

Palladium Books® Presents:

Garden of the Gods™

For the Palladium Fantasy RPG®



By Kevin Siembieda and Matthew Clements

C. WALTON

ED. FOX 17

Warning!

Violence and the Supernatural

The fictional world of the **Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game®** is violent, deadly, and filled with magic and monsters. It is an exotic realm where fictional magic, demonic creatures, gods, strange people and beasts are commonplace. Other-dimensional beings, demons and sorcerers stalk and enslave humans. Magic, monsters, gods, psychic abilities, insanity, cannibalism, war and heroic adventure are all elements of this book.

Some parents may find the violence, magic, and supernatural elements inappropriate for young readers/players.

We suggest parental discretion.

Please note that none of us at Palladium Books condone or encourage the occult, the practice of magic, the use of drugs, or violence. Nor is there any intention to make light of real world faiths.



**A magical sourcebook for the *Palladium Fantasy RPG®*, 2nd Edition.
Easily adaptable to *Rifts®*, *Chaos Earth®*, and any game system.**

Dedication

To **Wayne Smith**, one of my favorite players, a stalwart ally, friend and all-around great guy, and to **Shawn Hall**, a long time friend, fan, and the guy who inspired me to write this book. I cherish you both.

– Kevin Siembieda, 2020

The cover is by *Charles Walton II* and *Eduardo Dominguez S.* It depicts a ranger and his Wolfen companions at the statue of the Northern Pantheon deity, Wolvenar, patron of rangers, woodsmen, hunters, explorers, warriors, and Wolfen.

Easily Adaptable to Rifts®, Phase World® & Other Settings

Though designed with Palladium Fantasy specifically in mind, the many gods, blessings, magic artifacts, curses, ghosts, and most certainly the 100+ quests and adventure hooks can be easily adapted to **Rifts®**, **Chaos Earth®**, **Phase World®** and **Three Galaxies™** as deities, and as monsters or aliens in **Heroes Unlimited™**, **Aliens Unlimited™**, and perhaps even in **Ninjas & Superspies™/Mystic China™** and **Nightbane®**.

Simply convert Hit Points and S.D.C. to M.D.C., and damage to M.D., point for point. So if a weapon or power inflicts 4D6 H.P./S.D.C. damage, it does 4D6 M.D. in a Mega-Damage setting. Easy.

Any of the gods could be forgotten Earth deities or alien gods in **Rifts® Chaos Earth®** or **Rifts®** itself, or alien gods or strange godlike extraterrestrials in **Phase World®** and the **Three Galaxies** and **Heroes Unlimited™** or as rival demons in **Nightbane®**. Of course, you would have to extrapolate on their stats if these ancient or alien gods appear in person; use **Rifts® Conversion Book Two: Pantheons of the Megaverse®** or **Dragons and Gods™** as your template.

The ancient artifacts, Rune Weapons, and Holy Weapons can be just that in **Rifts®, Chaos Earth®, Heroes Unlimited™, Nightbane®,** and most other settings, or alien artifacts if you'd like.

The adventure hooks, especially the random tables found in two or three places in this book, are templates for adventures in any setting. As *Garden of the Gods™* was in the editing stage, I had more than one person comment that these quests and encounters could serve as a guide for writing video games, movies, TV shows, novels, and all manner of stories in any medium. All you have to do is adjust to the setting and technology level. For example, finding the ruins of an ancient civilization or lost people could take place in any setting, from fantasy to our modern world or an alien planet. USE this tool for any of your game campaigns in any setting. Mix and match the adventure hooks to create even more possibilities.

This is the beauty of having one game system for many genres. Unleash your imaginations and have fun.

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Palladium Books® Presents:

A Sourcebook for the Palladium Fantasy RPG®:

Garden of the Gods™

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– *Kevin Siembieda, 2020*

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The Garden of the Gods

A Hero's Story

The Garden of the Gods was everything the young warrior from the Eastern Territory had imagined. Growing up in **the New Kingdom**, as the *Eastern Territory* is often dubbed, the **Garden of the Gods** was the stuff of legend. And according to legend, it was said that the pure of heart and noble heroes could find divine inspiration there. And if especially lucky, even receive a vision quest or blessing. Such was the secret desire of young Ethan Axwell, but it had been six days now and, well ... nothing.

Ethan's band of adventuring buddies could not understand his fascination with the Garden. They didn't mind coming to see the island, learn about the next Lopanic Games, and even see the Garden of the Gods, but it was just a garden with a bunch of old statues. Probably worth seeing so you could impress the girls back home by truthfully saying you had been there, but a garden is a garden. Their supplies secured for the next leg of their journey into the Coyle dominated *Disputed Lands in the North*, they did what most young men heading into war would do, spend their nights in town drinking, dancing with pretty girls, and talking of the great adventure that lay ahead of them.

Ethan, on the other hand, was nervous. He was the de facto leader of the group. It was nice that his friends saw him as a Knight with honor and courage, and entrusted him to lead them. Only he wasn't a Knight. Not a true one. He was not born into nobility and though mentored by a Knight, his training was basic at best.

Like so many people flooding into the Eastern Territory, his family had dreams of becoming one of the new aristocracy in the East. But they struggled to tame the land and make their mark. Their modest wealth quickly being eaten up by the cost of coming to the East. All their hopes now rested upon the shoulders of young Ethan, and he felt the weight of the responsibility he carried.

The twenty year-old had trained under the tutelage of a Bizantium Knight for a year and a half. The lad had accounted for himself well in skirmishes along the fringe of the wild lands against the indigenous Coyles and Orcs, and his mentor was as proud of his performance as Ethan and his family. Still, he was no Knight, and taking the Northern Lands from the Canine people didn't set well with the lad. It seemed wrong, even if they were savage, inhuman monsters. So while Ethan's friends dreamed of grand adventure, fame and fortune, he had already experienced enough combat to know the journey ahead would be no easy task, and that there was nothing noble or glorious about war. Moreover, he had heard stories about the North and the Wolfen legions. If half of what was said about them was true, the skirmishes he and his friends had participated in were nothing compared to what

awaited them in the Disputed Lands. He only hoped he would prove a worthy leader and be able to bring his friends home alive and in one piece. That's why he had spent what little money he had left to travel to Lopan and to visit the Garden of the Gods.

Ethan Axwell had prayed, and prayed hard, but no god spoke to him nor peeled back the veil of time to show him his destiny. The only creatures speaking to him were the frogs and insects of the Garden as they croaked and buzzed about in the warm evenings of late spring. While his friends engaged in well-deserved revelry every night, Ethan found peace and serenity walking the Garden of the Gods. There scattered before him were an array of statues set along a maze created by the flowering bushes and hedges. Butterflies and dragonflies, and the occasional Faerie (always a treat for him to see) frolicked among the flowers and vines as the last of the day's sun slunk beneath the horizon. At night, they'd be replaced by fireflies flickering and dancing in the night, making the Garden feel all the more magical. The song of the cicadas and frogs drifted on the wind along with the songs and cries of night birds and nocturnal animals.

As one approached an area dedicated to a particular deity, the flora changed to reflect that particular god and the views of his followers. Roses and lilacs of all colors and varieties were common, but so were every other type of flower and blossoming vine. All of the gods were represented by a simple statue and a stone bench, or by a line of statues when the entire pantheon was represented. There were no towering shrines and temples, because here, it was said, all the gods were equal. Most were surprisingly modest, yet still impressive and inspiring. A few had a little shelter (like a pagoda) over the bench or benches to provide visitors some shade from the sun. Others had vine covered trellises or shade trees, and a few a modest fountain or a quiet pool of water. All beautiful and peaceful.

The gardens around the older, lesser known gods or deities that had fallen out of favor, or were worshiped mostly by Goblins, Orcs and other nonhuman species, were usually less well kept. Only a handful were overgrown and showed little sign of care. In a few such cases, the statue had toppled over or was partially sunken into the ground, or covered by a blanket of flowering vines and underbrush, but this was the exception to the rule. Most were well kept and breathtaking in their beauty.

One particular statue of a god unknown to Ethan had caught his eye. It was a statue made of grey and white marble, weathered and pockmarked by what appeared to be at least a millennium of wind and rain. It looked to be among one of the oldest statues. Its garden also seemed less well maintained than some others, but not too wild and looked to have been recently attended to.

The figure of the deity was that of Nar-Rabium clad in robes suggesting a mage or priest, but he also wore an armored chest plate, carried a large shield on one arm, and a large sword hung from a belt on one hip and a dagger and a mace from the other. The lithe but muscular figure wore a pleasant expression on his face, with a small, thin smile that reminded Ethan of his approving father when he had bid him farewell. At the deity's feet, carved into the single piece of massive marble, were a stack of books, scrolls, and a warrior's helmet. The right arm was bent at the elbow with a flat, open hand, palm up. In that hand burned a small, blue fire that remained illuminated day and night, as if by magic. Carved into the base was what Ethan correctly believed to be the name of the deity in several languages – Elven, Dwarven, Demongogian, Western, Northern, Eastern, and even Wolfen. The last two surprised him, because they were clearly added in a more recent decade. It was here, in the garden of this god, that he felt most relaxed and at peace.

"Are you a follower?"

Ethan had been lost in his thoughts, so he had not realized someone else had entered the garden of Nar-Rabium. (**Note:** Pronounced "nar-ray-bee-um.") Most people left after the sun went down, and though a few of the statues and gardens around them were lit up and attracted visitors night and day, most did not, this one included.

"Um ... what?"

"Are a follower of Nar-Rabium?"

"Who? Oh, him! The statue. No. I ... I just find it peaceful here."

"Indeed, it is quiet and beautiful here," said the bearded man dressed in the garb of the clergy. His blue and red robes were soiled at the bottom from grass and dirt. His neatly trimmed beard as white as snow. The stranger carried a tall, hooked staff that looked like gnarled wood except it appeared to be plated in gold and silver. The wizened stranger had a kindly face filled with wrinkles that indicated the passage of many, many decades. Yet despite his obvious great age, his voice was strong and his eyes seemed to shimmer in the moonlight with the passion of youth. It was instantly clear to Ethan that this man was a Priest. Undoubtedly one of the Garden's caretakers.

"That's new," said the Priest, pointing at the blue flame with his staff. "It appeared a few years ago. It means the church of Nar-Rabium is growing again and Nar-Rabium is with us once more."

"I don't know about that," said Ethan with a tone of disappointment. "I've seen no sign of any gods."

"What do you mean?" asked the Priest rhetorically. "The gods and the splendor of nature are all around you."

"Oh, of course, I meant ... you know ... um ..." Ethan fumbled his words, feeling a bit embarrassed.

"Ahhh, the stories of visions and miracles," said the Priest with a smile. "Everyone comes here expecting an encounter with the divine or receiving an inspiring dream, but most leave disappointed or imagine a sign in a dream or in the flowers means more than it really does. Don't feel bad, young sir. I have never been graced with such an experience here in the Garden either, and I have been paying my respects for a very long time."

The two men laughed. The ancient Priest made his way over to the stone bench to sit, using his staff to slowly lower himself down.

"I think this is my favorite spot in the Garden," said Ethan.

"Mine as well," said the Priest with a nod.

"I don't know this god, but for some reason, the name, Nar-Rabium, seems very familiar to me," mused Ethan aloud.

"Nar-Rabium is a very ancient god, all but forgotten until the fabled Defilers adopted him as their patron."

"THE Defilers? The Defilers of gods, Destroyers of Set, Slayers of Demons, Bringers of Justice, and Champions of the People?" asked Ethan with excitement. Every warrior of the Eastern Territory and the North had heard the legends of **The Defilers**. Ordinary adventurers of every race – human, Elf, Dwarf, Ogre, Wolfen, and creatures unknown – who stood up for what was right against impossible odds to protect the innocent and strike down evil. Not one of them a king or knight. Each one starting from the humblest stations in life, including thieves and monsters.

The Defilers were all ordinary people said to have been forged into heroes by the legendary tower of gold known as the **Palladium of Desires**. It was once a place of wonder and miracles said to have stood somewhere in the North between the mountains and Ophid's Grassland in the Great Northern Wilderness. Something had gone terribly wrong at the tower, turning it into a place filled with dark magic, monsters and demons. The legendary Defilers cleaned out the Tower of Gold, stood against every force of darkness that dared challenge them, saved countless lives, built a great city, and came to represent justice, fair play, and honor for all. They stand among the greatest heroes of all time. The stories and songs of their heroic deeds are still told and sung by soldiers and adventurers, peasants and kings alike.

"Yes," said the aged priest with an approving smile. "THE Defilers. I see you've heard of them."

"Of course I have. Every man-at-arms living in the East and North desires to follow in their footsteps."

"Not every man-at-arms," said the Priest in a disappointed tone. "Far from it. But it is good to know the Defilers and their patron, Nar-Rabium, are not forgotten."

"Well ..." mumbled Ethan. "We all know the Defiler stories. Nar-Rabium, not so much. Though now that you mention it, I do recall it as the name of the god who helped them strike down the Lord of Hades in one of their greatest battles. I just wish ... I, um ..."

"What is it, lad?"

"I wish the stories were true and that the Defilers were real. I would like to think that they really were ordinary people, like me, who became heroes and gods because of their actions and great deeds. But father and my uncles say they are just fanciful stories passed down to inspire children and entertain the troops."

"No disrespect to your father or uncles, young sir, but the stories are absolutely true. The Defilers were real people. That, I can assure you. And only one of the Defilers became a god. Abzurdra, the least likely of them all to become a deity, but the most deserving," said the Priest with a snort and a chuckle.

"You seem to know the stories well, sir."

"I do, indeed," said the Priest. "Do you know how the Defilers came to meet Nar-Rabium?"

"No, I don't know that story."

"Well, then let me tell you."

The two men spoke and laughed late into the night. Ethan enthralled by stories of Defiler heroics he had never heard before. And told with such flair and passion by the old man that the young warrior could almost imagine himself there with them. The stories included the Defilers' first great battles in which some said the god Nar-Rabium joined the heroes in battle, in person,

to strike down the demonic ruler of Hades, and died so that the Defilers might live to destroy the monster and go on to become the heroes of legend they were meant to be. After that battle, the Defilers insisted Nar-Rabium still lived, and built many shrines and churches to their beloved deity in the North and East, bringing the deity many new worshippers. Some of those places remained to this very day.

“Nar-Rabium believed in the goodness of the Defilers,” said the old man. “And in return, they believed in him, even when others proclaimed him dead. Thus, bringing a forgotten god out of the shadows and back to life.”

“You mentioned that before, but I don’t understand,” said Ethan. “The gods are immortal, they cannot die.”

“Yes. And no. There are many different beliefs about gods, but here is what I believe. The gods are supernatural beings that function very differently than we mere mortals. I believe they can die. And Nar-Rabium sacrificed himself that day so that the Defilers could live and stop a great evil that even the deity knew he could not destroy on his own. But you see, a god does not need to be slain in combat to perish. He may fade away into obscurity and become powerless without the worship of mortals. If a god is not remembered and spoken of, it is as if he does not exist at all. Is that the death of a god? I suspect it is a fate worse than death. Ahhh, but if people once again speak his name and believe in him, praise him, I believe that deity returns to life. The same if they never stop believing and praising his name for generations.

“Take Nar-Rabium, for example,” continued the wizened Priest with authority in his voice. “Nar-Rabium existed back in the days long before the Elves, let alone the humans that have come to dominate our world today. Nar-Rabium has always been a force of light and goodness. He stood against the Old Ones and was part of the plan to send them into the deep slumber that put an end to their reign during the Age of Chaos.”

“Wait,” protested Ethan. “I’m no priest or scholar, but my studies have given me the privilege of reading the *Tristine Chronicles*, and there is no mention of Nar-Rabium.”

“And yet, here is his statue, and his prominent role in the legend of the Defilers.”

Ethan looked perplexed.

The Priest continued his dissertation.

“Being learned is good, Ethan, but not all knowledge is held in books. Nor are the words of men always the truth. People like to rewrite history in their own favor. That is why there has never been a complete translation of the *Tristine Chronicles* proven to exist. In my many years, I have seen 23 tomes of the *Tristine Chronicles*. Not one of them identical. Each one is different. Each one incomplete in some way. I have learned that the pages where the names of all who stood against the dreaded Old Ones were destroyed very early on, to prevent retribution by the followers of the Old Ones, demons, and dark gods. Had they not been removed, you would know the name Nar-Rabium very well. Other forgotten deities as well.

“You see, gods function rather like the rise and fall of nations. When a kingdom is strong and powerful, it becomes known and its influence grows across the land. The larger it gets, the more powerful and renowned it becomes. When its people lose faith in it, or abandon it, the nation weakens, and it falls to more powerful forces. It becomes a shadow of what it once was, or fades away and is no more. Over time, it may be forgotten and fade from our memories and the pages of history completely. Our world is

riddled with ruins of forgotten civilizations. The Old Kingdom is so named because the glory days of the Elves and Dwarves are gone. Two civilizations beyond our imagining, ravaged and laid to waste by hatred and war.

“Today, the power and influence of the Elves and Dwarves remain here and there, but their great cities and grand civilizations are a fading memory. Only a handful of their walled cities remain, while countless crumbling ruins of their past greatness litter the landscape of the Old Kingdom. The last remnants of a bygone era the common people hear about in myths and legends, or we lucky learned people read about in books. Of these last Elven and Dwarven cities, many are gems hidden away from the eyes of the world for fear they too become targets of destruction. Their time of prominence is done. Even here on Lopan, where Elves lead and teach, and Dwarves are welcomed, they are both in the minority.

“So it is with the gods. Long ago, before Elf or Dwarf, or the time of men, Nar-Rabium, and many other deities now forgotten, were the powerhouses of their age. Over time, things transpired to change that. Today, Nar-Rabium and many of the ancient gods of the jungle, the South, and the North, are all but forgotten. Remembered and worshiped by just a handful. Kept alive in the shadows by cults hidden within the *Land of the South Winds* and the *Yin-Sloth Jungles*. And here, in the Garden. When they are gone, so are those gods, like others before them.

“Such was the fate of Nar-Rabium before the Defilers embraced him and championed his existence by doing good in his name. I would dare say that most of the temples and shrines to Nar-Rabium scattered across the Great Northern Wilderness and parts of the Eastern Territory were founded by the Defilers and their followers.”

“Like this statue here, in the Garden?” asked Ethan.

“No. The Garden of the Gods has existed since long before the Defilers were born. This statue has stood here for untold ages, forgotten and buried by the passage of time. It was a few Defilers who unearthed it, and restored it to its rightful place of honor. I hear tell one of them tends to its garden to this very day.” For some reason that last part made the old man chuckle.

“That’s impossible,” said Ethan. “The Defilers vanished ... um ... nobody knows for sure ... but it was something like two or three hundred years ago. And they took the Palladium of Desires with them.” Ethan pressed his point gently and without disrespect to his new friend. He had taken a quick liking to the old man and meant no disrespect. He was very much enjoying the Priest’s many stories, and truth be told, Ethan wanted more than anything to believe the Defilers had really existed, and had started out as ordinary people from humble beginnings like him and his own friends. The idea that one or more of the Defilers could still walk the earth pleased him to no end, but he had outgrown fairy-tales and childish fantasies.

The old Priest’s bones crackled like kindling as he stretched out his legs and leaned forward to work the kinks out of his spine. Sitting on the hard stone bench for so many hours had aggravated his arthritis something terrible.

“Ouch,” groaned the old man. “My bones are telling me it is time I took my leave, young sir.” The Priest stood up, causing more bones to crack and pop in response to his effort.

“It has been a true pleasure and an honor, sir,” said the young man.

“For me as well, Ethan,” said the aged Priest. “May I offer you a parting word?”

“Of course,” said the young Knight, appreciative of the old fellow.

“Do you know why Nar-Rabium chose the Defilers to be his champions?”

“No, sir.”

“Because he is the patron god of unlikely heroes, lost causes, and those who take a stand against impossible odds when it’s the right thing to do. The Defilers faced countless villains and impossible odds more times than I can count. They destroyed the ruler of Hades before they became known to the world as heroes. They entered Hades a second time and stood against the combined forces of Heaven and Hell, yet lived to fight another day. Do you know how?”

“Because they had Nar-Rabium on their side?” speculated the young warrior soon to face his own battles.

“There is no doubt that it helped to have a noble god who believed in them, but in the end, it was because the Defilers always remained true to themselves. They never lost faith in the goodness of people – all people, human and nonhuman. They believed that one person – and better yet, 26 friends who stood together – could accomplish the impossible, hold each other steady, and beat the odds. That, my young friend, is what made them heroes, and over time, legends.”

The old man’s smile quivered as if struck by a sudden, deep sorrow. He looked away for a moment and rubbed his eyes before turning back to address Ethan.

“I see those qualities in you, young sir. And I’ve become quite a good judge of character in my many years. I think you would have been welcomed into the ranks of the Defilers. Your friends too, if they are anything like you. I know Nar-Rabium would believe in you, if you would choose to believe in him.”

“So you are a follower of Nar-Rabium, then?” asked Ethan.

“Heh, not exactly. I believe Nar-Rabium died in that battle in Hades. Sacrificed himself for the greater good. But I’m starting to think it is damn hard to kill a god when people refuse to stop believing in him or his Champions.” The Priest paused and pointed. “Do you see that small flame in Nar-Rabium’s hand?”

“Yes,” said Ethan.

“I didn’t put it there. Nobody I know is responsible for it. It just appeared one day maybe ten years ago. And I swear it has grown larger and stronger just this past evening as we spoke. That tells me Nar-Rabium is back in the world of mortals and looking for a new generation of heroes to inspire. New Champions who, like the Defilers, will lead by their good example and stand for what is right against all odds. I wouldn’t be surprised if you became one of those heroes.”

The sincerity and emotion in the old man’s voice made Ethan blush. “Oh, um, thank you, sir. I ... I could never be like one of the Defilers.”

“Nothing is impossible, lad. Remember that. Improbable, perhaps, but not impossible. Ah, but now I must be going. We’ve been jawing all night. Look, the morning sun is starting to peek out over the horizon.”

Both men laughed as they looked at the pink, yellow, and blue glow rising up through the trees.

“Good sir,” said Ethan. “Our talk has been most enjoyable. I thank you for your time and the wonderful stories. May I ask your name?”

“Ah, a last word to the wise, Ethan. I learned very early in my youth to never tell anyone your true name. It can be used against you by Witches and villains in all manner of dark magicks. Thus, I have been known by many names, son. Most of them false. But ... for you, young sir ... I am *Kenyon Barrtol*.”

The old man made a slight bow, winked, and the two took their leave.

For the next two days, Ethan regaled his friends with tales of Nar-Rabium and the Defilers. Before departing from Lopan, Ethan wanted to leave the Priest a small donation from the winnings he made from a good night of rolling dice. However, he could find no Priest responsible for the shrine of Nar-Rabium, nor did anyone know of such a person. Finally, the “unofficial” head caretaker of the Garden of the Gods explained that individual Priests and groups of worshipers take it upon themselves to care for or tend to a specific statue, shrines, and garden area around it. They do so as a way to pay their respect to the deity they worship and to give back a little something to the Garden. In the case of Nar-Rabium, every spring and autumn, the garden around it is pruned, weeded, and cleared, but no one has ever seen the person, or persons, responsible. There was certainly no elderly Priest charged with its upkeep.

“He said his name was *Kenyon Barrtol*,” repeated Ethan.

The caretaker shook his head, reiterating that there was no local caretaker for Nar-Rabium. Then paused, and asked the young warrior to repeat the name.

“Uh huh,” said the caretaker upon hearing it again. A puzzled look stretching across his face. “It is rumored that Kenyon is alive, but that’s impossible. *Kenyon Barrtol* is human. If he were alive, it would make him ... let me think ... more than 350 years old. Maybe older than that.”

“So, you do know the name?”

“Well, yes, but ... the old man must have been having fun with you, boy, or you heard wrong.”

“No, I’m quite certain that was his name. I’m sure of it,” protested Ethan who was becoming increasingly irritated. “So who is *Kenyon Barrtol*?”

“Why, he is *Nameless*. The founder and head of the Church of Nar-Rabium.”

“Wait!” exclaimed one of Ethan’s friends in disbelief. “*Nameless*? As in one of the founding members of the Defilers?”

“Yes, exactly. Founding member and one of the group’s Council of Leaders. When the Defilers finally disbanded, *Nameless* took the mantle of Head of the Church of Nar-Rabium. According to accepted local history, some say myth and lies, it was *Nameless*, the *Ranger Coake*, the *Cybernaut Xar Xar* and a few others who tracked down, unearthed and restored the ancient statue of Nar-Rabium, here, in the Garden of the Gods, more than two hundred years ago, before the great renovation. *Nameless* remained head of the church for decades, though he would sometimes vanish for years at a time on adventures and missions of good will on this world, and some say in other realms of existence. Upon his two hundred and fiftieth birthday, he stepped down to retire and wander the land to spread the word of Nar-Rabium. It was on that day that he revealed what is said to have been his true, given name, *Kenyon Barrtol*. No one knows what became of him, but over the decades since, people from all walks of life claim to

have met him or fought at his side. Some say he wanders the land to this very day. But ... as I said, that's impossible."

Ethan smiled.

"I have it on good authority that nothing is impossible."

A Bit of History

Though Wolfen seafarers are said to have visited the island of Lopan for generations, as have Elves, Dwarves and other people, few went far beyond its shores, and there are no records that speak of statues. None except for a tiny handful of reports locked away among the archives of the Library of Bletherad.

One is buried in a ship's log where the Captain of a Western vessel carrying an expedition of hunters and trappers looking for exotic fare and furs to bring back to the Empire of Sin, found more than they had bargained for. It dates back 2,156 years.

"My lookout insisted he had spied Wolf-People piloting the three low, oar-driven vessels that raced away from us at astonishing speed. Soon, I was told, they vanished into the fog near our destination of the island of Lopan. I deigned this a flight of fancy as the inhuman savages could not be seafarers or possess the knowledge of shipbuilding. I now question that assessment as members of our expedition would later encounter the Wolf-People in the wilds of Lopan.

"They were six days missing and behind schedule when six of 24 men finally made their way to our schooner anchored off the northern coast. I will get a full recounting of their travails after they settle down. All are quite shaken by their ordeal, and need rest and time to collect their wits. I suspect their long exposure to the elements has addled their minds, for the story they tell is too fantastic to be believed.

"According to the men, all skilled scouts and hunters, four days into a successful hunt, they were beset upon by a flock of Peryton. Dozens of them. Perhaps 60 or more. These winged Demon Deer are well known to snatch sailors from the decks of ships and carry them off to their mountain nests to feed their young. Normally, I would question this account as I have never heard of such a large flock and we are a good 300 miles from the nearest mountain range. We ourselves saw no evidence of the creatures, though we did experience the wicked storm that rolled out from the northeast. A storm that the huntsmen believe drove the Peryton out from their mountain retreat and swept them to the northern shores of Lopan. As I said, normally I would not believe their account, but each, to a man, relates the exact same tale with the same look of horror in their eyes and terror in their voices.

"They claim a flock of Peryton swept down like angry locusts to take three men, then two others. Tearing them apart in mid-air like ravenous sharks, blood and bits pelting the men below like rain. As the sky bled, the rest of them fled to seek refuge under the trees, but they offered little protection. The winged demons plunged through the trees to give pursuit on hooved feet, while others flew above the canopy screeching and rattling the treetops.

"Another three men would fall to the Peryton before nightfall. Five more during the dark of night. All seemed lost when a hunting party of the Wolf-People made their presence known. The men were sure the wolves had come to feast upon them as well. Instead, the savages pulled the men under some sort of large animal hide that stunk like rotting fish on the beach. Man and wolf



huddled together under this tarp, the size of a sail, for three days. Though neither could speak to the other, the Wolf-People offering the men food and water. And both man and beast took comfort in each other's presence. Finally, after days, the screeching stopped and the sky was empty of Peryton. The Wolf-People packed their gear, rolled up the tarp, pointed the men toward our location and vanished, without fanfare, back into the woods like ghosts.

"Whatever befell those men, our losses are too severe to continue. This expedition is a failure.

"Truth be told, I do not like this damnable island in the middle of nowhere. Civilization is a thousand miles away and I haven't seen anything to make this trip worth our while. I don't care how many deer and elk or Unicorns there may be out there, it's not worth the cost in lives. Morale is low. The crew is afraid, and I don't blame them. It took forever to get here and all we've seen are monsters and death.

"Something killed these men. Whether it was six Peryton or 60, it doesn't matter. While we waited for them, we heard bone-chilling animal cries the likes of which I had never heard before. And our keen-eyed lookout insists he spotted a pair of dragons playing in the sky off in the distance. Six other trusted crew members confirmed this. And I personally saw the Wolf-People at sea in those strange boats, and Gryphons flying overhead, with my own eyes.

I have no idea how Elven colonies have come and gone on Lopan over the ages. Or why they or anyone would want to live on this god-forsaken rock, even if the southern shore is less dangerous. By my assessment, this island is a savage extension of the Great Northern Wilderness and unfit for civilized people. I say leave it for the wolves and dragons and gryphons. We'll all be happy to set sail on the morrow."

– Captain Thaddeus William Erwin

The Island of Lopan

Home of the Garden

Lopan, and its sister island Phi, are both located inside the **Great Inland Sea** at the center of the Palladium World. To the civilized world in the South, Lopan is located in the eye of the storm of modern politics – a quiet port at the center of the world, surrounded by hostile lands and waters, and raging political turmoil all around it. The Wolfen and monster infested Great Northern Wilderness lies due north, above it. The crumbling Old Kingdom below it. The hostile and untamed wilderness and wars of the Eastern Territory across the Inland Sea to the east. To the northwest are the notorious Ophid's Grasslands and the cursed Land of the Damned sealed off from the rest of the world, but somehow always a looming threat. To the west, the pirate-filled waters controlled by the war-mongering and fading Empire of Sin hungry to recapture its glory days of absolute power.

The peaceful kingdom of Lopan is one of the youngest centers of *human civilization* on the Palladium World. The large, long island has been colonized many times over the eons. Elves heralding from the New Kingdom (now known as the crumbling Old Kingdom), made the best and longest runs at occupying Lopan. Indeed, it was once a promising new horizon for the Elven Empire, with a handful of port cities and logging camps established along the southern shores. However, after the apex of Elven civilization collapsed after the Elf-Dwarf War, most of its forts

and new frontier cities slipped into ruin. The last time violence touched its shores was during the Elf-Dwarf War, and part of Lopan's current prosperity is due to the fact that it has not seen real war or invasion in thousands of years. Despite that, until the last several centuries it has been seen as little more than a stopping point for ships and travelers to resupply before moving on.

For the longest time, Lopan was mainly known for its horse and sheep pastures, fine wine, excellent farmland, and idyllic locations to build quaint summer cottages for the wealthy from the Western Empire, Timiro, and the Old Kingdom. Its location at the center of the Inland Sea had prompted many outsiders to assume the island residents were master shipbuilders, but that has never been the case. Though in modern times, Lopan has learned to make solid, reliable skiffs, schooners and other light vessels for short runs across the sea for trade with neighboring ports along the coasts of the mainland, primarily coastal cities in the Old Kingdom and Eastern Territory. Their shipwrights are becoming known for beautiful work, but these vessels are nothing but *boats* compared to the true ocean-going vessels used by Bizantium, Timiro and the navies of the Western Empire.

Despite its mild climate and central location, however, the Inland Sea has always been a barrier to non-seafaring peoples, and the Elf-Dwarf War ended its "official" colonization by the Elven Kingdoms before it could expand. It is only in the *Time of Man* that Lopan has been truly settled and for a consistent and long period, though ironically, with Elven leadership and guidance by the oldest city-states originally founded by Elves for generations. Progress kept slow by the belligerence of the Western Empire who controls the **Gedorma Strait** with an iron fist and cuts off Lopan and the west coast of the Eastern Territory from the oceans beyond, severely limiting trade with the outside world.

It has been only in the last five or six centuries that the island was able to build and sustain port cities in the south and east, roads, farms and habitation by a growing population. Still, much of the island continent's interior remains undeveloped, and parts in the North are nearly as wild and hostile as the Great Northern Wilderness.

This perception of being a second-rate, backwoods outpost of no consequence and little value has largely changed with Lopan creating reasons for outsiders to come and visit. The advent of the **Lopanic Games** and heightened promotion of the games as well as spreading the word about the mysterious **Garden of the Gods** to the outside world, has played a tremendous and important role in this regard. Though Lopan remains politically backwater and largely rural, the island has the highest standard of living in all the Eastern Territory. One of the most fortunate places for human, Elf, and people of most races to be born, in all the world. **Empress Jeslynn** of the **Astura Dynasty**, an Elf, is the present ruler of Lopan and in her capable hands it is earning a place of increasing prominence in the world.

Lopan is at the center of the world. Travel times by boat to the Eastern Territory, Great Northern Wilderness, and the Old Kingdom are almost the same, depending upon the port of departure, and it is only a bit further to the northern outskirts of the Western Empire. With the attention from the Lopanic Games, visiting Lords and Ladies, warriors and adventurers, have come to realize its prosperity, safety and central location makes Lopan a natural place to gather funds and recruit supporters for crusades and adventures in the world around it. Many mercenary companies, shipping ventures, and magical and religious causes are

starting to be founded inside its borders, though most of them have their eyes fixed *outward on the world beyond Lopan*. Spies and agents working for one power or another often use Lopan, and its neighbor Phi, as bases of operation, staging points, and for the recruitment of adventurers and mercenaries.

The primary feature that draws travelers from all over the world to Lopan and takes advantage of its central location, is the **Lopanic Games**. Athletic, equestrian, and knightly contests of growing renown and importance that occur every three years and involve challengers in tests of combat from many races and almost every kingdom in the world. The Games are held in the spirit of neutrality and fair competition, which has spawned a kind of tourist industry on Lopan and travel infrastructure around them. Attracting competitors and spectators from the world far beyond the shores of Lopan.

The Empress has encouraged the development of the games and helps support them any way she can. In order to keep the positive word about Lopan spreading, and to increase and maintain trade and tourists year round, and not just during the games, she has also allowed word to spread to the world about the **Garden of the Gods**.

The large, established religions and cults may not like it when pilgrims and the curious go rooting around the Garden, but Lopan is far from the influence of powerful churches, and the forces of the Empress maintain a solid hold on the population's hearts and minds through patriotism, might, magic, and the power of the purse.

The neutrality policies that have kept the island's people out of world conflicts and fostered the Lopanic Games have been extended to religious neutrality as well, and nowhere is this better represented than in the **Garden of the Gods**, open to all people, regardless of religions and social status. The Games, in which there are no restrictions on race, creed, or social status, are said to have been inspired by the neutral-ground concept spoken of in legends about the Garden of the Gods. Indeed, the island of Lopan and its inhabitants have been spared the upheaval of war and natural calamity for as long as any human can remember. A calm and peace that some attribute to the presence and growing renown of the Garden of the Gods.

Lopan is mostly a nation of *humans* and *Elves*, but there are also a number of *Dwarves*, *Gnomes*, and a smattering of many other races. Though they are not counted as part of the official population, Lopan's rural and forested lands also makes it the home of *Centaurs* and *Faerie Folk* who have inhabited the island since time immemorial. It is also said to be visited by dragons and other mystical beasts. The southern coast of the Great Northern Wilderness is so near, *Wolfen*, *Kankoran*, and *Bearmen* visitors are fairly common, and a few have even taken up residence on the island. The general lack of the monster races – including monstrous people common elsewhere the world such as *Ogres*, *Trolls*, *Giants*, *Ratlings*, *Kobolds*, and *Goblins* – means that many residents of Lopan are unaccustomed to them. This expresses itself through fear and embracing rumors and superstition about these people, especially with centuries of stories about them marauding across the Old Kingdom and causing problems most elsewhere. However, some Lopani are almost completely devoid of the prejudice and human-centric attitude found throughout so much of the rest of the world. And even those who succumb to rumors about the so-called “monster races” may fear them and believe outrageous stories, but do

not hate them. They regard them as exotic oddities of considerable interest.

Due to the fact that the island-continent has had Elven leaders for centuries and that Elven remains the language of the learned and is used in magic, formal titles, legal terms, trade, and the like, it is the primary means of communication and most residents, including humans, understand and speak it as their primary language. The human Eastern and Western dialects are also prevalent, and all languages can be heard from visitors to the Garden of the Gods and the Lopanic Games.

Though Lopan is a signatory to the **Charter of Dominion**, and technically a part of the **Eastern Territory**, it is also a favorite, unofficial escape for *Western Empire* nobility, as well as anyone trying to get away from the populated cities of the rest of the world. This is especially true of the declining cities in the Old Kingdom that must deal with constant threats from the Orc, Ogre and Goblin barbarian hordes, as well as drought, famine and war. For most people living along the shores of the Inland Sea and Gedorma Strait, Lopan is remote enough to be safe from invading armies, but close enough to reach by ship. It is known to be safe, peaceful and uncrowded, but still civilized in parts, with comfortable cities and rustic cottage homes for those who prefer that kind of thing.

The Garden of the Gods & the Religions of the World

The **Garden of the Gods** existed long before the first humans ever set foot on Lopan, before the earliest Elven explorers charted and settled along the southern coast to establish outposts and a few coastal cities, and before the *Tristine Chronicles* ever began its account of world history, the statues of the gods stood nestled among the flowers and trees. A tiny realm of its own, the Garden is studded with statues that are said to depict ALL known gods, as well as deities forgotten and lost over the ages. It is a divine source of enlightenment with no affiliation to any one particular deity, religion, or nation. It is considered a holy site that could well be the remains of the primordial powers that gave birth to the Palladium world, or even the universe.

According to the most commonly accepted legends, the Garden of the Gods was created a short time after the Old Ones were defeated, by the gods themselves, to be a neutral zone where they could gather in peace and solitude as equals among gods. A place they could visit to find solace and comfort in its natural beauty. There is even a passage in the **Tristine Chronicles** that describes a place some believe to be the once, little known, Garden of the Gods:

“Twas a short time after the Battle of the Gods, when the divine did gather to parlay at a place yet unknown to man and Elf, Dwarf and Titan.

“There, the divine decreed the land to be of neutral ground. And so it was that they put forth their energy into the land, to create hallowed ground where all gods would be remembered, and no god would dare raise his hand or voice against a fellow divine. The land was that day transformed into a lush garden for-



est that would persist throughout the ages. A place of beauty for gatherings and serene reflection for the immortal and mortals, alike.

“Thus, it is said, that any god who violates the peace of the Garden shall be cast out and punished. And woe unto those who refuse their just punishment, for they shall suffer destruction at the hand of their fellows.

“And so it is, in the **Garden on the Edge of Blackest Night**, that mortals shall find divine insight and the divine shall be reminded of the Bleakness that reigned before them, so the world shall never again know the Tyranny of Misery and Chaos that made gods tremble and mortals weep.”

– *The Tristine Chronicles*

Many believe the mythical neutral ground where the gods once gathered and may still gather, as described in the sacred **Tristine Chronicles**, is the **Garden of the Gods** on Lopan. This assumption is given further credence by the fact that the Garden exists on the edge of civilization before one enters the Great Northern Wilderness, proper. Even today the Great Northern Wilderness is considered to be a savage and foreboding land dominated by monsters, snow, and long, dark winters. Though it is known as *the Great Northern Wilderness*, for eons prior the Elves and Titans called it the *Dark Forest* and before that, *Kobolds*, *Goblins*, *Orcs* and other archaic monsters called it the **Forest of Blackest Night**.

For generations hunters and woodsmen told stories of an idyllic paradise located toward the center of the island. A Place of Good Hunting that never seemed to suffer from drought or storms, and was renowned for its meadows, fields of flowers, wild roses, and flowering vines that bore a bounty of berries and fruit, nestled under a canopy of oaks and firs. They spoke too of ancient stone statues – tributes to current and eldritch gods – half concealed among the flowers and vines. A place of a by-gone time held sacred and avoided by the Centaur, and a home to the Faeries. A place difficult to find and said to, sometimes, leave people who would come upon it with insight and visions, and even touched by a god. For these reasons, the ancient ruins remained the stuff of local legend, and were left alone and undisturbed for many centuries. For most Elves and humans colonizing the southern coast of Lopan, the Place of Good Hunting and ancient statues swallowed up by the forest was largely unknown or just another tall tale about a land with many tall tales, myths, and legends. To the outside world, nothing was known of it at all.

The magnificence of the statues was not made known until some five or six hundred years ago. That’s when Elven historians from the ruling house of Lopan in the South decided to see what these stories were all about, and found what would become known as the **Garden of the Gods**. The statuary were indeed ancient, hidden among the dense bramble and flowering flora. At that time, they estimated there to be two or three dozen ancient statues, and partially excavated a dozen, made sketches, and returned to the city with stories and images of an ancient ruin – an ancient burial ground, perhaps – located in a lush part of the wilderness. But ancient ruins are commonplace in a world with a long history like Palladium, and not much was thought of them at the time. Only the little known Knights-Fossar of the woodland monastery knew of the Garden and its greater significance, a secret they kept to themselves for the longest time.

For centuries, the Garden remained mostly forgotten, once again becoming the subject of local folklore. An oddity to wonder about as the inhabitants of Lopan focused on more pressing matters of making a life for their families on the shores of the sprawling woodland island. The small Elven ports in the South and East embraced the slow migration of humans in search of a safe habitat to make their life. As humans slowly arrived in greater and greater numbers, more and more fishing villages and farms sprang up. So did the makings of towns that began to dot the coastline. In time, they would grow into coastal cities and give birth to the Kingdom of Lopan.

All the while as Lopan's human communities flourished and grew with Elves chosen to lead them, the site of the Garden laid fallow, untouched, but not quite forgotten. Finally, two hundred years ago, another team of Elves and humans went to the site to conduct a more serious study and excavation of the ruins. The more vegetation they chopped away, the more remarkably preserved statues they uncovered. First ten, then twenty, then forty, and the number continued to grow. There seemed no end to the statues hidden among nature's splendor. As they went along, they were inspired to establish paths and carve out areas that served as picturesque garden areas to surround the statues and pantheons of deities as they were uncovered and revealed. A surprisingly easy task, as they often needed to do little more than preserve a meadow, or cluster of fruit trees, or a patch of wildflowers, or a glorious pond already graced with a fountain or statue of a god resting on one bank, or in the center of the water. The garden portion of the excavation seemed to almost form by itself, as if the paths they carved out of the wilderness were preordained.

When the flood of human settlers coming from the West and the Old Kingdom into the Eastern Territory began to flock to Lopan, over the last century, half of the Garden was already excavated and visited as a place of curiosity and beauty. So beautiful and awe-inspiring that early on it was decreed to be hallowed ground and dubbed the **Garden of the Gods**. For what else could it be, especially nestled among such natural splendor?

As more inhabitants of Lopan and travelers from near and far came to visit, word of the Garden began to spread. Every new excavation of a god statue created more buzz and excitement. Every report of a vision or miracle attracting more conjecture and more visitors. The rulers of Lopan realized the potential for the Garden as an attraction to go in hand with the Lopanic Games, and expanded the excavation efforts (which continues to this day). Soon, more than a hundred and fifty statues of gods, known and unknown, had been uncovered, with a few more, and their garden area, formed out of the thick brush of the Primeva every year. As the garden grew, so did its reputation. Local inhabitants considered it a place of inspiration and good fortune, and sometimes foreign visitors would wander out of the Garden, speaking of prophecies and lost deities. Soon Knights and nobles, Priests and Druids came to find purpose, quests, and missions said to have been told to them by the gods. Though rare, there were people who claimed miracles and visitations by the Gods of Light and Dark, and other deities. A Timiro prince and a Western nobleman, both claiming visitations by their respective gods, created quite a stir when they went home, and helped to boost the notoriety of the Garden and tales – true or imagined – of blessings and miracles.

Around the same time, the Lopanic Games also began to gain illustrious prominence, with many a visitor to the Games making

a trip to the fabled Garden of the Gods before heading home. For many, both events were a profound once in a life time experience. All of this built into a perfect storm of events for Lopan that has created an economic boom, and for the first time ever, is bringing the world to the humble island continent.

Within the last ninety years, the Garden of the Gods has been slowly made known to the outside world, with more people learning of its existence every year. Half of its three hundred (or more?) statues have been revealed as trees and dense underbrush have been cut away and true gardens with pathways and sitting areas carved into the vegetation. Over the years, modest fountains, benches, lanterns, and small shrines with candles have been added, and every year a half-dozen new statues are revealed. A small, but imposing keep has also been constructed to watch over the Garden, built at the site of an age-old Elven hill fort. It serves as a waypoint for travelers who wish to enter the Garden, a monastery for pilgrims, and a refuge for those who have been drawn inexplicably to the wilderness garden by powers they do not understand.

The Garden of the Gods has become a national treasure on Lopan, yet it is also largely unknown to much of the outside world, especially among the poor and uneducated. The Garden and its statues are seldom spoken of outside of *Lopan*, *Phi* and the *Great Northern Wilderness*. One reason is that organized religions and civilized kingdoms are not quite sure what to make of the place, or of the many rumors and wild stories about gods and visions that surround it. No one knows the Garden's true origin or purpose, so discretion dictates it is best not to speak of it, nor for established churches to sanction its existence and give it more religious significance. To do so would give the Garden credibility and power that could undermine existing religions and churches. And those in power who benefit from them do not want that to happen.

Churches competing for followers don't want the Garden to become a Mecca that attracts tens of thousands of pilgrims who might be swayed to worship another deity, or worse, to join a rival church or religion. As a result, only locals in and around Lopan, and a portion of the educated elite – members of nobility, scholars, merchants, and practitioners of magic as well as sailors and world travelers and adventurers – may know anything about the Garden of the Gods. Most other people have never heard of it, or if they have, only know of it from rumors and exaggerated tales. When the subject of the Garden does come up, the leaders of most established churches outside Lopan warn their followers not to visit this "so-called Garden of the Gods," lest they put their faith in jeopardy and risk becoming the unwitting servant of some unspeakable evil.

Of course, the real reason is a combination of jealousy and fear of competition, so they make up stories about evil and danger in the Garden of the Gods to keep people away. The clergy wants its people to turn to them, not seek answers in a mythical Garden of unknown origin and purpose in a faraway land. As a result, there are all kinds of wild stories, lies, and rumors about the Garden and the many "unknown gods" found there. Surprisingly, the majority of the rumors and stories are mostly positive, if often inaccurate, like a good ghost story with an air of the unknown, mystery, and spookiness.

Despite the organized effort to keep the Garden of the Gods a secret, word of mouth is spread by pilgrims, tourists, sailors, adventurers and competitors in the Lopanic Games who arrive by

the shipful; most from the *Western Empire*, *Timiro*, *the Old Kingdom*, *Eastern Territory*, and the *Great Northern Wilderness*. The latter includes Wolfen, Kankoran and Bearmen, making Lopan and the Garden one of the few “civilized” locations where these *beast men* may be encountered.

The Garden of the Gods has no official affiliation with any church or religious organization. It is said to represent all of the known pantheons, as well as many *unknown*. That means there is no one religious organization that benefits from the Garden nor do they make any claims to ownership or of the miracles attributed to it. As noted earlier, most clergy question the veracity of the stories and warn people to stay away lest they fall prey to some dark and dangerous force masquerading as their god.

The Garden is politically neutral as well. The government of Lopan makes no claim to the sacred place and leaves the Garden open and available to anyone who comes to visit, regardless of race, nationality, creed, or social standing. There is no fee to enter, no financial obligation or rite of passage. It is just there to enjoy. Simple in its design. Beautiful with its meadows, flowers, and hedge walls. Available to all, rich or poor, human and nonhuman alike.

The History of the Garden of the Gods

The Garden of the Gods is a mysterious place steeped in myth and legend. No one knows why, when, or who first built and erected the more than 200 statues and modest shrines to the gods, with easily another hundred or more yet to be unearthed. Every known deity is represented along with many unknown and forgotten gods, which only adds to the Garden’s mystery and wonder. Many, if not all, of the statues are believed to go back tens of thousands of years, to long before the emergence of humankind and the Elf-Dwarf War. Many scholars believe they date back 30,000 or 40,000 years, while others insist they date back much further, to the legendary *Time of a Thousand Magicks* 70,000 years before the modern age, and possibly older. They point to a famous passage in the *Tristine Chronicles* and claim the Garden of the Gods to be nearly 100,000 years old and created by the very deities who brought an end to the Old Ones and the notorious *Age of Chaos*.

One source of such conjecture is the fact that there are statues in the Garden, especially in the **Primeva**, **the Untamed Garden of Forgotten Gods**, that are no longer known to humans or even the long-lived Elves and Dwarves. These statues were cocooned in walls of overgrown vines and bramble over the ages, some swallowed into the trunk of trees, and there remain more yet to be excavated and revealed in all their glory. From time to time, adventurers or clergy, or Lopan court appointed excavation teams hack through the vegetation to uncover a new ancient wonder, such as the recent unearthing of a *Gorilla god* and a *Panther deity*. The latter carved out of a single, massive block of obsidian. And of even greater excitement, the discovery of the lost *Pantheon of Aco and the Juggernaut*.

Another matter of debate is whether the Garden’s statues were erected over a period of hundreds or thousands of years, or whether they were all put in place within the short time span of a single human lifetime or a few generations. While there are some obvious new additions and restorations in recent decades, most statues and monuments appear to be very old and look to be around the same age. The timeless nature of the Garden of the

Gods makes it almost impossible to determine the true age of its statues, and a god lost just a century ago may seem as old as an idol from tens of thousands of years in the past.

Over the last century, the Empress of Lopan and her forebears have sanctioned and encouraged the exploration and maintenance of the Garden. A few roads have been cut through the woods between southern Lopan, the center of civilization on the island, and Eastern Lopan, to the center of the island that is home to the Garden of the Gods. **The Solarium**, a small castle-like monastery, has stood watch over the Garden long before the locals and the rest of the world discovered its full majesty. The enigmatic Order of the **Knights-Fossar** are known to be local heroes who now extend their vigilant eye and protection to the farms, villages and port city that has grown up in the region, as well as the visitors and pilgrims who come to the Garden. The monastery, like the Garden, is autonomous and neutral ground. The Knights and Wardens are said to serve and defend the Garden and protect the people.

Lopans’ royals and their advisors believe the Garden of the Gods adds to the prestige and notoriety of the island-kingdom, just as the Lopanic Games have done. As a result, they are cultivating the Garden of the Gods carefully, maintaining it as a relatively undeveloped, neutral site, wary of offending a particular god or religion, especially as the kingdom becomes more and more dependent upon the money spent by visiting pilgrims and the faithful.

The Nature of the Garden

The Garden of the Gods is a place of peace, a bastion of prayer, meditation, and contemplation. Unlike so many other parts of the world, there are few thieves watching from the shadows, few highwaymen lurking along the road. Those who travel here with evil intent generally find their thinking changed by exposure to the Garden, and those who do not, best be on good behavior or they are dealt with by the Champions and crusaders who visit it, or the mysterious *Knights-Fossar* who watch over the region as a whole. Lopan itself is a refuge from the outside world in many ways, and the Garden is the most peaceful and idyllic setting on the entire island.

People experience the Garden differently depending on their alignment, religion, species, and the nature of their visit. Those who visit the Garden at different stages of their life will find it changed, and their perception of the experience will be altered as well. Memories of time spent in the Garden are sometimes hazy and unclear, even though some of the most profound experiences of a person’s life may happen there. Time, distance, and reality are altered by the incredible power of the gods.

Though it is rather small when charted from the outside, the Garden of the Gods is not bound by the limitations of conventional geography. Its ten or twenty square miles (16 to 32 km) contains a miniature desert valley, snow-covered highlands, forests, jungles and a murky swamp. When viewed from afar, these all seem tiny, decorative and artificial, part of the manicured “hedge maze” appearance of the Garden, but once inside the Garden’s bounds, visitors realize that it may take a day or more to cross some of the individual areas, and horizons seem to stretch and expand as one travels.

The Verdant Gates are the entrances to the Garden, massive arches of branches and flowering vines that mark the openings to the Garden and lead to a maze of passages through the hedges around the Garden's interior. There are four Verdant Gates, facing north, south, east and west, and as you approach them, you are already able to spot butterflies, birds and magical creatures such as Faeries and Sprites flitting about. The divide between the divinity of the Garden's interior and the everyday world beyond, clear for any visitor to see.

Inside the Garden is a land of splendor and wonder. In addition to the statues of deities strewn across the grounds, butterflies, birds, squirrels, and Faeries play and chase each other through the trees, and the fruit and vegetables that grow here are bright and vivid and healthy. The air and water are clean and pure; free of any contaminants. Animals in the Garden tend to be tame and unafraid, approach visitors, eating right out of their palms, and sometimes following groups of pilgrims and adventurers to beg for treats. Every sunrise and sunset is a spectacle, every rainstorm washes the Garden clean and leaves a rainbow in its wake. The night sky is a light show of stars serenaded by frogs, cicadas, and other creatures. Fireflies dancing among the flowers, trees, and statues only add to the glittering natural (and supernatural) wonder of the experience. There is question why people find inspiration here.

Excavators and caretakers have created paths and walkways, overlooks and places to sit and meditate whether it's on wooden or stone benches or the grass. Boards and paving stones mark the most traveled portions of the Garden and candles, lanterns, and torches hang from posts to help light the way for visitors. It is a nice touch that makes the Garden glow with warmth and golden hues, but it is unnecessary. At night, the Garden is always lit with the sort of radiance you would expect from a bright full moon whether the moon is actually full or the thinnest of slivers.

For some exotic gods, years pass between visitations by pilgrims, and often when they return they find the Garden layout seems to have changed from what they remembered, but then the place is a maze to bring with and they assume they remembered its wrong. The people who have excavated and sculpted the vegetation into the lovely Garden everyone knows and loves insist their effort have been guided by the gods themselves and marvel at how the paths and hedgegrows and flowers, meadows and pods, seem to take on a life and purpose of their. It's almost as if they are merely the physical conduits through which the deities have worked their magic.

The current level of popularity toward a particular god or pantheon often dictates how well cared for, trimmed, and immaculate that area of the Garden may be, because they have many visitors and volunteer caretakers who tend to it and keep it perfect. Thus, some gods and their garden are well appointed and manicured, the statue(s) clean and polished. Other areas are a bit more shaggy and unkempt, while some others are poorly maintained and somewhat overgrown, though still beautiful and alluring. Still others are little more than a patch of wild flowers or flowering weeds, or a wild tangle of plants and vines that may still cover parts of the statue. The worst kept areas are overgrown with trees and dense underbrush, the statues covered in a thick blanket of moss that obscures the cut stone, or are cloaked in layers of vines and bramble over centuries of time. So dense is the vegetation in this area of the **Primeva, the Untamed Garden of Forgotten Gods**, that it is impossible to see the statues within its leafy

embrace until the foliage is cut away or a visitor finds himself pressed up against one. Many statues of ancient and forgotten gods are believed to exist in the Primeva, but they are virtually inaccessible until walls of trees and vegetation are cleared and they are carefully and artfully excavated. Their garden sanctuary, like those before them, cut and carved from the existing trees and plant life. Areas of forest and bramble are located in sections all around the Garden, but the Untamed Garden of Forgotten Gods is the largest area located in the deepest part of the Garden and covers arcs of as of yet uncleared terrain.

These statues of forgotten or nearly forgotten or unpopular deities unearthed from the Primeva are sometimes in surprisingly good condition, others are weathered and battered but most of the features remain visible if unknown. For the local caretakers, visiting scholars and the Fossarian Wardens, identifying the unknown deities become a mission. One that can sometimes take a life or generations to determine with any sense of accuracy. It helps when a deity reveals itself through visions and dreams, but the data provided by people who make such claims must be verified through ancient records and compared to myths and legends of the past, if they even still exist.

Somehow, the Garden also seems to be roughly divided by age, with an outer ring of the newer and popular deities, such as the gods of the pantheon of Light and Dark, an inner ring of older known and less popular gods, a core of even older deities, and the **Primeva** in the center where the edifices of truly ancient, fading and forgotten gods lost for many millennia seem to be most numerous, though not always. Of course, the actual age of any particular statue and god is difficult, if not impossible, to measure. It appears that many statues are arranged in the Garden based upon the time they stopped being worshiped, rather than the time of their birth/creation. The followers of a god may cling to their beliefs for thousands of years in some far-off corner of the world, while the rest of an entire pantheon may be forgotten or only dimly remembered, which means they have been half buried or completely consumed by the vegetation of the Garden, until a Caretaker or pilgrim or royal excavation team happens upon them one day.

Whatever deific powers are at work in the Garden of the Gods, they have prevented even the oldest, forgotten statues from being completely eroded or destroyed by eons of weather and neglect. They may be covered in a thick blanket of vines and vegetation, and a few are known to be half-merged into the trunks of massive, ancient trees, but they are never fully gone nor sunken and buried into the earth.

Some scholars believe that once a god's churches and followers are in danger of extinction in the outside world, and forgotten, his statue slowly moves inward, from the Garden's accessible exterior, to more difficult to reach sections, to the forbidding inner gardens of the Primeva. This is complete conjecture, as to systematically observe and study the Garden is a process that would require tens of thousands of years, beyond the lifetime of humans, Elves or even dragons. Other scholars and self-proclaimed experts on the Garden, such as the Knights-Fossar, reject this theory. Pointing out that many a deity who has been largely forgotten from the annals of history, have been found with that god's pantheon and at locations throughout the Garden, not just in the Primeva. However, they must admit that, for whatever reason, the statues of the most ancient and unknown deities seem to be clustered within the Primeva. If those who believe the Primeva

is a graveyard for forgotten gods are correct, it may be that even a forgotten god who is a member of a pantheon or related to a god that has retained worshippers, though they may be few in numbers, remains attached to that pantheon or relative deity. And that is why some forgotten gods have been uncovered in other parts of the Garden, such as the pantheon of Aco.

The lasting mystery: Of course, nobody knows how the Garden works, and the gods never talk about or reveal anything about the Garden. Not who created it, when, why, how it works, or what it all may mean. It just is.

Beauty: The Garden represents a pure and ancient form of the timeless energy that may have created the world. Every tree and flower and blade of grass is a natural work of art. The water shimmers with supernatural radiance, the sky is vivid blue on clear days, and storms brew with heavenly magnificence, shapes, and figures swirling up out of the clouds to cast bolts of lightning at each other, but never do no harm to this place or those within its confines. Every sunset and sunrise is a miracle unto itself, enough to bring tears to the eyes of sensitive mortals. The animals of the Garden are healthy and vital and not very aggressive, and every landscape feels like a painting by a master artist brought to life.

Divine Neutrality: No gods may manifest and take physical form within the limits of the Garden, or so it is said. The divine energy of the place prevents existing gods, Demon and Deevil Lords, Alien Intelligences, Greater Elementals, and similar supernatural beings from entering the Garden in their godly form, whether their purpose is to destroy it, bury it, resurrect their forgotten brethren, or simply visit and admire the scenery. In mortal guise, with their powers suspended, it is said gods may walk amongst the Garden, and indeed, caretakers and strange visitors might sometimes be a god in mortal form. Here their **avatar** may bask in the serenity and splendor of the Garden, or interact with mortals to offer clues and guidance to those they meet, particularly those who may be on a quest to help that god or rekindle the worship of their name. The Garden is not inclined towards or opposed to any individual god, good or evil, religion or pantheon, nor is it devoted to the gods of any specific race or region, no matter how widespread their following may be in the outside world. The Garden is a place for all.

Hospitality: The Garden's trees and plants abound with fruit and berries that can be picked and eaten by visitors. Bees do not sting intruders who harvest their honey, and fragrant herbs and wild grains are found in rich patches. The favor of the gods bless visitors with fresh air and clean water safe to breathe and drink from any source.

The temperature is mild and soothing, even in during the cold and snowy winter months. The Garden's animals are friendly, and sometimes helpful, guiding lost visitors back to paths or leading those who might follow them to the exit or to sources of food and water. In addition to the natural bounty that the Garden provides, caretakers are known for helping visitors and guests, and a spirit of generosity and giving seems to fill the hearts of most who pass through the Verdant Gates, leading pilgrims to share food and water, wine, and song. The fear and suspicion that goes hand in hand with meeting strangers on the road in the outside world is absent inside the Garden.

Impenetrability: The magic that makes up the Garden of the Gods is as old and powerful as the world itself. No spell can sense what is occurring within its bounds, no magic sight or looking-glass can peer into the Garden from afar. **The hedges** that make

up its *outer walls* are immune to fire, either magic or natural, and cannot be pierced by any tool or weapon. Climbing the hedges is impossible, as each individual branch/vine does not have the strength to support a person's weight, and will slip the grasp of even the most skilled climber, and are too thick and dense for someone to push their way through. Magically-shrunken intruders and tiny Faerie Folk find an opaque, unbroken wall of leaves and bramble at the center of the hedge, impossible to slip through, though they may fly over it.

Modesty: The Garden of the Gods is a modest display. There are no giant statues, massive temples, or towering shrines that out do another. Here, all the gods stand as equals. None greater than another. The larger a pantheon, the larger the section of Garden they occupy; however, ALL statues are roughly the same size and quality, with few larger than 8 or 9 feet (2.4 to 2.7 m) tall. Though each divine setting is modest, there is a sense of wonder and awe, beauty and inspiration that permeates the air. Those who set foot within the Garden feel as if they are in the presence of the gods, and of ancient power and wisdom far beyond that of any of the mortal races. For anyone who has visited the holiest shrines of the Palladium World or stood in the presence of an actual god or goddess, the sensation will be familiar.

Sanctuary: No armies may violate the tranquility of the Garden. Any military force with hostile intent that tries to enter the Garden's limits finds themselves unable to pass through any of the Verdant Gates. Their horses refuse to walk into the Garden, and soldiers find themselves stopped by what is essentially an unshakable sensation that they must not enter and turn back or go around; physically and emotionally unable to venture any further. The sensation is not unlike that of a child doing wrong who suddenly realizes his parents are watching. The invading or conquering soldiers can simply go no farther or do any harm to the Garden or its statues. Ultimately, with a sense of shame or dread, they turn around and leave without entering.

The tall hedges that make up the perimeter of the Garden are invulnerable to tools and weapons, fire and magic, and anyone who tries to climb over them is unable to find a grip on the hedges to scale them. Those who fly over finds landing inside the Garden from above to be difficult, as they automatically soar over the glorious Garden and land at one of the four Verdant Gates. The exceptions are **Faerie Folk**, insects, and birds. Faeries and Sprites of all varieties visit and play in the Garden of the Gods, including a few that are not known anywhere else. Also present are the occasional *Brownie*, *Pixie*, *Grogach*, visiting *Leprechaun* or *Striggan*, and a few of the oldest, most magnificent trees are inhabited by a protective but tolerant *Nymph*. The Faeries, Sprites, and Brownies are self-appointed protectors of these grounds. Some working in concert with a favorite caretaker or the other unofficial protectors of the Garden and Lohan, the *Knights-Fossar*. The wee folk warn the Knights and caretakers of suspicious individuals and any nefarious plot the Faeries may have overheard. Even when the uglier and mean-spirited Faerie Folk visit, such as the minuscule Bogie and the nasty Toadstool or Puck, they stay to the shadows and don't cause trouble for people or their Faerie-kin. The worst of the Fey avoid the Garden, so there is no chance of encountering a Hairy Jack, Kelpie, Kinnie Ger, Dead Moon Hag, or Will-O-The-Wisp.

Individual knights, soldiers on quests, groups of crusaders, warrior-monks, mercenaries, adventurers, priests, sorcerers, thieves and peasants, queens and kings with no intention to do

harm to the garden or those within, may enter and move about freely. The gods of the Garden seems to be able to sense the intent of its visitors, and theoretically an entire army could march right in one end and out the other as long as their mission was peaceful or they harbored no ill will toward the Garden and the statues, or any of the people within its enclosure. Whether the magical inhabitants of the Garden, the Knights-Fossar, or the gods themselves would allow any harm to come to the Garden is another question, but it seems unlikely.



Caretakers, Visitors, and Avatars

Many of the statues of the gods, and the garden around them, have their own caretakers. Some have several, others only one or two, or even just a person or small group of people who check on the statue and its humble garden, clean up and weed the area, and trim the vegetation once or twice a year. A few may see attendance only every few years or are tended to by unaffiliated visitors who simply pitch in to help. Other areas in the Garden are slowly excavated and restored by scholarly researchers appointed by the Emperess of Lopan, and sometimes by the sanctioned *Fossarian Wardens*, both of whom work to reveal and carve out more Forgotten Gods and create more of the Garden out of the Primeva. They also try to prevent any area of the Garden from slipping into severe disrepair. This is especially true of the revealed Forgotten Gods who may no longer have any followers to tend to their gardens. Away, elsewhere in the world, sometimes secret texts are uncovered or a godly visitation reveals the identity of a fading or forgotten god to a mortal who undertakes a personal mission to the Garden of the Gods to restore a fading or lost god(s) to a place of dignity, serving as caretaker for a time, or even just making a single visit.

Most Garden areas are maintained by volunteer caretakers who are a collection of true believers and religious zealots. In many cases, they are people who claim to have been personally helped or inspired by the god or pantheon they now serve as one of the Garden's humble volunteers. Caretakers may be men and women of any age. Few are clergy, however. Most are average laypersons and none of them preach to visitors as such is not the intent of the Garden and is considered to break with the neutrality and equality for all gods. Rather, they tend to the physical gardens and the statue(s) of the god(s) in which they believe or simply to keep the beauty of the Garden from disrepair. They speak with visitors, sharing what knowledge they have of the Garden or the Gods, and offering counsel and comfort to those who ask for it. Of course, such individuals have their bias toward a particular god or pantheon of gods, but most sincerely revere and appreciate the Garden's spirit of respect for all and neutrality, and are careful not to disparage any of the other deities found within its leafy confines.

Some caretakers and wise strangers are encountered only once in a lifetime, then never seen or heard from again. They offer advice or words of encouragement, suggest a quest or course of action, and then vanish. It is said that, from time to time, these are not real people, but *avatars of the gods* themselves, going about in humble form to move throughout the Garden and walk among mortals. A god may take the form of a caretaker, a pilgrim, a crusader, a knight, a child, or a Goblin. As a result, it is common practice to treat everyone with respect for the very reason that he or she, young or old, human or otherwise, could be the avatar of a god.

On the other hand, the Garden of the Gods is visited by many who do not linger or ever return. Many who visit only have enough money to visit once in their lifetime. So it is possible people looking for a sign from the gods or sage advice find it in the words or kind deeds of a stranger rather than a deity in person. But who is to say that a deity is not speaking through that person? It is up to the visitor to recognize what it is they seek, and interpret what they see and hear, whether it comes from the divine or the ordinary.

Naysayers

There are doubters from far away who insist the Garden is a sham or nothing more than a pleasant fantasy that does not exist in the real world. They do not accept the stories of those who have journeyed to the so-called Garden of the Gods. They write off the accounts of visions and godly visitations as dreams, delusions, and wishful thinking, or flat out lies by those who seek to be special and important. Skeptics insist there is no divinity at work on Lopan, just clever tricksters and ordinary magic harnessed to con visitors out of their hard-earned coin. Even more insidious, the caretakers, they claim, are charlatans speaking with the voice and authority of the gods and using the Garden as a front to further their own agenda, or worse, to lure people into the service of dark and dangerous gods.

Non-believers speculate that the messages and visions perceived to come from divine beings are, in reality, induced by the Garden's so-called caretakers, local priests, seers, and mages. The visions, they claim, are implanted into the visitors' open and willing minds with drug-soaked food and drink, or by magic or psionic powers.

The heads of the Church of Light and Dark have gone so far as to state, as fact, the words and actions of the mysterious caretakers put visitors into a suggestive, hypnotic state of mind, and then use verbal commands and hallucinogens to impose their influence over their victims. A "voice of a god" that offers advice and sends unwitting believers off on quests in the name of a deity, but which somehow benefits the perpetrator of this hoax or the Lords of Lopan. The common rumor is that the clergy and caretakers of the Garden prey upon religious faith, hope, and desperation, and use drugs and hallucination to manipulate heroes and visitors to secretly do the bidding of the church or cult they serve.

Another popular naysayer's theory is that it is all one big joke. A hoax of epic proportion. It is well known that Faeries love to trick and befuddle humans and other Big People, so visions, voices, and visitations could be nothing more than Faerie Magic used to perpetrate an elaborate hoax to amuse the Wee Folk. Faeries are, after all, reported to abound in the Garden and elsewhere on Lopan. Two more reasons it is best to avoid this strange place.



Into the Garden of the Gods

The Garden of the Gods is home to lush beauty and impossible greenery. Trees grow strong and full, some straight and tall, others full and sprawling providing a natural green canopy to protect visitors from the sun and weather. At many locations, the branches of trees on either side of a pathway arch over to create lovely green tunnels for visitors to walk under; dragonflies, Faeries and Sprites flying overhead or watching from the tree branches. Floral tapestries of vines may drape down from the ceilings, pillars and walls or down the sides of the hedgerows. Throughout the weave of vegetation, birds and animals and Faerie Folk can be seen fluttering about and playing with butterflies or dancing with each other among the flowers. Sometimes it is difficult to tell if it was a butterfly or Sprite that just bounced past your ear. Dragonflies, cicadas, crickets, grasshoppers and bees also abound in the Garden.

It is a place where parks and lawns and other features that seem small from afar take on new dimensions once one has arrived. Visitors are left with the realization that the Garden of the Gods is a place where the normal rules of time and space seem to be bent or broken. Many believe the boundary between the world of mortals and the world of the divine is thin here, bridged by the Garden itself. Some scholars who have studied the Garden of the Gods believe it to be a concentrated remnant of the forces that created the Palladium world long ago, and may be a dull reflection of the Deific Realm or of infinity. Others think it is simply a place honored and marked by the gods, and as such, is touched by the divine, giving it special qualities and some unusual properties.

At dawn and dusk, the sun's light is warped and bent slightly around the Garden, making for spectacular and unique sunrises and sunsets. During the day, the entire Garden shimmers from afar like a mirage, sometimes looking like an island floating in the air until one approaches close. The square box of neat, geometrically-perfect hedges appears to be an illusion or some trick of the eyes.

The Verdant Gates

There are four gates along the Garden, facing precisely north, south, east and west. Each gate is roughly 40 feet (12.2 m) high and 20 feet (6.1 m) across, so even large beings should have no trouble squeezing through. Each is festooned with flowers and blossoms, a myriad of colors that dazzles those who enter. Bees, hummingbirds and Faeries flutter through the air, and there is a sensation of enchantment and excitement that is almost electric.

The Verdant Gates feature no doors or other restrictions, but looking through the gates into the Garden beyond has a distorted mirage or reflective water appearance which can be a bit disorienting for a moment as one passes through them going in and out of the Garden. On the other side of the Gates, however, visitors are instantly and fully within the Garden where everything looks normal but on an elevated and heightened level. Colors seem brighter and more vibrant, be they the color of the leaves and flowers or the sky and sun above. If there is a paradise in the mortal realm, surely this is it.

Hedgerows

The borders of the Garden and many of its inner partitions have **hedgerows**, veritable walls of tightly interwoven trees, bushes, and hedges. These enchanted boundaries are immune to fire, both regular and magical, and seem immune to weather. Storms are never severe in and around the Garden of Gods, the plants always green and healthy. Since their creation by those excavating the Garden, they seem to be nearly indestructible and as permanent as the Garden itself. They are also difficult to climb, as the individual branches and boughs are not strong enough to support the weight of most climbers, and bend or snap off as someone tries to find a handhold. Tightly woven, they are also impossible to push through without chopping through the vegetation and inviting the wrath of pilgrims and caretakers if not the gods themselves. There are numerous potential defenders of the Garden, as most visitors, whether crusading warriors, Priests, Wizard, or peasant farmer, are not going to stand by while someone tries to deface or destroy any part of the fabled Garden. That includes the denizens of Faerie who live among the branches and within the meadows, all of whom are quick to take action whenever necessary. One can also imagine that the bees and insects and birds and wildlife would also intervene if it ever became necessary, but so far it has not.

The outer hedges that serve as the boundaries of the Garden are said to be impervious to fire, but the inner ones are not. That said, it seems difficult to set any portion of the Garden of the Gods on fire, and no blaze is known to have ever swept across it, just as storms and inclement weather seem to skip over or are barely felt within the Garden.

The Terraces

On the other side of the Verdant Gates, visitors find themselves greeted by complex and geometrically stunning **hedge mazes** upon large terraces that surround each entrance. The Terraces separate the main sections of the Garden, creating miniature environments unto themselves. Each of the four Terraces have a few statues of gods built into them in shrines and alcoves, but most of the statues are to be found further inside the Garden.

The hedge mazes of the Terraces are relatively simple compared to some of the truly exquisite features deeper within the Garden of the Gods. They are a part of the Garden's rites of initiation, as much as anything else, enchanted with a timeless energy that allows visitors to feel that they are leaving the normal world behind. The Terraces force those who enter the Garden to slow down and admire the beauty all around them, to explore and take in the unusual nature of the place. Caretakers tend to the plants and flowers here, though the outer hedges, ever since they were first excavated, have always remained magically perfect and flawless and in no need of human attendance.

Garden Mazes

Another famous feature of the Garden of the Gods are its **mazes**. Hedgerows often wrap back around, forming mazes and odd arrangements. There are a myriad of hedge mazes in many places, with perfectly manicured walls of trees and shrubs that create repetitive corridors that make navigation tricky. Tiled mosaics with patterns can be found here and there to help guide visitors

through the Garden and function as markers. As do the occasional statue or small shrine.

Most mazes are fun to travel and may lead to a small courtyard lined with stone benches or one of the statues and its garden area, or to a section of the garden that contains an entire pantheon. There, in the courtyard, may be a statue of a god or something unexpected. This can be an ancient stone or metal mechanisms that is a mechanical puzzle with moving parts, a monolith or stone marker with pictograms or linguistic codes, lovely fountains, a meadow, pond or stream with benches (and probably a statue of a god), or a unique garden area where the quiet and respectful may glimpse a rare and fleeting sight of a rainbow though it hasn't rained, a deer or Unicorn before it races back into the thick, Faeries, Sprites or Wing Tips often dancing among the flowers, or they might see an ethereal Nymph who resides inside an ancient tree. And though none have ever been found one, and the caretakers insist they do not exist, there are people who believe that some mazes lead to a secret underground chamber where they can find an ancient temple, or a magical relic, treasure or a Leprechaun's pot of gold.

Woods and Thickets

The Garden is a network of lawns and parks and paths that weave through the woodland from which it was created. A vast ornament of nature and divine splendor. In the most frequented sections and largest thoroughfares, the grass is neatly cut, the paths swept and spotless, the flowers and plants and trees perfectly arranged. The hedges that make up the dividing walls of the Garden break it up into smaller sections, each boundary as inviolate as the last. Each section is a world unto itself, with unique plants and features and visitors.

The Garden is also broken up with areas heavily wooded with trees, thickets and glades. There are also sacred groves, copses and lone trees, often incorporated into the hedges, paths and other architecture of the Garden of the Gods. Thick undergrowth makes natural barriers in places, and sometimes hides statues away from the casual observer until they get close or turn a corner. Anyone looking for the deepest secrets of the Garden must be prepared to spend plenty of time making their way through the elegant natural splendor. It is always best to follow the paths and go around natural barriers like thickets as wild animals and Faerie Folk may lurk within. Creatures that may be startled and attack, or unhappy to have intruders stomping around their home.

Statues of the Gods

The one constant that continues throughout the Garden are the statues and stone markers of forgotten gods. Each one has its own little place of respect, a clearing, pedestal, circle, square, platform or other subsection of garden within the Garden. Some of these statues and monuments are overgrown, but most stand clean and whole in a place of honor. All are roughly the same size, as all the gods are considered equals in the Garden. Locations to meditate and pray and converse with the deity(s) represented by the sculpture. Points of potential contact where people feel closer to their deity(s) or are inexplicably drawn to a particular place or statue in the Garden, even if they don't know who the deity is or what he or she may represent. These smaller courtyard gardens are the specific places where pilgrims come

to worship, and in some cases, may be the last shrines to the gods they depict.

Every statue is different, modest and roughly the same size, for here upon these sacred grounds, no deity is portrayed to be greater than another. This applies whether the god is known or unknown to mortals. And is one more reason why some established church sects and devotees dislike and rebuke the Garden, because their deity or pantheon is depicted no mightier or more important than any others. A bias and a perceived slight that some mortal worshipers, particularly leaders of various churches, bring with them into the Garden.

Not only do these edifices portray a variety of gods of differing shapes, race, and attire, some also serve as examples of the culture and style of worship for that particular god or time period. Some are flat stones with two-dimensional glyphs or portraits carved into them. Some are traditional monoliths and other stone markers with names and faces, or prayers and spiritual passages inscribed upon them. There are statues of a god's full form, as well as busts, heads on pedestals, and stylistic representations that could be an animal, object, geometric shape, pattern or symbol associated with the religion.

Some visitors believe direct physical contact with one of the statues is the best way to contact any deity in the Garden, whether known or lost, but the truth is nobody knows when, how, or why a god might choose to help or make its presence known to anyone. The gods of the Garden are ancient and distant, some of them weakened by the passage of incredible lengths of time and a lack of worship and acclaim. The nature and sincerity of the individual reaching out is likely to have a huge effect on whether a deity pays attention to him or makes a connection.

Most people leaving the Garden believe they have been touched by the divine for just having visited this serene and beautiful place. And who is to say they have not. There is no doubt there is something special about the Garden of the Gods, but it is *not* a hot line to the gods or a wish granting miracle machine.

The real magic of the Garden of the Gods may simply be that it is a place where people take the time to put aside their everyday worries and differences to reflect upon larger, greater questions in life. They ponder about morality and mortality, what is right and wrong, good and bad. They think about their own life, their purpose in the world, and the best path in life for them. Some ponder what they should do next, how to be better, stronger, wiser, kinder, or how to overcome a painful loss or frightening challenge. Some seek truth and desire justice. Others ask of themselves many probing questions and, in effect, meditate, whether they realize it or not, within the comforting beauty of a place with a reputation for people finding the answers they seek. And so most people come away with answers or inspiration, or at least feeling better and more resolute. Who is to say with any certainty whether they found the answers within themselves or through divine inspiration directly from the gods?

Whatever the case, every individual must choose for themselves whether or not to accept the inspiration or path set before them. The choice is entirely their own even if they received a vision or visitation. The gods do not force anyone to do anything.

Offerings

Many of the pilgrims and crusaders who visit the Garden come bearing gifts, sacraments, and offerings, not just for the god or



gods they intend to visit, but also for the caretakers, fellow travelers, and as a generic appeasement to the Garden as a whole. Many statues have offerings placed at their feet, whether they are coins, food, drink, oils, perfumes, tools, weapons, animal hides, bouquets of flowers, bones, skulls, gems or other items.

What type of offering will attract a god's attention depends on the nature of the deity and the sincerity and emotions that accompany it. Many Dragonwright gods are rumored to respond to bones, works of art, gold, gems, and the like. Gods from the Pantheon of Light and Dark are said to prefer offerings of water, green plants, tools, weapons, and symbolic figurines. The Northern Pantheon gods are believed to have a greater appreciation for furs, whale oil, axes, fish, and meat.

These offerings come from the faithful, as well as caretakers who regularly tend to the statues and graves. A large collection of offerings indicates a god that still receives regular visitors, and might have just been visited by followers who could still be somewhere in the Garden. Few or no offerings could mean a god is obscure or completely forgotten, but it could also indicate that a caretaker recently cleaned up the area. If there is an accumulation of old, worn, weathered, rotted or rusted offerings, that is a clear sign, however, that a particular deity has been lost to the outside world for a very long time.

Some of the Garden's dark and evil gods require offerings that are less palatable to virtuous folk; bones, dead animals, fresh blood, even living victims for sacrifice. And while the gods of the Garden do not judge mortals or are too powerless to intervene, visitors who feel a moral duty, righteous crusaders, and the Knights-Fossar could all spell disaster for a Dark Priest or sor-

cerer intending to contact or please his beloved or patron deity through human sacrifice or other evils.

Random Offering Table

01-02% 1D4 pieces of fresh fruit.

03-04% A bouquet of wild flowers.

05-06% A single rose.

07-08% A container of honey or fresh picked berries.

09-10% A dead rodent, probably a mouse, mole, squirrel.

11-12% A dead bird, probably a game animal such as quail or duck, but could be a different type of bird, perhaps one that has symbolic relevance to the deity or the person leaving the offering.

13-14% A basket containing 1D4 small animals such as a dove, kitten, squirrel.

15-16% A basket containing 1D4 fresh fish.

17-18% A basket containing 1D4 live snakes; 50% chance they are poisonous.

19-20% A basket containing 1D6+4 insects or spiders.

21-22% Animal Hides/Furs: The hides or furs of animals used as trade goods. Has a value of 1D4x100 gold.

23-24% Bones – Animal Skull(s): 1D6 animal skulls of any variety, but could have symbolic relevance to the deity or the person leaving the offering.

25-26% Bones – Assorted Bones: A little pile of animal bones, probably from small rodents or birds, but could be something more grisly, such as humanoid bones or a skull, possibly of an enemy or a human sacrifice. Whatever they are, they have symbolic relevance to the deity or the person leaving the offering.

27-28% Bones – Human/Intelligent Creature: The skull of a human or other intelligent being, or a handful of bones from such a being. Probably an enemy or the remains of a human sacrifice that has symbolic relevance to the deity or the person leaving the offering.

29-30% Coins – Gold: 1D4 gold coins.

31-32% Coins – Silver: 1D4 silver coins or a small silver nugget.

33-34% Coins – Copper: 1D4 copper coins.

35-36% Doll: Handmade doll like a children's toy made of cloth or an effigy of a loved one or the god, or of an enemy, or something of significance to the deity or the person leaving it.

37-38% Figurines: Handmade figurines/carvings made of wood. The carving could represent the god or a related mythological figure, or be that of an animal or people/family, etc., any of which could have a symbolic meaning for the deity or the person leaving the offering behind.

39-42% Incense: A stick, wedge, or powdered incense.

43-46% Candle: May be any size, but usually small or medium. May be lit or unlit. Lit candles are quite popular and so is incense, above.

47-48% Drink – Wine: A jug, flask or skin of wine. Good to drink.

49-50% Drink – Milk: A container of milk, almost certainly gone rancid by the time the players come across it.

51-52% Drink – Light Alcohol: A container of mead or beer. 50% chance it is still good to drink.

53-54% Drink – Water: A jug, canteen or flask of water. Good to drink.

55-56% Drink – Rum: A bottle, jug, or skin of rum or other hard liquor. Good to drink.

57-58% Flowers: Bouquets and garlands of flowers have been laid upon this statue, still fresh.

59-60% Food – Grain: A loaf of bread or sack of wheat or other grain or corn left behind for this god. May represent the harvest. 50% chance that it is still edible.

61-62% Food – Meat: A cut of meat, probably a haunch, leg, wing or pot full of animal organs. 01-05% chance that it is still edible.

63-64% Semi-Precious Gemstone: Worth 1D6x10 gold.

65-66% Gemstone: A small precious gem such as a diamond, ruby or sapphire, or piece of jewelry such as a wedding ring, bracelet, necklace, etc., that has meaning to the deity or the person offering it. Worth as little as 1D4 copper or as much as 3D6x10 gold, or simply has symbolic value that the deity will understand.

67-68% Instrument – Drum(s): 1D4 ceremonial drums.

69-70% Instrument – String: Lute, lyre, harp, guitar, or other musical string instrument.

71-72% Instrument – Wind: Flute, whistle, or other musical wind instrument.

73-74% Oils: 1D4 vials of ceremonial oil, or a small bottle or jug of olive oil.

75-76% Perfume: 1D4 vials of perfume, unspoiled and still fragrant.

77-78% Tool – Hammer: A simple craftsman or smith's hammer or mallet, still usable. 1D4 damage.

79-80% Tool – Woodsman's Axe: A standard wood-cutting axe, still sharp. 2D4 damage.

81-82% Tool – Hand Axe/Handaxe (small): A small hand axe or tomahawk/, still sharp. 2D4 damage.

83-84% Sewing or Knitting Needle: 1D4 sewing needles.

85-86% Fishing Hook: 1D4 fishing hooks or a fishing pole.

87-88% Flag or Emblem: A flag or emblem that may represent the deity, a defeated enemy, a heraldry flag or patch, a kingdom, or significance to the person making the offering, and similar. Could also be broken sword or arrow, helmet, hand, head, or skull of an enemy of the deity.

89-90% Symbol: A holy symbol or other symbol that has some significance to the deity, the church/followers of the deity, or the person leaving it.

91-92% Beads or Item: Prayer Beads, or Beaded necklace, or headdress, gauntlet, gloves, worn out boots, horseshoes, a book, or other item that has significance to the deity or the person leaving it.

93-94% Weapon: Arrow or Spearhead: An arrowhead or spearhead or the whole arrow or spear.

95-96% Weapon – Ceremonial Dagger: A ceremonial dagger or scepter or other item of the kind used for rituals or human sacrifices. 1D4 damage; worth 2D4x10 gold, but may hold greater value as a religious symbol.

97-98% Weapon – Sword: A soldier's sword, still sharp. 2D4 or 2D6 damage depending on the type and size.

99-00% Weapon – Other: A spear or mace or axe, or other weapon left behind as an offering or a gesture to the deity or for a Champion or hero who follows in his footsteps.

The Primeva

The Untamed Garden of Forgotten Gods

Sometimes a dense cluster of mighty trees or vegetation located within a cleared and manicured area of the Garden is found to conceal a statue of a deity nobody realized was there, still locked within its leafy confines. However, the majority of statues waiting to be revealed exist in what is known as the **Primeva** or the **Untamed Garden of Forgotten Gods**.

The terrain of the Primeva is that of an ancient forest of trees filled with dense bramble and thick tangles of vines and underbrush. Giant trees create a thick, umbrella-like canopy over everything else, completely blocking out the sun in places, reducing it to scant beams in others. The branches overhead are full of life, from wild cats and snakes to squirrels and other small arboreal animals, birds, and insects of all kinds. Flowering vines completely wrap around and encase statues sandwiched between walls of saplings and thick underbrush, completely concealing them. The brush is so dense you would need to spend hours chopping and cutting through the plants to make the slightest progress in starting a pathway.

The Untamed Garden of Forgotten Gods is the only part of the Garden not directly connected to the rest of it with neat paths and walkways. The landscape is so dense with vegetation that the most intrepid of visitors cannot push their way through more than a few feet before finding themselves blocked and barricaded, and forced to turn back. Even those who can magically make themselves only inches tall or are able to turn into mist have trouble navigating what becomes a murky maze of tall grass and weeds, dense tangles of vines and unrelenting bramble, bushes, and trees. Those who have tried report quickly losing a sense of scale and direction within minutes of difficult travel within the Primeva.

The least fortunate get lost and fall victim to wild animals or the environment, never to be seen again. The lucky ones are either rescued and led out of the tangled mass by one of the gentler denizens of this Faerieland, such as a Sprite or Faerie, or *miraculously* find their way back into the cleared area of the Garden by accident. Such lucky survivors report simply stumbling out of the dark labyrinth of the Untamed Garden or having followed a path of sunlight or what they thought was an animal path, and always without any idea where they had been or how to get back there even if they had stumbled across a statue or monument.

This is the main reason it takes so long to unearth new statues. Another is nobody wants to damage any of the statues encased within the living greenery while chopping through the vegetation, making careful excavation essential. Skilled excavators and landscapers work slowly and carefully to find and unveil the statues of lost gods. Removing trees and cutting and shaping new hedgerows out of the landscape. They preserve some clusters and walls of trees and bushes and meadows as they go along to create a lovely new area of the Garden. Cutting, chopping, and hauling away the rest. In some ways, the formation of new areas of the Garden cut out of the Primeva is like that of sculptors who work in stone. They often say they envision an image trapped inside the stone block and chip and cut away at it until the image is revealed as a statue. The same can be said about the continuing formation of the Garden, only on a much larger scale. The selection of what trees and vegetation stays and what goes, and the trimming of the trees, shrubbery, vines, and flowers are as much a work of artistry as the statues and monuments that are uncovered from within. The end result are garden paths, walkways and courtyards cut and shaped to best present the ancient statues while leaving them surrounded by natural splendor. A botanical wonderland filled with exotic plants and flowers and trees, and accented by equally magnificent fauna that lives in or visits the Garden.

It is an operation that requires a delicate hand and finesse to preserve not only the statuary, but also the bounty and beauty of the living Garden. That includes the flora, nests, and habitats of exotic birds, butterflies, and animals, but also the flowering mounds and hiding places of the Faerie Folk who live here. The Untamed Garden and other largely uninhabited forests and meadows on Lopan are home to an astonishing array of Faerie Folk. Among them the rarest and most shy, like the **Guardian Faerie** and **Walking Stick Faerie**, both of which are believed to exist only on Lopan and perhaps in remote mountain valleys in the Great Northern Mountains and a few secluded woodlands in the Great Northern Wilderness.

The most ancient of the Fading and Forgotten deities are found within the depths of the overgrown Primeva, which has served as a sort of hidden cemetery of lost gods for millennia, waiting to be rediscovered and unveiled. Yet even here there is a sense of wild, untamed beauty and wonder. Statues of ancient gods peek out from among tall grass and leafy trees, or from their wrappings of vines or carpets of moss, so overgrown with flora that it is difficult to tell where the structure ends and the forest begins.

The expert Lopani excavators tell all sorts of stories in which they cut and trim and weave through the tangle of vegetation never knowing when or where they might stumble across an ancient idol, statue, monolith, small shrine, or marker of an elder and forgotten deity as they cut a path through the greenery or force their way through the underbrush. Often the discovery is unexpected, happening when they bump their head or stand up or turn around

to stretch their aching muscles, only to see the stone face of a lost god staring back at them from amongst the vegetation. Other times the branch they used to pull themselves up or rock they leaned against to rest a moment is part of a statue or the pedestal upon which it rests. Statues, idols, small shrines, monoliths, and stone markers are found throughout the overgrown forest that is the Primeva.

Ancient script and strange symbols from lost languages and forgotten civilizations, and sometimes Runes and magic symbols, adorn many of them. A source of clues and records for those who may be able to interpret the esoteric markings. Whether realistic or highly stylized, each statue or monument is an echo of the past and a god that was once known to mortals. Some still are, but perhaps only by members of a small cult or ancient religion practiced by a tribe or village in a remote region, or by a tiny handful of people scattered around the world. For many of these deities, their statues in the Garden of the Gods/Primeva are the last vestiges of their existence anywhere in the world. The only place where their image can still be found whole and mostly intact.

The statues here are generally primitive and simple, the idols and monoliths of stone-age peoples. Their faces look out from within the dense undergrowth, and many of their shrines and tombs are carved out of tree trunks, or so overgrown with vines that it is difficult to tell where the structure ends and the forest begins. **The Boulder Sepulcher** is the most noticeable of them, a large, freestanding boulder the size of a small cabin with a sepulcher carved right out of it. The entire exterior of the boulder has been inscribed with ancient symbols of a lost language, but if it held a sarcophagus inside, it has either been stolen or crumbled away to nothing ages ago.

The overgrown, yet to be excavated section of the Garden in its wild beauty is larger than most visitors realize and is likely home to another hundred, perhaps more, statues of deities hoping to be rediscovered.

Faerie Protectors

Most Faerie Folk, but especially Faeries, Sprites, Brownies, Spriggans, Pixies and even the cantankerous Bogies, who live within, around, and near the Garden of the Gods, are among its most vigilant protectors. They will chase and strike and use their magic on anyone who tries to deface or harm the statues or the Garden itself, while others fly or run to get help from the Knights-Fossar and visitors who they think will lend a hand. But there are two rare Faeries that bear mentioning. (For information on a host of Faerie Folk and a hundred other creatures and hundreds of animals, see the **Monsters and Animals™** sourcebook.)

Guardian Faerie

By Kevin Siembieda and Charles Walton Jr.

Like their Faerie and Sprite cousins, Guardian Faeries are beautiful, little butterfly-winged people who look delicate and sweet. However they are larger, standing a full foot (0.3 m) tall, wear decorative face paint – war paint, actually – and are much more combative and quick to action. They are always ready to fight and protect their homes (the trees and thickets they inhabit)



and their friends and family. Hence their name, Guardian Faeries. They are also more serious than other Faeries and though pleasant and playful, are much less likely to play pranks or steal from Big Folk. In fact, they can be considered the Paladins of the Faerie world.

Visitors to the Garden who observe these majestic beings have debated over whether the inquisitive and heroic Guardian Faeries are indigenous to the Island of Lopan or migrated here during some troublesome, dark and distant past from the Old Kingdom or Great Northern Wilderness, as they have never been reported in any other parts of the world. Some intrigued observers of Guardian Faeries have wondered if there might not be a mystical bond between them and the Island of Lopan or the Garden of the Gods.

These pale green-skinned Faeries are extremely protective of the Garden of the Gods, and work like a bee colony flying to and fro as they help preserve and maintain the Garden. Guardian Faeries are very attentive to their surroundings, and are quick to buzz anyone they suspect has foul intentions. Other times they fly around a person's head two or three times before landing someplace within eyeshot and then stand there looking menacing and stern, like an angry parent. This is a warning to let the person or people know they are being watched and had better behave themselves.

Their protection extends to all inhabitants of the Garden and any location the Guardian Faeries consider to be home or a friend's home. A friend's home may include a beehive or wasp nest. Guardian Faeries recognize the important role insects play in pollinating the beautiful flora of the Garden and collecting the plants' nectar and the morning dew atop blades of grass, leaves,

and flowers petals. Vandals, thieves, and ruffians are confronted and scolded, or chased out of the Garden. As is anyone who becomes threatening or physically accosts anyone within the Garden. Such incidents are rare, and much more likely to happen outside the Garden, but the Guardians are there to keep the peace. The little Guardians have the ability to mark those they consider to be enemies or potentially dangerous troublemakers with a scent only they and other Faeries and Sprites can detect. Such threats are aggressively monitored, and when they become an active danger to people, statues, or a part of the Garden, the Guardian Faeries (often accompanied by other Faeries) strike, relentlessly harassing or attacking the marked person with their "stingers" until they flee or are rendered harmless (knocked unconscious, charmed, forced to perform the Faerie's Dance, etc.). The level of the Guardians' aggression is dictated by the level of disrespect, danger, and destruction the brigands represent.

Dwarves, Orcs, Ogres, barbarians, and other discourteous beings who have unwittingly spat or slobbered (or worse) onto flowers or into fountains and ponds are scolded and warned (and scent marked). Those who ignore the warning and continue to despoil the Garden or the statues are attacked and stung till their limbs or faces become swollen and filled with venomous agony. Suspected thieves and troublemakers are watched carefully, in alternating shifts between different Faeries who report back to a Guardian. This includes monitoring their own. When other Faeries steal from the Garden or from a visitor, they too suffer the Guardians' wrath. All Faeries are curious and like to peek or sneak inside the garments, pouches, sacks, and belongings of visitors to steal candy and sweets or interesting baubles, but NOT in the Garden and not under the watch of the Guardian Faeries!

The only time a Faerie or Sprite is allowed to sneak inside a Big Folk's luggage or bag is to determine if they have stolen property. Of course, the Garden's bounty is for everyone, so the Guardians and other Faerie Folk pay no attention when fruits and berries and vegetables are plucked and eaten.

Most Faeries use their magic against humans and other Big Folk, and so do Guardian Faeries; however, they are the most combat oriented and quick to fight, attacking with needle-like spears enchanted with a magical venom that burns and swells like an allergic reaction to a bee's sting. Because of this aggressive behavior unusual for Faeries, their size, and uniquely different magic, some people question whether Guardians are true Faeries at all, and wonder if they might not be magical agents of the gods, or even the souls of fallen heroes that have been resurrected into these flying Guardians. Such colorful speculation is fun and quite common, but is not true. Guardians are true Faeries, just an unusual and very rare breed.

Alignment: Principled (15%), Scrupulous (65%) or Unprincipled (20%).

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+6, M.E. 2D6+5, M.A. 2D6+7, P.S. 1D6, P.P. 2D6+10, P.E. 2D6+6, P.B. 3D6+12 (minimum of 20), and Spd 3D6+5 running and 2D6x10+80 flying (typically 50 mph/80 km with bursts of speed up to 120 mph/192 km lasting for 1D6+20 minutes).

Size: One foot tall (0.3 m) and weighs one pound (0.45 kg) or less.

Natural A.R.: 7

Hit Points: 2D6+60; Faeries are magical beings and tough for their tiny size. Guardian Faeries are one of the toughest.

S.D.C.: 2D6+20 (plus an additional 20 S.D.C. when human-size; see Special Abilities).

P.P.E.: 1D6x100 and can draw on ambient P.P.E. in the Garden and along ley lines.

Horror/Awe Factor: 9

Natural Abilities: Fly and hover at will, Nightvision 90 feet (27.4 m), see the invisible, keen normal vision, sense the location of water 60%, and sense the location of ley lines 80%.

R.C.C. Skills: Speaks Faerie and Gobblely 98%, player characters can learn two additional languages at the base skill +20% bonus, Climb 60%/50%, Dance 70%, Identify Plants & Fruit 75%, Land Navigation 85%, Lore: Faerie Folk 90%, Preserve Food 90%, Prowl 60% (+10% in the Primeva and dense forests), Sing 60%, Track Animals 50%, Wilderness Survival 90%, and W.P. Knife and W.P. Spear. Skills do not increase with experience.

Attacks per Melee: Four hand to hand attacks or two using magic.

Bonuses: +1 to strike, +2 to parry and dodge in flight, +3 to roll with punch/fall/impact, and +1 to save vs magic.

Magic Spells: Befuddle, Charm, Cloud of Smoke, Extinguish Fire, Sleep, Tongues, and the Faerie's Dance.

Scent Marking (special): Guardians can magically create what might be considered a *faerie dust* that sticks to the target and goes unnoticed, marking him as an enemy or danger to be wary of. This scent is recognized by all Faeries, Sprites, Pixies and Bogies, but not the larger Faerie Folk nor other beings.

Stinger Venom (special): Guardian Faeries can magically enchant the tips of their spears with a venom that inflicts 1D4 damage from the initial sting/stab, +1 damage per round for

the next 1D4 melee rounds, and the site of the stab/sting burns and swells up for the next 2D6 hours. When stung by 8 or more venomous attacks, the victim is covered in large ugly welts, marked as one of their victims, and suffers the following penalties: -2 on Perception Rolls, -2 on initiative and -10% skill penalty.

Grow to Human Size (special): This ability is limited to 4 times per 24 hours and is used to frighten, startle, and chase people away, and is very effective, especially when several, foot tall beings suddenly transform into six foot (1.8 m) tall angry warriors and their enlarged "stingers" (spears) with them. When most opponents are outnumbered by the suddenly human-sized Guardian Faeries, they either run away or drop their weapons and surrender. Guardian Faeries don't mind when they run away shrieking like a child, because their transformation is more for show than fighting, and is used as a trick to intimidate and scare an enemy, not fight. The giant-size (for them) transformation lasts only for one melee round (15 seconds), and their flying speed is reduced by half when big. Their enlarged venomous spears only inflict 1D6+1 damage, but do look more menacing.

Guardian Faeries may also enlarge themselves to human-size (they think of it as Elven-size) to tackle or grab someone, or to grab an item, or knock an object out of an opponent's hands, as well as for other short term uses where being human-size is helpful. Though seldom done, a Guardian can use up all four of his or her transformations consecutively to stay big for one full minute (4 melee rounds/60 seconds), but then cannot go big again until 24 hours have passed.

Psionics: None.

Habitat: The Garden of the Gods and remote forests and thickets in northern Lopan.

Notes: Guardian Faeries never wear armor, only light silks that are woven by silk insects. As usual, Guardian Faeries are leery of most Big Folk, though they have a healthy respect for Paladins and Knights, the Knights-Fossar and Fossarian Wardens in particular, and know most local caretakers. Anyone who appears to help in the upkeep and natural preservation of the Garden of the Gods can slowly begin to gain their trust and even friendship, which is a valuable honor.

Unlike most Faeries, Guardian Faeries can wield two types of weapons, a forearm mounted Wrist Stinger that is usually made from a thorn or animal claw, or a spear made from wood or from a sewing or knitting needle; both magically enchanted to deliver a venomous "sting." These tiny weapons might appear laughable and harmless in comparison to the heavy broadsword, mace or battle axe carried by robust warriors, but the Guardian Faeries are adept at stabbing Big Folk in vital areas, including ears, lips, face, neck, hands, arms and legs, and the damage and burning pain from the venom is no laughing matter, especially when stung repeatedly or attacked by more than one or two Guardians. When they aren't carrying these weapons, they hide them in secret caches inside trees, bushes, and vines. Most have dozens of such weapon caches hidden throughout the Garden, all too small and innocent for most people to ever notice.

All Faerie Folk appreciate and respect the courageous and heroic Guardians, and happily join them in battle against marauding Big Folk and threats to their homes.



Walking Stick Faerie

By Charles Walton Jr. and Kevin Siembieda

Walking Stick Faeries, also known as *Tree Faeries*, are arboreal beings. They are the only Faeries without wings, but can leap an astonishing 15 feet (4.6 m) across and 10 feet (3 m) up. They run across tree branches and leap from limb to limb with the agility of monkeys from the Yin-Sloth Jungles, performing acrobatics and gymnastics at breakneck speed and can survive a fall of a hundred feet (30.5 m) with ease. Whenever desired, Walking Stick Faeries can blend into their surroundings by becoming motionless. Their stick-like appearance and ability to sprout any type of leaves makes them look like just another branch or twig of a tree or bush and nearly impossible to see. This ability to blend in seamlessly with bushes and trees makes them nearly invisible whether prowling in trees or through underbrush. This makes them great spies and scouts in forest terrains.

Having a life that spans centuries has made them shrewd and cunning. Unlike most other Faerie Folk, Walking Stick Faeries are happy to sell or trade their in-depth knowledge of the forests they inhabit, as well as function as a scout or spy for Big Folk. Their price can be coins or gems or magic, but is usually wine, candy, honey, jams, fruit pies, cakes, cookies, and other sweets.

Walking Stick Faeries are very observant of their environment and the life all around them, especially the comings and goings of travelers, adventurers, magical creatures, and monsters. Being so adept at hiding and being unseen, they are terrible gossips who are always eavesdropping on conversations and noting where people are coming from, heading to, staying at, and what they are planning.

Like all Faeries, these beings are surprisingly strong and durable for their tiny, 6-8 inch (15 to 20 cm) stature and spindly limbs. Even more so than their winged cousins. The little fellows get along well with most Faerie Folk including Bogies, Pucks, and Toadstools, but feel closest to Faeries, Sprites, Grogach, Pixies, and Will-O-The-Wisps. On Lopan they have come to like and respect the Knights-Fossar and Elves in general, but tend to judge every person on their own merit.

The younger the Walking Stick Faerie (300 years and younger), the more daring and adventurous they are, and likely to engage with other species much to the chagrin of their tribal leaders. The young are bold risk takers who like to travel woodlands far and wide, seeking to communicate with people, regardless of race, to learn about them and go on grand adventures. However, sharing information with anyone other than fellow Faerie Folk requires bribes of honey, candy and other sweets, fresh sweet fruit, wine, or a good story – they love stories and juicy gossip. Once they begin to talk, Walking Stick Faeries will be sure to tell a big story that often incorporates far more history and unnecessary and outdated details than most travelers or adventurers care to hear. This may cause listeners to fall asleep or lose their patience and leave before hearing the end of the story, which might contain the most important parts of the story or critical information. (“Oh, did I mention the cult worships an adult dragon? Hello, did you hear what I said about the dragon? Hmm, I guess they don’t care.”) Bards, Rangers, Faerie Folk and Elves, however, seem to know how to hold the most fruitful conversation with Waking Stick Faeries and can get them to cut to the chase and get to the

important details in half the time without all the undesirable details and boring history.

Alignment: Typically Unprincipled or Anarchist, but there are the occasional good and evil Walking Stick Faeries.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+5, M.E. 2D6, M.A. 2D6+3, P.S. 1D6+1, P.P. 2D6+12, P.E. 2D6+3, P.B. 2D6+10 (minimum of 17), Spd running and leaping through tree branches and underbrush 2D6+50 or 40 mph (64 km) and often in terrain where Big Folk can barely get through. Spd running on the ground is 1D6+16 or 15 mph (24 km) for up to 5 hours at a time.

Size: 6-8 inches tall (15 to 22.3 cm) and weigh 10-16 ounces (0.3 to 0.45 kg). The Elders are 20% thicker, taller and heavier, +2 to P.S. but 20% slower.

Natural A.R.: 10 (11 for Elders).

Hit Points: 2D6+45; Faeries are magical beings and tough for their size. Walking Stick Faeries are among the toughest.

S.D.C.: 2D6+20 (+12 for Elders).

P.P.E.: 1D6x100 and can draw on ambient P.P.E. in the Garden and along ley lines.

Horror/Awe Factor: 9

Natural Abilities: When motionless or prowling very slowly they are virtually invisible (equal to the Camouflage skill at 95%), Nightvision 120 feet (36.6 m), see the invisible, keen normal vision, sense the location of water 50%, and sense the location of ley lines 80%.

R.C.C. Skills: Speaks Faerie and Gobblely 98% (Player Characters can learn three additional languages at the base skill +30% bonus), Climb 98%/90%, Dance 50%, Identify Plants & Fruit 90%, Land Navigation 87%, Lore: Faerie Folk 90%, Preserve Food 90%, Prowl 60% (+20% in forest environments, among bushes, underbrush and vines), Track Animals 42%, Track Humanoids 62%, and Wilderness Survival 90%. Skills do not increase.

Attacks per Melee: Three hand to hand attacks per melee or two using magic.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls, +1 to parry and dodge, +4 to roll with punch/fall/impact, and +2 to save vs magic.

Magic Spells: Animate Object, Blinding Flash, Calling, Chameleon, Charm, Concealment, Detect Concealment, and Tongues.

Blend with Plant Environments (special): A chameleon-like ability in which the Walking Stick Faerie can magically transform the leaves on its head and shoulders to match the exact type of tree, bush, or plant it is hiding on, as well as change the coloration of the leaves and their skin to blend in with most any foliage, trees, and brush, no matter the environment or season.

Commune with Flora (special): Enables the Walking Stick Faerie to influence the leaves and branches of trees, bushes and vines to shift and drape or droop, or tighten in order to conceal himself or other people, animals, or any objects, or for vines to uncurl so it may use them to climb or swing, buds to bloom and spread open, or a flower to close, or to release pollen, or a tree its sap, or for acorns to drop and pelt those below, or to irritate, distract, or confuse an animal or human adversary or pursuer. However, cannot cause a plant to break its limbs or branches, or completely uproot itself, or to expose itself to fire. Range: Any number of plants within 10 feet (3 m).

It should be noted that though a Walking Stick Faerie cannot control them, bees, wasps and other biting insects never

bother or attack them, but arboreal animals like squirrels and racoons as well as birds find them pesky and annoying and may attack or knock them from their perch.

Psionics: None.

Notes: Never wears armor as their bodies are magical and hard and rough like wood. These Faeries often gather in small tribes of 6D6+6 members with an Elder leader, and live up in the trees like squirrels or monkeys. The older they get (300+ years), the less adventurous and gossipy they become, and the more leery they are of Big Folk, especially humans, Dwarves, and the monster races. However, those who know them maintain a healthy respect and trust for the Knights-Fossar, Fossar Wardens, Druids, Gnomes, the canine races, and Garden caretakers.

Outside and Around the Garden of the Gods

Civilization and an abundance of farms, villages, and fishing communities, the port city where most pilgrims land, and the Champion's Village where the Lopanic Games take place, are all miles away off the eastern shore of the Island of Lopan. Though there are farms, homesteads, cottages, and hunters' lodges, small villages, and the towns that have sprung up near each of the Verdant Gates, for the most part, the rest of the countryside around the Garden is mostly known for its tranquil beauty, especially when compared to the Great Northern Wilderness and Eastern Territory, or the bleak wastes of the Old Kingdom.

In the land immediately surrounding the Garden of the Gods, the air is pure and fresh, and there is a sense of enchantment, but also a sense of danger and the untamed. In the forests around the Garden of the Gods and to the north, rare and mystical creatures are known to be much more common. From Faerie Folk of every stripe, to Centaurs and Unicorns, and exotic creatures like the Pegasus and Gryphons, all the way up to roosting dragons, Peryton from the northern mainland, ghostly Entities, and other creatures and monsters. Here one may even spy the occasional inquisitive dragon in the skies overhead, and these are just the bold (or foolhardy) dragons that do not go in the guise of a human or other lesser species. Wolfen longboats may also be spotted along the northern coastline. Visiting Wolfen create too much commotion when they dock at one of the port cities (though it does occur), so many Wolfen find an alcove to anchor along the north coast and walk in from there to visit the Garden or to trade with the communities around it. Many do a little hunting on their way in or back to their Dragon Ships.

The Knights-Fossar do their best to keep order and patrol the outskirts of the Garden, and do a good job of it, but they are few in number and their resources are limited. Lopan authorities from the big cities also make regular monthly visits to the communities around the Garden, where they are happy to investigate crimes and adjudicate disputes, but their main focus is the more heavily populated areas along the coast.

Threats Outside the Garden

Outside the divine protection of the Garden, visitors here are still vulnerable to pickpockets, thieves, bandits and outright at-

tacks. Most crimes are committed by visiting outsiders, including Western pirates, who stake out the richest visitors and listen quietly for tidbits about outgoing and incoming cargo ships they can attack and plunder at sea, and vessels transporting the rich and powerful that may be worth kidnaping at sea or on Lopan before they board their ship. Such individuals can garner a decent ransom, typically 6,000-12,000 gold each, but sometimes double that. Less important people may only amount to a few hundred gold in ransom. There are also wild beasts, hostile and wicked Faerie Folk, and other brigands who come and go.

Local authorities have jurisdiction over their own communities, while the court of Lopan has overriding authority over all communities and often handles the most heinous crimes (murder, kidnaping, etc.) and matters involving diplomatic relations with other kingdoms. The Knights-Fossar are an independent and autonomous authority that works with both the royal and local authorities, and are well liked and respected by all law-abiding inhabitants of the island continent, including the Centaurs, Faerie Folk, visiting Wolfen, and the monster races. The Knights patrol around the Garden of the Gods out to roughly 60 miles (96 km), but also engage in long-range patrols to every corner of Lopan at least a few times a year, including the infamous Black Pit.

Pilgrims, crusaders and frequent visitors. Visitors of almost any race and religious affiliation can be found outside the Garden, making their way to or from one of the Verdant Gates or neighboring towns. The same is true of the two well-traveled main roads from the east and south. These are places where a strutting nobleman from the Western Empire or Timiro may pass a rabble of freed Orc slaves from the Old Kingdom, or priests from Bizantium and the Land of the Damned might walk shoulder to shoulder without ever realizing how far they both have come to make such a meeting possible. Ogres, Trolls, Wolfen, Minotaurs and other species oft considered monsters elsewhere in the world might be on a pilgrimage just like any other coming to the fabled Garden of the Gods. Kobolds, Goblins, and Orcs are uncommon on Lopan, compared to the mainland all around it, but they can be found on the island continent, usually as free, second-class citizens of the peasant class; typically laborers and farmers.

Notable Towns Outside the Garden

A lively and friendly town has sprung up outside each of the Verdant Gates. Each is surrounded by scattered farms, orchards, homesteads, hunting lodges and the cottage homes of the wealthy. At least half of the cottages are owned by merchants and nobles from the Western Empire, the Old Kingdom, and Eastern Territory, and are locked up and empty half the time. So it is surprising that burglaries and squatters are not more common.

All of the towns and surrounding farm communities are quite tame by the standards of the Old Kingdom, the Eastern Territory, and most of the civilized and developed parts of the world. Each offers stables for horses, boarding houses, restaurants, modest shops to spend one's coin and buy souvenirs such as holy symbols of the many deities, statues of Aco and/or the Juggernaut, Aco dolls, charms, and jewelry, and places to find food and drink and modest entertainment. Visitors and pilgrims can find lodgings and good local cuisine at reasonable prices. A typical, basic



but cozy room is 15-25 gold a night. There are only a few luxury suites or large rooms in each town, and most wealthy visitors would not consider them luxurious at all; they cost a whopping 50-60 gold a night. Most meals are 2-5 gold and a mug of beer or mead or a glass of wine is one gold, hard liquor or fine wine 2-4 gold. Still, most wealthy visitors consider the quaint charm of the rural communities to be part of the experience when visiting the Garden. Most visitors to the Garden only spend 1-3 nights in the area, but some stay for a week or several weeks depending on the purpose of their visit and their financial resources. **Note:** Upscale accommodations and a wide selection of food, alcohol, and shopping can be had at the large coastal cities, especially where the Lopanic Games are held, but the cost of everything is 2-3 times more than the Garden communities even during the “off-season” at the coastal cities, and 4-6 times more during the games.

Krigan Heights

Krigan Heights, near the eastern entrance to the Garden, is the largest and most notorious of the towns around the Garden. It is a short way outside the East Verdant Gate. Many athletes, knights,

warriors and adventurers stay in this sprawling, active and boisterous town. There are many shops, taverns, places of entertainment, boarding houses, and stables, as well as a couple of magic shops, three blacksmiths, an armory, two carpenters, a lumberyard, a house of healing (mainly herbs and psychic healers), a mortician, a cemetery for outsiders, a small temple and shrine to Aco and the Juggernaut, and a few other deities, and most of the other types of businesses you would expect to find in a growing town frequented by rough and tumble outsiders, adventurers, and common folk.

Though a predominantly human population, visitors are likely to find the broadest range of races from all over the world in Krigan Heights. In addition to lots of humans, there are visiting Dwarves, Kobolds, Gnomes, Goblins, Orcs, and to a lesser degree, Ogres, Wolfen, Bearmen, and others, but there are few Elves. The largest population of Elves living around the Garden is at Briargrove.

The Sea of Dreams is the largest and most popular tavern in the entire town of Krigan Heights, especially among athletes, warriors, and adventurers. It is attached to a large dance hall and casino. All the games are honest, but still in favor of the house,

and friendly competitions involving games of darts, knife and axe throwing, arm wrestling, dice, and cards can be found here in abundance. This is also the place where visitors are most likely to get into brawls and encounter scoundrels, thieves, con artists, ladies of ill-repute, mercenaries looking for work, and the wealthy merchants and nobles looking to hire them. If you are seeking a night of rambunctious fun, libations, gambling, or trouble, the Sea of Dreams is the place for you.

The Mystic Cloud is on the opposite spectrum of the Sea of Dreams. It is a dark, quiet, and discreet drug den and place of exotic pleasure. It has three communal areas where visitors can get high and lay on mat-covered floors with dozens of other mellow and zoned out customers. Custodians monitor these areas to prevent robbery and other incidents. There are also many private rooms that cost 10 gold an hour for the wealthy, clergy, and nobility who seek privacy and better security. The Mystic Cloud offers its patrons a wide range of conventional drugs and hallucinogens as well as magic fumes, illusionary experiences, psionic manipulation, and select Faerie Foods that create hallucinations and strange but pleasurable effects.

The authorities in Krigan Heights are mostly honest and incredibly tolerant. They are used to men-at-arms, athletes, and adventurer-types drinking too much, getting rowdy and carried away, brawling, dueling, and being a public nuisance. Most are either escorted to their boarding house or tossed into the drunk tank or one of the many other jail cells at the sheriff's office and town jail. Those locked up are kept there until they sober up and are released after a stern talking to, a warning to behave themselves, and a small fine of 2D6 gold. If they caused damage, the perpetrators are expected to pay for the damage and apologize to the tavern or shop owner. All of this is eminently fair and civilized. Murder and violent crimes are uncommon in Krigan Heights, and rarer still in the other three towns.

Godsmire

The town of Godsmire is located a short distance from the South Verdant Gate. It is named for the marsh, thickets, and mangrove trees on the outskirts of town, home to fish, ducks, geese, pheasants, quail and other game birds and animals. The locals insist the area is enchanted and that the marsh and the forest around it are blessed with an abundance of deer, boar, and game animals that make it a hunter's paradise. But that paradise is not without its dangers, for it is said that Mermaids and a small clan of wicked Kelpies live in the small, shallow lake (only 6-15 feet/1.8 to 4.6 m deep) within the marsh, and sometimes come out to toy with, trick, or prey upon hunters and travelers. Kinnie Ger as well as wolves and predatory felines also stalk the woods. Despite that, Godsmire is a pleasant and lively country town even with visitors who come to see the Garden.

Every night, Godsmire and the woods and marshland around it comes alive with the sounds of frogs and insects singing to the moon. Fireflies lighting up the night one by one with their green luminescence and congregating in harmless swarms so thick in the warm summer nights that they cast a glowing light along the pathways and between the trees.

Many pilgrims and clergy stay at Godsmire, attracted by the town's reputation for being a wholesome, cozy, lights out by midnight community of god fearing people. The town offers clergy and pilgrims a number of small temples and shrines to the

gods of Light and Dark, Dragonwright, Aco and the Juggernaut, the Northern Gods, Algor, and some others. The Church of Light and Dark is currently building a new, larger church and rectory that will be maintained by a cadre of priests, acolytes, and Garden caretakers.

The Blind Toad. Visitors to Godsmire might be surprised by the delicious smells wafting from the **Blind Toad**, a large, popular inn and tavern that draws visitors from around the Garden. The Blind Toad's rooms are small and cozy, the inn an island of warmth and light and good cheer smothered in delicious smells of homemade bread and home cooked meals. There is warm food and drink served day and night.

There are other taverns and boarding houses, but the **Blind Toad** and the **Huntsman's Lodge** (a smaller version of the Blind Toad on the other side of town) are two of the most popular gathering spots. Their down-home coziness and simple comfort food are appealing to pilgrims, caretakers, and ordinary folk as well as visiting knights, warriors and adventurers. Both are good, clean establishments that serve basic alcohol such as Dwarven beer and mead, an excellent selection of fine local wines, and a small selection of hard liquor from the capital city; nothing imported from the mainland. Country meals include various hearty vegetable and meat stews, meat and potato meals (mainly goose, duck, rabbit, and deer), delicious home-baked breads, meat pies, fruit pies, and homemade fruit jams and honey.

These two taverns are open to all regardless of race, creed, or nationality. In the spirit of the Garden of the Gods, the proprietors expect everyone to show tolerance and respect to one another within the taverns and the connected inns. Anyone who gets too rude or rowdy can expect to be tossed into the swamp by the one-eyed Troll who is the bouncer at the Blind Toad or by the lovely Elven Wizard or her Ranger husband who run the Huntsman's Lodge. The Blind Toad is also visited by some of the Knights-Fossar, who help keep the peace as do other visiting knights and heroes.

The Mud Puppy is a popular bathhouse and mud spa powered by a hot spring on the edge of town. Travelers and athletes can enjoy hot baths or soothing mud baths to help relax and soothe aching muscles. A hot bath costs one gold. A mud bath costs 5 gold. There are two separate areas, one that is communal for the common man, and one for the aristocracy and wealthy, which is more private and has scented candles and offers bath salts for 10 gold.

Briargrove

The predominantly Elven and human town of Briargrove is located a few miles from the West Verdant Gate and was established centuries before the Garden of the Gods was discovered. The settlers knew it was an enchanted forest home to Faeries and that there were ruins of an ancient civilization reclaimed by the forest, but they never imagined it was anything like what the Garden of the Gods has become. Instead, they left the ruins and statues and the Faerie Folk alone, and focused on settling and developing the rich orchard-lands and building their lives. The Elven founding forefathers discovered what they called a natural orchard of fruit trees – mostly apple trees, but also pear and plum trees. Acre after acre of them. There is also a portion of the Briar made up of what they consider to be sacred groves of olive trees and cedars.



The first farm colony was established in the Orchard-lands by early Elven pioneers that date back to the first Elven colonists thousands of years ago. Many of them met their end trying to establish one of several Elven colonies forced to abandon their efforts, return to the New Kingdom, and try again every few generations until they made it work. As a result, the governing Elves of this community are honorable, hardworking, peace-loving family clans. They are held in high regard by all people living in and around Briargrove, and regarded as nobility. Not that the ruling families of the town behave like nobles or knights. Nor do they fit the arrogant and condescending stereotype for which Elves are so notorious. They are grounded, pleasant, fair, and friendly leaders who care about everyone in their town regardless of lineage or race. That said, half the community is composed of Elves, 39% humans, 8% Gnomes and 3% others, but there are no Dwarves.

The town and all of the Briargrove community is one of the quietest and most law-abiding towns anywhere on Lopan. The orchards and surrounding forests are not without their dangers, but are mostly bright and inviting during the day, starry-skied and sheltering during the night. Butterflies and Faeries chase each other through the branches of the trees and beams of sunlight, bridges cross little streams, and the orchards all seamlessly blend with the forest as a whole. Chimney-smoke from homes and farms can be seen rising through the trees, and they seem to fit comfortably into their wooded and pastoral surroundings. There is no clear cutting of the forest or gutted land for farm crops.

Woodsmen and hunters come and go, as do local residents, some of them caretakers who tend to various statues of the gods within the Garden. Visitors arrive from many different kingdoms

and nations to walk among the Garden, but Druids, Rangers, woodsmen, Warlocks, Priests, scholars and other strong but quiet and reserved people seem to find their way to Briargrove, while warriors and adventurers tend to end up in Krigan Heights, Godsmire, or Northpoint.

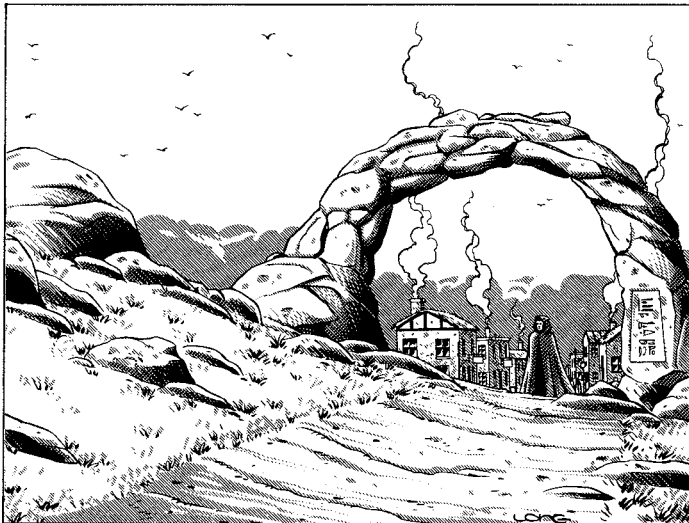
Before the discovery of the Garden, Briargrove was notorious among the inhabitants of Lopan for the **Tree of Ancestors**. A massive oak, its trunk as wide as a barn, that stands alone atop a hill. It is said to be the tallest tree on the island continent and believed to be thousands of years old. Carved into the base of the tree are inscribed the names of the early Elven settlers in the region. Over time, many settlers and inhabitants of Lopan would journey to the great tree to add the names of their own family members and from whence they came. Fallen athletes, heroes, and champions who perished in the defense of Lopan are now also added to the tree, which has become something of a sacred, living monument to the people of Lopan.

There is another large tree within Briargrove, not far from the Tree of Ancestors, but half its size. Named the **Tree of Champions**, it is dedicated to every gathering of the Lopanic Games, with the names of the winners magically inscribed upon its trunk.

The Huntsman's Hospite. In the middle of town, across from the park that is the town square and place of festivals, is an impressive timber hall known as the Huntsman's Hospite, a resting place and watering hole where all are welcomed to share a meal and good conversation, and enjoy a warm bed for the night before heading out into the woods or off into the Garden again. The Hospite is built completely out of black-brown timbers, soaked in pitch to protect them from the rain. It sits amidst tall pine trees,

steep-roofed, with wooden statues of Elven deities perched at each corner above the gutters that siphon off the Briar's soft but frequent rainfall.

Rangers and woodsmen, humans and Elves, Wolfen and Bearmen, and any who have an association with the forest, are the mix of people found at the Hospite. Haunches of venison, deer pelts and antlers hang from hooks around the covered porch, along with game birds of all kinds. Priests and visitors are also welcome, and the Hospite is known for its spirited philosophical and theological debates as well as stories of adventure and gossip told by visitors, and stories about the gods told by priests and scholars.



Northpoint

Because it is the most remote of the four towns, this is where you are most likely to encounter members of the so-called monster races, including the likes of Giants, Trolls, Ogres, Orcs, Goblins, Eandroth, Kankoran, Wolfen, Bearmen, Centaurs, and even the occasional Spriggan, Pixie, Puck, and Leprechaun, among others. There are a number of buildings constructed on a larger scale to accommodate large humanoids, making humans and Elves feel like they are child-size once again, and a few that are dug down into the earth to make Kobolds, Dwarves, and Goblins feel comfortable. In keeping with the ideals of neutrality and equality perpetuated by the Garden, most nonhuman visitors work hard to be tolerant and civil toward each other and especially toward humans, Elves, and Dwarves who, as a people, have enslaved and persecuted their kind for millennia.

As you might guess, Northpoint also has one of the largest populations of nonhuman inhabitants on Lopan. It is the place where Ogres (5%), Orcs (25%), Goblins (20%), Centaurs (3%) and others (24%) choose to live. A sort of ghetto of non-humans, though 21% of the population is human and 2% are Elves.

The Broken Bones Inn and Tavern is massive in size. Its brooding tavern the size of a gymnasium where meat-loving people gather to dine on meat dishes and meat stews, and get drunk on hard liquor, mostly rum and a local moonshine. Dancing, singing, wrestling matches, darts and knife throwing take place inside. Outside in the courtyard contests of archery, spear throwing and target practice take place, and there is a pit for cock and dog fights. Next-door is a crude arena dug down into

the earth where gladiatorial style fights, competitions, duels and grudge matches take place accompanied by much betting and cheering. Most fights are not usually to the death, but death matches do happen.

The Tavern Divine is a large pub with heavy wood tables and chairs. It is designed for human-sized people, but with a section that has tables and chairs suitable for Ogres and Wolfen and all the furnishings are designed to handle large, heavy beings. The statues and holy symbols of more than a hundred gods line the tavern's walls, high up toward the ceiling to avoid damage from roughhousing and brawls. As you might guess, the Northern Gods and deities favored by *non-humans* are the emphasis here, but most of the known pantheons are represented. The tavern is run by a human scholar, his wife, and their seven daughters, and his Ogre partner, his wife, and four of their nine children. The rest of the Ogre's adult children are off adventuring on the mainland. The Tavern Divine is known for its spirited debates about the gods, religion, kingdoms and politics on the mainland, and is full of gossip about everywhere, but especially the Western Empire, Old Kingdom, Eastern Territory and the Disputed Lands. Any southerner looking for perspective from a non-human's point of view would do well to quietly sit at the back of any of the establishments in Northpoint and just listen.

Mercenary companies and anyone looking for muscle and swordsmen can find plenty of potential mercs and adventurers for hire in Northpoint. Particularly those who have no love for humans, Elves, Dwarves or the Western Empire. And not just muscle, non-humans have their share of Priests, Witches, Warlocks, Necromancers, Summoners, and psychics, too. Pirates are also said to recruit new crew members and specialists from Northpoint's transient visitors.

A band of a dozen pickpocketing, purse grabbing, Goblin thieves and a pack of bushwhacking thugs (mixed non-human races led by an 8th level Ogre with Major Psionics) both live nearby and regularly stalk Northpoint for easy marks. Neither group are murderous. They mainly engage in robbery, con games, trickery, cheating at cards, rolling drunks, bushwhacking people on the road, and threatening visitors to turn over their valuables or else. Both groups also kidnap and ransom visitors on occasion. ("If you want your friend back, it will cost you 500 gold." That sort of thing.) However, the Goblins are a cowardly lot who flee when things don't go their way, grabbing and running off with whatever they can carry. They never attack any group that outnumbers them or appears to be much more powerful. The Ogre led group of thugs is more dangerous and violent, often beating their victims and warning them to keep quiet and not report them if they know what's good for them, but try to avoid killing anyone. By not killing, they fly under the radar of the Lopan authorities, and the Knights-Fossar only intercede and make an arrest when they catch the crooks in action.

Other criminals and villains find their way to Northpoint as well, and it is rumored that people at the Divine Tavern and Broken Bones Inn both have connections to legitimate and underworld organizations, smugglers, pirates, and fences. In fact, the **Happy Orc Pawn Shop** is a cover for a fence and smuggler, and the **Peekaboo Magic Shop** dabbles in buying and selling stolen magic items, fumes, Faerie Food, and poison. However, for the most part, it is a safe, rough and tumble town, where humans, Elves, and Dwarves are the rare minority.



The Power of the Garden

A Disclaimer about Faith and God: This book is filled with fictional deities. We speak of gods and their priests and followers as if they are real, because that's all part of the fictional setting of the Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game world and the fantastic adventure stories we create for it. These are **not** real gods or religions, they are pure fiction.

Nor do we have any intention to belittle or insult the faith you may personally hold precious and dear. This is a *make-believe world* of magic and supernatural beings called "gods." These fictional "gods" may be good, selfish, evil, or mischievous. They may champion heroes or consort with the *fictional forces of evil* and *fictional demons*. These make-believe characters are inspired by our own imaginations as well as ancient myths and legends such as Odin and Thor of Norse mythology, Zeus and Hercules of Greek and Roman mythology, Egyptian gods, and others, but *none are real* nor intended to cast any disparaging light upon any real faith, religion, or church in the real world. We apologize if we have inadvertently offended anyone with this subject matter in a fantasy game of adventure and heroism.

– Kevin Siembieda, Publisher and Game Designer

A little about the deities and culture of this world

They may pray to one or several gods for good fortune, another god or three for success in combat, another deity for strength of spirit, another for wisdom, another for good health, and so on. It is common practice for travelers to acknowledge the most prominent deity or pantheon of the local people when visiting their region. So for example, when traveling through the *Great Northern Wilderness*, a band of adventurers or warriors from the South may make a sacrifice to Od or to one or more of the other Northern Gods, or even the Wolfen gods, as a sign of respect and to win that god's or pantheon of gods' good favor during their journey. They certainly don't want to insult the gods of that region and bring upon themselves any misfortune. Such *acts of respect* are not unlike bringing a bottle of wine or a dessert as a gift to the host of a party or celebration at their home. It's a common courtesy.

While most individuals favor one or several specific gods, they believe in the existence of all gods, and tolerate many pantheons and beliefs, including those of rival deities and evil gods. This means that while some people may be devotedly committed to a particular pantheon and church, they do not openly condemn or fight people who are members of a different or rival church.

In the Palladium World there is no one religion or god, and the followers of these diverse churches and myriad deities may have their own way of honoring their beliefs. Some will be steadfast members of a specific church and donate regular offerings to that church and help their priests when possible, but others who wor-

ship the same gods may not. Instead, they may give to the poor or make a donation to a local temple or church only when they can or when they think of it. They may even give such a donation to people in need or to support a shrine or temple that has nothing to do with the pantheon of gods they worship. Such an individual may only give money when flush with cash, or may choose to contribute in some other way, like physically assisting in the building of a temple or shrine, or feeding the hungry, or protecting the church from a monster, villain, or group giving the local church trouble. Read that last one as a forceful and intimidating talk, threats, physical violence, and possibly worse to resolve the problem, as most warriors and adventurers are inclined to resolve problems with their fists and swords rather than through diplomacy.

As a general rule, most people, but particularly adventurers, warriors and knights errant, approach life with a karmic philosophy. They believe every act of kindness, goodness, and heroism is recognized by *their gods* and counts on their behalf, bringing them the favor of their deities, no matter whom they help or protect.

Since most warriors and adventurers work hard and put their lives on the line for a noble cause, fame, and fortune, most are quick to join any religious festival, especially when booze, song, dance, and merriment are involved. It doesn't matter whether it celebrates their gods or someone else's. The only exception might be a god or pantheon that is outright contradictory to their own beliefs or a sworn enemy of the gods of their pantheon. However, most people tolerate all religions and gods. They may believe their gods or church are superior, but they tolerate other people's gods and beliefs. The exceptions are members of wicked and evil cults known to worship demons or other forces of evil, who may engage in human sacrifice and other acts of cruelty and evil.

These same sentiments are reflected among the deities themselves. Much like the mortals who worship them, most gods are tolerant of other deities and pantheons, even rivals. For the most part, that includes tolerating dark gods as a simple acceptance of the duality of the universe. There is always a struggle to find balance between good and evil, order and chaos.

Yes, the different gods may be competitors for the hearts and minds of the people, but the deities seldom engage in open warfare against one another. Nor do they slaughter the other gods' followers. Instead, they try to win over people through their Champions, priests and followers, and via the occasional act of divine intervention. That said, public miracles and direct appearances by any god are exceedingly rare. More likely, when something good or seemingly miraculous happens, people of diverse faiths are all quick to attribute it to their own pantheon of gods or their favorite deity. Of course, the gods are happy to take credit for any perceived miracle(s) attributed to them, whether they actually had anything to do with it or not. After all, it's good public relations.

If they can get away with it, most gods even take credit for the handiwork of another god's direct miracle or the heroic sacrifice of another deity's Champion. This is as simple as not correcting an incorrect presumption of who is responsible for what. Instead, they let their Champions, priests, and people, in general, interpret events as they want to see them. If that happens to give them undeserved credit for someone else's good work, so be it. Those are the types of underhanded and sneaky things the Palladium gods and their followers actively engage in. Of course, Cham-

pions, priests and zealous followers have a way of convincing themselves that it *was* their god or pantheon of gods who saved the day, whether it is true or not, and may be willing to go so far as to argue over it.

Of course, sometimes things get nasty between various religious groups and churches, with one or more sabotaging and working against the other. This is not a friendly rivalry; this is subtle, subversive political war. And sometimes literal, bloody war. The gods don't usually involve themselves in such conflicts, but they don't discourage them either. They just stand back and await the outcome. Zealous beliefs also can lead to all kinds of injustice and persecution in the name of a god or pantheon, and are seldom encouraged or endorsed by any, except wicked, deities.



The Divine Garden

The Garden is a place of boundless beauty and mythical energy. A realm unto itself, it is more than just a collection of interesting statues and stones. No one knows who carved the statues, and changes to the Garden of the Gods seem to occur even without the hand of man. The topography slowly shifts, plants grow or wither at unusual speed, and statues sometimes appear and disappear as gods are forgotten and rediscovered in the outside world. Areas that look like little lawns or parks from afar may stretch for a mile or more once one is inside its area of the Garden, and the mountain at its center appears to be nothing more than a small hill when visiting it.

The gods are said to be watching, and some believe they are present in spirit, so most visitors are on their best behavior when visiting the Garden. Moreover, there is no telling who may be a deific avatar, or a priest able to call down divine vengeance, or a Champion happy to fight on behalf of his deity. Rumors and stories of magic, miracles, and divine enlightenment further this reputation for the unknown and mysterious, and often the verification of strange events comes from a fellow visitor or a caretaker who vanishes without a trace, never to be seen again. People who come to the Garden are generally more introspective, seeking answers and guidance, so any encounter, no matter how ordinary, is given extra weight by them. All of which makes anything that occurs in the Garden suspect by naysayers and many outsiders.

Yet it cannot be denied there are many acts of kindness and charity that take place within the Garden that would be rare to

find in the outside world. Sometimes wealthy nobles, knights or religious officials visit the Garden expressly with the purpose of doing good deeds, all in the hopes of winning the favor of the gods in a place where they are said to be watching.

Dreams and Visions, Voices and Visitations

How does one identify and measure communication with the gods?

Some visitors to the Garden claim to have long dialogues with their gods, and they may, but it is likely to be more their own imaginings than reality. Most gods never make direct contact or communicate with the people who worship them, not even Priests. The greater the deity's notoriety and number of worshippers, the less likely the god is to make direct contact with a mortal or interfere in their affairs. Mainly because it has plenty of followers and power, and doesn't need to recruit more. And though the gods are reputed to be more likely to hear you in the Garden of the Gods than anywhere else, even if true, they are not likely to respond or appear directly. If there is any response or communion at all, it is likely to be subtle and open to interpretation.

Any Caretaker in the Garden can tell you it is difficult to discern when a deity has reached out and touched a mortal. After all, where does any idea or inspiration come from? What drives us flesh and blood mortals to explore and wonder about the world and our place in it? What is the difference between coincidence and divine intervention? Was that idea or decision entirely your own, or was that moment of clarity or decisiveness a little push from a deity? Ever think, "Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time?" In the Palladium World, that impulse could have been a tiny spark from a well intentioned or mischievous god. Or an evil force speaking to the person's weakness, anger, or greed, to deliberately lead that person astray or to cause suffering for him or those around him. Or any of it could have been an impulse or rash decision made on the part of the person all by himself. That's how subtle the influence of the Palladium gods – good, selfish or evil – can be upon any person.

Dreams

Dreams are the most common method the gods use to reach out to visitors within the Garden. Though deities do not physically manifest in or around the Garden of the Gods so it is said, a deity may appear and speak to a chosen individual in a dream, trance, or vision. Many of those who have spent the night within the Garden recall waking to strange sights and sounds, sometimes even to a conversation with a nameless stranger, only to awaken again, later that morning, right where they went to sleep, never certain if their experiences were a dream or part of waking reality.

Dreams may seem real or they may be surreal and highly symbolic and difficult to understand, with metaphors and representations whose meanings must be *interpreted*. Sometimes they are flashes of images and sounds, accompanied by a sudden insight or a realization that may not happen until much later on or a chance encounter with someone or a place from the dream.

The vast majority of *visits with gods* in the Garden occur within dreams or waking visions (see below), rather than face to face.

Even then, deities are likely to appear in the form of an animal, a stranger whose face is cloaked in shadow, a ball of light, a talking tree, a pillar of fire, an angel, or even as a disembodied voice floating on the wind. The dream visage of the god may also be that of an earthly avatar or agent such as a priest or seer who the dreamer met at the Garden, or as someone familiar to the dreamer who speaks from authority or with compassion and encouragement. This could be a deceased loved one or a long dead ancestor come to guide and help their relative or friend, but whether this is a true vision from a deity or the stuff of fantasy brought about by being in such an enchanting environment, is impossible to say. Then again, what mortal can measure how a god might choose to inspire them?

Advice, inspiration, a sudden realization, and taking action in one's life makes up the message of most dreams. The average visitor to the Garden of the Gods is in search of enlightenment, answers, lost cultures, purpose, and mysteries to untangle. Gods, especially those eager to be rediscovered, are happy to entice mortals to act upon age-old revenge against their enemies, inspire good deeds, slay monsters, and to empower their Champions and chosen people/races. They also generally interact with visitors based upon their personality and alignment. Evil gods tend to haunt or worry good characters and encourage evil ones, while virtuous gods seem to attempt to frighten away evildoers and enoble crusaders and warriors who fight in the name of a just cause or the cause of that particular deity. Heroes often arrive at the Garden seeking crusades, quests and opportunities to help others and advance goodness. Villains seek personal rewards, wealth and power at the expense of others or to advance chaos and wickedness.

Waking Visions

Waking visions are very similar to dreams, only they occur while the subject is awake, conscious, and at least somewhat aware of what is happening, or what just happened. There are many places in the Garden where waking visions are said to occur: overlooks, forest clearings, meadows, flowering fields and gardens, and natural displays of beauty, as well as at the foot of one of the Garden's statues of a god. This may happen while in prayer to the god in question or while engaged in a religious ceremony, or idyll musings, or out of the blue. Depending on a person's sincerity, focus, or connection to the divine, or just pure chance, there may be an immediate reaction from one of the deities represented by a statue.

Outside stimuli is another method of receiving visions and insight, presumably by a god. Some clergy and caretakers may offer visitors food or drink or incense that has been drugged or enchanted to induce a vision (or nightmare). Fasting may also lead to visions. Some gods are believed to require a small offering of meat, alcohol, fruit, vegetables, or the sacrifice of a small animal or the worshiper's own blood even if it is just a finger prick. But for many others, the serenity and beauty of the Garden is enough to evoke an inspirational dream or a waking vision.

While dreams may have a narrative or ongoing motif, visions are often brief encounters, an epiphany caused by something someone says or something glimpsed in the Garden, or a static image that flashes in the visitor's mind or before his very eyes. Words and sounds, images and shapes, and a chance, singular encounter with a man, woman, or child, priest, traveler, Faerie,

animal, tree, flower, or a seemingly extraordinary radiance or shadow, cloud, or unexpected memory (and the emotions that come with it) that provides meaning, insight, peace, or motivation, or which evokes a daydream, image, or epiphany that has a profound emotional impact upon its recipient, is said to have been a message – even a waking vision – sent from a god. Such a vision and the emotions, realization, or resolve that may come upon a person may happen anywhere, at any time, within the Garden. And often when it is least expected: turning a corner, looking at a flower or pond, gazing at the stars or up into the sky, in the face of a stranger, or sitting, standing barefoot, or lying upon the cool grass. Sometimes the vision is little more than a silhouette bathed in a beam of sunlight or a brief, meaningful conversation, the sweet song of a bird, or the sound of distant music carried upon the wind but the source of which is never identified. The visitor having the vision or encounter blinks or turns away for a moment, and the vision ends and the deity’s messenger is gone, but the moment has weight, and is taken to be a divine message, omen, muse, or prophecy. An image, sound, or handful of cryptic words can go a long way for someone who came looking for meaning or purpose, or divine inspiration. These are the dreamlike moments and waking visions most people report.

The most profound waking visions are exactly what most people expect them to be. Often it is only perceptible to a single person in a group. That person sees his/her god or images played out before him like a movie playing across the sky. The images and sound – sometimes just one or the other, and sometimes accompanied by scents – are said to fill up the entire sky and thunder across the landscape before the recipient’s eyes. Some report it is as if they were swept away to another place and time. Others claim time freezes for everyone around him, while the deity speaks only to him or reveals a vision to him. While the vision recipient is held spellbound in the majesty of the divine and the importance of the words and/or images dancing before him, the people all around him experience no such thing. And though the waking vision may last for several minutes, when it ends, only a split second has passed in the real world.

Other times, a waking vision lasts but a few seconds or a minute or two: A beautiful maiden or warrior, or a magnificent flower that opens before the viewer’s eyes, or perhaps radiant with light or some other momentary image or reflection that could be just as much a trick of light, or a momentary hallucinatory image like a mirage that vanishes with a turn of your head, or fades before your eyes like a rainbow. And it all takes place before anyone else can see it. That image and sounds, or words, however, has (or will have) some significance to the person who saw it. Or the vision is a sharp, clean image – a face, a landmark, an insignia, a symbol, a moment in time – and may be accompanied by a single spoken word, phrase, sentence, music or sound(s) that may be straightforward and clear, or cryptic or without meaning until seen again later in the real world.

Why the gods seem to enjoy being mysterious and cryptic in what they reveal in words and imagery is anyone’s guess. It may have more to do with a disconnect between mortals and the divine that distorts the message or is beyond the senses and full comprehension of even the wisest of mortals. So that face, landmark, insignia or fleeting image may come with a name or statement. **For example**, let’s say the image appears like a moving holographic projection displaying a beautiful maiden smiling sweetly as she plucks a flower. In the vision a man (or monster) appears

out of nowhere and strikes her or pushes her to the ground, before looking up so the person getting the vision can see his (or its) face. Then, the vision is gone as quickly and unexpectedly as it appeared. But before it faded, or while the scene was unfolding, like a snippet from a movie, the vision-seer hears the words, “Save her.” “She must be rescued.” “Stop him.” Or, “The wickedness must end.” Or, “She (or he) is the key.” Or, “She (or he) holds the answers you seek.” Or even something more enigmatic, “Light blossoms from the darkness,” or, “Where love blooms there is hope if given the time.” Or it may speak the name of the woman or the man (or monster), or the name of a place, and nothing more. Or there may be a particular sound (chirping crickets, cicadas, birds, laughter, running water, wind, a piece of music), or no words or sounds at all.

The recipient of this **waking vision** may know the people in it, or not. Usually not, in which case, he may discover later who one or more of these people may be via a chance encounter or at a public event, or in a conversation, or in a picture or a book, etc. More likely it will be through a chance encounter. But remember, what is seen and heard in the vision can be interpreted in many ways. While it is natural for most of us reading the example above, to immediately assume the woman is innocent and in trouble, she could be the evil and dangerous one. Or they could be lovers, or siblings, and countless other possibilities. So people who receive any type of vision – waking, dreaming, or otherwise – must always be cautious about how *they interpret* what they see, hear, and think it means. This is even fuzzier and less reliable when the vision is a symbolic omen where sounds, images, colors, and symbols may all have meaning and demand interpretation.

Sometimes waking visions (and dreams) may also show a battle scene or an image of ... well, anything: A robbery or mugging, a party at a castle or tavern, a street festival, two men facing each other in a duel, a fire, a storm, a religious ceremony, a ritual, a mage or monster casting magic, someone in jeopardy, someone happy or sad, an animal, a location (be it a famous building, mountain, forest or landmark, near or far, or completely unknown), or the face of a friend or an enemy, or a stranger, and so on; with or without words and sounds. **Note:** In game play, Game Masters should take full advantage of such images, words, clues, riddles, insight, and messages. Have fun with it, but also try to use this divine resource to inspire and help the player characters, not mess with their minds or confuse and frustrate them.

Voices and Sounds

Voices and sounds are the most ethereal and mysterious messages from the gods, often mistaken for, or explained away as, the sound of the wind, music being sung or played in the distance, Faerie trickery, or the conversation of strangers nearby but unseen behind a hedge or in the next area of the Garden. Gods that are weak, fading from memory or long-forgotten, may only be able to reach out to mortals through faint whispers. This hushed voice may be the last few shreds of their power before they vanish back into nothingness. The Garden is also full of the voices of stronger and more substantial deities calling out amidst the songs of birds, serenading crickets, children at play, flowing water, and wind dancing among the leafy branches of the trees. The voices of the gods speak in countless languages. Many of them long dead, though gods have the means to speak any language,

and often possess psychic and spiritual communication capabilities that enable them to reach out to mortals regardless of their native tongue, and touch not just the ears or the mind, but emotions as well.

Like the dream visions and waking visions, the voice may come in a dream, where it will be loudest, or while the recipient of the message is awake, where it will be a soft whisper. It may simply say a person's name, place, or object, or share a simple message of encouragement, warning, or insight. "The Library of Bletherad." "To the Empire of Sin." "The Olympiad you must attend (or enter and compete)." "There is another way." "Trust your heart." "No good can come from your current path." "Vengeance is not justice." "Trust your companions." "Don't trust your companion." "Don't be swayed by others, you know what is right." "Honor your heritage." "Danger comes from the north." "Seek the truth." "Beware the one who wears the feathered crown." And so on. By the way, some statement like, "Beware (or don't trust) the Black Dragon," could mean a knight, prince, priest, etc., whose symbol is that of a black dragon or who might be a priest or worshiper of Dragonwright, specifically Styphon the Black; or it could mean a living, fire-breathing dragon our hero has yet to meet or has met in the past.

Divine Visitation

The rarest of encounters in the Garden of the Gods is a *divine visitation*. This usually involves meeting someone helpful and wise or tough and insightful, whom you later realize was probably an agent or an avatar of a particular god disguised as a caretaker, pilgrim, blind beggar, warrior, healer, thief, mage, farmer, visitor, or local. Only it turns out he or she is not a local or is someone who died! In some cases, the person experiencing a divine visitation knows or suspects this stranger is a messenger or avatar of a god, but that is the exception, not the rule. Most people who experience a divine visitation do not realize it until circumstance and impossible coincidence points to this miracle. Such a realization may occur hours, days, even years later and is slowly pieced together. In other cases, the truth is never realized or denied as impossible. ("But that would mean ... but that's impossible, right?")

A divine visitation is believed to be most likely to occur on or near the anniversary of an important event, or when something good, bad, or important is about to happen. But sometimes it takes the right person (often the least obvious person) to visit the Garden for a deity to make an appearance in whatever form the god may choose.

It is important to understand that it has been mutually agreed by the deities, themselves, that the gods are *unable to manifest themselves as supernatural beings* within the neutral grounds of the Garden. Thus, a giant, glowing deity with a booming voice and crackling energy or other immortal form can NOT appear in the Garden of the Gods. Hence the visions and voices and dream contact. However, powerful and popular gods, as well as the weak ones hoping to be rediscovered in the Garden as they slowly fade to nothingness, are said to be able to temporarily create physical, seemingly mortal, **avatars** from nothing. This avatar may look like any normal person or animal, or in the full visual likeness and regalia associated with the god as recognized by mortals. This person or animal avatar (which can talk) has no supernatural abilities and appears as an ordinary mortal, not a god. Of course,

when the deity is done, he or she can vanish in the blink of an eye, as if it were a ghost.

Though a more invasive form of a divine visitation, the deity may temporarily commandeer the body of a mortal person or animal through which to speak. This can be a trusted companion or a complete stranger, or animal. This is not possession in the usual sense, as the Garden's benign energy makes *possessions* extremely rare, but rather a temporary "borrowing" of a mortal's body and voice with which to speak and convey a message. This means in most cases, the person through which the deity speaks, realizes that an unearthly force wants to speak through him! This chosen individual retains the use of his body and limbs, can think and act clearly, and, like a medium, can ask the "force" to identify itself. The god then speaks through him.

The deity is likely to try to avoid scaring people by identifying itself as a "friend" or "helper," or it may reveal its divine identity. ("I am Od, and I have reason to speak to X. Will you allow it?") At this point, only the person through which the deity wants to speak, hears the god, and must give the deity permission to use his or her body as a vessel through which to speak. An honor, in and of itself, if the voice can be believed. If the person agrees, the deity speaks through him. That person can hear and remember the conversation and knows he is speaking in the voice of another being – of a god. The mortal vessel can continue to think and move of his own free will and is not panicked by this strange event. Only his voice has been commandeered. The voice is different than the person's own speaking voice and may have an accent and peculiar or different way of speaking. The voice either addresses one particular person or the entire player group, and may identify itself as a specific deity at the onset, or at the end of the visitation. ("So says Kym-Nark-Mar.")

The deity is able to speak and converse as if it was present, because it is, but speaking through a mortal is taxing for that individual and can only be maintained for 3-6 minutes. A physical avatar, on the other hand, can stay for 1-6 hours at a time and reappear when the deity so desires. Both types of divine visitations can only take place inside the Garden of the Gods, though they are rare. **Note:** The possessing deity or avatar vanishes the moment the person steps out of the Garden, or when the god has said his piece, whichever comes first.

The people who experience divine visitation are considered blessed, or chosen (and sometimes cursed). Those familiar with the Garden's ways may look to them for leadership or advice. And though people may look to them for further messages and communications from the gods(s), it is not likely to ever happen again.

Who are chosen for a divine visitation? You never know. That is up to fate and the gods. All the classic methods for inducing visions may be used, including meditation, fasting, labor-induced exhaustion, sweat lodges, sensory deprivation, the use of herbs, animal toxins, and drugs, or any combination of them. Any technique or substance known to knock down mental walls, reduce inhibitions, cause hallucinations, and make a person more open and receptive to the supernatural and enlightenment, is believed to increase the odds of seeing or hearing something supernatural inside the Garden.

It should also be noted that certain gods are said to be stronger at certain times of the day or night, or year, or during seasons or on holy days associated with that being or what they symbolize. And even gods who like to inspire and guide (or manipulate)

mortals, especially those who worship them, may be busy with their own affairs for years, decades or centuries at a time. If pilgrims or adventurers are familiar with the rites of the god from whom they seek a sign or insight, many believe it gives them a huge advantage reaching out to that god(s), so a little research could go a long way. But there is no hard evidence any of this is true or works.

How many of these experiences are legitimate contact with a deity, and how many are visitors reading more into their experience due to their desire to believe, is anyone's guess. The latter is most likely. That said, their experience, however it was induced, and whether real or imagined, remains special, and evidence to them that they have been "touched by the divine." It is true, because they believe it is true, and they see an omen or find insight, wisdom, purpose, or a quest as a result of their experience, or interpretation of it. To them, it could not be the result of simple self-reflection or deep thought, it must be the divine.

Most visitors to the Garden of the Gods enjoy serene and inspiring moments, and feel like they have experienced something special and worthwhile regardless of what happens. However, the vast majority never experience a genuine *divine visitation*, *vision*, or *dream*. Not even if they are kings and nobles, renowned heroes, clergy, or worthy pilgrims who visit the Garden hundreds of times. The same is true of the caretakers, some of whom practically live on site.

Of those who do have a vision or divine visitation, most of them never expected one, and stumble across the mystical experience or an encounter with living mythology all on their own.

For those who have tried for years to contact a god and failed, attempting to use other people as a medium is more likely an opportunity for charlatans and con artists to take advantage of them. There is no priest, mage, or psychic who has a direct line to the gods. The deities do as they will.

For the majority of pilgrims who make the trip and do not experience visions or visitations, they are satisfied to have simply stood in the presence of the gods. Still others visit to collect the tales of people who claim to have witnessed miracles and wonders in the Garden where the gods are said to visit.

A mission from god

As you can see, the Garden of the Gods is a fountain of inspiration. In its own subtle way, it is full of leads and insight for lost causes and individuals in search of purpose. Of course, a visit to the Garden of the Gods, regardless of the length of one's stay, frequency of visits, piety, and good intentions, is no guarantee of finding anything of interest or spiritually moving, especially if the gods sense some sort of ulterior motive. However, chance encounters with fellow visitors might.

Between the Garden of the Gods and the Lopanic Games, throngs of people from all corners of the world visit the fabled Garden and the nearby towns and central port cities. This has turned Lopan into quite the hub for the latest news and gossip about world events, war, and political intrigue. All information that is helpful to knights, mercenaries, and adventurers in search of wrongs to right, battles to join, quests, and opportunities. Likewise, nobles and the wealthy send emissaries to recruit adventurers for missions of all kinds, all over the world. This may involve

quests for treasure, monster hunting, bringing evildoers to justice, safeguarding good and legal operations, scouting, research, acts of revenge, searches into the unknown, the acquisition of ancient relics and magic, to piracy, thievery, the nefarious, and everything in between.

There are also plenty of quiet intrigues, hidden ruins, groups of eldritch non-humans, and mysteries to explore on the enigmatic island of Lopan and the regions surrounding it at the center of the world, i.e. locations like Phi, Ophid's Grassland, the shores of the northern Old Kingdom Lowlands, the Eastern Territory, the Disputed Lands, the Great Northern Wilderness, and even the Empire of Sin is not all that far away. All accessible by ship and magic for those willing to make the journey.

For those blessed or lucky enough to glean mystical insight from the Garden, whether directly or indirectly, their source of motivation or sense of purpose may indeed come from the gods in the form of a dream, vision, words, sounds, sights, or symbology as interpreted by that individual. As previously noted, messages and instructions from the gods may be incomplete or cryptic, and must be untangled by the recipient. "Find the cave at the foot of the blood drenched mountains facing east in the Old Kingdom where the Orcs gather," or "Seek out an island in the waters east of Timiro, with jade shores and a great sundial amidst a lagoon." What does any of that mean and where could that be? Figuring that out could become an adventure in and of itself, as might the journey to get there.

Lost gods and lost causes go hand in hand. The Garden of the Gods is full of fading and forgotten deities in need of an avenger or a Champion, or more followers. Many gods were struck down in ages past by dragons, champions, armies, competing religions, and gods that still exist today. The power of some fading and forgotten gods has dwindled as their followers fell in numbers, were hunted down or lost their faith, and those gods may still burn for revenge against the gods/religion that displaced them, or long for a comeback, though their fall might have happened thousands or tens of thousands of years ago. All of this may lead to help from that god if the mortals' actions raise the deity's power level, garner new followers, or undermine that old rival or enemy.

In addition to quests, causes, and the search for lost artifacts, the gods may also bear more personal messages. They can help an individual come to terms with personal problems or weaknesses, or provide closure to an unresolved issue or past failing. The gods can often see into the minds and hearts of men, and can sometimes perceive a mortal's past and potential future as well. This makes them excellent counselors, as long as their interests and those of whom they are advising are one and the same. Untrustworthy gods can cause all sorts of mayhem by abusing the faith mortals have in their divine nature. Friendly and sympathetic deities are generally happy to help people find enlightenment, purpose and joy, especially when they are followers or champion the deity's cause. This is particularly true of forgotten gods eager to regain their place in the world of mortals. They long to have their voices heard and to be remembered and worshiped once again. For normal pilgrims who visit the Garden without a further agenda in mind, this kind of wisdom is usually what they seek, rather than Rune Weapons, magic, fame, prophecies of power, or the secrets of ancient, lost civilizations.

Following Signs from the Gods

Below are a number of *optional tables* that can be used to generate quests, missions, insight, and inspiration for those who seek them in the Garden of the Gods. Game Masters may roll percentile dice for random determination or make deliberate selections.

Step One: Random Insight Tables

G.M.s, roll once on the random insight table, then once on the corresponding secondary table for completely random insights, or select the ones that seem to fit the characters, campaign, or setting best. To determine where a lost city, treasure trove, missing individual, or object is located, either pick a location to suit the god, campaign, or players, or use the random location table present at the end of the Random Insight section.

Roll on this table first, to determine which table to roll on next (or pick one, and go to that table).

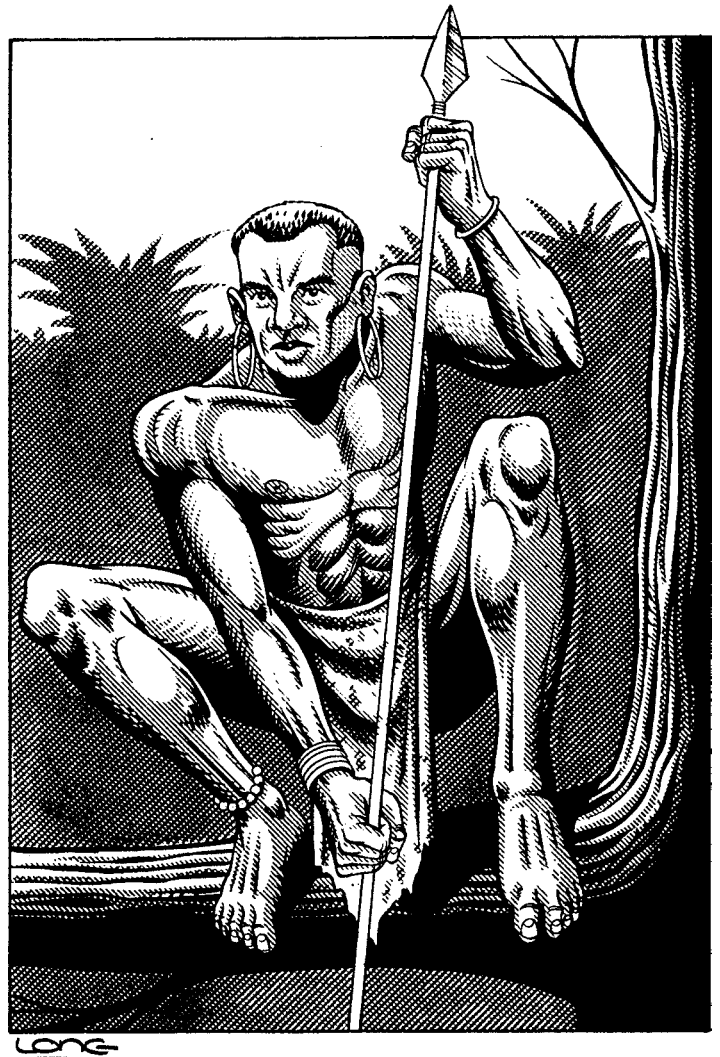
- 01-10% **Forgotten Tribe**
- 11-20% **Ancient Ruins and Lost Civilizations**
- 21-30% **The Lost**
- 31-40% **Forgotten Island, Valley, or Lost Lands**
- 41-50% **Lost Treasure**
- 51-60% **Arcane Knowledge**
- 61-70% **A Mission/Quest from a God**
- 71-80% **Restoration of a Church**
- 81-90% **Path of Revenge or Justice**
- 91-95% **Means of Divine Restoration**
- 96-00% **Personal Revelation**

Design Note: These tables are full of adventure hooks spawned by the Garden of the Gods. Create your own adventures using these tools or from your own imagining. Listen to your players and the needs and desires of their characters for additional ideas for adventure. What follows are just some possibilities.

01-10% **Forgotten Tribe**

Somewhere in the remote wilderness or on an unmapped isle is a group of followers of one of the Garden's gods. They are mostly cut-off from the outside world, and probably have been for some time. They need some sort of help.

01-14% Primitive People: There are many remote highlands, hills, mountains, badlands, deserts, jungles and deep forests in the Palladium World that hide small tribes and bands of people (humans, Elves, Dwarves, Titans, and others) that have been isolated from modern people, civilization and culture as a whole. Some of these groups are tiny civilizations unto themselves, but others are stuck in a stone-age, tribal existence, probably reliant upon muscle and primitive weapons or magic to protect themselves and keep the harsh wilderness at bay. Whatever their lifestyle, they are likely to be highly



xenophobic and suspicious of outsiders, even people of their same race/species.

15-28% Elves of a Different Era: There are groups of Elves that retreated away from the world at various points in history, most notably following the Elf-Dwarf War, and others who have isolated themselves in ages since, like the Millennium of Purification, seeking to preserve their old culture and way of life in a world where humans and other people outnumber them more and more every year. Hidden citadels, fog-shrouded islands, oasis-forts, remote jungle or mountain retreats, and spectacular secret cities built into mountains or tucked away in remote valleys, are all the kinds of places where Elves might go to separate themselves from the world at large.

29-42% Forgotten Dwarves: With their subterranean nature, there are countless places on the Palladium World where small villages to entire cultures of Dwarves could still exist. Underground cave systems, inactive lava tubes, and cities carved out of solid rock are all known shelters of Dwarves, but mountains and rocky terrain of any kind also play to their natural advantages. Dwarves are very skilled at hiding the entrances to these kinds of habitations, however, and at defending them once they discover intruders or believe themselves to be under attack. The same is true of Kobolds and to a much lesser degree, Troglodytes.

43-56% Feral Orcs: Orcs living a traditional, hunter-gatherer existence can be found in certain backwards regions and fallen kingdoms of the Palladium World, particularly the Yin-Sloth Jungles, Baalgor Wastlands, and the periphery of the Old King-

dom. They worship old Orc and Goblin gods and know nothing of the barbarian hordes of the Old Kingdom, slavery by humans, Elves and Dwarves, or the urban poverty that defines the life of many Orcs in human-dominated regions.

57-70% Isolationist Giants: Giants usually hold smaller species in contempt, especially after generations of being hunted and persecuted by them. Almost any large population of giants will be found in some distant sanctuary, far from the civilizations of smaller folk. Some of these refuges, like Mt. Nimro, are well-known to outsiders, though their reputation protects them from intruders. The Isle of the Cyclops is probably the most famous example, spoken of in many kingdoms, but almost never glimpsed by outsiders and non-giants. **Note:** In addition to the True Giants described above, this may apply to Titans and Rahu-Men who feel out of step in time and ashamed of their past alliances with Elves, Dwarves and humans, as well as small communities of Trolls and Minotaurs, and perhaps even a giant species not commonly known.

71-84% Dying Race: There are many rare races upon the human world whose population is dwindling, from Minotaurs and Bearmen, to Centaurs and Changelings, to Gnomes and many types of Faerie Folk and elder monster races. Rather than be totally absorbed by more numerous and successful species, some of their kind have retreated back into solitude and secret communities, often just to keep their culture intact or their people safe. A disconnection from their ancient deity or a threat to one of their fragile communities or very existence could be why one of the gods of the Garden is reaching out to send heroes or champions to such long-lost people.

85-90% Patron God: These isolationists have a patron minor god, demigod, Greater Demon, dragon, witch or powerful mage that has adopted them as its followers. This deity or protector is a jealous leader, and uses its powers to keep those under its charge separate from the corrupting influence of the outside world. Developing independently from outside forces, the beliefs and practices of this tiny culture, village or cult may be quite strange and extreme, especially to foreigners seeing them for the first time. Worse, their godly patron or powerful protector has become a despot tyrant or insane tormentor or enslaver, which is why a deity is trying to dispatch heroes to help these forgotten souls.

11-20% Ancient Ruins and Lost Civilizations

The history of the Palladium World is long, rich, and steeped in mystery. Civilizations have risen and fallen. Ages of magic and war, persecution and prosperity, have come and gone. Just as there are statues of forgotten gods, there are a countless number of lost civilizations and forgotten people. The ruins of their civilization, gods and magic can be found anywhere ... if you know where to look or happen to stumble upon them. Ancient people and secrets and treasure that sometimes reach through the sands of time to influence the heroes and people of today.

A lost city, temple, catacomb, or ruins buried (or partially buried) by the dust of eons past. These ruins could contain treasure, forgotten relics, magic, weapons, secrets, and ancient danger ready to reemerge. Or just evidence of a civilization long gone. It is lost for a reason, whether that it has been physically buried, overgrown with vegetation, partially destroyed by war or calamity, or because it has a dark history best left forgotten and undis-

turbed. Whatever the case, there are likely to be all manner of challenges and dangers to overcome to reach it. There may be savage bands of barbarians or bandits, Orcs and other monster races, or monstrous creatures, dangerous animals, and geological obstacles. And all too often, demons and monsters of the past being unearthed for the first time in millennia.

01-13% A Sea Port in the Desert (or plains or forest or buried inside a hill): Once a harbor on a glittering sea, this port's watery claim to existence dried up long ago, and now its docks sit high over a mud-caked flat that used to be a vast lake, wide river, or part of the sea. The mostly buried skeletons of ships and boats rest on the dry, cracked ground, sails long gone, many of their timbers disintegrated over the ages, leaving only the thickest wooden beams and bits of metal. The remains of old storehouses, like the contents that may have filled the belly of some vessels, are buried under the earth, and the remains of the past, even treasure, could be exposed any time there is an earthquake or a flash flood.

14-26% Fallen Splendor: Once a majestic city, this sprawling ruin probably dates from before the Elf-Dwarf War, or possibly from the semi-mythical time of the Prestida Kings. Marble floors and beautiful mosaics are covered in dust and half-buried in sand, and these ruins stretch for miles. Everything could be covered in an age-old layer of ash, dirt, or mud, however, depending on what disaster befell this former jewel. Palaces, marketplaces, and countless common homes are crumbling back into the earth.

27-39% Overgrown City Ruins: Deep within a forest or jungle are the remains of a culture that once ruled over this land. Any wooden edifices have rotted away, leaving only buried stone foundations in their passing. Large portions of stone or brick homes and buildings have crumbled or tumbled down to the forest floor; some sunken back into the earth. Only the city's walls, watchtowers, temples and largest stone structures remain at least partially intact, and they have become wrapped and covered in the thick tangle of centuries of vines and lost amongst the thickening trees and dense tapestry of vegetation. Moss and vine covered monoliths and statues are likewise hidden among the overgrowth or tumbled down to the forest floor. Any tunnels hidden amongst roots lead down to ancient crypts and chambers, and it is difficult to tell in places where the forest begins and the ruins end.

40-52% Buried Temple: A grand temple or cathedral from a different time is buried in centuries of mud, rising earth, or shifting sands. Mounds and hilltops are likely to be the tombs of old buildings and towers hidden beneath their hulking forms, and a little digging will be all it takes to reach an old door or window that leads down into the largest hill to reveal the halls of a forgotten temple complex. What monsters, magic, mysteries, or treasure may lay in wait inside its forgotten bowels is there for the bold to discover.

53-65% Crumbling Castle: A fortress that used to lord over its surroundings, this castle keep and shattered walls succumbed to a siege or fire many generations past. Its ruined walls are indefensible against any serious army, but this old fortification is a perfect hideout for thieves or monsters, or could be turned into a temporary base camp for mercenary warriors or adventurers exploring or working in the region. Its crumbling walls can be reinforced with lumber, mud bricks, or stone, but it would take years and a small army of builders to even begin to restore the castle and its many sections of toppled defensive walls.

Dark magic or a curse might have been responsible for the castle's undoing, however, and it may still maintain its hold on the place, or a new threat may have taken up residence. And any location that saw the slaughter of its inhabitants or a mighty clash of armies may be haunted by ghosts and evil spirits. Such places do not give up their secrets easily, and underground chambers, crypts, or tunnels below the depths of the castle's dungeon, and yet to be discovered, may still contain its dangerous secrets, demons, magic, or treasure.

66-78% Abandoned Monastery or Mountain Stronghold: High upon a mountain, seaside cliff or sitting upon some ancient hill or crossroads, this impressive structure used to be a monastery, church, holy place or mountain refuge. It could have been defiled or partially destroyed in some great battle, or its faithful may have perished or simply walked away in the aftermath of a plague, fire, or loss of their devotion.

79-91% An Underground City: This one-time thriving city of ages past had to be abandoned when water levels rose or diminished, or a river shifted its course, or agricultural resources dried up, or fell to some kind of disaster, earthquake, famine, plague, invasion, dark magic, or evil force, making its residents leave or leading to their demise.

This is most likely a Dwarven or Kobold city of old, but it could be an underground city built by ancient Minotaurs, humans (a secret base or community), Changelings (a hiding place/refuge), or even Elves, or a forgotten race of people whose existence stretches back tens of thousands of years. If the construction is crude, the simple chambers and tunnels might be the handiwork of ancient Goblins, Ratlings, Troglydites, Maxpary, or other species barely remembered or completely forgotten. What monsters, magic, mysteries, or treasure may lay in wait inside its forgotten bowels is there for the bold to discover. Or this underground habitat may have been found and inhabited many times by many different people over the millennia. What ghosts, monsters, magic, mysteries, or treasure it may have held may be long gone or still waiting to be found.

92-00% Sunken City: A thriving city in ages past, this site had to be abandoned when water levels rose, a river shifted its course, an Earthquake pulled it underwater, or some kind of evil magic created a devastating deluge. Only the spires and rooftops of the tallest buildings now extend up from the water, the rest of the city, parts of it collapsed, rests at the bottom of the lake, river or sea. Buildings and toppled ruins are mixed in amongst seaweed and silt, just a few feet below the surface; the water no more than 40-60 feet deep (12.2 to 18.3 m). Statues look upward at the world they once knew, sharks and groupers and the occasional sea monster lurk in doorways or peer out from beneath collapsed roofs. Treasures lost here are probably still unlooted, though anything that dissolves or rots or rusts in water will have decayed long ago.

21-30% The Lost

With their incredible powers and perspective, gods are able to hear the pleas and prayers of those in need. Few pray harder than those who have been lost or cut off from their families, friends, or from civilization as a whole. In the alternative, this table may apply to a seemingly lost cause, unless it can find support or heroes to champion it.

01-10% Lost Innocent: A baby, toddler, child, group of children, or a mentally challenged innocent (an elder with dementia, a severely autistic teen or adult, etc.) has gone missing and is believed lost, kidnaped, or worse! In this world of magic and monsters, cults and villains, the missing could have simply wandered off and lost their way, or been kidnaped, perhaps as an act of vengeance or held for ransom, or taken for some other nefarious purpose: prey to be eaten, or for human sacrifice, enslaved, tortured, or other malicious reason. If there are signs of a struggle or other victim left injured or dead where they lay, the worst should be expected. However, being lost and alone in the wilderness can be just as dangerous for the innocent and people not prepared for such an environment. Not the least of which includes danger from wild animals, monsters, Faerie Folk, bandits, wicked travelers, the elements, and the environment (ravines and trenches, fallen trees and rivers, bogs and so on).

The prayers of the innocent (or the loved ones who fear for them) may be heard by a god who may take pity and send help through the Garden of the Gods or a priest, hero, or someone looking for a sign or purpose. Of course, those looking for the lost innocent may have to face one or more of the dangers themselves before the child or innocent person can be found and rescued.

11-20% Kidnaped Bride or Groom: Potential brides are sometimes kidnaped by an overzealous would-be-suitor, powerful noble, jealous rival, or wicked individual. Romantic rivals, stalkers, madmen, and members of the monster races might try to take a woman, or man, betrothed to another before they are married, or just newly married. Spurred on by jealousy, madness, or revenge, they may kidnap and run away with the bride or groom to keep as their mate, whether the person wants this or not. (Usually, not!) This can also apply to teens, men and women, stolen to be forced into marriage by barbarians, members of the monster races, particularly Ogres, and other savages who sometimes steal women who are forcibly married to the kidnaper, or forced into bondage and captivity as a slave or for the purpose of bearing children. In the case of monsters, the person may be taken as a slave or plaything to work and serve them, for carnal pleasure against the victim's will, and other foul purposes. Carried off in secret and probably overpowered, the captive's only hope is a desperate prayer to any god who might be listening.

It should also be noted that in certain societies of humans, Coyles, Orcs, Adram and some tribal peoples, the male takes/kidnaps the unmarried female of his desire to be made his bride. This is usually a willing victim and "the taking" nothing more than tradition or ceremony and a bit of theatrics, but not always. Abductions of people of all genders, races, and species happen all the time throughout history. Such kidnappings can expand into brutal rivalries, feuds, and physical battle. Winner takes the female. One-on-one battles to win the woman who has been taken by a rival or an enemy are to the death in only 20% of the challenges. In most cases, a sound defeat is sufficient, but that depends largely on the two combatants and their cultures. In some instances, a tribal chief, elder, or Shaman intercedes to announce the winner and put an end to the fight over the bride. If stolen by a rival or enemy tribe, which is a common practice, the parents, family and friends, as well as the warriors of the entire tribe, *may* give chase to get the kidnap victim back. As you might imagine, this clash of warring clans or tribes can lead to considerable bloodshed and all-out war.

21-30% Knight for Ransom: After a battle, many common soldiers are executed, forced into slavery, imprisoned, or simply driven off as a bothersome rabble. Knights and nobles and sometimes important members of the clergy, however, carry a high value, and are often captured to be sold back to their own family or kingdom. Clad in chains and locked away in a dungeon or a cage at a war camp, the captive must wait for word to be sent and the ransom to be paid, before the victim(s) is returned to their army, homeland or family; a process that could take months. And if no ransom is forthcoming, only the gods can save them from their fate, as most captive Knights, Paladins and heroes are either slain or stripped of everything and put into slavery.

31-40% Captured Priest or Priestess: Many monasteries and churches go basically undefended, reliant upon the favor of the gods and respect for religion to protect them. Barbarians and apostates have no qualms against violating religious sanctity, however, and delicate targets are often raided, their followers carried away, and holy treasures pillaged. Any unfortunate souls taken prisoner might be ransomed back to the church, if it is wealthy enough, but could just as easily be forced into slavery or held as potential human sacrifices. While their god(s) may have forsaken them, others could be more receptive to their plight and come to their rescue.

41-50% Regretful Runaway: Many people who run away from their homes and lives do so under harried circumstances, without time to plan or prepare supplies, or knowing what to expect in the world at large. Getting lost in the wilderness, or on the cobblestone streets or back alleys of a city, is not an unlikely outcome. This individual has run from bad circumstances into worse, or has otherwise seen the error of his or her ways and is in need of help, even from distant and forgotten gods or kind strangers.

51-60% Lost Cause: This can be any person, group, town, kingdom, religion, goal or cause of good or noble intent that needs a champion. Without intervention by heroes or adventurers willing to take on impossible odds, the underdogs behind the good cause are hopelessly outmatched and likely to be squashed by the forces of evil. Whether they and their champions win or lose is up to the Game Master, clever playing, and fate (the roll of the die).

In the alternative, dark gods may seek a similar champion, cultists, group of followers, or adventurers to revive an ancient terror, a forgotten belief or cult, or bring about tragedy and harm to others. Lost causes are not always noble and good, though such well intentioned individuals may be duped into helping to unleash evil and suffering. And it may be up to heroes and adventurers to stop such evil schemes from succeeding.

61-70% Lone Survivor: The single survivor of a massacre, sacrifice, plague, war, ritual gone awry, or other disaster, is hurt, hungry, lost and alone. Whatever tragedy befell this individual, it is probably right on his heels, or the battle could be with isolation, climate, environment, or hostile creatures. At least one of the gods sees this plight, however, and is reaching out to anyone who might be able to assist or rescue the poor suffering or trapped and lost soul.

71-80% Castaway, Outcast, or Lost Champion: Lost in the dense woods, surrounded by steaming jungle, trudging through a barren desert, or floating on a piece of wreckage, those who have given up hope of rescue have no choice but to reach out to the gods. Their pleas may go unheard by active gods with huge fol-

lowings and countless enemies, but the gods fading from memory or already forgotten in the Garden have centuries to listen for faint calls and whispered prayers. They stand much to gain by recruiting new champions, adventurers, and followers, especially ones who owe them their lives. The gods cannot go after these individuals themselves, however, and must find willing *agents* to ride to the rescue for them. This is one such quest.

In the alternative, alone in the wilderness, that hermit or mysterious stranger without memory of his or her past, is more than he or she may seem. A hero (or villain) who became lost in defeat or tragedy and sought to lose himself in the wilderness or in a bottle of booze, or both. This lost soul is ready for redemption and/or the world still needs him, and one or more of the gods of the Garden have sent you and your group to find him.

81-85% Bearer of Secrets: Someone who has witnessed a dark secret at the heart of some mystery, conspiracy, or cult has made a run for his life with pursuers looking actively for him. With knives waiting around every corner, this fugitive(s) is praying to stay alive and escape those who hunt for him. What the fugitive knows is worth killing for, and anyone who helps him could become privy to valuable and dangerous information. Information that could make the adventurers become targets themselves.

86-90% Lost Treasure (or Relic): Only those who will use such a boon to the benefit of the god's wider and larger plans (good or bad) are likely to be given the clues to such a grand discovery. Whether they wittingly or unwittingly serve a greater good or impending evil, is yet to be revealed. And it is not necessarily the discoverers who will benefit from such a treasure or weapon of destruction.

91-95% Lost Magic: This ancient and lost magic secret, artifact, or weapon may be the stuff of legend or completely lost to the annals of history. However, some god in the Garden has decided, for good or ill, that it is time for this item, spell, secret, or cult to resurface. Good luck.

96-00% Lost God: For too long this deity (good, selfish or evil) has remained forgotten. It is time for a comeback. How exactly this unfolds should be dictated by the Game Master and the actions/reactions of the player characters.

31-40% Forgotten Island, Valley, or Lost Lands

This may be a land of promise, a lush paradise, a place of magic, a land of secrets, or a domain of danger, possibly kept secret by a god or Demon Lord as a haven for his or her people, or a place and people who are outcasts or chose to be forgotten. This island, mountain, or jungle valley, hidden plain, underground realm, lagoon, or mountain plateau is undiscovered and unknown by civilization (except perhaps, by a trusted few). It is a waiting gem or a land of peril for anyone who finds it. In most cases, any inhabitants, be they humans, Dwarves, Elves, Gnomes, Changelings, or other species of humanoids, known or unknown, are suspicious and wary of outsiders. And scared of what may happen if the outside world should learn of their idyllic home. **Note:** Moreover, this forgotten land is so remote and/or isolated in such an unusual location that it is almost impossible to ever find again after it is left behind. Unless stated otherwise, there is only a 5% chance of successfully returning and finding it again! This is true even if the adventurers make a comprehensive map with notes

and leave markers to follow. Some markers and landmarks get overgrown or go missing, or the landscape seems different than before and icons such as a river or lake may have moved or dried up, and seem to have vanished, etc. There could be a spell or illusion that plays a part in veiling this place of splendor and plenty.

01-15% Mining Country: A pleasant enough valley or stretch of forest in or around hills or mountains, but nothing out of the ordinary until its caves or ancient and forgotten mines are discovered. Here lies rich, mostly untapped veins of one or more minerals and precious ores. A boon to anyone, but of particular value to Dwarves, Kobolds, Alchemists and other mages who require gems to work their magic. A source of one or two of the following: Gold, silver, copper, diamonds, rubies, sapphires, emeralds, or other precious or semi-precious gems; a natural treasure in itself. 1D4+6 hours of panning for gold or digging for nuggets or gemstones provides *each participant actively mining* with gold, silver, or gems worth 1D6x100+700 in gold per day.

It should be obvious to even the most dense of characters that if word gets out about this remarkable find, it would create a gold rush effect, bringing thousands of prospectors to steal their discovery. So keeping this place a secret is of utmost importance. A secret made all the easier to keep because no matter how certain the characters may be that they can find this treasure trove again, they have only a 5% chance of successfully returning and finding it again! This is true even if they make a comprehensive map with notes and leave markers to follow. (Some go missing, get overgrown, etc.)

If there are inhabitants, odds are that they won't mind if visitors stay for a while and even take precious ore and gems away with them. There is either so much of the gems and gold or silver have little or no value to the inhabitants, that they are happy to let the "visitors" have some. They may even pay them a small fortune for simple tasks or give them a bunch of precious metal and/or gems. (Game Masters, perhaps as much as 2D6x1,000 gold for each character! But now the adventurers need to haul it back to civilization without losing it or having it stolen. And you should make them work for it.) ALL of this is on the condition that the "outsiders" are respectful of the people, their traditions and superstitions, as well as the land, and do not destroy the surrounding landscape or harm or enslave the people or the animals in the area. **FYI:** Deeper in the mine(s) may be a dragon(s), Elemental, or animals the inhabitants consider to be friends or sacred, and not to be harmed in any way. Animals outsiders might consider to be dangerous monsters and seek to destroy them. Animals that keep outsiders away from the richest veins, and may threaten, kill, and devour intruders or those who abuse their friends, i.e. the local inhabitants. If the land or animals are harmed, the inhabitants fight the intruders, incapacitate them, and remove them from this special place. Taking them a considerable distance before letting them free. If the strangers/player characters are too threatening, cruel, hostile and destructive, the local inhabitants of this lost land may have no choice but to kill them. Maybe feed them to the creatures in the mines/cave tunnels, etc. Or such a dragon(s) or monster(s) may be their protector and deal with troublemakers from the outside, personally and roughly. Players, be smart, take what you can get and leave in one piece on good terms. **Note:** These conditions may be applied to any of these lost lands.

16-30% Fertile Farmland: A lush stretch of arable farmland that seems to appear out of nowhere, probably in a valley, around an oasis or flood plain/river lowland, beyond what may

seem like a wall of stone, mountain, trees, or debris. One of the gods has set this land aside for his or her followers, or simply as a special place of beauty and serenity, before other matters took precedence. This is a place of plenty where wild wheat and corn or rice, fruit trees, and berries, and other edible plants as well as game animals, abound. It is the perfect spot to rest for a few days and re-provision, or even for starting a village or settling a group of refugees.

If inhabited, the people may be friendly and welcoming or wary and standoffish, but not outright hostile unless threatened or attacked. Any farmland and crops tended to by inhabitants are all high yield and never seem to suffer from disease or infestations.

31-45% A Verdant Paradise: This could be a sunny light forest or jungle meadow filled with flowers, fruit trees, a source of fresh drinking water, and ample game animals. It is nestled away in a mountain valley, an uncharted island, or almost any unpopulated area just beyond a dense and menacing or dead forest, harsh and desolate land, over the a hill in a desert, hidden inside a canyon or the crater of a dormant volcano, atop a mountain plateau, or as impossible as it may seem, inside an underground cavern. (The latter may be the result of magic, a pocket dimension or other phenomena.)

46-60% A Hamlet in a Valley: Rising terrain and walls of rock, or desolation, or a morbid and foreboding forest hides this secret valley and its inhabitants. A place that long ago enjoyed the protection and patronage of one of the Garden's forgotten gods. A small settlement of people (any race or mixture of people) exists here in harmony with their surroundings. While the inhabitants come and go to trade food, animal hides/furs, and perhaps herbs or other modest, natural resources from their secret valley with outsiders, they lie about their real home, which is a well kept secret. They are probably peaceful, but may harbor a dark past, or a dangerous secret such as they are Changelings, cultists who worship a forgotten or forbidden god, etc.

61-75% Cavernous Realm: An underground expanse perfect for colonization by any of the subterranean races of the Palladium World, or for use as a hideout or secret refuge by those unable to convert it into a real city or fortress. Natural caverns that stretch for miles and underground waterways both make up this lost chamber, along with two or more secret entrances and exits difficult to spot from outside. Hot springs or some other reason keep the underground at a comfortable warmth, even if the outside world is cold and hostile.

In the alternative, this could be a long abandoned city built by ancient Dwarves, Kobolds, or other people. Or it could be a pocket dimension or a portal to another world.

76-87% Island within an Enchanted Lake: Hidden by magic and mirage, there is an island within a large lake or sea that has gone undiscovered by those who walk the lake's shores. Unseeable from land or air, it takes a small boat and an act of faith to reach this island paradise, which might conceal a temple, treasure, community of Faerie Folk, a forgotten people, or even a dimensional nexus.

88-94% Distant Land or Island: Located far from shore, this island, or island volcano, or mountain peak, or mountain valley, has never been visited by outsiders. With guidance from a god(s), however, the player group is able to find it. Provided they can find the means to get there. If an island, they will need passage on a ship with a crew willing to risk the journey into unknown waters or seas known to be dangerous, and survive the lengthy journey.

Anything or anyone they find on the island is likely to predate humanity's rise to power, or at least has been isolated for several millennia and grown apart from the known world.

95-00% Inaccessible Land or Island: Perfectly visible and known to travelers, this island, mountain peak, mountain valley, or underground, has a reputation as a death trap such as dangerous reefs no vessel can navigate, monster infested waters, shrouded in mist and magic, or protected by steep, unscalable cliffs that may be said to be cursed or inhabited by demons or deadly monsters. The Land of the Damned, the Sea of Despair, and the towering peaks of the Great Northern Mountains that serve as a barrier to keep people out of the Land of the Damned, are three examples of such places, but there are other, smaller, often isolated places that also exist. Places where rumors and legends speak of death, and dangerous and unspeakable horrors await. Places that, while no one knows for certain, should be avoided or are said to harbor, or be cursed, or filled with danger and holding nothing worth the risk to visit. Anything could await intrepid adventurers and fools who should manage to visit such a frightening domain – the descendants of shipwreck survivors or those who were magically banished to the inescapable location, monsters, demons, ancient and forgotten people, forbidden or forgotten magic, a lost relic, ancient treasure, ancient shrine or temple, etc., or a combination of some or all of the above.



41-50% Lost Treasure

This category promises gold and diamonds, weapons and armor, books, spell scrolls, and rare resources, but there are many different types of treasure in life, including knowledge and wisdom, purpose and love. This secret treasure may have been

stashed away long ago when the god's believers were numerous and wealthy. It could be the legacy of ancient good or evil, or the art and treasure of a lost civilization or deity, a dangerous relic or magic item hidden to keep people safe or hidden by an evil being so that it does not benefit the worthy, and so on, hidden anywhere in the Palladium World. That often means a steamy jungle, untamed wilderness, a remote mountain top, the belly of a mountain or volcano, and other remote and mysterious places. However, it could also be hidden somewhere among modern civilization, locked away in a vault of a church, kept secret by a cult or nobleman, in a dragon's lair, or lost in some ancient catacomb few people know about deep beneath the city, or the ruins of an old Elf, Dwarf or Titan city, etc.

What true plans the god(s) may have for this treasure may or may not benefit those who unearth it. The deity(s) involved may have bigger plans for the treasure and for those who found it. Odds are it will serve a greater purpose or cause that benefits more than (or someone instead of) the player group. Still, it takes them on an epic adventure that could change lives on many different levels.

01-10% Arms and Armor – Standard Fare: The god reveals the location of a collection of normal large and small swords, spears, shields, daggers and axes. Also features 1D6+1 chain mail hauberks and 1D4 suits of chain and plate and/or 1D4 suits of splint or plate armor. All in excellent condition. Enough to supply and upgrade everyone in the group while leaving enough to sell and make 2D4x1,000 gold to help finance a mission or split among the team members. This military cache is likely to be found somewhere on or around Lopan along the coast of the Inland Sea off the shores of the Old Kingdom or Eastern Territory, or Great Northern Wilderness, but could be located at the player group's destination or near another objective as part of divine assistance on a quest.

11-20% Arms and Armor – Magic Weapons: The players are granted a vision showing them where to find 1D4+2 enchanted weapons, hidden away for heroes sent on a special quest. The weapons are to be returned where they were found when the mission is done, though the G.M. may elect to let the player group keep one or two if they earned it, and/or allow them to *borrow* the weapons if they continue to do missions for that god or pantheon.

1. Flaming Short Sword or Cutlass: Inflicts 2D6+6 damage.

2. Flaming Goupillon Flail (or Ball and Chain if preferred): Inflicts 3D6+6 damage.

3. Magic Battle Axe: Inflicts 4D6 damage and magically returns when thrown.

4. Magic War Hammer (or Mace if preferred): Inflicts 2D6 damage to normal opponents, 4D6 damage to demons and is Indestructible.

5. Three Lightning Javelins (or three arrows if preferred): Contained in an ornately carved quiver with a single eye, mountain peaks and lightning bolts. Each has one, explosive use, inflicting 1D6x10 damage and can be thrown (or fired if arrows) 50% farther than is normal. Destroyed after it is used/thrown/fired.

6. A silver plated weapon of choice, large or small: Has two Magic Weapon Properties of choice. See page 249 of the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition** for more information on magic weapons and options.

21-30% Arms and Armor – Enchanted Armor: 1D4 suits of magic armor is hidden somewhere within range of the god's divine powers of detection. Each armor magically adjusts to the

size of the wearer, provided they are roughly human sizes no larger than 9 feet (2.7 m) tall.

1. Cloak of Armor: Looks and weighs like a normal hooded cloak, but has an A.R. of 14 and 90 S.D.C. The cloak may look plain and simple or have fancy trim and even symbols or an emblem on it. If the latter, the people who find this cloak probably do not know what the symbols or emblem/crest represents (in this case add 20 more S.D.C.). G.M.s, have fun with this.

2. Leather of Armor: Looks and weighs like a normal suit of soft leather armor, but provides an A.R. 15 and 145 S.D.C.!

3. Invisible Armor: Only the wearer of the armor can see it, and only a person of good or Unprincipled alignment could see it in the first place, though it looks to be made of molded glass. Vanishes when a person of good or Unprincipled alignment puts it on. It has A.R. 15, 100 S.D.C. and is also made to be magically Lightweight (half) and Noiseless.

4. Magic Splint Armor (full suit): A.R. 16 and 180 S.D.C. (magically enhanced), and two powers of choice from the list on page 249 of the *Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition*.

31-40% Arms and Armor – Rune Weapon: The god can sense the presence of a Rune Weapon and shares this information with one or all of the player characters in the hopes of winning their favor. Wherever it is hidden, it is likely to be far away and difficult to reach, or require the defeat of a powerful guardian, monster, or mage. Lesser Rune Weapon 01-80%; Greater Rune Weapon 81-00%. Design as most appropriate to your game. See page 250 of the *Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition* for more information. In the alternative the item could be a *Holy Weapon* (see page 252 of the Fantasy RPG) and probably an ancient relic.

41-50% Scrolls and Books: Books are extremely rare and valuable in the Palladium World, whether they are scientific manuals or collections of children's tales. Libraries, academies, and the courts of kings are often willing to pay handsomely for any tomes that they can copy and add to their collections. These volumes are worth 3D6x1,000 gold to a buyer in a large city or king's court. The book may also be a source of valuable myths, legends, lore, maps, or insight about a particular church, ruling family, kingdom, region, god, pantheon, relic, curse, magic, or secrets.

If a magic scroll, it will contain a total of 1D4 spells (any from levels 1-8) and may be cast by anyone with sufficient P.P.E. and the ability to read the scroll. Typically written in Elven/Dragonese or one of the human languages.

51-60% Magic Items or Spell Scrolls – Minor: One or more of the Player Characters are shown the location of a total of 1D4+1 magic items (rings, simple crystals, magic powers, magic potions, charms/holy symbol) or 1D4+1 magic spell scrolls. Typically, the value of each magic item is 35,000 gold or less; often much less, 6,000-20,000. (See page 253 of the *Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition* for information about magic rings, charms, talismans and potions.)

In the case of spell scrolls, each scroll contains one low level spell; a level 1-5 spell invocation. (G.M.s, make it something that will be useful in this adventure or quest at some point, but not essential.) A scroll may be used by a mage to learn the incantation as part of his permanent repertoire, but this takes time and the scroll is destroyed in the learning process. Or the spell written upon the scroll may be read aloud to cast that spell one time by anyone who can read the language it is written in, and has suf-

ficient P.P.E. to activate the spell magic. The level 1-5 (pick one) spell is cast with the Spell Strength of a 5th level Wizard. As usual, the text vanishes upon being cast, leaving a blank scroll in its place. (**Note:** Scrolls are most often written in Elven/Dragonese or one of the human languages. See page 247 of the *Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition* for information about scrolls.) No spell on any of these scrolls is greater than a level five spell invocation.

61-70% Spell Scrolls or Magic Artifacts – Major: One or more of the Player Characters are shown the location of a total of 1D4+1 magic items (charms/talismans/medallions in the form of a holy symbol, an ancient magical holy relic, magic rings, crystals, potions, simple magic weapon that is a Demon or Deevil Slayer, or a magic item with a value of no more than 200,000 each. And could be an ancient and holy artifact or relic with healing power, promote visions and premonitions, or hold other magical power(s) that has religious or historical significance to a particular god, pantheon, church, or people. (See page 253 of the *Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition* for information about magic rings, charms, talismans and potions.)

In the case of spell scrolls, 1D4+1 magic spell scrolls are found. Each scroll has *two spells* written on it, one low level spell (level 5 or less) and one medium to high level spell (level 6-10). A mage may use the scroll to learn a new incantation as part of his permanent repertoire, but this takes time and the scroll is destroyed in the learning process, and though one may be learned, both spells are lost. Or a spell written upon a scroll may be read aloud to cast that spell, one time, by anyone who can read the language it is written in and has sufficient P.P.E. to activate the spell magic. Once used, that specific spell vanishes from the scroll, but the other spell remains until it is read and activated. (**Note:** Scrolls are most often written in Elven/Dragonese or one of the human languages. See page 247 of the *Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition* for information about scrolls.)

Note: The treasure may be owned or guarded by a band of criminals, cultists, Witches, monsters, or other danger, and may be considered part of its treasure, nest, burrow, or lair.

71-75% Silver: A buried or hidden treasure of silver coins or bars, worth up to a total of 2D6x10,000 gold. This much silver is no trifle, however, and will require pack horses and wagons to transport. May require numerous trips to remove it all. The treasure may be owned or guarded by a band of criminals, cultists, Witches, monsters, or other danger, and may be considered part of its nest, burrow, or lair.

76-80% Gold: A buried or hidden treasure of gold worth up to 3D6x10,000 gold. This much gold is no trifle, however, and will require several pack horses and wagons, because is it is way more than can be carried by the characters without them. May require numerous trips to remove it all. The treasure may be owned or guarded by a band of criminals, cultists, Witches, monsters, or other danger, and may be considered part of its nest, burrow, or lair.

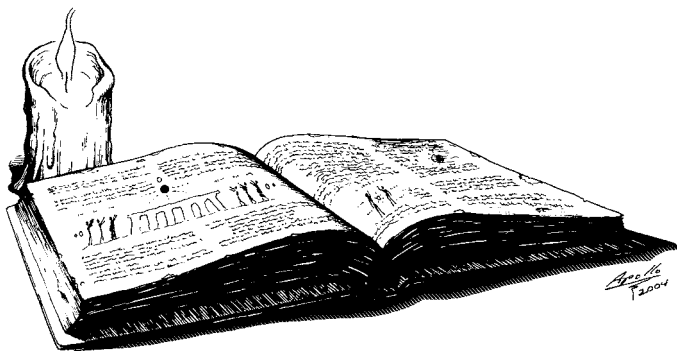
81-85% Diamonds and Gems: A buried or hidden treasure of precious stones worth up to 4D6x10,000 gold. This much treasure is no trifle, however, and will require pack horses and wagons to transport. May require numerous trips to remove it all. The treasure may be owned or guarded by a band of criminals, cultists, Witches, monsters, or other danger, and may be considered part of its nest, burrow, or lair.

86-90% Knowledge: A valuable or lifesaving clue(s), secret, or vital information is revealed at this location. This might come from an inscription or painting on a wall, statue, or altar in a temple or ancient ruin, or from a scroll, book, or artifact found at the location. If it is a non-magical scroll, book, or artifact of some kind, this object may have a value of 1D6x10,000 gold to the right person (a god's Champion, priest, follower, king, etc.), and may reveal even more information or present greater power to that person or group; or it may function as a key to unlock even greater secret knowledge or solve an ancient mystery; or if a holy object, in the right person's hands (a high priest, Diabolist, Witch, specific person, etc.), it provides them with knowledge or power, provided they have the ability to use the relic properly. Or was that knowledge revealed only to one of the Player Characters?

In the alternative, this knowledge may be vital to the success of the player group's mission/quest/goal, or help the player group in some important way, or help the innocent person(s) the group is trying to protect or rescue. Or perhaps the knowledge or proof of something helps them bring about justice, right a terrible wrong, or promote a great good. Such knowledge could be science, technology, books, or information and a location of a *beneficial resource* such as drinking water, fertile land for farming, a place filled with animals to hunt, a sacred object, a magic item, a pool of healing, a hidden place of safety, a secret passageway to avoid being seen or to get to someplace quickly, and so on.

91-95% Wisdom: This may be an understanding or epiphany about oneself, life, love, people, compassion, mercy, honor, nobility, acceptance of others, dealing with a problem, unraveling a mystery, and so on, probably with long-lasting ramifications and importance.

96-00% Purpose or Love: One or more characters in the player group find purpose for their life or a new mission/quest as the result of this Garden of the Gods inspired adventure. Or the character(s) come to realize they love and support a particular cause, kingdom, god, goal, or person, and are at peace with that realization or decision and where it might lead them next.



51-60% Arcane Knowledge

Tales from a different age, records of magic or historical events, religious texts, a lost secret, even lost segments of the *Tristine Chronicles* that have been misplaced over the eons. Difficult to copy and spread, even with the aid of magic, knowledge and information is often worth even more than gold or gems.

01-15% Lost Language: A "Rosetta Stone" style tablet or scroll that translates a lost and dead language into something more universal, most likely Elven/Dragonese. Anyone with the Literacy skill in the more common translation language receives the equivalent of Literacy at 50% and Language at 30% in the

lost language, and can interpret texts or inscriptions given enough time.

16-30% Religious Texts: Lost teachings and holy books, possibly the key to restoring a forgotten god's following. These rare and valuable missing pieces of history might be worth a small fortune to the right collector, church or cult, but could also get the Player Characters marked for robbery of that text, or death by zealots looking to suppress the information!

31-45% Maps and Charts: Sea charts are of inestimable value to seafaring nations, kings looking to survey their domain, explorers, smugglers and pirates. Maps showing the positions of fortifications and military defenses, especially those along critical areas like the Gedorma Strait, could be worth a king's ransom to the right political opponents. There are old Elven, Dwarven, Titan, Kobold, and others records and maps that show the location of ancient lost or fallen cities, temples, tombs, mines, undiscovered islands, ley lines, or dimensional nexus points, that may contain treasure, magic, danger, and intriguing secrets locked away in their ruins or at their locations. They may also show a different or more complete view of the world than any modern maps made over the last 4,000 years, and contain information and details the modern descendants of these people have lost or forgotten. Such rare original books, non-magical scrolls, and maps are highly prized in places like the Western Empire, Timiro, and Bizantium where they could fetch 1D4x1000 gold each, sometimes much more depending on the information.

46-60% Stories and Myths: Through visions and voices, the players are made privy to one of the great stories or secrets of the Palladium World, its past or its mythology. A lost god reaching out is probably a central figure, but this could also be a direct account of a fabled event in the distant past, the identity of an unknown force behind a significant event, a curse, a weapon or relic of historical significance (and its possible location), a bit of lost/unknown history or info about a particular people, or the telling of a widely-known myth or piece of history from a different perspective. The Player Characters now know the truth, the missing backstory from one of the world's powerful races or a lost people, or simply tales of heroes and villains lost to time.

61-75% Spells – Good: Spell scrolls for 1D4+1 low level (1-5) healing, protection (resistance, impervious, Extinguish Fire, etc.), and/or sensory spells (sense this or that, See Invisible, etc.) are hidden nearby and offered to the player group to help them through their upcoming quest or travails they don't know are coming. If there are no magic users amongst them, the spell scrolls can be sold or kept for bartering and trade, or replaced with a minor, helpful magic item such as a ring, bracelet or medallion of protection, or sensory awareness.

76-90% Spells – Evil: Spell scrolls for 1D4+2 spells (level 1-7) that involve domination, torture, manipulation, and control of others. Available spells include: Agony, Animate and Control Dead, Befuddle, Blind, Blinding Flash, Charm, Charismatic Aura, Compulsion, Constrain Being, Control the Beasts, Domination, Fear, Fool's Gold, Increase Weight, Paralysis: Lesser, Trance, Turn Dead, and Words of Truth. They can be utilized by one of the group's magic users or kept for their value in trade.

91-00% Tristine Chronicles Segment: A lost piece of the legendary *Tristine Chronicles* is relayed to the listener/holder, probably just a few lines or a page or an image/drawing. This lost passage could have an incredible amount of meaning and significance, especially if it fills in a piece that helps to clear up debate

between differing schools of thought amongst historians. Or it may be minor and without obvious importance, but nonetheless a welcomed addition.

61-70% A Mission or Quest from a God

These missions are hero quests a deity may bestow upon noble heroes, adventurers and those seeking purpose or a god's favor. **Note:** Any villain, monster, army, or force of evil or chaos that is "run off," is only a temporary fix that may not be acceptable to a deity (or the people being rescued). Unless destroyed or rehabilitated and truly turning over a new leaf, the villain(s) or monster(s) will only come back at a later date or go someplace else to work its insidious evil anew. Likewise, villains and monsters may seek revenge upon the heroes who have foiled their scheme and ruined their cruel fun or bid for power or wealth. This could make for a reoccurring villain to cause trouble or go after and attack the heroes/Player Characters.

01-10% A Rising Darkness: This could be a new evil, monster, demon, vampire, zombies, or danger that is born from darkness and evil, and probably a powerful creature of magic or of supernatural origin. This new and burgeoning menace has arrived from someplace else and must be found and rooted out. It could be a conquering and cruel warlord or ruler whose counsel is a demon or other wicked force, a dark priest, a Witch or evil mage, monster or group that is secretly or openly spreading, growing in power or invading/destroying and causing suffering. It must be reckoned with before it becomes unstoppable.

11-20% A Gathering Storm: This could be a person or group, event or cause, political or religious movement or allegiance that is already present and is either evil and self-serving to begin with, or turning evil and belligerent as it grows in strength and numbers, and plots against the good and the innocent. The evildoers (thieves, assassins, cultists, Witches, wicked nobles or warlord, church/priest, or something more monstrous) may be raising an army or gaining support, or waiting until they are powerful enough to strike in a decisive manner. Unless nipped in the bud, it will cause great suffering, sorrow, war, discord, destruction, and death.

21-30% A Terrible Injustice or Wrong to Right: This could be any number of things or events that have hurt people or set into motion events and practices that continue the injustice or wrongdoing and cause more people to suffer. It must be stopped and the course corrected. This may involve rooting out hidden monsters and evil forces that are manipulating and pulling the strings from the shadows, or blackmailing leaders, engaging in acts of terrorism, stalking people, and creating an environment of fear and cruelty, or paranoia and injustice, or all of the above. The root cause of this evil (demon, vampire, monster, cultist, criminals, evil mage, etc.) must be found and eliminated, and perhaps a new leader(s) put into power.

31-40% A Dark Secret to be Uncovered: And in so doing, exposing injustice or evil to be openly challenged and opposed or destroyed outright. As usual, this could be many things, including a secret enemy, a secret fiend exerting its influence or via mind control, demonic possession or magic, a diabolical plot or conspiracy that must be stopped, a terrible wrong or murder concealed and tearing the community or leadership apart, the source of a curse or supernatural manipulation, and so on. If an unknown, evil power behind the throne, pulling the

strings for its own terrible agenda (revenge, the acquisition of power or wealth, etc.), it must be uncovered and stopped, run off or destroyed.

41-50% A Monster or Monsters on the Loose: A single monster, demon, vampire, dragon, or a group or horde of monsters or inhuman barbarians, or raiders, are preying upon the innocent. Their wicked ways are unchecked and terrorizing the countryside. They must be stopped, run off, or destroyed in order for peace to be restored. Eliminating the leader and the second-in-command may do the trick, or not. If the latter case, our heroes will have to deal with the entire band or they'll just regroup and the problem starts all over again.

51-60% Dark or Forbidden Magic: Some source of dark magic – a Witch, an insane mage, an evil dragon or other creature of magic, dark god, dark priest, a cursed artifact, cursed Rune Weapon, Necromancy, or evil enchantment is causing grief and trouble. That could include people going mad, magical mutation or illness in the animals or the people, crop failure, drought, and/or the attraction of sinister mortal, magical, or supernatural forces. The source/cause must be uncovered and stopped or reversed, run off, or destroyed in order for peace to be restored. This dark magic may have been done with deliberate intent or unwittingly unleashed – such as forbidden or forgotten magic activated or released with disastrous results.

61-70% Rescue Mission: This may be a search and rescue mission that is anything but simple and straightforward. It may require defending and protecting an important object/relic or individual, group or entire community of people taken prisoner by, or under siege from, a mortal or monstrous or supernatural or magical enemy. Such a mission could involve a prison break, rescue from a slave camp, cult, Witches' coven, monster or group of monsters, or protection from a dragon, spirits, demons, Deevils, Elementals, or other invader or a conquering army.

71-80% A Cruel Tyrant: A cruel tyrant and his or her henchmen and enforcers have usurped the throne or taken a community (large or small) as their domain. Their subjects suffer under cruel and unjust laws and treatment, are beaten or tortured or slain when they speak out or take a stand against the tyrant. Things will only get worse if the tyrant is left unchecked. Such villains are often power-mongers or madmen who will stop at nothing to get the power, wealth and glory they seek. And they only want more. More power. More people forced to bow before them. Or worse, the cutthroat may have an agenda of genocide against a particular people – Changelings, Wolfen, Ogres, Elves, Dwarves, humans, or whomever the tyrant finds to be undesirable – or some other mad agenda. If not stopped, the tyranny of death and cruel subjugation will only spread.

81-90% Betrayal/Treachery: An act of betrayal or treachery has set into motion events that could unleash something terrible, topple a nation or church, change a kingdom (or the world!) for the worse, instigate war and ethnic cleansing, or other terrible event unless it is stopped, or the wrong/treachery that is setting the crisis into motion righted or avenged and stopped. This could involve finding and rescuing an imprisoned king or leader (or god!); destroying the new regime and putting fair good people in their place; showing the betrayer's true colors and revealing his crimes/treachery to get the people to rise up and overthrow him and reinstate the old or build something new and better, and so on.

91-00% An Ancient Evil: Something evil and forgotten or only spoken of in myths and legends has risen up from the bottom of the sea or some forgotten, dark, dank corner of Hell to bring a new generation of strife and destruction. This could extend to an ancient god, Demon Lord, ancient dragon, cursed Greatest Rune Weapon, an ancient evil and unholy relic of immense power, a forgotten minion of the Old Ones, or the actions of their followers. One such continuing threat are plots to awaken the slumbering Old Ones by cults and madmen who worship the monstrous deities and wish to see the Age of Chaos reborn.

In the alternative, this could be a mission to rescue, protect or reinstate an *Ancient Good*. The god or pantheon wants a fading or forgotten god, or belief, or leader that is a force of good to be remembered, recognized, and grow to inspire goodness and breed order, equality or acceptance, and peace.

71-80% Restoration of a Church

For many gods, the lack of belief and worship over the years is the cause of their being forgotten. The Garden is one of the last places known to hold any signs of their past existence in the realm of mortals. The only way to bring them back is to spread their name and their doctrine again among the world of mortals.

01-20% Find the Faithful: This god's followers are cut off from their long-lost deity, far away in some corner of the world well removed from the Garden of the Gods and civilization. The players must find these worshipers and reconnect them to their forgotten divine patron, even just by telling them of the existence of the Garden of the Gods and the presence of the deity's statue there. These people's beliefs might have changed or died out generations ago, but they still know many of the old legends. If they could be shown that their ancestors' ancient god still exists and cares about them, it may rekindle their faith. Some evidence on one's side and some knowledge of the mythology in question will go a long way towards making that case. Perhaps the deity even makes an appearance or the adventurer group can prove this by destroying an evil that has plagued these people for centuries, and that only they and their lost deity know about. Or the heroes restore an ancient, missing artifact, or free the people, etc.

21-40% Desecrate the Desecrators: The god in question faded from power when its followers were wiped out and its church razed to the ground. In order to rise from the ashes and rebuild a base of followers, the fading or forgotten god must impose the same fate upon the descendants of his enemy(s). The killing of priests and smashing of temples may seem distasteful, but these violators are likely to be followers of demonic or wicked deities themselves, and stopping them will put an end to their own religious crimes and twisted practices. Depending on the player group and how far the G.M. and players want to take this storyline, it could end with them fighting the evil god!

41-60% Lost Temple or Holy Place: The holiest site in this god's following has been lost, abandoned or somehow magically shifted into another dimension or de-powered. To return the god's followers to power, his or her temple must be rediscovered and filled with the voices and prayers of the faithful. The temple (or other holy place) is probably located at the end of a harrowing journey and controlled or inhabited by dangerous people, monsters or spirits unwilling to relinquish it. Moreover, whatever dark forces caused it to be lost long ago could still be watching

over it, looking to maintain their control and lashing out at whoever tries to take it away.

61-80% The Lost Teachings: This god did not fall in battle, but faded away when his or her words and translated teachings were corrupted and twisted until they lost their original and true meaning, or a rival or enemy lied and distorted the truth. Now the truth must be brought to the faithful and restored, and they must be convinced of its veracity, even if the current priesthood or naysayers and doubters view the truth as falsehoods and heresy, and will protect their folly and false teachings to the death.

81-00% The Homeland that was Promised: Before this god lost his or her faithful or was forgotten, he or she vowed to lead an army of followers to a promised land set aside just for them. That mission never took place, but those followers' descendants still wait for the day that their god returns or sends a messenger to take them to their promised refuge. The deity has decided it is time, and has reached out to the heroes or adventurers who visited the Garden to serve as his shepherds to lead his flock to the promised land where the people can thrive and heap glory upon that god's (or pantheon's) name.

81-90% Path of Revenge or Justice

Gods, priests and people have been cast down, and perhaps doomed to fade and be forgotten due to the actions of others, and may have burned for thousands of years with the desire for vengeance. Whether active or forgotten, the anguished call of such deities can be heard by visitors who listen for it or share their anger or lust for revenge and justice. Such mortals may hear the whispered names of those who have done the deity harm or be visited with a vision that illustrates the terrible wrong and inspires them to right that wrong or avenge the god or his worshipers, who may have suffered mightily for their devotion.

This table can be used to determine a quest in which the heroes who accept the mission must oppose/fight/stop (or avenge the victims of) the danger listed below. Alternatively, evil characters would join and support/help to perpetuate the wrong, the injustice, or the wickedness and battle anyone who tries to stop it. These quests are deliberately broad and vague and can be easily applied to any number of bad guys and situations, but will almost certainly put them in opposition with another god and/or his minions, henchmen, or followers. A fate that could earn the lasting wrath of an evil deity, Demon Lord, and/or those who serve it. As usual, roll percentile dice for random determination or pick one.

01-16% Specific Deity: The god beseeches the players to take revenge against a particular god who did him harm in ages past. This may not bring the offended god back to power or truly right the wrong, or completely help those who follow him or her, but it will at least go a long way towards restoring some kind of karmic balance. This could be a wide range of vengeful actions that may include stealing or destroying a holy relic, temple, shrine, etc., worshiped by the enemy god's followers; slaying the rival deity's right hand, priestly leader, powerful monster or henchman, prophet or other important individual(s); doing any number of things to undermine or diminish the rival deity's reputation, church, and following, and other acts of sabotage. Such a quest is not likely to require the heroes to destroy the god himself, though it could, and if the opportunity should arise, their patron god may encourage them to do so.

17-31% Religion: The followers of a specific religion or cult are responsible for wiping out this god's church, followers, or perhaps once slew or banished the deity from the realm of mortals. (**Note:** Slaying a god, demon, and most other supernatural beings in the physical world of mortals destroys the being's physical manifestation in that reality, sending the being back into the ether, but does not destroy it forever. Over time – often millennia – the supernatural being reforms to live again. And seeks revenge.) In this case, the deity wants key people within the religion to pay for their crimes. In order to settle old debts, the church or cult's leaders targeted by the angry deity must suffer or die, or perhaps their temples burned and their treasures, magic items, and relics taken from them.

32-46% Race/People: Often such a mission is to destroy the last of some great evil, but sometimes the wrath is much less noble. It may be petty and not very godly, but sometimes, an entire group, religion, organization, or species earns the ire and wrath of a god. This could be because they fought against or defied that deity at every turn, inflicted a severe and painful wound or wrong upon the god, are responsible for an act of supreme betrayal, or turned their back on that deity. As a result, this god – typically a selfish, evil, or vengeful deity – seeks to destroy them for their offense. The god would like nothing less than to have the skulls of every last one of the offending people left around their shattered temples and altars. Or the vengeful deity may learn that some members of this people or group marked for obliteration have survived, and wants to see the last of their kind finally rooted out and wiped from the face of the world.

In the alternative, a more subjective and forgiving deity may send the heroes to protect the people targeted (or the last of their kind) from the wrath and destruction of a vengeful god. If an evil deity, the monster's wrath may know no bounds, and never be fully satisfied, or may unfairly spread to include innocent people undeserving of such a cruel fate. And sometimes, even gods can lose their way. If the vengeful deity is, or was, of good or selfish alignment, the god's anguish, sorrow, or lust for revenge has blinded or twisted his/her perception of what is right and wrong, just and fair. Thus, it is the heroes' mission to protect the people targeted while trying to make the deity see reason or find compassion and forgive the last of these people for their sin against him, and let them live in peace. This is particularly true of people who are truly sorry or have forsaken their own evil ways and seek forgiveness and a chance to redeem themselves, or just go on without any kind of negative involvement with that deity or his followers. This is often the case with descendants of a people who were not directly involved in the wrong against the deity, are good and kind, and simply want to live in peace without that god in their lives one way or another.

47-61% Culture/Region: This god's wrath is directed at a particular location, an entire region, or a particular culture/belief or way of life. Any people who embrace those beliefs and practices are regarded as enemies and face the deity's wrath and possibly destruction. As above, heroes may be sent on a quest to find, undermine or destroy the last of some great evil culture, such as an evil cult, a particular legacy of pirates, a gathering of villains, monsters, or the demonic, or to protect people from such a foul culture, cult, villains or environment.

Sometimes a god or pantheon's wrath is much more sweeping over the land, and sometimes unfair and stretching across the centuries. The timeless perspective of gods is far different from

that of mortals, and the fact that the people who wronged them or deserved punishment have been dead for hundreds or thousands of years in a particular region might mean next to nothing. Yet a deity's curse or punishment placed upon a particular location or region may be left in place for eons, or even forgotten about. Its subtle effects imposed upon all who enter it or try to make it their home. This includes a great number of possible consequences, such as making a particular area attractive to monsters or men of violence, or subjected to severe or unpredictable weather and storms, poor hunting, poor crops, insect plagues, bad luck, conflict, and trouble. Some have wondered if the *Disputed Lands* (or the cultures of the barbaric and savage Coyles or the invading Eastern humans) have been cursed to suffer the wrath of one or more dissatisfied or angry gods. The blasted and desolate *Baalgor Wastelands* and ruination of the *Elf and Dwarf nations* after the folly (some say madness) of the Elf-Dwarf War may be other examples of such a deific wrath and punishment placed upon a culture or region.

Anyone traveling through or operating within such a place or culture will be subjected to the conditions imposed upon it by that deity(s). And may face travails and challenges that may build and strengthen them or crush them, which is one reason a deity may send adventurers on a quest to such places or cultures. Another may be to help the innocent people there who face some new danger or trouble and need help. Or because some ancient relic, treasure, or weapon is located there and needs to be found (for any number of reasons), or must be stopped from being found by the wrong people, or will help the heroes on their real quest or further their goals, turn them into champions, etc.

62-76% Kingdom/Dynasty: The lines of kings are long, and just as power is handed down through the generations, so may be an ancient feud with a god or Demon Lord long thought defeated. This quest may involve restoring the god's honor by destroying or overthrowing the living descendant of the monarchy (especially if he's a tyrant or evil), or to protect and defend a noble and good king (or even a scoundrel if he is ultimately good for the kingdom/people despite his corruption or foibles) from an evil god and/or the deity's henchmen or assassin who wants him or his children or entire family killed or left in ruin.

In other cases, the entire town or kingdom may be in jeopardy and the schemes of the evil or vengeful deity and his agents must be stopped before it is too late. Kevin's Lord DeSilca tournament game is a great example of such a quest. In it, the heroes must stop the evil king, Lord DeSilca, from completing a depraved ceremony and human sacrifice before the stroke of midnight. First, they must find his secret lair where the ceremony is to take place. Second, they must battle their way through minions and monsters to get to the ceremony. Third, they must stop the ceremony, presumably by slaying the powerful and demonic Lord DeSilca or by any means possible; which means going up against DeSilca and more minions. If they fail, Lord DeSilca becomes a new Demon Lord of Hell. Worse, the entire kingdom ruled by Lord DeSilca, and everyone in it, including the heroes themselves, will be dimensionally teleported to Hades, where they become the newly appointed Demon Lord's tortured subjects and minions.

77-88% Individual: A living mortal is the focus of this god's need for vengeance, whether it be someone who is the person, or the ancestor of the person, who committed the crime for which they must pay, or the holder of a specific office or position, in possession of something important such as a powerful magic, rel-

ic, Rune Weapon, knowledge, etc., stolen from the deity or one of his minions or church, and similar. It could also be a strangely specific prophetic request, “the richest man in Bizantium” or the “firstborn son of the high priest of Dragonwright,” for example. The god might not be intentionally vicious or hateful in this request, either, simply bound by some age-old spell, promise or oath, put in place by a rival god or powerful enemy.

89-00% Ancient Monster: The target of this wrath is some sort of ancient being, dragon, monster, demon or perhaps a rival god or powerful servant of that god. Smug and safe, the perpetrator of the terrible wrong is confident it has been successfully covered up by lies or by the ages past. As a result, this monster does not expect the hand of vengeance to reach out for it after so long, or through such an indirect route as Champions, heroes, or adventurers given a quest at the Garden of the Gods. Anything capable of defeating a god or its church, however, is going to be quite a match for even the most skilled and best equipped group of heroes.

91-95% Means of Divine Restoration

Any of the known gods and pantheons may seek to restore or help a people, church, religion, group, or cause that is dedicated to them or close to their heart.

In the case of fading and forgotten deities, the god may seek to restore his or her own position in the world of mortals. To be recognized and worshiped once again, and in so doing, be restored and revitalized in the mortal and deific realms to proudly walk among the other gods. Some of these forgotten gods know how they can be brought back to their former power, but need lesser beings, Champions, Priests and followers to assist them in order to accomplish it. This may be a first step in a plan that will take decades or centuries to see success, or action designed to help along or re-energize an existing mission of divine restoration for a fading or forgotten god, especially if the plan has stalled or is facing opposition from the forces of darkness or a rival deity.

01-20% Recovery of a Sacred Object: This could be a weapon, tool, jewelry, gem, statue, piece of bone, symbolic item, remains of the dead, a relic, a sacred object, etc., that represents the deity and his or her role in the cosmology of the Megaverse. The object may be enchanted, magical, or completely ordinary except for what it symbolizes or means to the god’s followers or enemies. Lost in ages past, this sacred object is probably in the possession of the god’s most hated enemy or some other evil being(s), or hidden deep within some forgotten labyrinth, ruin, or remote and dangerous place in the world. Moreover, there may be others who upon learning of the sacred object, want it for themselves to sell, to gain power, to undermine the deity or his followers, etc.

21-40% An Eye for an Eye: In order to restore this god, his or her deific rival must be undermined or perhaps tricked. This means almost anything, from slaughtering the rival or offending god’s followers, destroying temples, or defeating the actual god in combat, to stealing or destroying something (or someone or someplace) important, sacred, or valuable to the deity in order for the god seeking restoration to intimidate, manipulate, or blackmail that deity so that he or she may be restored. Only with teamwork, cunning, powerful magic, and/or divine assistance may any of this be possible.

41-60% Pilgrimage to a Distant Land: To restore this god, the heroes must conduct a journey to a distant land or remote and dangerous place. They carry a piece of a relic or a sacred object, magic item, a statue, a holy symbol, a bag of earth, a token, or something else that must be returned to, or reestablished at, this place or to the people living there. Once it is returned, some ancient wrong is righted, a curse is broken, a prophecy is completed, a people’s faith is restored, and so on. In the case of a deity seeking restoration, the gesture helps bring the god back to the world of mortals. It could be a first step or a final step, or something in between, but it helps reestablish the deity and/or his followers.

61-80% In Search of a Rare Trophy: Sometimes an object is required to restore a god that is not a one-of-a-kind match, but is still rare and difficult to obtain. This could be dragon bones or scales, the skull of a powerful monster or person, vampire’s teeth, an exotic victim to be sacrificed, the blood of a nobleman, etc. Bringing the trophy to an appointed location where it can be sacrificed to the deity or placed someplace of significance (a particular church, temple, shrine, tomb, mountain peak, sea, the Garden, etc.), it rights a wrong, fulfills a prophecy, etc., and/or sets into motion the deity’s return to prominence or power.

81-00% Quest for Divine Fire: Somewhere, likely far away or someplace hard to reach, is a lost temple to this particular god. Within it is an *eternal flame*, a fire that has burned since the god was forgotten by time, but weakens and shrinks with each passing millennium. In order to help restore this god to the world of mortals, a torch lit from the eternal flame must be brought to someplace of significance (a particular castle, church, temple, shrine, statue, tomb, mountain peak, the Garden, etc.), and once placed there it continues to burn without additional fuel or care, and grows larger and brighter as the deity grows in power or triumph. Or the flame may indicate the deity’s protection or that it watches over this place or people, or that they are his chosen, and so on. Keeping the torch or lantern lit with this flame for a journey of hundreds or thousands of miles is a unique challenge, as any number of untimely events can douse a lit flame, no matter what precautions are taken. That said, it must not be extinguished, and otherwise it flickers and burns until it is delivered. Or will it? The longer the journey takes, the smaller the flame becomes.

96-00% Personal Revelation

Rather than knowledge of the outside world or clues to put them on the trail of age-old unfinished business, this god has granted insights to within the recipient’s own mind and personality. If that person or group of people are receptive to the sometimes uncomfortable information, visions and insight, this droplet of divine wisdom could be worth more than any treasure or secret buried in time.

01-14% Unknown Lineage: The god reveals an unknown truth regarding one or more of the Player Characters’ history – ancestries, a famed or reviled ancestor, royal blood, mixed heritage, or some other truth about who he or they are on a fundamental level. This information could be glamorous and exciting or very unsettling depending on what that truth is and the characters’ upbringing, beliefs, attitudes, and prejudices. This could be a shocking, “Luke, I am your father” moment or information that is welcomed and serves to strengthen the characters’ resolve or sense of purpose.

15-28% Destiny: One or two (all?) members of the player group are fated for glory, adventure, and/or tragedy. How much the god can see of the future, and how much the deity is willing to reveal at any given moment, depends on the characters and their level of devotion and service to the deity and its cause. (Game Masters, reveal only what you feel comfortable revealing at any given time, and remember, clues and info from the gods are often cryptic and mysterious.) And though a god may help guide that destiny, fulfilling it is entirely up to the individuals. Otherwise, the god helps them out along the way with the occasional blessing, clue, bit of information (which should have to be uncovered, not just handed to them), and motivation. If the character(s) refuses to accept this destiny, he/she/they are likely to lose the deity's support and/or be subjected to a number of coincidences and incidents that point or nudge them down that path nonetheless. A reluctant hero is still a hero.

29-42% Dark Connection: This god has taken it upon him or herself to reveal a dark and ugly truth to one (or a few) of the characters. The dark connection is revealed either with malicious intent to harm or challenge the hero, or in hopes that the truth shall have a positive and motivational overall effect. This could be almost anything – the villain, monster or deity they oppose once hurt or destroyed his church, village, tribe, or family; or perhaps the group let this villain escape in the past (or a family member did); or a family member or trusted community leader has betrayed them, made a deal with the devil or betrayed the king or the village for his own personal advancement or to protect his own family; or was once accused of a terrible crime connected to this current circumstance/adventure (this could be true or a false accusation), or was (is!) a member of the evil cult or criminal organization, or worshiped and served the god or demon that the character and the player group must now fight.

This info is usually provided to a) motivate, and b) provide a chance to right a wrong, redeem the family's name, prove himself to be a hero, exact revenge, help those in need (be there for others, because in the character's own past there was no one to oppose such evil, and he knows how that feels or how that scenario ends), or to garner glory or wealth, etc., but whatever it is, it should motivate or propel the character into action. Whether it is a positive, reckless, or negative response is up to the character and his teammates who also have influence over him.

43-56% Family Secret: Similar to #29-42% above, only even more personal. The god can see into a character(s)' past and knows the truth concerning a dark past or despicable and perhaps notorious deed (murder, robbery, betrayal, servant of a horrible evil or murderous cult, etc.) by a family member. The family could be from foul beginnings, covering up some awful secret, or guilty of a shared crime or blasphemy. This news could shake a character(s) down to their foundation, making them question the ones they love the most and everything that makes them who they are. As above, this info is usually provided to a) motivate, and b) provide a chance to right a wrong, redeem the family's name, prove himself to be a hero, exact revenge, help those in need, and so on. In the alternative, a demon or dark god may reveal the info to discourage and make the hero doubt himself and give up on his quest.

57-70% Inner Workings: Divine intuition and perception can see right through one or more of the characters, and a few revelatory words can make this inner truth evident to that individual. Many people go through life without confronting uncom-

fortable realities, and the instant enlightenment provided by a god via a dream or a voice in his head, can be just as effective as years of self-discovery, only compressed into a single moment of exposure to divine truth. There is a 20% chance this may cause the recipient to develop a random insanity or a prejudice towards a particular species, group, god, villain, or religion. Similar to #29-42% and #43-56%, above, this info is usually provided to a) motivate, and b) provide a chance to right a wrong, redeem the family's name, prove himself to be a hero, exact revenge, help those in need, and so on. In the alternative, a demon or dark god may reveal the info to discourage and make the hero doubt himself and give up on his quest.

71-85% Psionic Awakening: There is a chance that one of the characters is a latent psychic, with undeveloped skills waiting to see the light of day. Roll Percentile: *01-60%* the character is an undeveloped Minor Psychic and as such selects two Sensitive or Healing psionic powers (or one of each) and gets 1D4x10+20 I.S.P. *61-00%* the character is an undeveloped Major Psychic and as such selects a total of four psionic abilities from one of the following categories: Healing, Physical or Sensitive and gets 1D6x10+30 I.S.P. – or since these latent capabilities are being ignited by a god – one Super-Psionic ability may be selected instead of the four lesser abilities. No further psychic powers manifest, this is it, but the character does get 1D6 I.S.P. per each new experience level.

86-00% Mystical Awakening: If one of the characters is a spell casting magic user, including Mystic, Druid or Shaman, he receives divine knowledge that enables him to permanently know 1D4+2 new spell invocations. The spells can be selected from any level 1-9, giving this favored individual access to spell knowledge that may be difficult and expensive to acquire. He also receives a permanent bonus of 3D6+20 P.P.E. to cast them. If a Diabolist the character gets the P.P.E. boost and 1D4+1 new wards or spells, whichever the character prefers. If a Summoner, he gets the P.P.E. boost and the knowledge of two new circles or 1D4+1 spells, whichever is preferred.

A character who is a healer of any kind (Psi-Healer, Shaman, doctor, nurse, midwife/doula, herbologist, etc.), teacher, cook, baker, theologian, clergy, or other nurturing, care-giving profession gets a permanent bonus of 15 P.P.E. and the *ability to heal others* by laying of hands. Each healing stops bleeding, closes the wound, kills infection and restores 1D6+6 Hit Points and 2D6 S.D.C.; can only heal one person at a time. Repeated healing on the same person (or animal) has a cumulative healing effect. Each healing/laying of hands costs this unique individual 5 P.P.E., but P.P.E. recovers at a rate of one point per hour, double when sleeping, and quadruple when meditating. This character also enjoys a +5% bonus to all Medical skills and abilities (if any), and is, him or herself, +10% to save vs coma and death.

A character mystically awakened but is neither a mage or healer, but rather some sort of fighter (Merc, Ranger, Thief, Assassin, etc.), laborer, farmer, or other profession, gets a permanent bonus of 10 P.P.E. and all their physical attacks with any weapon, or even their bare fists, inflict an extra +8 *damage to supernatural beings* (gods, demons, Deevils, Entities, Creatures of Light, angels, Elementals, ghosts, spirits, Astral Beings, energy beings, vampires and other undead), and can cast spells from scrolls provided they have the ability to read it and sufficient P.P.E. to power the spell.



Blessings & Miracles

Step Two: Random Location Table

Roll percentile dice for random determination of where a god inspired dream, vision, visitation, inspiration, or rumor might send a Player Character or adventurer group; or just pick what best fits the game and the players.

- 01-03% Isle of the Cyclops/Isles of the Four Sisters
- 04-07% Eastern Territory – Llorn Region
- 08-11% Eastern Territory – The Disputed Lands
- 12-15% Eastern Territory – The Tegyn Peninsula
- 16-19% Baalgor Wastelands
- 20-22% Great Northern Wilderness – Shadow Coast/Barbarian Lands
- 23-26% Great Northern Wilderness – Algor Mountains or Dragon Claw Region
- 27-29% Great Northern Wilderness – Interior
- 30-31% Great Northern Wilderness – Hinterlands
- 32-33% Great Northern Mountains
- 34-37% Island Kingdom of Bizantium
- 38-41% One or more of the Floenry Isles
- 42-45% Lopan
- 46-49% Old Kingdom Lowlands
- 50-53% Old Kingdom Mountains
- 54-56% Old Kingdom Coastline/Inland Sea or the Island of Phi
- 57-60% Mount Nimro or Moount Nimrod or Southern Old Kingdom
- 61-64% Ophid's Grasslands
- 65-68% Timiro Kingdom
- 69-72% Western Empire – Caer Itom or West Kighfalcon
- 73-76% Western Empire – Scarlet Mountains or Old Kingdom Frontier
- 77-79% Western Empire – The Vequerrel Woodlands or Middle Kingdoms
- 80-82% Yin-Sloth Jungles – Western Portion
- 83-85% Yin-Sloth Jungles – Southern Portion
- 86-87% Yin-Sloth Jungles – Mountains bordering the Baalgor Wastelands
- 88-90% Land of the South Winds – Coastal, Big Cities, Shipyards, Pirates
- 91-92% Land of the South Winds – Interior/Cults
- 93-94% Land of the South Winds – Jungle Region/Mysterious/Untamed
- 95% Island of Y-Oda/Library of Bletherad or Island of Zy
- 96% Southern Islands at the Edge of the World
- 97% Great Ice Shelf beyond Bizantium, Domain of the Ice Born
- 98% Land of the Damned – Chaos Lands/Mountains
- 99% Land of the Damned – Eternal Torment
- 00% Land of the Damned – The Bleakness

There are no sections of the Garden that are specifically good or evil. Everything is mixed and scattered throughout the various areas of the Garden. In many places, entire pantheons, or families of gods, are represented in the same area. Like any family, there will usually be a father and mother figure and benevolent good gods as well as troublemakers, tricksters, and evil ones – the black sheep of the deific family. The passage of time sometimes changes the significance of the gods, even within a pantheon, with shifting importance of a particular deity and how he or she and other members within the pantheon may change over the course of time. And as always, certain gods will be seen as more important or relevant to the times than others. Thus, there may be a deity(s) you might not expect to be found standing among a known pantheon because that deity(s) was affiliated with those gods long ago, but not so today in these modern times. Likewise, there may be statues of unknown gods standing among the members of a popular and renowned pantheon because their names and value have faded over the millennia. Leaving them forgotten or nearly forgotten, but they remain part of the deific family even if they are regarded as less important or no longer remembered by mortals of this day and age. It is these fading and forgotten deities who are most likely to reach out to people in the hope of rekindling their place among gods and men. This occurs as moments of inspiration, dreams, visions, and visitations, as already discussed, but also as blessings and miracles granted to those the gods believe are deserving or who champion their name or cause.

The miracles and blessings attributed to the Garden of the Gods are just as varied as the many known and forgotten gods represented there. Depending on one's race, religion, alignment and inner motives, good, selfish, or evil gods may reach out with very different blessings based on their unique powers, sense of morality, and personality. A Champion of good may be cursed by an evil god, where a god of a good alignment may choose to support heroes and crusaders of good intention.

Skeptics, including the priests and religious orders of established churches, are wary of the visions and miracles attributed to the Garden of the Gods, and often see the place as a threat to their established churches and religious traditions. As a result, many priests warn their flocks away from making visits to the Garden of the Gods, and openly question whether this is a holy place at all. Fearful they may lose the support of their faithful, many priests and churches try to convince their followers that the Garden of the Gods is a *danger* best avoided, lest they find their beliefs tested and be led astray.

In truth, these clergy are terrified of losing their power base and influence over the masses who turn to them for guidance and support the church with donations and tithing. They fear a supposed vision or message from an unknown or unrecognized deity might take precedence over their own teachings, church dogma, and power structures, causing *their followers* to choose a new god or take a new path that leaves the clergy and their church behind

and out on the street. They fear a devious charlatan or cunning members of a rival church could lurk in the Garden posing as the voice of a god or goddess to lure their faithful away to a rival church by promising them lies of favor and a new covenant with a deity who claims to make the pilgrims their “chosen people.”

The fact that the gods of the Garden do not work that way, and make certain no such trickery takes place within the Garden itself, is beside the point. After all, most of these fearful members of the clergy have never actually visited the Garden themselves, so it represents their worst fears and compels them to make false assumptions and spread lies based on those falsehoods. They don’t believe they need to visit the Garden, because they have their calling and don’t need reaffirmation from *who knows what* with its own agenda of trickery and deception.

Some concerned clergy and power-mongers have convinced themselves that the Garden of the Gods is the *Scam of the Century*, and believe that works of magic, particularly healing, restoration, and visions (which could be the result of magical illusions), are cast by the caretakers, or members of a rival church or even secret cabals and evil cultists looking to undermine established religions. At least that’s how the elite members and priests of many established churches choose to handle questions about the Garden of the Gods. They chastize and criticize the Garden with self-righteous indignation and fury, claiming it is all hokum and fakery. All this bluster and condemnation a simple precaution to preserve what they know and understand, and to hold on to the social and political power that their position within established churches brings to them.

Such warnings and efforts to discredit the Garden of the Gods have not stopped the ever increasing stream of pilgrims visiting over the many years. Anyone desperate enough for a god’s favor or seeking a little hint of the divine, does not let the words of a self-serving priest or fearful zealot stop them from making the trip to Lohan to experience the wonder of the Garden for themselves.

As for fakery and imposters posing as the voices of gods, while this may happen from time to time *away* from the Garden, it does not take place in the Garden itself. That’s one of the mystical or divine aspects of the Garden of the Gods. Most people are so touched by its serenity and the presence of the divine, that even criminals and people of ill-repute do not practice their disreputable crafts within the Garden’s confines. It is as if the Garden has a subtle calming effect on all who visit, making them feel at peace and find a sense of wonder and awe they may have forgotten since childhood. Many a scoundrel has laughingly recounted forgetting about any plans to hurt, deceive, or rob people after setting foot inside the garden. A sensation that often lasts for days after leaving it. Some brigands say their visit to the Garden of the Gods gave them pause to examine their life and to reconsider the criminal path they had chosen. While the visit to the Garden may momentarily soften the hearts of thugs and criminals, causing some to temper their criminal activities for a few days, or offer uncharacteristic mercy to their next handful of victims, most return to their foul ways and don’t look back. Still there are some who take stock of their life and make a change for the better (or worse, as the case may be). Such is the influence the Garden of the Gods has on many people.

Still, the naysayers and the powerful who fear the Garden might undermine them, insist that all works of magic and healing, visions and miracles, are fake. Many point an incriminating

finger at the Garden’s mysterious **caretakers** as being responsible for such deception and fakery. This claim is preposterous, because most of the caretakers are not practitioners of magic nor powerful priests. The vast majority are ordinary people from all walks of life. Yes, some may be recent converts or the devoted faithful who maintain a small section of the Garden and the statues of certain gods within the Garden enclosure, but a “caretaker” is just as likely to be a visiting pilgrim, soldier, mercenary, sailor, adventurer, merchant, farmer, or peasant. As such, they possess no special powers nor mystical abilities. Many are transient visitors who become so moved by their experience, or by the splendor of the Garden, that they decide to take it upon themselves to prune and tend to their favorite area or favorite god before heading home. Most of these visitors who care for the Garden spend an afternoon, or an entire day, or a few days tending to that area of the Garden before leaving, never to be seen again. A bit of charity in a once in a lifetime experience. Content that they did their small part in keeping the Garden maintained and well manicured for the next group of visitors.

Yes, a stranger could wield magical or priestly powers or psionic abilities – and the Garden of the Gods is visited by many types of mages, priests, psychics, and traveling heroes – but why would an individual work such magic upon another stranger?

There may be an answer to that. Some have theorized that a visitor could be compelled to do so by one of the deities, but that would still mean divine intervention via a third party. However, the gods seldom behave in such a direct manner, and most deities care little about the affairs of mortals whether they be nobility, renowned heroes, or common peasants.

It is more likely any such magical or priestly intervention comes as an act of individual charity. The Garden is known to touch the heart and move its visitors, especially the most sincere and heroic, inspiring them to show compassion to others and to do good to help those in need. Many visitors to the Garden say they feel connected to the world in a profound manner. In that moment of kinship and connection, such a visitor may choose to work his magic or use his powers to help another. And in that same moment, may choose not to take credit for the kind deed, but to cast his magic or prayer from leaf-cloaked anonymity. Such kind souls taking solace in the warmth and goodness of the act itself without any desire for credit or thanks. The fact that the Garden or one of its gods may be assigned responsibility for “the magic” or “miracle” is of little consequence.

It should be noted that though people choose to believe that the many deities portrayed by the statues visit the Garden of the Gods in the form of a physical avatar or disguised as a caretaker or visitor, such an occurrence has never been proven. Not ever. People just presume this must be the case, but nobody knows this for a fact. Not the residents of Lohan, or even the priests and caretakers who live on the island and frequent the Garden on a regular basis. Thus, it is impossible to tell what is the direct handiwork of a god or simply an act of kindness and compassion.

Claims of secret cabals and cults at work within the Garden are also complete nonsense, lies, and misguided fears. There is no such thing. The closest anyone comes to a secret cabal is the heroic *Knights-Fossar*, and they champion honor and goodness and truth, with no desire to sway anyone’s belief in one god or another.

Deific Blessings

It is possible to get the attention of a god when visiting the Garden, and perhaps win his or her interest, and get bestowed with a Blessing. A work of magic that helps or enhances the recipient for a short while. A Miracle or Miraculous Blessing is an even more potent, impressive and rare act of divine magic. Most are granted to people with a noble cause or who agree to champion a deity, pantheon of gods, or one of the deity's causes.

Some Deific Blessings are immediate and bestowed after a vision or meditation at a statue of a deity within the Garden, sometimes without the recipient realizing it. Other times a Blessing is a kind of reward in exchange for the individual or group pledging to perform a task or a quest on the god's behalf.

Conditional Blessings like those attached to a quest, often require proof of loyalty and the recipient's worthiness to serve a deity in such a fashion before the Blessing is bestowed. Sometimes potential Champions, Priests, heroes, and the faithful die in this process, but the benefits of assisting a god, from Blessings to acclaim and tangible reward (treasure, Holy Weapon, magic item, etc. that may result from such a vision quest), is more than enough motivation for many a would-be hero or true believer. After all, they have already sailed and ridden far to visit the Garden of the Gods, probably in search of inspiration, guidance, or a purpose.

Though the Blessings are presented here as a **Random Table**, in many cases it may be better for the Game Master to *select* the Blessing most appropriate and best suited to the character and the vision quest/mission/adventure that awaits him and his teammates. As a general rule, the Blessing should probably be tailored to the character and/or his goals and intentions, so consulting with the player to know what those are is a good idea. So might asking him which Blessing he or she thinks would be most suitable for the character at this time. Remember, however, the gods may have other plans in mind for the character (or the player group), so selecting a different Blessing or making a random determination (roll percentile dice) may be equally appropriate.

If a randomly rolled Blessing, we suggest *the player* rolls the dice. After all, it is his character's destiny being determined.

Blessings are scarce and unpredictable. Not everyone in the player group is going to receive a Blessing from a god, only one or two characters, at the Game Master's discretion. (G.M.s, try to be fair and avoid favoritism.)

So who should be blessed? At first blush, the bold, courageous warrior or powerful mage may seem to be the right candidate for a Blessing, but does a character who is already powerful or *blessed* in so many other ways, really need a god's Blessing? Or is it the humble Druid or Scrupulous Ranger, or the fledgling and uncertain Priest, or Thief with a heart of gold, or the brave Vagabond, who is more deserving or more in need of the Blessing? Or perhaps it should be the character who, in the moment of truth, will play an unexpected and instrumental role in the group's quest. (Think the Hobbits in the *Lord of the Rings*.) Someone whom the god, in his or her infinite wisdom, knows will stand true and deserves the Blessing.

Game Masters, have fun with Blessings, but please do NOT feel obligated to hand them out like candy to any character, not even one, for any reason. Do what is best for the story and for the enjoyment of the entire player group.

Similarly, if a player decides his character has been blessed by a deity after a visit to the Garden of the Gods due to circumstance and coincidence such as lucky rolls of the dice or outstanding role-playing, but *you* know he has not been blessed, *do not correct that mistaken presumption*. Let the player and his fellow players believe that he or she, or they, have earned the favor of a god. Why? Because that misconception may drive the character's behavior and the story in directions you didn't anticipate, and lead to loads of fun for everyone. And don't forget, a Blessing might manifest and become evident at a later time, after the character has proven himself worthy in the eyes of the deity watching him or the group. Game Masters should always try to be flexible, listen to the players, and play to those characters to create a dynamic adventure and powerful moments in the game.

Restrictions and Conditions of Blessings:

In each case, the Blessing only lasts for one quest, crusade, or mission, which may resolve quickly in a matter of hours or take days, weeks, or months.

Number of Blessings: Typically one per chosen individual. A Champion of the Gods is an exception, as this individual gets to pick two Miraculous Blessings and one of the comparatively lesser and more common Deific Blessings described in this section.

A Priest or Shaman may pray for a Blessing or a Miracle as per the character's O.C.C., and a Blessing may be given as a gift from a deity, especially in the Garden of the Gods, usually for a quest or reward for a grand service, sacrifice, or loyalty.

Duration of Bonuses AND Special Skills or Abilities that come with the Blessing:

The recipient of a Blessing gets two benefits. **First are bonuses** that last throughout the mission starting from the moment the Blessing is granted.

Bonuses: Bonuses last for the entire quest, crusade or mission, or until the Blessed does something to lose the deity's favor and, as a result, the Blessing is removed or suspended. Loss of a god's favor may occur when the Blessed individual does something evil, cruel, immoral, or otherwise contrary to the deity's sensibilities and what the god represents/stands for/symbolizes. Favor and the Blessing may be won back, but it takes a lot of effort and sincerity.

Second, are special **skills** or **abilities** the Blessed individual receives when he *prays and calls upon the deity* he believes has gifted him with the Blessing for help.

Skills: The skills or special abilities of a Blessing come into play **ONLY** when the Blessed individual calls upon his god in prayer to grant him *the abilities* to save the day; i.e., save a life(s), defeat a foe, or accomplish something important, probably on the deity's behalf, or which reflects well on that god or moves the quest/mission a step closer to being accomplished. Such skills and/or abilities last for 7 days every time this part of a Blessing is activated. This is in addition to bonuses already in place.

The Blessed individual receives ALL the skills and/or abilities listed under the Blessing at the level of proficiency indicated for those special skills, even if they conflict with his own O.C.C. or level of experience. **Note:** If the character already has that skill at a higher proficiency, then add a +10% bonus to it

for the next seven days, after which the character's skill returns to normal.

G.M. Note about Skills: As always, you, as the universe, can elect whether or not a prayer is successful and the Skill portion is granted, even if the player fails his roll, but do not be overly generous or protective. The roll of the dice is *Fate*, and failure may lead to other adventures or a life lesson for the character. Players should not become dependent upon the intervention of deities and neither should you. Be fair and even handed, and 99 times out of one hundred, let the dice dictate divine intervention or the success of a skill or ability.

Duration of Skills Bestowed via a Blessing: One week (7 days). A typical Deific Blessing provides 2-4 skills or a special ability intended to help the person on his vision quest. As a result, the skills/abilities may be oriented to the individual **or** to the quest and journey upon which he is embarking. The Blessed individual does NOT learn these skills over time, nor does he get to keep them as a permanent reward. In some cases, the skills function more as luck in a particular area whenever the character makes a quiet prayer ("Aco, help us."), and the Blessed individual may not even realize he possesses one or more skills or a special ability. ("Hey, I found a secret door, again." Or, "I don't know how I was able to hide and slip away unseen like that. Thank Amyar." Or, "I'm telling you, there is something off or dangerous about that guy. I can feel it. I know it.") That said, most Blessed individuals come to realize the skills or special ability are part of a Blessing and will call upon their deity when it is most needed. Actually, most people who have been Blessed get into the habit of praying to their deity whenever they need strength, guidance, confidence, or help, and come to credit the deity for their successes, which is exactly what the gods want. ("Isis, give me strength." "Heim, guide my arrow." "Ra, shine your protection upon us and show us the way." "Thank Od, for our victory." And so on.)

Success Rate of Being Granted the Skills when Needed: The granting of the skills or special ability provided by a Blessing is not automatic or constant like the Blessing's bonuses. The more the deity is called upon, though appreciated, the lower the chance the god provides the skills/abilities.

The first time a deity is called upon to help by granting the Blessed individual **the skills/special abilities** of a Blessing, the result is automatic and instant. As always, the imbued skills lasts for 7 days.

The second request, there is a 95% chance the god is listening and grants the skills/abilities. **A failed roll means** no skills are granted, and the next time the god is called upon, it counts as the subsequent request (in this case a third request, below). Bonuses from the Blessing, however, remain in place.

The third time, there is an 85% chance the god is listening and grants the skills/abilities. A failed roll means no such skills are granted and the next time the god is called upon, it counts as the subsequent request (in this case, a fourth request).

The fourth time, there is a 75% chance the god is listening and grants the skills/abilities. A failed roll means no such skills are granted and the next time the god is called upon, it counts as the subsequent request (in this case, a fifth request).

The fifth time, there is a 65% chance the god is listening and grants the skills/abilities. A failed roll means no such skills are granted and the next time the god is called upon, it counts as the subsequent request (in this case, a sixth request).

The sixth request and onward, there is 45% chance the deity bestows the special skills/abilities. The Blessed individual probably still has the god's favor, but there is a point when the gods expect their followers, heroes, and even Champions, to stand on their own two feet, and rely upon themselves to achieve their goals. Blessings are meant to *help* in a critical moment and against dangerous foes, but are NOT intended to make the Blessed into a superhuman or reliant upon divine intervention, which is what a Blessing is on a small scale. It is time to stand on your own feet and use the gifts you were given at birth. Strength of willpower, conviction, tenacity, and heart and soul commitment are blessings everyone possesses. They are the true stuff of heroes, though are not always used.

Of course, as always, the bonuses from a Blessing last until the quest or mission is accomplished. **Note:** Those vanish only if the Blessed individual is not sincere and focused upon his appointed task.

Granting the Skills/Abilities in a Moment of Great Need, Even if the Roll Fails: As always, Game Masters should be flexible and take everything into consideration when a character turns to his deity for help. Gods should NOT bail out a character every time he or his group find themselves in trouble. However, if the Blessed has really earned it, and if *you* (the G.M.) believe the god would, indeed, grant the skills/abilities of a Blessing – perhaps even when they are not requested – regardless of how many times the character has already asked and received it – then do so.

That said, there is something about a slim chance and hitting it that makes people shout for joy and feel special, so you might want to enforce the 45% chance rule after the fifth request. Under this situation, the die roll hitting a low number may make the character feel like he really is living his destiny and indeed has the favor of the god or pantheon that has Blessed him. Game Masters, use your judgement and the quality of role-playing being displayed (as well as dramatic effect) as your guide. Remember, the bonuses granted by the Blessing remain in force until the character's quest from a god is accomplished or the deity takes them away.

The Shared Blessing Alternative: If the Blessed individual is appealing to a deity to help him *AND his entire group of teammates*, he and everyone in the group enjoys the bonuses, but at **half** of what's listed (round down), and everyone except the Blessed, enjoys a +5% bonus to their existing skills for a three day period. The specific Skills and skill bonuses listed in a Blessing are only available to the Blessed individual who earned the Blessing, not everyone, and only when he calls upon his god, as described above.

The power and wisdom of the gods: Any of the Blessings, Miraculous Blessings, and Miracles presented in this book may be granted by ANY deity, whether the god is known or forgotten, good, selfish, or evil.

Additional Blessings unique to a specific deity are found in the descriptions of the fading and lost gods that have been revealed within the Garden. Most are little known or forgotten by modern people and would like to be rediscovered and worshiped. These fading and forgotten gods still command a bit of divine power within the Garden of the Gods and wherever their statues and shrines remain. It is at these places where deities are most likely to reach out to mortals they find worthy, promising, or in need

of help, with inspirational dreams, visions, and visitations, and bestow upon them quests and blessings.

Descriptions of Deific Blessings

- 01-03% Blessed with an Eye for Danger
- 04-05% Blessed with an Eye for Good
- 06-08% Blessed with an Eye for the Hidden
- 09-10% Blessed with an Eye for Secrets
- 11-12% Blessed with an Eye of the Thief
- 13-15% Courage/Valor – The Heart of a Hero
- 16-18% Honor and Compassion
- 19-20% Generosity
- 21-23% Godspeed
- 24-26% Good Fortune
- 27-29% Good Health & Fast Recovery
- 30-31% Heal Others
- 32-33% Insight and Understanding
- 34-36% Justice
- 37-38% Knowledge
- 39-41% Luck in Battle
- 42-43% Magical Attunement
- 44-45% Piety
- 46-48% Protection from Evil/Keep Us Safe
- 49-50% Protection from Faeries and their Magic
- 51-53% Protection from Magic
- 54-55% Protection from Psychics/Psionics
- 56-57% Protection from Temptation; Temperance
- 58-60% Protection: Keep Hidden from Danger & Evil
- 61-62% Protection: Ward Off Supernatural Evil
- 63-65% Rescuer
- 66-68% Safe Journey
- 69-70% Sense Impurities
- 71-73% Sharp Blades
- 74-76% Sharp Eye
- 77-78% Spiritual Cleansing
- 79-81% Stealth
- 82-84% Strength of Body
- 85-87% Strength of Spirit
- 88-90% Strength of Will/Mental Fortitude
- 91-92% Strength to Fight the Forces of Darkness
- 93-95% Sure, Quick Hands
- 96-98% Wisdom about Life
- 99-00% Wisdom about the Supernatural

Deific Blessings of the Gods

01-03% Blessed with an Eye for Danger: This Blessing makes the individual keenly alert and aware of danger in all environments, on the street, in the wilderness, in combat, and at play and relaxing.

Bonuses: +3 to Perception Rolls to notice suspicious characters who mean to do harm to the Blessed individual, his teammates, the innocent, or someone he cares about or is protecting. This includes noticing someone who is following or spying on them, readying to attack, laying in ambush, and to notice tripwires and traps. +1 on initiative and +1 to dodge and avoid or circumvent danger, cannot be surprised by attacks from behind, and +1 to roll with impact.

Skills: Detect Ambush 75%, Detect Concealment and Traps 65%, Recognize (not use) Poison 70%, and Streetwise 60% for 7 days per activation of the Blessing.

04-05% Blessed with an Eye for Good: This is often the Blessing given to someone who has a good heart and wants to help people. It enables the Blessed individual to recognize good people and good intentions, and sense evil and foul intentions in people.

Bonuses: +3 to Perception Rolls to recognize when someone has a good heart, is sincere, has good intentions, is honorable and trustworthy, as well as +1 to disarm, +1 to pull punch, and +1 to save against mind control and possession.

Skills: Detect Concealment and Traps 70% and the equivalent of the magic spell or psychic ability: *Sense Evil* at no P.P.E. or I.S.P. cost; line of sight (must see the bad guy), 100 foot (30.5 m) range, at will for 7 days per activation of the Blessing.

06-08% Blessed with an Eye for the Hidden: The Blessed becomes astute at finding the hidden and concealed. This includes finding things that have been lost and misplaced, or stolen and hidden nearby.

Bonuses: +2 to Perception Rolls to notice when something is out of place or to notice telltale markings or clues that indicate the location of a secret panel, door, passage, hiding place, crypt, etc., and how to access it. Also likely to notice camouflage, traps, and places where someone might try to hide an object or valuables.

Skills: Detect Concealment and Traps 80%, Locate Secret Compartments and Doors 75%, and Recognize (not use) Poison 65% for 7 days per activation.

09-10% Blessed with an Eye for Secrets: The Blessed has an eye for noticing details and piecing together clues and figuring out their meaning, uncovering plots, and at the Game Master's discretion, recognizing suspicious behavior and deception, and someone who is trying to pick a lock, pick a pocket, or avoid eye contact.

Bonuses: +2 to Perception Rolls to notice when someone is holding back, not sharing, leaving out details, and probably lying, or has just stolen/*Palmed* or *Picked Pockets* and is hiding what he stole on his own person or quickly hid nearby, and can find it.

Skills: Intelligence 80%, Interrogation Techniques 75%, Cryptography 70% (and in half the usual time), and Detect Concealment and Traps 65% for 7 days per activation.

11-12% Blessed with an Eye of the Thief: Whether good, selfish or evil himself, the Blessed individual suddenly has the eye of a thief and becomes keenly aware of items of value and their worth, as well as likely thieves and criminal behavior.

Bonuses: +2 to Perception Rolls to recognize valuables, wealthy targets, locations vulnerable to or ideal for breaking and entering, and likely thieves and criminals.

Skills/Abilities: Forgery 75%, Gemology 80%, and Recognize Weapon Quality 70%. The Blessed also has the special ability to recognize likely thieves, pick pockets, cardsharps, con artists, bandits, pirates, smugglers, and other criminals who engage in robbery, smuggling and fencing of stolen goods, and when such villains are casing a place or watching a person to target for their next crime, 70%. In addition, the Blessed can recognize law enforcement officers, city guards, and soldiers even when they are undercover, 60% for 7 days per activation.



13-15% Courage/Valor – The Heart of a Hero: This is more than not being afraid of monsters and horror, it is staying calm under fire and courage of conviction. To stand up for what is right and to protect those who cannot stand up for themselves, despite the possible personal cost to oneself. Bravery in the face of opposition, humiliation, hardship, physical pain, threat of death or personal loss. To face one's fears and act when action is necessary for the welfare of others, but is not foolish, reckless, or suicidal in taking such action.

Bonuses: +3 to Perception Rolls to recognize when someone is in need of help and to identify what the danger or problem may be; +10 to Hit Points, +10 to S.D.C., fatigues at half the usual rate and recovers twice as fast, +1 to save vs disease and poison, +2 to save vs Horror Factor, +20% to survive coma and death, and +1 to ALL other saving throws.

Skills/Abilities: Military Etiquette 75%, Heraldry 70%, Recognize Weapon Quality 65%, and the special ability to stand strong and brave. Anyone using Interrogation or Seduction to get the hero to talk and reveal information and secrets that would hurt other people, his god, or cause, suffers a penalty of -50%. This hero will never *betray* his friends, allies, or any innocent people counting on him, even if it means his own death. Telepathy, psionic probes, and mind control cannot force betrayal nor pull such information from him either. Lasts for 7 days per activation of the Blessing.

16-18% Honor and Compassion: This Blessing helps the recipient to stay true, noble, and honorable. His word is his bond, and no matter what, the Blessed individual endures, he manages not to become jaded and cold-hearted, and maintain the ability to be just and kind, and show mercy to those who deserve it. As a result, he is able to stop himself from killing, torturing, or doing something terrible or wrong in the heat of the moment.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize when a person is sincere or honorable and likely to live up to a promise or commit-

ment, and to know when an untrustworthy blackguard is lying; also +1 to disarm, +2 to pull punch, and +1 to roll with impact.

Skills: Public Speaking 80%, First Aid 75%, and Intelligence 70% for 7 days per activation.

19-20% Generosity: The Blessed individual has a kind and generous spirit, is quick to pitch in and help a friend, lend money, and share his good fortune with the less fortunate.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to notice acts of kindness and to recognize when someone needs help but may be too proud or shy to ask for assistance, as well as +2 to notice a good deal, sale, or opportunity, and +2 to roll with impact.

Skills: Gemology 75%, Recognize Weapon Quality 70%, Dance 65% and Karmic Balance for 7 days per activation. **Karmic Balance:** This has the Blessed see his kindness and generosity returned to him via the people he has helped and been kind to (and their appreciative friends and family) willing to share their meager resources with him. They may buy him food or drink, provide a place him and perhaps any polite and respectful friends to sleep or dine in their home, vouch for the Blessed character, provide basic medical treatment, share information and rumors, and may even be willing to hide him and his allies from enemies who hunt them.

21-23% Godspeed: The Blessed individual is gifted with feats of speed that should lead to a prosperous or successful and safe journey.

Bonuses: +10 to Spd attribute, +2 to roll with punch, fall, or impact, and +5% to Physical skills where such a bonus is applicable and makes sense (Acrobatics, Climb, Swimming, etc.).

Skills/Abilities (special): Forced March, +1 attack per melee round, and has excellent physical speed (see bonus above), sure-footedness, and performs most tasks and skills in half the time without sacrificing quality or being reckless for 7 days per activation of the Blessing.

24-26% Good Fortune: People who receive this Blessing are luckiest when helping or protecting others, and are lucky in ways you might not expect, such as surviving a fall or impact that should have killed them, narrowly avoiding an accident or injury ("That arrow missed you by a hair!"), finding great bargains, saving against disease and poison, and similar; G.M. discretion.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize people in need as well as to spot opportunities and bargains. The Blessed individual is also impervious to disease and poison when caring for, transporting, or protecting the sick or innocent in need (+2 to save otherwise), and takes half damage from a Critical Strike, attack from behind, or Death Blow. +30 to save vs coma and death, and is able to make a complete recovery from having Hit Points reduced to low as 25 below zero!

Skills: Gemology 70%, Recognize Weapon Quality 65%, and Lore: Magic 60% for 7 days per activation.

27-29% Good Health and Fast Recovery: The Blessed individual enjoys tremendous good health and resistance against sickness.

Bonuses: Immune to ordinary illnesses and disease from the common cold, bacterial food poisoning, and the flu, to the bubonic plague; +1 to save vs poison, magic fumes, Faerie Food and the penalties/side-effects and duration from them are half; +2 to save vs magic-based illness/disease, and when affected by

them the symptoms and penalties are half; +20% to save vs Coma and Death.

Skills: Brewing 75%, First Aid 70%, and has the special ability to heal quickly. Recovers 1D6+1 Hit Points and 2D6 S.D.C. are healed per 24 hours of rest and recovery.



30-31% Heal Others: The Blessed individual is given the gift to heal others (not himself) through the laying of hands, three times per 24 hours without P.P.E. cost.

Bonuses: The Blessed individual is impervious to disease, +2 to save vs poison, and enjoys a +5% bonus on all Medical skills. Furthermore, those he or she treats are +20% to save vs coma and death and recover in half the usual time.

Skills/Abilities (special): Holistic Medicine 75%, Identify Plants and Fruits 70%, Brewing 65%, and the ability to heal others by touch and prayer, four times per 24 hours without P.P.E. cost for 7 days per activation.

Each healing touch stops bleeding, closes wounds, kills infection, and restores 1D6+4 Hit Points and 2D6 S.D.C.; can only heal one person at a time. Repeated healing on the same person (or animal) has a cumulative healing effect.

32-33% Insight and Understanding: This Blessed individual is self-aware and cannot be easily tempted or swayed from his strength of conviction and sense of honor and duty to others. More importantly, this Blessing reinforces his awareness and empathy to the plight of others, and he is compelled to be compassionate, reassuring and helpful.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize when someone else is having a crisis of conscience, fearful, and considering doing something they will live to regret or is counter to their alignment. This awareness enables the Blessed individual to try to intervene and prevent the person from doing something terrible or damaging to himself or others. In addition, the Blessed individual is +1 on initiative, +1 to save vs mind control and illusions, and +2 to save vs possession.

Skills: Sing or Play Musical Instrument like a professional to inspire, comfort, or soothe the spirit of others 80%, Public Speaking (moving, inspiring, comforting, helpful) 75%, History 70%, for 7 days per activation of the Blessing.

34-36% Justice: This Blessed individual is keenly aware of injustice and is empathetic to its victims, compelling him to want to right wrongs and help people. He develops a strong sense of right or wrong and fair play, and has a desire to make things right. Likely to take up lost causes and help the underdog despite personal risk or the odds against them.

Bonuses: +3 to Perception Rolls to tell when people are down-trodden, suffering under injustice and cruelty, and when someone has a kind heart and is sincere, honorable, and trustworthy; +1 to disarm, +1 to pull punch, +1 to save against mind control and possession, and is himself trustworthy and able to evoke trust 90% among those who need his help and intimidate the perpetrators of injustice and tyranny 80%.

Skills: Heraldry 70%, History 65%, Public Speaking 75%, and has the special ability to recognize injustice, bullies, tyrants, and cold-hearted people in positions of authority who are corrupt and abusing their power 80%, for 7 days per activation.

37-38% Knowledge: The Blessed individual is bestowed a range of helpful knowledge including understanding all languages and the ability to ride any type of animal suitable for riding.

Bonuses: +1 to Perception Rolls (all), +1 to parry, +5% to all of the character's normal skills, and the ability to magically understand and speak all languages at 75%; enough to be conversant and have a good understanding of what is being said. This language ability does not kick in until the Blessed hears the language spoken by another.

Skills: Dowsing 75%, First Aid 80%, General Repair 70%, History 65%, Identify Plants and Fruits 60%, and Horsemanship: General and Exotic Animals (any), both at 55%, for 7 days per activation.

39-41% Luck in Battle: This Blessing makes the individual alert in combat, and aware of danger in all environments, on the street, in combat, and at play or relaxing.

Bonuses: +3 to Perception Rolls to notice suspicious characters who mean to harm the Blessed individual, his teammates, the innocent, or someone he cares about or is protecting. This includes noticing someone who is following or spying on them, readying to attack, laying in ambush, and to notice trip wires and traps. Also +1 on initiative and +1 to dodge to avoid or circumvent danger, cannot be surprised by attacks from behind, and +2 to roll with impact.

Skills: Detect Ambush 75%, Detect Concealment and Traps 65%, and Recognize (not use) Poison 70% for 7 days per activation.

42-43% Magical Attunement: This Blessing bestows upon the recipient the ability to recognize and sense magic.

Bonuses: +1 to save vs magic, +2 to save vs curse, and if a practitioner of magic, +5% to all O.C.C. Abilities.

Skills/Abilities (special): Lore: Magic 75%, Lore: Geomancy & Ley Lines 70%, and the ability to detect magic at will and without P.P.E. cost, the same as the spell *Sense Magic*, for 7 days per activation. In addition, the Blessed individual is able to sense if an item, potion, circle, or symbol is magical, as well as if a person is a practitioner of magic and which type of magic they practice! However, the attuned individual will not know what a magic potion, object, circle or symbol means or does, just that it is magical.

Note: If a practitioner of magic, the Blessing also provides the mage with +15 P.P.E. and increases the duration and range of his magic by 10%.

44-45% Piety: The Blessed individual strives to be more humble, grounded, and spiritual. He or she probably went to the Garden of the Gods to be touched by the divine, find a way to help people in need, or find a purpose in the service of his deity. The pious character tries to live a simple austere life, spends money and time to help the poor and people in need, and tries to be self-effacing, humble, compassionate, kind, and merciful, particularly to those of lower caste. The Blessed individual tries to see kinship and equality in all people, and tries to accept even the monster races as his brethren. The character probably feels most at home among the common folk and clergy rather than royalty and the aristocracy, even if he, himself, comes from royalty or a higher station in life. If the latter is true, it probably makes him a black sheep and a disappointment to his family.

Bonuses: +1 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +2 to save vs curse, and +5% to have his deity hear and answer his prayers as long as he remains humble and pious.

Skills/Abilities (special): Dowsing 60%, First Aid 70%, Lore: Religion 80%, and +1 attack per melee when defending/protecting the weak and innocent, and followers of his deity. Common people, peasants, slaves, monks, and clergy feel comfortable and safe with the Blessed individual, and are willing to break bread with him and share their hopes, dreams, fears, and what they know. Trusting that he will keep their secrets no matter what. This is especially true of priests and worshipers of the same god the character serves or who has given the character his blessing and favor.

46-48% Protection from Evil/Keep Us Safe: This Blessing makes the individual alert and aware of wickedness, abuse, cruelty, and crimes against humanity, such as slavery, torture, and murder, and those who engage in such acts.

Bonuses: +3 to Perception Rolls to notice bullies, abusers, slavers, torturers, killers, assassins, tyrants, evil monsters, demons, Deevils, and supernatural evil. This includes noticing when such villains are watching him, tailing him, readying to attack, or about to assault an innocent victim. Also recognizes the signs, tools, and the practice of torture, human sacrifice, and dark magic.

+2 to roll with impact, +1 to save vs curses, magic, and illusions, +1 to save vs Horror Factor and psionic attacks cast by such evildoers, +2 to save vs possession and the powers of the vampire.

Skills: Escape Artist 75%, Lore: Demons & Monsters 70%, and Lore: Religion 65% (with a focus on dangerous cults, gods and religions) for 7 days per activation.

49-50% Protection from Faeries and their Magic: Faerie Folk, even the malevolent ones, do not attack, enchant, or subject the recipient of this Blessing to their mischief and games, unless he provokes them or attacks them first. If the Blessed individual remains polite and respectful, he might even be able to speak with the Fey and negotiate deals and safe passage for others.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to notice Faerie Circles, Mounds, and other indicators of the presence of Faerie Folk, as well as to tell when one is up to no good (trickery, robbery, an attack, etc.), +2 to save vs Faerie Food and +2 to save vs all Faerie Magic. Moreover, the penalties and duration of Faerie Magic are half when the Blessed individual does fall victim to it.

Skills/Abilities (special): Lore: Faerie Folk 80%, Identify Plants & Fruits 70% (to find sweet berries and honey to win a Faerie's favor or to trade for info and safe passage), and the ability to understand and speak Faerie Speak for 7 days per activation.

51-53% Protection from Magic: The request for this Blessing usually comes from someone who is going into opposition against an opponent who wields magic and casts spells. Superior resistance to the power of magic.

Bonuses: +2 to Perception Rolls to notice dangerous magic, wards, circles, Wizards, Witches, Necromancers, evil cultists, Priests of Darkness, dragons, other creatures of magic (Sphinx, Scarecrows, Lizard Mages, etc.), and supernatural evil. This includes noticing when such beings are watching him or the player group, tailing them, readying to attack, or about to assault an innocent victim. +1 to roll with impact, +2 to save vs magic spells, +1 to save vs illusions, circles, wards, fumes, and unwanted potions, +2 to save vs Faerie Magic and Foods, and +2 to save vs curses.

Skills/Abilities (special): Lore: Demons & Monsters 60%, Lore: Geomancy & Ley Lines 65%, Lore: Magic 70%, and knows when a mystic symbol, circle, or ward is activated and dangerous, and recognizes the rituals that evoke magic, open dimensional portals, summon the supernatural or create a magical horror such as animated dead, Golems, Mummies, and Zombies, as well as rituals that call for a blood sacrifice, for 7 days per activation of the blessing. **Note:** The Blessed individual cannot read most mystic symbols and may NOT know what the ward, circle, or symbol means, except as noted above – unless he is a practitioner of magic himself. The latter has a very clear idea of what the magic or symbol means, what it does, and the full level of danger the magic represents.

54-55% Protection from Psychics/Psionics: The request for this Blessing usually comes from someone who is going into opposition against a psychic or has a fear about psychics and beings with psionic powers, especially the abilities to read minds and emotions, mind control, and manipulate others. As a result, he prays to seek protection from such powers whether they are wielded by mortals or non-humans.

Bonuses/Ability (special): +3 to Perception Rolls to notice Mind Mages and other psychics, spirits, ghosts, and the supernatural, as well as people who may be possessed, mind controlled, or being manipulated and controlled by psionic powers or magic. Also +2 to save vs illusions, +1 to save vs psionics and mind control of all kinds (including drugs and magic), and +1 to save vs possession.

Moreover, the Blessed individual's thoughts and emotions are closed off at all times to psionic probes and manipulation similar to the psychic power of *Mind Block*, only more powerful and expansive. This makes the protected Blessed individual **impervious to Detect Psionics, Empathy, Empathic Transmission, Bio-Manipulation, See Aura, Sense Evil, Sense Magic, and Telepathy!** However, this also means the individual is unable to get helpful empathetic and telepathic transmissions from allies and helpful spirits, and cannot use any psychic abilities he may possess himself. Some beings with psionic abilities may consider him a threat because they cannot "read" him.

56-57% Protection from Temptation; Temperance: The Blessed individual is able to exercise personal restraint, self-control, and discipline. Most people have certain dangerous attractions, weaknesses, and proclivities. Most of us resist those urges when they threaten to become destructive, but for others, it is a life-long struggle. This can range from the abuse of alcohol and drugs to sex, to dangerous risk taking, or a lust for glory,

importance, wealth, and/or power. All things that may distract and lead an individual astray to make bad choices and mistakes that may hurt him and those around him. The Blessed individual who requests this Blessing knows this about himself (or the deity provides it knowing he will be challenged and tempted) and prays to be given the strength not to fall prey to such “distractions and temptations” while on this quest or adventure.

Bonuses: +2 to Perception Rolls to notice when someone is deliberately trying to use his proclivity(s) against him; +3 to save vs all types of temptation and charm attacks whether they be seduction, magic, psionics, or illusion based. This includes the words, charm and seduction of Deevils, demons, dark gods and their minions. Also +2 to save vs curses and vs possession.

Skills and Abilities (special): Streetwise 75%, Detect Ambush 60%, and the special ability of being able to resist temptation whenever the Blessed individual realizes someone is trying to tempt or manipulate him 80% for 7 days per activation of this Blessing. However, the Blessed who has resisted temptation may choose to convincingly play along and fool an enemy into believing he has given in to the temptation, or is charmed/seduced, in order to turn the tables on them or trick them. Interrogators suffer a -40% penalty when trying to get information out of the Blessed individual.

58-60% Protection: Keep Hidden from Danger and Evil: The Blessed individual tends to be a protector concerned about the safety and well-being of others.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize good hiding places, exits, and escape routes, +1 to recognize an increasingly dangerous situation, +1 to save vs disease, and +10% to save vs coma and death.

Skills/Abilities (special): Camouflage 80%, First Aid 75%, Wilderness Survival 70%, and the special ability to hide and keep people safe for 7 days per activation of this aspect of the Blessing.

The Blessed individual is able to hide himself and a group of other people from danger and evil that may be hunting for them. This divine intervention works rather like the Chameleon spell, and is applicable only when the intention of the Blessed individual and those with him is hiding to escape and survive, not sneak in and attack. Moreover, he and the people must be actively trying to hide someplace that is out of the way – under the stairs or porch, inside a tunnel or cave, up in the rafters or tree branches, scrunched down behind furniture or inside a closet under some clothes or behind boxes, under camouflage or foliage, or tucked away in a shadow – not out in plain sight.

This is a completely defensive magic intended to hide and protect, not to conduct espionage or breaking and entry. As long as the Blessed and those hiding are trying to be quiet and remain hidden, they will not be found! Miraculously, the sounds of muffled whimpering, soft tears, heavy breathing, etc., are not detected, nor is the scent of people, sweat, or blood; not even by creatures with keen olfactory and audio senses. More amazing is the fact that they cannot be seen via a crystal ball or searching Elementals or Astral Beings while they are hunkered down and hiding. However, the moment they leave their hiding place to make a run for it, or to attack, the divine concealment is broken and they can be detected by hunters nearby.

The Blessed individual also has incredible luck choosing the safest route and narrowly escaping danger and disaster, especially when he is escorting or trying to rescue innocent people from

danger. Thus, he is likely to get all or most of the innocent people across a bridge before it collapses or is washed out, or narrowly escapes or avoids a rock or mudslide, gets out of a burning building or crumbling ruin before it caves in, etc.

61-62% Protection: Ward Off Supernatural Evil: This Blessing makes the recipient something of a walking holy symbol that is able to challenge and keep evil at bay. Limited to Lesser Deevils and Demons, Wild Vampires and Lesser Entities such as Poltergeists and Haunting Entities.

Bonuses: +2 to Perception Rolls to notice when supernatural evil is at work or threatening harm, has taken possession of someone, and similar; impervious to the vampire’s bite (can be slain, but not turned into a vampire) and its powers to charm and hypnotize, +2 save vs all types of other charm attacks, curses, and possession.

Skills and Abilities (special): Lore: Demons & Monsters 80%, the ability to intimidate and hold lesser supernatural evil at bay 80% – includes Lesser Deevils and Demons, Wild Vampires, Poltergeists and Haunting Entities – by looking stern and tough and commanding them to stay back and do no harm. Secondary Vampires are wary and hesitant to attack this individual, almost as if they can sense something special and dangerous about him, but are not held at bay for long. This intimidation tactic to keep lesser supernatural evil at bay like hungry but timid dogs may also work on lesser Faerie Folk and timid or superstitious monsters and bandits, 45% chance. However, none of these beings are held at bay if they are attacked by the individual or anyone near him. The spell is broken.

This Blessed individual is also able to create a Globe of Daylight (same as the spell) two times per 24 hours at no P.P.E. cost. Each Globe has a maximum duration of one hour and can be cancelled at will.

As usual, these skills and abilities are available for 7 days per activation of this aspect of the Blessing.

63-65% Rescuer: This Blessing provides stealth and cunning to rescue and escape.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls that involve recognizing when someone is in trouble and in need of rescuing, recognizing avenues of escape and good timing to make an escape. Also +2 to disarm and entangle, +1 to pull punch, and +10 to M.A. attribute whenever trying to evoke friendliness, convincingsness, trust, intimidation, or bluffing in order to rescue someone. The latter includes talking trouble away to avoid a fine, capture and imprisonment on behalf of another, or to bluff his way into a sheriff’s office, court, holding area, slave pen, or prison to help break someone out.

Skills: Detect Traps and Concealment 70%, Escape Artist 75%, and Pick Locks 65% for 7 days per activation.

66-68% Safe Journey: The Blessed individual and those accompanying him have good fortune in their travels even under the worst conditions.

Bonuses: +1 to dodge, +2 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +1 to save vs poison, +3 to save vs disease, and +10% to save vs coma and death.

Skills/Abilities (special): Identify Plants & Fruits 70%, Land Navigation 75%, Wilderness Survival 80%, and the ability to somehow always seem to find the safest, least peril-filled path of travel for 7 days per activation of this aspect of the Blessing. This includes miraculously finding the way out of a burning build-

ing or forest, narrowly avoiding or successfully escaping a flash flood or mudslide, landslide, avalanche, or earthquake, crossing a bridge moments before it is washed out or collapses, managing to escape the notice of bandits waiting in ambush or given a pass by them (“I like you, move along.”), managing to sidestep a trap or pit, and similar travel pitfalls.

69-70% Sense Impurities: This Blessed individual is given the gift to sense impurity and contamination.

Bonuses: Impervious to disease, +3 to save vs poison, and +2 to save vs magical sickness, curses and Faerie Food.

Skills/Abilities (special): Brewing 75%, Cook 70%, Use & Recognize Poison 65%, and the ability to sense when food and beverages might not be properly prepared and dangerous to consume. Also knows when water might be contaminated or the environment is not clean and unsuitable for habitation (dirty or contaminated room, tent, bedding, wagon, supplies, tools, etc.), and knows it is best for him and others to avoid it. (“I wouldn’t eat that. The food is bad. Or has spoiled or been poisoned.”) This includes knowing not to eat berries and plants that are poisonous to people.

71-73% Sharp Blades: The Blessed character’s blade weapons become magically polished and sharpened, and never get dull. Moreover, in his hands they do damage to the magical and supernatural, vampires, demons, etc., as if they were lesser magic weapons (normal damage).

Bonuses: +1 to strike, +2 to damage, and +1 to disarm whenever any blade weapon is used, and the Blessed individual feels confident when going into battle with a blade weapon.

Skills/Abilities (special): Recognize Weapon Quality 70% (+10% for blade weapons) and W.P. Paired Weapons but only with blade weapons (if the character already has W.P. Paired Weapons, substitute with W.P. Targeting/Throwing Weapons) for 7 days per activation.

74-76% Sharp Eye: This Blessing makes the individual alert and notice details and clues concerning danger, ambush, and betrayal, that others might miss. Applicable to all environments, on the street, in the wild, in combat, and at play or relaxing.

Bonuses: +2 to Perception Rolls to notice details and clues, +1 to dodge, +5% to skills that require vision and attention to detail including Art, Detect Ambush, Detect Traps and Concealment, Forgery, Intelligence, and Tracking skills.

Skills/Abilities (special): Intelligence 75%, Surveillance/Tailing 70%, perfect close-range and distance vision, cannot be blinded by sunlight, glare, or Blinding Flash, Nightvision 300 feet (91.4 m) for 7 days per activation.

77-78% Spiritual Cleansing: This Blessing removes negative energy, all non-deific curses, hexes, Possessing Entities/spirits, or lasting spells intended to control, befuddle, or dominate the individual, bringing the Blessed individual back to normal and feeling positive.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to recognize people and places that are likely to be under a curse and locations where spirits, ghosts, and demons may be present; +1 to save vs illusions and mind control, +3 to save vs possession, impervious to the bite and powers of vampires, and +2 to save vs magic cast by Witches, Devils and demons.

Skill/Ability (special): Is able to instinctively cast Exorcism and Turn Dead, equal to a 5th level spell as often as four times a

day for the seven day duration of a Blessing’s skill or ability being granted and the Blessing activated. Moreover, Entities, ghosts and spirits leave him alone unless he attacks them first.

79-81% Stealth: The Blessed individual walks softly and moves silently. He tends not to draw attention to himself except when attention is warranted or desired.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls regarding noticing guards and security measures, finding the quietest and/or least noticeable way in and out of a building or room, and the quietest and least noticeable route of travel indoors and out, on the street or in the wilderness.

Skills/Ability (special): Unseen (similar to the Chameleon spell) when hiding, motionless in shadow or among the cover of thick foliage. Prowl 60%, Tracking but only the *Counter-Tracking* portion of the skill to cover his trail, follow parallel, etc., 65%, and Surveillance/Tailing 70%.

82-84% Strength of Body: The Blessed individual exhibits strength and fortitude to withstand physical punishment and cannot be broken through work, fatigue, beatings, or torture. This individual has courage of conviction and the fortitude to stand strong to help others regardless of personal danger; fights to defend the innocent and battle evil, and always tries to do the right thing.

Bonuses: While the Blessing is in place, the individual enjoys an additional 20 S.D.C., is +3 to save vs disease, poison, gas and fumes, +1 to save vs magical sickness or infirmity (Agony, Blind, Mute, Paralysis, Sickness, Petrification, etc., as well as Faerie Food and dangerous magic potions), but takes full damage from other types of magic and spells, +1 to save vs psionic Bio-Manipulation, +1 to save vs possession, and +40% to save vs coma and death.

Skill/Ability (special): When the Blessed individual’s help is needed, he exhibits a number of special capabilities.

1. Can lift and carry twice what someone with his P.S. should be capable of accomplishing.

2. Can withstand the effect of fatigue through sheer force of will. Lasts twice as long before fatigue begins to set in, and recovers from fatigue in half the time.

3. Can keep fighting or helping people – pulling people from a burning or collapsed building, hauling needed supplies despite injuries, hold a great weight regardless of injury or the strain on his body, and similar. In fact, the Blessed individual is able to suffer damage until Hit Points drop to *30 points below zero*, at which point he collapses. However, even then, the Blessed still lives, though barely. Roll to survive vs coma and death with the +40% bonus noted above.

4. Incredible recovery: 1D6 Hit Points or S.D.C. (start with Hit Points) per hour of rest and recuperation even when given only the most basic and sparse medical treatment. Double the Hit Points and S.D.C. recovered via magical (spell, priest, or potion) or psionic healing, and recovers from injuries and coma in 10% of the normal time with no negative side effects and minimal scarring.

85-87% Strength of Spirit: The recipient’s sense of right and wrong, good and evil, cannot be swayed, corrupted, bought, or dampened. The character is fair, honest, and compassionate. This individual remains strong and true even under the most demoralizing conditions. No matter what, this Blessed individual is a beacon of strength and hope for his

teammates and anyone who hears him speak or witnesses his strong character in action.

Bonuses: While the Blessing is in place, increase M.A. attribute to 22 (or +4 to M.A., whichever has the greater effect to evoke trust and intimidation), +1 to save vs Horror Factor and all types of mind control (psionic, magical, drug induced, etc.), +2 to save vs possession, +4 to save vs insanity, and +15% to save vs coma and death.

Skill/Ability (special): Public Speaking 90% and the special ability to bring hope and steadiness to those around him. When morale is low and people are fearful or becoming despondent, the Blessed individual can buoy their spirits and keep them from giving up hope or deserting. Allies, friends, and people who recognize this individual's inner strength and goodness, and trust the Blessed person, rally around and draw strength from him and his words. This keeps them strong and from giving up for as long as the Blessed individual stands with them, *giving ALL a bonus* of +1 to save vs Horror Factor, mind control, possession, and insanity!

88-90% Strength of Will/Mental Fortitude: The Blessed individual has emotional and mental strength to withstand adversity and cannot be broken mentally. This individual has courage of conviction and will stand fast to help others regardless of personal danger, fight for what he believes in, and to do the right thing.

Bonuses: +1 to save vs all psionic attacks and Horror Factor, +2 to save vs illusions, +2 to save vs all types of mind control (psionic, magical, drug induced, etc.), charm and domination (magical or otherwise), +4 to save vs possession (all), +10 to save vs insanity, and +30% to save vs coma and death.

Skill/Ability (special): When the skills Interrogation Techniques or Seduction are used against the individual Blessed with Strength of Will, they suffer a -50% penalty; and no matter what anyone does to the Blessed (physical or psychological torture, threats, intimidation, etc.), they cannot break his spirit or sense of right and wrong, nor loosen his tongue to betray others or reveal secrets. Generally speaking, this individual can NOT be forced to do anything against his will and he will never betray, kill, or do serious harm to a loved one, friend, ally, or innocent person.

91-92% Strength to Fight the Forces of Darkness: This Blessing is more than brute strength and endurance, it includes remaining brave, just, and honorable in the face of evil, and not be corrupted by it, bend to it, or respond in kind with equal cruelty.

Bonuses: Fatigues at half the usual rate and recovers twice as fast, recovers P.P.E. and I.S.P. in half the time, +2 to save vs curses and possession, +1D6 to damage the forces of darkness, including demons, Deevils, dark gods, Witches, evil Priests, Necromancers, vampires, the undead, the animated dead, and creatures of magic and supernatural beings of evil alignment. **Note:** *If a mage*, the damage bonus applies to spells as well as physical attacks, and the magic user enjoys a +10 P.P.E. bonus for the duration of the Blessing. *Same for psychics*, but they get +10 I.S.P. *The same for Clergy*, but they get +6 P.P.E., and a +7% bonus that their god will hear and answer their prayers!

Skills: Lore: Religion 80%, Lore: Demons & Monsters 75%, and Lore: Magic 70% for 7 days per activation.

93-95% Sure, Quick Hands: This is a Blessing request that often comes from warriors, archers, thieves, assassins, and artisans.

Bonuses: +1 to strike with thrown weapons or bow weapons of any kind (short bow, long bow, crossbow, etc., as well as with a sling) whenever such a weapon is used, and +1 attack per melee when using archery/firing arrows from a bow weapon of any kind (short bow, long bow, crossbow, etc.), or sling, for the entire melee round.

In addition, the Blessed individual has sure, steady hands that will not lose their grip, tremble, slip, or drop tools or objects. This provides a +5% bonus to any skills *that require nimble fingers and dexterity of the hands*, including such skills as Art, Carpentry, Escape Artist, Forgery, General Repair, Play Musical Instrument, Preserve Food, Skin & Prepare Animal Hides, Rope Works, Sculpting, and all Medical, Rogue (other than Ventriloquism), and applicable Physical skills that require hand-eye coordination and dexterity.

Skills/Abilities (special): General Repair 75%, Rope Works 70%, and Play Musical Instruments that require the use of the fingers and hands at 65% for 7 days per activation.

96-98% Wisdom about Life: The recipient of this Blessing is wise and compassionate. He or she is often able to tell when it is time to take a stand, take action, or stand down, and when it is best to yield or retreat, as well as determine what is fair and what is not. Tends to keep his head even when someone is trying to provoke him or his comrades to engage in rash or violent action. Tends to consider the consequences of his actions before taking them and does not sweat the little things. Also tends to be kind, tolerant, and understanding, and finds time to smell the roses and enjoy people and life's small pleasures.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to recognize potential trouble and treachery from strangers, enemies, and many situations; +1 to disarm and pull punch, and +1 to roll with punch, fall or impact.

Skill/Ability (special): Anthropology 75%, History 70%, Literacy (all common languages) 65%, and can usually tell when someone is trying to con/trick/cheat him or those around him 70% for 7 days per activation, as well as having a strong sense of right and wrong, justice and fairness.

99-00% Wisdom about the Supernatural: The Blessed individual has an eye for the presence of the supernatural, both good and evil, and senses whether their words and promises can be trusted or not.

Bonuses: +3 to Perception Rolls to recognize the presence and the handiwork of supernatural forces: Deities, Spirits of Light, Deevils, demons, ghosts and spirits, people who are possessed, the foul magic of Witches, Demonic and Magical Familiars, Necromancers, and Summoners, and is not frightened by them or their minions, as well as the ability to tell when a supernatural being means no serious or lasting harm, and when such beings are angry and ready to attack or hurt someone. In addition, +1 to save vs Horror Factor and insanity, +1 to save vs curses, and +2 to save vs possession.

Skills: Lore: Demons and Monsters 80%, Lore: Religion 70%, and Dowsing 65% for 7 days per activation.

Miraculous Blessings & Miracles

Miraculous Blessings for Champions of the Gods

A **Miraculous Blessing granted to a Champion of the Gods** is two, sometimes three (usually as a reward after remarkable service) of these high-powered Blessings which become a permanent special ability the Champion can call upon on a regular, though limited, basis. That miraculous feat or power(s) is typically available once or a few times (as described in each description) a day, for as long as the Champion of the Gods serves his chosen, primary deity, faithfully, loyally, and to the best of his ability. A Champion must keep the deity's approval and favor to be so Blessed. Should the Champion deeply or frequently disappoint the deity, fail to properly serve the god, or worst of all, defy or betray the god or the god's cause, he loses the god's favor and support. When this happens, the Miraculous Blessing and any Blessing bestowed upon the failed Champion is stripped away in an instant and without warning or fanfare. The Champion will instinctively know when and why a Miraculous Blessing has been stripped away, though the reason should be quite obvious to him. Winning back a god's favor after losing it is no easy task, and may be impossible depending upon the level of egregiousness or hurtfulness.

A **Miracle**. The Miraculous Blessings described below may also be granted as a Miracle – meaning a miraculous answer to a prayer. Such a Miracle may also be granted directly from a deity or through an emissary such as a Priest or a Champion.

A Miraculous Blessing may also be *temporarily gifted* to a Priest, Druid, practitioner of magic, warrior, hero, devotee, worshiper, or just about anyone who touches the heart of the deity.

Both types of Miracles are usually in direct response to a sincere and heartfelt prayer on behalf of someone else or a worthy cause. If the god approves or endorses the cause, favors the recipient (or the person making the prayer), or if the Miracle is in the deity's best interest, especially if helps to stop, undermine, or destroy a hated enemy or rival, or saves many lives, the god *may* grant it or some other Miracle it may deem to be better or more fitting. **Note:** Whether a Miracle or Blessing of any kind is granted, regardless of how many may pray for it or how deserving the recipient may be, is always left to the discretion of the Game Master and the roll of the dice. It is a Miracle because it comes from a divine source and is rare and often spectacular and otherwise impossible.

Unlike the Miraculous Blessings granted to a chosen Champion (in effect an active sales representative and soldier of the god), **Miracles gifted upon all other people** have a much shorter life span. A duration of one hour or an immediate result are most common.

Miracles are rare and precious, so they are not handed out causally nor frequently. They are usually granted or performed as a response to an immediate crisis, a cause the god supports, or as a reward for heroic service or sacrifice above and beyond the call of duty. Whatever the circumstance, a Miraculous Blessing (and most any Blessing) is typically designed to help with one immediate or specific event, battle or crisis. Miracles, in particular, often occur at a *critical moment* that should make a critical or profound difference. In the alternative, as noted, it may also be gifted as a reward or thank you for spectacular service or sacrifice

on the deity's behalf, such as the Restoration or Resurrection of a hero or innocent, sending rain to nourish crops, stop and dispel a violent storm, etc.

The chance of a successful Miraculous Blessing being granted varies as follows (and always at the Game Master's discretion):

Remember, a Blessing from a god is a rare and precious gift. Miracles and Miraculous Blessings are much rarer.

Hero, Warrior, or Adventurer of Good Alignment: 2%; +5% if on a quest or adventure acquired at the Garden of the Gods.

Devotee or Worshiper of Good Alignment: 2%; +5% if on a quest or adventure acquired at the Garden of the Gods.

Priests: As listed under the Priest O.C.C. plus an additional +7% to all prayers if on a quest or adventure specifically given to the cleric by his deity or acquired at the Garden of the Gods.

Champion of the Gods: A Champion's prayer for a Miracle on behalf of someone other than himself, or for an additional Miraculous Blessing on a temporary basis in order to destroy an unspeakable evil or to perform a great good in the deity's name, has a better chance of being answered than most. 45%, +10% if on a quest or adventure specifically given to the Champion by his deity or acquired at the Garden of the Gods.

Everyone Else: 1%; +4% if on a quest or adventure acquired at the Garden of the Gods.

Duration: The duration of a Miraculous Blessing or the frequency in which a special ability(s) may be accessed is found in the description of each. Some are instant, while others last for a short period. Which are which is usually pretty obvious and understandable.

Most people who receive a Miraculous Blessing either see an instant result or possess the special ability(s) for one hour.

Only Champions of the Gods may be able to perform the special ability one or more times per 24 hours for as long as they faithfully serve that deity to the god's expectations. See specific Miraculous Blessings for details and limitations.

Descriptions of Miracles and Miraculous Blessings

Breathe without Air/Death Trance

Crusader's Armor

Demon and Witch Slayer

Divine Influencer

Divine Exorcism

Dragon Slayer

Firebrand

Immortality

Impervious to Fatigue

Impervious to Cold

Impervious to Fire

Impervious to Poison

Impervious to Possession

Impossible Save or Catch

Impossible Shot/Strike

Impossible Strength
 Iron Skin
 Light Bringer
 Lightning Bringer
 Magical Insight/Awareness
 Miraculous Bio-Regeneration
 Miraculous Fasting
 Miraculous Healing & Revitalization
 Miraculous Recovery
 Miraculous Restoration of I.S.P.
 Miraculous Restoration of P.P.E.
 Miraculous Saving Throw
 Miraculous Survival
 Phoenix Resurrection (Self)
 Protection from Dark Magic
 Rain Bringer
 Resurrection, Other
 Shield from Storms
 Spell Casting, Combat
 Spell Casting, Defense
 Spell Casting, Helpful
 Spell Casting, Stealth/Spy
 Supernatural Strength

Breathe without Air/Death Trance: Like the spell, the recipient goes into a trance and appears to be dead to survive in hostile and airless environments. This is really a stasis trance in which the hero's metabolic rate slows to a crawl. The recipient of this Miracle can breathe without air and survive extreme cold, heat, smoke and other toxic conditions, even being submerged underwater or exposed to deadly levels of radiation or outer space without ill effect. The person in the trance senses if he is about to be attacked or seriously harmed (stabbed, beheaded, burned, etc.) and can choose to wake up in a heartbeat, alert and ready for action. **Note:** There is a 15% chance the recipient receives a new dream vision, instructions, a nudge, or new information regarding his mission, or reaffirmation from his deity if it is appropriate or needed. This is automatic if the deity is the one who wants or needs to communicate with the individual.

Champions can perform this trance at will for a maximum of 24 hours per level of experience, lasting for as long as desired per trance within that time frame. One hour per level of experience for all other recipients of this Miracle.

Crusader's Armor: The recipient of this Miraculous Blessing sees his armor magically enhanced with 100 S.D.C. regardless of the material, leather, chain, splint, plate, etc., and weight is half the usual amount. But the most amazing aspect is that damage inflicted upon the armor is magically restored, making the armor fully restored to its full S.D.C., polished, shining like it was freshly forged and unscathed. There is one condition: the armor must retain at least *one S.D.C. point* in order for it to be magically restored. If reduced to zero or below, the Blessing comes to an end.

For a Champion of the Gods, damage inflicted upon the Crusader's Armor is restored once every 48 hours, sooner if prayed for and if the god responds to that prayer.

For other people, the 100 S.D.C. bonus and light weight is put in place immediately, and *one magical restoration of the armor* automatically occurs when the restoration is most needed.

Demon and Witch Slayer: The recipient of this Miraculous Blessing is +1 to save vs possession, +3 to save vs the spells, magic, and abilities of a Witch, and inflicts 2D6 extra damage with attacks directed at Deevils, demons, vampires, other undead, animated dead, Witches, and the Witch's supernatural familiars and minions. This applies to all such creatures, not just those under the command of a Witch. The damage bonus applies to any weapon(s) held in the Blessed individual's hand, making it, in effect, a Holy Weapon against such beings only, as well as his bare-fisted punches, kicks, head butts, etc. **Note:** In Mega-Damage settings, the character inflicts M.D. damage to Witches and supernatural evil, but not against mortals, dragons, or creatures of magic, unless they are a Witch. Witches are linked to evil supernatural beings, making them vulnerable to miraculous empowerment.

Note: *If the recipient of this Miraculous Blessing is a mage, the damage bonus applies to spells as well as physical attacks, and the magic user also enjoys a +20 P.P.E. bonus for the duration of the Blessing. Same for psychics, but they get +20 I.S.P. Same for Clergy, but they get +15 P.P.E., and a +10% bonus that their god will hear and answer their prayers! The damage bonus is only applicable against Witches and demonic forces of darkness.*

For a Champion of the Gods this is a constant ability, for others who receive this as a Miracle prayed for and received, duration is one hour.

Divine Influencer: This Miraculous Blessing gives the Champion the gift of gab of a charismatic motivational speaker or preacher whenever he speaks about his deity and tries to win people over to follow the god he represents. This is the equivalent of the Public Speaking skill at 90%, but the Blessing also gives the Champion the ability to evoke trust and confidence in himself and his deity, 80%. The result is that people whom he has rescued or helped are inclined to praise the deity he champions, build a shrine or temple in the deity's name, and sing songs and tell tales of how the Champion's god helped save them, performed miracles, and how all should hail this divine and benevolent god. Repeated acts of protection, rescue and charity are likely to get a large number of the local population to begin to worship the deity.

This earns the Divine Influencer a +10% bonus to be heard by his god whenever he seeks the deity's guidance, help, blessing, or a miracle, in prayer. A privilege most Influencers use wisely and sparingly.

For other people who are not a Champion of the Gods, this is a Miracle that has been prayed for and provided for a limited time, i.e. a particular speech, sermon, presentation, or event, seldom lasting for more than one hour.

Divine Exorcism: This Miracle is the answer to a prayer. It is NOT an ability that can be performed any time by a Champion, and is applicable to only one or two people at a time.

A Divine Exorcism means it is an automatic success as the possessed recipient of this Miraculous Blessing is touched by a deity, forcing any and all Entities, spirits, demons, or other being(s) from their body, including any unwanted splintered essence of another god or Alien Intelligence! The evil force(s) is not only removed from the body and mind of its victim, but sent back to the plane of existence from whence it originates, without any chance of it possessing someone else upon exiting its victim. In addition, the victim of the possession feels relieved and untar-

nished by the wicked and horrid thing that once possessed him; no lasting insanity as a result of the experience. Moreover, the person restored by this Miracle is +5 to save vs possession and curses, and +1 to save vs mind control of any kind, for the next year.

Dragon Slayer: The recipient of this Miraculous Blessing is impervious to the poison, eye beams, and breath attacks of dragons and inflicts 2D6 extra damage to dragons and other creatures of magic, including Scarecrows, Sphinx, Mummy Immortalis, Lizard Mages, Faerie Folk, Adram, etc. This bonus applies to weapons held by the Blessed individual as well as his physical attacks: punches, kicks, head butts, etc. **Note:** In Mega-Damage settings the character inflicts M.D. to dragons and creatures of magic, but his normal damage to mortals, demons, and supernatural beings.

For a Champion of the Gods this is a constant special ability. For others who receive this as a Miracle prayed for and received, duration is one hour.

Firebrand: The Champion can magically turn any weapon held in his hand into a flaming weapon that inflicts an extra 1D6 damage to mortal opponents and an extra 2D6 damage to supernatural evil, wicked monsters, and creatures of magic. This is done at will at no P.P.E. cost, and remains in place for as long as the Champion requires it.

For a Champion of the Gods, being a Firebrand is a constant ability he can call upon at any time in the service of his deity.

For others who receive this as a Miracle prayed for and received, the duration is one hour.

Immortality (Conditional): Even if only a single hair remains in this world, the Champion completely regenerates and returns to life within 1D4 hours after his death! Likewise, he is impervious to disease, gas, fumes, poison, radiation, and even magical sickness, but remains susceptible to curses, mind control, illusions, and possession. In addition, the immortal heals at a rate of 10 Hit Points per 8 hours, and when Hit Points are healed, S.D.C. is restored at 15 points per 8 hours.

This Miraculous Blessing is an exceedingly rare gift given to only the greatest of Champions who have proven themselves, or to someone in whom the deity sees great things. It is never granted to kings or heads of state, politicians or church leaders. Should a recipient of Immortality achieve such an esteemed position, the Blessing comes to an end.

In many cases, the recipient is not made aware of this gift until he dies. And even after returning to life the first time or two, he cannot be sure it wasn't a one time Resurrection. Thus, most assume they can die the same as any normal person until after 3 or 4 deaths, or when they realizes they are aging at a tiny fraction compared to those around them; every passing year is like one month to them.

As usual, the god who bequeathed the Blessing is the only one who can take it away, and may do so at any time, for any reason. Immortality is rescinded when the recipient of this great gift uses it in a reckless, casual manner (life is precious and should never be taken for granted), or tricks or betrays his god, or commits a horrendous crime or disappoints the deity so badly the god cannot find himself able to forgive, or feels he must punish the Blessed individual.

The end of Immortality may also come when the god has decided the Champion's work is done, or the time has come for

the immortality to end for any number of reasons. Under these circumstances, the god will let the Champion know that it has either, a) removed the immortality so that he can finally grow old as normal from this moment forward, and live out his life as an ordinary mortal; or b) that his time has come and he will soon die. The deity will either show the Champion his fate in a dream or vision in which he sees himself lying dead or dying, or more likely with people mourning over him, or celebrating his life after his death; or the god may appear and speak to his Champion in a dream or vision saying something like, "You have done well. I am proud of you, but this shall be your last battle," or "You will soon join me when our enemy falls" or, "when the quest is finished," or "when the song of victory rings out," etc. That said, the god seldom reveals when, where, how, why, or by whose hands the Champion shall meet his end. Only that the end is coming soon and he should strive to die well. **Note:** Such a triumphant life usually comes to an end after a victory, saving a life, defeating a foe, or sacrificing his own life to save another or to save a cause. If the Champion does not meet his fate heroically in battle, he dies quietly and peacefully in his sleep.

In this regard, **Immortality** as a Miraculous Blessing is *conditional* and *limited* because it comes with an expiration date. For many humans and other beings with a human-like life span, this Immortality Blessing lasts for 1D6x10+80 years from the time it was bestowed. In some rare instances two or three time longer. For long-lived species like Elves, the length of time is 1D4x100+300 years from the time it was bestowed. Remember, however, the Immortality Blessing is *conditional*, so sometimes it is not any longer than that of a human, and much shorter if the recipient fails or betrays the god.

Immortality is also sometimes bequeathed as *a curse to punish* someone who must live through a tragedy when he would rather die, and endure a long, sorrowful or challenging life. One of the downsides of Immortality for anyone is watching everyone you come to care about age and die, and the world change around you, for better or worse. In some cases, death is allowed when the victim has finally changed his ways, learned a life lesson such as lasting humility and/or compassion for others, or attained enlightenment or another high ideal that is difficult to attain in a single lifetime; or when the deity decides he has suffered or endured enough. **Note:** The longevity aspect of Immortality is most likely applicable to an NPC (Non-Player Character) or villain, who has existed for decades or centuries, and can make an excellent reoccurring enemy.

Impervious to Fatigue: The recipient of this Miraculous Blessing can engage in heavy, relentless labor, combat, or other activity without feeling the effects of fatigue for one hour per P.E. attribute point, before he even starts to feel tired; seldom suffers from physical exhaustion.

For a Champion of the Gods this is a constant ability, for others who receive this as a Miracle prayed for and received, duration is 18 hours.

Impervious to Cold: Immune to cold, freezing rain, snow, frostbite, hypothermia, snowblindness and hail; no damage. The recipient of this Miraculous Blessing can sleep naked in the snow, walk through a blizzard, swim through ice cold water, and handle ice and snow without injury or discomfort. Magic weapons made of ice inflict only 30% damage. However, while the cold, ice, and snow cannot hurt the recipient of this Miraculous Blessing, being

struck by falling debris, and impact damage from possibly being slammed into trees, rocks, objects, or buildings when caught in an avalanche still applies, but damage is 30% of normal. Being caught in an avalanche and buried alive by it does no damage, and the Blessed individual will miraculously survive and climb out unscathed.

For a Champion of the Gods this is a constant ability, for others who receive this as a Miracle prayed for and received, duration is up to 72 hours. They feel cold but are not hurt by it.

Impervious to Fire: Immune to heat, fire, smoke, and sulfur, the Champion is able to pick up and handle burning hot embers, coals, burning wood, white hot metal, lava, boiling liquid, etc., and can walk through a blazing inferno, molten rock, swim through lava, and walk through magical flaming barriers without harm. Magical flaming weapons inflict only 30% damage, and he can drink boiling hot soup and beverages. However, while the fire, heat, and smoke from a burning building or forest cannot hurt the recipient of this Miraculous Blessing, being struck by falling debris inflicts full damage.

For a Champion of the Gods being impervious is a constant ability, for others who receive this as a Miracle prayed for and received, duration is one hour.

Impervious to Poison: The Champion who gets this Miraculous Blessing is immune to poisons, venoms, toxic gases, and infection from cuts or injury, and +1 to save vs magic potions and Faerie Food. For a Champion, this Blessing is always “on.”

For most others, this is a Miracle prayed for and received for one hour of immunity, or to completely negate and cure a poison already ingested or inflicted. The Miracle completely eliminates the poison and immediately restores any Hit Points and S.D.C. lost due to the poisoning or venom. The person feels completely fine with no lingering side effects or penalties.

Impervious to Possession: The Champion who gets this Miraculous Blessing cannot be possessed by any means and is +1 to save vs curses and mind control (all). The Champion is constantly closed off to the supernatural world, which also means he cannot see, hear or communicate with ghosts, spirits, or Entities.

For most others, this is a Miracle prayed for and received for one hour of immunity, or to completely negate and cure a person of possession similar to an Exorcism, except the possessing force is pushed out and chased off, but not forced back to its originating dimensional realm. It lingers and can search for a new victim. Moreover, the victim may suffer from exhaustion and possible insanity from the events of the possession.

Impossible Save or Catch: The Champion is able to catch an object or person who is thrown, dropped, falling, or needs to be knocked or pulled out of harm’s way, as often as once per 24 hours. This includes a diving catch and tumble and roll without injury to himself or to the person or animal he just saved/moved out of harm’s way.

For most others, this is a Miracle prayed for and received for ONE important action to save or catch.

Impossible Shot/Strike: Once per 24 hours, the Champion can make an automatically successful strike that hits no matter how difficult the attack or how small the target. This can be done with a weapon in hand or a thrown weapon, or arrow shot, and it inflicts *double damage* or does what the Champion intended, e.g. disarmed an enemy, shot an object out of someone’s hand,

knocked an object out of reach, shattered a vial of poison or a potion, pinned an enemy’s sleeve, cloak or jacket to a chair, door, tree, etc., and similar, once per 24 hours. The range is double whatever is normal for that weapon or object. For example, 1,280 feet (390 m) for a long bow, 100 feet (30.5 m) for most handheld weapons not designed for throwing (knife, sword, battle axe, mace, club, staff, pole arm, etc.), 200 feet (61 m) for a spear, and 600 feet (183 m) for a javelin.

For most others, this is a Miracle prayed for and received for ONE important attack; double damage.

Impossible Strength: Twice per 24 hours the Champion is able to lift, carry, or pull 60 times the weight he can usually handle. Likewise, he can hold a door closed or object tight as if he had a Supernatural P.S. of 50, and throw objects weighing less than 500 pounds (225 kg) up to 600 feet (183 m), and objects weighing as much as 2,000 pounds (900 kg) up to 60 feet (18.3 m). Moreover, he can *match* any opponent in a wrestling match, even if the opponent has Supernatural P.S. greater than his own, but he cannot best him, only equal him, unless he is the stronger of the two.

Duration: For Champions it is 10 minutes per P.E. attribute point. For other people, one hour total.

Iron Skin: Natural A.R. 17, +30 Hit Points, +100 S.D.C., in addition to the Champion’s usual H.P. and S.D.C. points, which means he can fight in light armor, or with little or no armor if he so chooses. Wearing conventional armor only provides more protection. Lost Hit Points and S.D.C. recover at the rate of 10 points per hour. Moreover, once per 24 hours the Champion can instantly rejuvenate, restoring ALL Hit Points and half of his S.D.C., and feel rested, not fatigued in the least. **A Fatal Flaw:** The Champion also has a small weak spot – *an Achilles’ Heel* – that has no armor protection and when struck, suffers double damage, plus a 10% chance of stunning the Champion. Stun means reduce his melee attacks and combat bonuses by half for 1D4 melee rounds! Roll percentile to determine where the weak spot is located, or pick one:

- 01-10% Back of the Head.
- 11-20% Temple on the Side of the Head.
- 21-30% Ears.
- 31-40% Chin.
- 41-50% Elbow.
- 51-60% Kidney Area.
- 61-70% Small of the Back.
- 71-80% Groin.
- 81-90% Knee.
- 91-00% Heel or Ankle.

Duration: Constant for Champions, but for most people, this is a Miracle prayed for and received for 1D6 hours.

Light Bringer: The Champion can perform a Blinding Flash and Globe of Daylight spell twice per 24 hours with no P.P.E. cost. The effect and duration is equal to a spell cast by an 8th level Wizard.

In addition, the Champion cannot be blinded by light, and can see in darkness as long as there is moonlight, stars in the sky, or other source of ambient light available. Range of Sight: 800 feet (244 m).

Moreover, the Champion can fire a *light blast* as a signal or as a focused beam of light (i.e. a laser beam), at will. The laser blast inflicts 2D6 damage and has a range of 500 feet (152 m).

Each light blast counts as one melee attack. +2 to strike with light blast. **Note:** Because this is sunlight, the light blast inflicts double damage direct to the Hit Points of vampires and most other beings vulnerable to sunlight, triple damage to Shadow Beasts. Moreover, when the Light Bringer is about to use his light blast, his hands are bathed with a warm light as if a radiance is glowing from inside his hands. Since his hands glow with the light of the sun, his bare fist punches do 2D6 damage direct to Hit Points of vampires and others vulnerable to sunlight, and a mere touch does 1D6 damage. Holding out the glowing hand, open palm, will hold Wild Vampires at bay, but only 10 feet (3 m) away, and Secondary Vampires at 6 feet (1.8 m) away. The latter may screw up the courage to charge and attack, but probably target people other than the Light Bringer.

For most people other than a Champion of the Gods, this is a Miracle prayed for and received for 1D4 hours and usually for a specific conflict or mission.

Lightning Bringer: The recipient of this Miraculous Blessing is able to perform a *Call Lightning* spell once per 24 hours, inflicting 1D6x10 damage (equal to a 10th level spell without P.P.E. cost), up to 300 feet (91.4 m) away, and is himself impervious to electricity and lightning.

In addition, the Champion can fire an electric bolt from his hands. Damage: 3D6 damage per blast. Range: 120 feet (36.6 m). Each bolt counts as one melee attack. +2 to strike with electric bolts. **Note:** When he is about to fire an electric blast, his hands crackle with a bluish-white light.

As often as once per 7 days (4 times per month), a Champion of the Gods is able to teleport to where lightning has struck, or teleport to a location on the ground, on a ledge, rooftop, tree, etc., below where a lightning flash has just appeared in the sky, but he must be able to see the lightning flash to teleport there.

For most people other than a Champion, this is a Miracle prayed for which enables them to cast one Call Lightning (10th Level power), one Lightning Teleport, and the abilities of impervious to electricity. They can also fire a 3D6 damage electrical blast from their hands for a period of one hour; each blast counts as one melee attack same as above.

Magical Insight/Awareness: This Miraculous Blessing enables a Champion of the Gods to cast the following spells at no P.P.E. cost, three times each per 24 hours: Eye of Thoth, Faerie Speak, Heal Self, See the Invisible, See Wards, Sense Magic, Sense Traps, and Tongues. Duration and power level is equal to an eighth level spell.

For most people, this is a Miracle prayed for and received for one hour. Each listed spell can be cast once, or two of the spells listed can be cast three times each.

Miraculous Bio-Regeneration: 1D6 Hit Points or S.D.C. is restored once every melee round, until the recipient is completely healed to normal. For Champions of the Gods, Bio-Regeneration is constantly in effect.

For most people, however, this is a Miracle prayed for and active for 1D4+1 hours.

Miraculous Fasting: The recipient of this Miracle can go without food or water for up to one day per P.E. attribute point; 2 days per P.E. point for Champions of the Gods. Remember, this is a miraculous occurrence, so there are no ill effects nor discomfort – no loss of Hit Points or S.D.C., no weakness, and no signs

of starvation. Even after many days, the individual feels hunger on par with having skipped a meal, and remains perfectly healthy and hydrated.

Miraculous Healing and Revitalization of Another: This is the gift of healing by touch given to a Champion of the Gods to help others. One time per 24 hours the Champion can miraculously heal and revitalize one person via prayer and laying of hands.

Note: A Champion of the Gods may perform more than one *Miraculous Healing and Revitalization of Another* in a 24 hour period, but at the personal cost of 2 P.P.E. points and 10 of his own Hit Points! P.P.E. and Hit Points sacrificed in this manner do not begin to recover by any means until 24 hours have passed, forcing the hero to function at a diminished capacity until that 24 hours has passed. The Champion's P.P.E. and Hit Points spent to heal another regenerate at a rate of 2 P.P.E. and 10 Hit Points per each subsequent 24 hours. This miraculous healing cannot be used to heal oneself, only others.

When this miracle is bestowed upon a Priest, Shaman or Psychic Healer in response to a prayer or requests for a miracle, an instant *Miraculous Healing and Revitalization* takes place upon the intended recipient of the healing. Clergy, Shaman and Psychic Healers are able to heal one person per level of their experience within a 24 hour period, or they may heal that number all at the same time.

In either situation, a Miraculous Healing and Revitalization restores the strength and energy of *the living*, requiring the person intended to be healed to have at least one Hit Point. The miracle instantly negates poison and its symptoms (and penalties), cures earthly illnesses (but not chronic disease like arthritis, cancer, diabetes, and similar), stops bleeding, heals wounds, removes fatigue, and all penalties and side effects associated with the illness or injury. Half of the individual's Hit Points and S.D.C. are restored in an instant. The healed individual sits up feeling as fit as a fiddle and ready for action. No scarring, no fatigue.

Miraculous Recovery (Self or One Other): Once per 24 hours, the Champion of the Gods can will himself to be instantly brought back up to full Hit Points and S.D.C., provided he has not slipped to less than *two Hit Points!* This is usually done when seriously beaten or injured and bleeding out. Most call upon it when down to less than 15 Hit Points. Requires one full melee round (15 seconds) of concentration and prayer, during which the Champion cannot fight or engage in any other activity, not even speak, except to mutter his prayer to his god. The Miraculous Recovery is guaranteed as long as the Champion has his deity's favor and support. In the alternative, the Champion can put his Miraculous Recovery on one other person of his choice.

A Miraculous Recovery performed by a Priest, Monk, Shaman, Prophet or other holy being on behalf of another person is possible in answer to a prayer while kneeling at that person's side along with the laying of hands. 1D4 minutes of prayer is required by the person doing the praying and asking for the Miracle (others may join in and also pray if they would like, but this one person is the main voice calling out to their god), and he must focus on prayer and communing with his deity, nothing else. Chance of success depends on the success ratio of the Priest, Shaman, etc., communicating by prayer with his god.

When the god responds and grants the Miracle, the recipient is *instantly restored to full S.D.C. and Hit Points*, and feels strong and ready to fight or engage in strenuous activity. Instantly re-

moves fatigue, cures illness and the effects of poison and eliminates their penalties and side effects, stops bleeding and heals wounds.

Miraculous Restoration of I.S.P.: All spent I.S.P. of one individual is instantly regenerated to full, one time. This Miracle is an answer to a *prayer*, with an instant result. The Miraculous Restoration of I.S.P. can be for the person making the prayer, but more often it is on the behalf of someone more deserving or capable. Often a psychic who can make a difference in saving lives, defeating an enemy, or furthering a cause. Whether a Champion of a God or other person, this Miracle is only possible through prayer and divine intervention.

Miraculous Restoration of P.P.E.: All the spent P.P.E. of one individual is instantly regenerated to full, one time. This Miracle is an answer to a *prayer*, with an instant result. The Miraculous Restoration of P.P.E. can be for the person making the prayer, but more often it is on the behalf of someone deserving or capable. Often a magic practitioner who can make a difference in saving lives, defeating an enemy, or furthering a cause. Whether a Champion of a God or other person, this Miracle is only possible through prayer and divine intervention.



Miraculous Saving Throw: Once per 24 hours, the Champion gets an automatically successful save vs any one thing (poison, magic, psionic attack, possession, etc.) or one miraculous dodge, whenever he calls for it.

For most people other than a Champion, however, this is a Miracle prayed for and received for one specific battle or quest and is one or maybe two saves total at a critical moment that benefits the cause or other people. In the alternative, the Miraculous Blessing may be bestowed as a reward for the recipient's hard-fought efforts or sacrifice.

Miraculous Survival: This Miraculous Blessing enables a Champion of the Gods to miraculously survive something that should have killed him: A fall from a great height, a building collapsing on top of him, an earthquake, avalanche, mudslide, rockslide, tidal wave, plague, poison, etc. He may be pinned and trapped by debris, and need help being pulled from the rubble, mud, or snow, but not only does he survive, he comes out of it with only a few minor bruises and scratches. Likewise, he can survive a Death Blow, hanging, or beheading; the blade shatters

or falls off, the Death Blow or hanging fails. It may hurt and has a 50% chance of knocking out the Champion or seem to kill the Blessed individual, but he is fine, just stunned for 1D6 minutes and suffers 1D6 damage direct to Hit Points.

As a Miracle for someone other than a Champion, the prayer must take place while the person is missing/buried, or first found and seems to be dead or unconscious. If the prayer for the Miracle is successful, the person awakens a few melee rounds later and is okay, except for a few bumps and bruises.

Phoenix Resurrection (Self): This is a Miraculous Blessing that is sometimes bestowed upon a Champion of the Gods, a priest, or a very important person to the deity or his plans. In fact, the Blessing is often put in place before the individual dies. In most cases, the recipient does not know the Blessing is even in place, as it is often a surprise gift or reward a god may bestow upon those who greatly impress the deity, or as a reward for exceptional service or personal sacrifice to the god or his cause. For a heroic Champion of the Gods who has provided great service and loyalty to his deity, this may be a third Miraculous Blessing, which he may know nothing about.

For most people, this is a *one time Miracle* not to be abused, because it will not happen again.

When the recipient of this great gift has died and is beyond any form of medical or conventional magical recovery, the person rises within 1D6 minutes, completely whole and with 50% of his Hit Points (the rest recover as normal), all of his S.D.C., and feels fine, as if he has just awakened from a restful sleep. If the person had been dismembered, cut into pieces, crushed, burned, or otherwise horribly mangled or disfigured, the Blessed individual rises, like the Phoenix, completely whole and healed as long as the head survived and is mostly intact. There is no risk of an insanity from the shock of dying, and the resurrected Champion does not remember the shock or pain of dying.

Also see Resurrection, Other.

Protection from Dark Magic: The Miraculous Blessing makes a Champion of the Gods +2 to save vs curses and dark magic such as Witchcraft, Necromancy, Domination, Sickness, Charm, Petrification, and Death spells, as well as any spells, potions, wards, circles, and Faerie Food cast or created by demons, Deevils, dark gods, Old Ones, and other evil supernatural beings, evil Faerie Folk, and other wicked creatures of magic. Furthermore, the damage, duration and penalties/side effects of spells cast by such wicked creatures are all half.

For a Champion of the Gods, this Blessing is in place for as long as he has the favor of his deity. For others this Miracle is available only via prayer and when that prayer is answered, the protection lasts for only 1D4+1 hours.

Rain Bringer: The Blessed individual is given the gift to summon beneficial rain sufficient to grow crops and to provide good, pure drinking water for one growing season; reversing or preventing drought without fear of flooding. In addition, the Rain Bringer cannot drown, and electrical and lightning attacks do half damage during the season of growth and rain. Whether a Champion of the Gods or other person, this Miracle is only possible through prayer and divine intervention.

Resurrection, Other: A miraculous healing that not only restores the recipient to full Hit Points and S.D.C., but also reattaches severed limbs, even a severed head, provided the severed

body parts are present and the recipient of this magic has not been dead for more than 30 days. Requires the laying of hands by the individual who is praying for this Miracle, usually with much fanfare in the name of the deity granting the Miracle. Scarring is minimal. Whether a Champion of the Gods or other person, Resurrection, Other is only possible through prayer and divine intervention.

Shield from Storms: This Miracle provides protection from all types of storms. Though the storm rages all around them, everyone under the protection of this Miracle – one specific person, a group, building, village, city, or an entire kingdom – is miraculously protected from the storm, high winds, lightning, hail, snow, flooding, tidal surge, etc., and left unharmed. For them the “storm” is a mild and harmless weather event.

Whether called upon by a Champion of the Gods, a Priest, or other, this Miracle is only possible through prayer and the grace of a god.

Spell Casting, Combat: A Champion of the Gods who is NOT a practitioner of magic is able to manifest four offensive spells once each per 24 hours, at no P.P.E. cost. The Champion simply calls upon the spell and it happens, without knowledge of magic or spell casting. The four spells can be selected from the following, but once selected, those four spells cannot be changed.

Spells Available for Selection: Befuddle, Blind, Blinding Flash, Carpet of Adhesion, Cloud of Smoke, Energy Bolt, Fear, Fire Ball, Fire Bolt, Fuel Flame, Globe of Daylight, Magic Net, and Paralysis: Lesser.

Spell Strength: Each is cast as if by a 6th level Wizard regardless of the Champion’s own level of experience.

When bestowed to a Champion of the Gods who is a *practitioner of magic or Priest*, the Blessed individual gets to select the four spells as above, and cast them without expending his own P.P.E. In addition, as often as once per 48 hours, the Wizard or Priest Champion can pray for one additional combat spell from Spell Invocations level 5-10 or Elemental Spells level 1-6, and cast it without using up any of his own P.P.E. Plus the mage’s own combat spells inflict an extra 1D6 damage.

As a Miracle bestowed upon someone other than a Champion, select four spells from the list, or one spell that is level 4-10, as described above, but the one or four spells are available only for a maximum of one hour per P.E. attribute point. If not used within that time frame, the ability to cast these spells vanishes.

Spell Casting, Defense: A Champion of the Gods who is NOT a practitioner of magic is able to manifest four defensive spells once each per 24 hours, at no P.P.E. cost. The Champion simply calls upon the spell and it happens. He has no knowledge of magic or spell casting. The four spells can be selected from the following, but once selected, the four spells cannot be changed.

Spells Available for Selection: Armor of Ithan, Breathe Without Air, Chameleon, Death Trance, Energy Field, Impervious to Fire, Impervious to Poison, Increase Weight, Mystic Alarm, Negate Poison, Repel Animals, See Wards, Sense Traps, and Turn Dead.

Spell Strength: Each is cast as if by a 6th level Wizard.

When bestowed to a Champion of the Gods who is a *practitioner of magic or Priest*, the Blessed individual gets to select the four spells, as above, and cast them without expending his own P.P.E. In addition, as often as once per 48 hours, the Wizard or Priest Champion can pray for one additional defensive spell from

Spell Invocations level 5-10 or Elemental Spells level 1-6, and cast it without using up any of his own P.P.E. Plus the duration of the mage’s own defensive spells lasts 40% longer.

As a Miracle bestowed upon someone other than a Champion, select four spells from the list, or one spell greater than 4th level, as described above, but the spells are available for only a maximum of one hour per P.E. attribute point. If not used within that time frame, the ability to cast these spells is gone.

Spell Casting, Helpful: A Champion of the Gods who is NOT a practitioner of magic is able to manifest four helpful, non-combat spells once each per 24 hours, at no P.P.E. cost. The Champion simply calls upon the spell and it happens. He has no knowledge of magic or spell casting. The four spells can be selected from the following, but once selected, the four spells cannot be changed.

Spells Available for Selection: Climb, Concealment, Cure Minor Disorders, Decipher Magic, Extinguish Fire, Globe of Daylight, Ignite Fire, Mend Cloth, Negate Poison, Seal, See the Invisible, Swim as a Fish, and Weightlessness.

Spell Strength: Each is cast as if by a 6th level Wizard.

When bestowed to a Champion of the Gods who is a *practitioner of magic or Priest*, the Blessed individual gets to select the four spells, as above, and cast them without expending his own P.P.E. In addition, as often as once per 48 hours, the Wizard or Priest Champion may pray for one additional helpful spell from Spell Invocations level 5-10 or Elemental Spells level 1-6, and cast it without using up any of his own P.P.E. Plus the duration of his own helpful spells lasts 50% longer.

As a Miracle bestowed upon someone other than a Champion, select four spells from the list, or one spell greater than 4th level, as described above, but the spells are available for only a maximum of one hour per P.E. attribute point. If not used within that time frame, the ability to cast these spells is gone.

Spell Casting, Stealth/Spy: A Champion of the Gods who is NOT a practitioner of magic is able to manifest four stealth and spy related, non-combat spells once each per 24 hours, at no P.P.E. cost. The Champion simply calls upon the spell and it happens. He has no knowledge of magic or spell casting. The four spells can be selected from the following, but once selected, the four spells cannot be changed.

Spells Available for Selection: Chameleon, Charismatic Aura, Climb, Concealment, Detect Concealment, Escape, Fingers of the Wind, Float in Air (no sound of footsteps or creaking floor board, and leaves no footprints!), Invisibility: Simple, Levitation, Multiple Image, See Aura, Shadow Meld and Weightlessness.

Spell Strength: Each is cast as if by a 6th level Wizard.

When bestowed to a Champion of the Gods who is a *practitioner of magic or Priest*, the Blessed individual gets to select the four spells, as above, and cast them without expending his own P.P.E. In addition, as often as once per 48 hours, the Wizard or Priest Champion can pray for one additional stealth/concealment/spy spell from Spell Invocations level 5-10 or Elemental Spells level 1-7, and cast it without using up any of his own P.P.E. Plus his own spells have a longer range and duration; increase by 20%.

As a Miracle bestowed upon someone other than a Champion, select four spells from the list, or one spell greater than 4th level, as described above, but the spells are available for only a maximum of one hour per P.E. attribute point. If not used within that time frame, the ability to cast the spells is gone.

Supernatural Strength: The Champion of the Gods is given Supernatural Strength, not just for fighting but to work, build, protect, and help others. This inhuman strength remains in place for as long as the Champion keeps his deity's favor. A Champion gifted with Supernatural Strength is also +2 to Perception Rolls to recognize when someone is physically spent, weak and in need of help, and he fatigues at 10% the usual rate, recovers from fatigue after only 20 minutes of rest, and is +20% to save vs coma and death.

While the blessing is in place, increase the Champion's everyday P.S. attribute to 25 (or +5 to P.S. if the P.S. is already 20 or greater). See page 17 of the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition**, for damage, plus the Blessed individual is able to

throw weapons and objects 50% farther than normal, and can lift and carry 50 times his P.S. attribute number in pounds. (P.S. 25 means he can lift and carry 1,250 pounds/562.5 kg, a P.S. 30 = 1,500 pounds/675 kg.)

For most people other than a Champion, when this Miracle is granted, it provides them with Supernatural Strength for 1D4 hours, and is usually provided at a critical moment in a battle or to save lives, or help others. This may involve holding something together, preventing a support beam from collapsing, holding the castle gates closed (or open), smashing through a door or wall, carrying people to safety, firefighting, building, etc., as well as fighting.

The Gods' Place in the World

Fading and Forgotten Gods

A resource for power and adventure

Deities draw strength and power from within themselves, but also from the worship, prayers, and sacrifices of their **followers**. Without this lifeline from mortal worshipers, the gods weaken, become forgotten and eventually fade away into oblivion. How many hundreds of thousands or millions or billions of years that may take is not information the gods share with mortals. Such a lonely existence as an unrecognized spark or fading shadow of their former selves must be an unpleasant ordeal for deific beings.

With worshipers gone and the deity becoming forgotten in the mortal realm, their power and omnipotence fade, and even seeing into the mortal realm becomes difficult and foggy, almost as if developing cosmic deafness and cataracts. In time, the deity's essence and influence becomes limited to only the few remaining statues and shrines that represent them. A last fingerprint connecting them to the mortal realm. The spoken word of their exploits and mythology also maintains a connection to the mortal realm, as do songs and prayers, but the old stories, songs, and myths are usually among the first things to go as people forget about a deity and have no reason to call his/her name, pray to him or care in any way. Some gods have existed as mere flickers around their statue in the Garden of the Gods for fifty or sixty thousand years, and there are lost statues and gods that could be older.

However, even the most archaic god can return to full life, if rediscovered and re-energized through the belief, prayer, and worship from mortals. The trick to rebirth for any deity is finding a way to attract new followers to sing his or her praises and to get more and more people to join in their acknowledgment of the deity via prayer, songs, and worship. The more worshipers there are, the stronger and healthier the deity.

The Return of a God

Every time a fading or mostly forgotten deity's name is mentioned, it is like a tiny energy jolt. Every prayer or song a wel-

comed and encouraging voice off in the distance. The more worshipers, the louder and closer the voices become and the greater the life-giving energy. Until, finally, the prayers of the many sound like a choir singing with a full orchestra playing just for him and/or the god's entire pantheon.

The deities who have statues in the **Garden of the Gods** are connected to their edifice in a subdued existence beyond time and nature. Each statue in the Garden is an earthly conduit to the deity it represents. Many of the popular and widely worshiped gods are so powerful that they see and hear the mortal world around them whenever and wherever they desire, ranging far and wide with their disembodied perspective. Others are not so fortunate. They are weak for lack of worshipers or have been forgotten over the passage of time. They can only behold that which happens directly around their physical representation in the mortal world such as a statue, shrine, temple, or church in their name or the name of the pantheon of which they are a member. Such fading and by-gone deities are closeted-in with their own thoughts and musings in a kind of mystical solitary confinement that can slowly drive some gods mad over many millennia. Other deities find resolve or a new purpose, and try to reach out and find their way back to the realm of mortals through gathering recognition and worshipers.

It is the belief, faith, love, and prayers of mortals that gives a god a connection to a particular planet and its people. When that link becomes too thin and tenuous, the deity fades from existence on that world. Over time, the god may become completely powerless and unable to effect change or have any influence in that world whatsoever. This means no contact with mortals, no delivering of visions or prophetic dreams, and certainly no miracles, no divine interventions, or direct appearances in person.

Certain magical places (i.e. locations with high levels of P.P.E.) may be the exception, but even there the deity is probably nearly powerless. A place like the **Garden of the Gods** is yet another rare exception, because it's not magical, it is *divine*. The presence and influence of so many gods makes the fabled Garden something truly rare and unique. The statues of the gods, known and unknown, are a powerful, and in some cases, last link to that mortal realm.

The statues in the Garden of the Gods are one way for a fading or forgotten deity to stay connected to the mortal realm and try to recruit new Champions, priests, and worshipers. Here,



even forgotten gods still have a tenuous link to the mortal realm. This is true even if their statue is overgrown and hidden with vegetation, or deteriorated and damaged by the passage of time and loss of worshipers. These **lost gods** are able to hear prayers and conversations and see what is happening around their statues, especially when their name is invoked, or the conversation or prayer is leveled directly at them, or is about them. It is the only way these deities can glean news about the present world. For those still lost in the Primeva, it may have been years, decades, or centuries since the weak, forgotten deity has been able to glimpse the world of mortals, or to converse with anyone other than the Garden's birds and squirrels.

Being Remembered and Rebirth into the Modern World

Scholars and theologians have many different theories about the nature of the gods' nether-existence within the Garden, but most agree that deities are so powerful even in what we would consider to be death, a portion of that god's being remains as an echo or reflection somewhere in the Megaverse, perhaps forever. A tiny spark of divine essence that lingers like a firefly or hot ember that is all that remains from a once brilliant fire, waiting to be rekindled, drifting through the night.

The Garden of the Gods is a place where that divine spark finds its way and lingers at its statue. A place where disempowered gods lost and forgotten over the ages find themselves slowly drawn toward its inevitable pull. A pseudo-existence in the world of mortals where they can funnel a bit of divine energy to touch the people who visit and stop to look upon their visage. For most people, that "touch" may be nothing more than a feeling of serenity, inspiration, or a spark of an idea. Or it could be a sense of reassurance that they are on the right path or need to change their ways.

Other times, the deity may be able to reach out and touch a visitor in a more profound manner, giving the individual a sudden epiphany, vision, or dream quest. Any of which can begin to rekindle the deity's place in the world of mortals by inspiring the right person. Someone who acknowledges the deity and carries that god's memory and good will with him beyond the Garden. Better yet, if that person continues to call upon the deity for guidance and inspiration, tells others about the god, and encourages them to do likewise.

Forgotten gods are desperate to stop slipping away into oblivion, so they muster what energy they can to find a way back into the hearts and minds of people. Eager to be recognized and worshiped once again, these lost gods are the most likely to reach out in a noticeable way and to search for a **Champion of the Gods**. To those few, but special people, the lost gods may communicate through signs and omens, dreams and visions. They may go so far as to give a hero, Champion, or someone they believe has a special destiny, a Blessing, or provide an artifact or a Holy Weapon for a holy quest – or more likely the knowledge of where to find such a treasure. The Fading and Forgotten gods are also more likely to respond to the prayers of their Champions, Priests, and newly recruited worshipers in a time of need, especially if it advances the deity's own agenda or it will help to rekindle his memory in the hearts and minds of mortals. Unless there is some-one telling people myths and legends about the deity, and singing

his praises in story, poems, and songs, it is nearly impossible to recruit new followers or remind the world of his existence.

The only way for a deity or a pantheon of gods to be reborn in the realm of mortals is for that being to be rediscovered, acknowledged and worshiped by the people of that world. And not by a small group of people, but tens of thousands or millions, or billions are even better. The challenge becomes how is that possible when a god is already forgotten, or worshiped by a tiny handful of devotees. It is a feat made all the more difficult in a world where technology is primitive and communication is mainly limited to word of mouth. Difficult, but not impossible.

This is where a **Champion of the Gods** comes into play. A Forgotten god needs a hero to do great things in his name and to shout his name for all to hear. A traveling salesman to spread the word and display great feats of heroism and the miraculous so that people are wowed and seek to learn more about the deity who, through his Champion, has come to help them.



Champion of the Gods

You might think priests and the building of shrines and temples would be the first step in establishing a base of followers for a forgotten god. Sometimes that is the case, and sometimes it works. However, more often than not, a god or pantheon of Fading or Forgotten gods needs one or more Champions to lead the charge.

Champions of the Gods are part super-hero, part salesman, and part showman. A valiant and flamboyant heroic (or villainous) messenger who battles evil (or good), slays monsters, and performs with flare and much fanfare in the name of his deity – the god he champions. A god who, in return for being its vanguard and voice in the world, bestows the Champion with Miraculous Blessings to empower and impress.

Make no mistake, while a Champion of the Gods may promote and shout the name of his patron deity from the rooftops, tell stories of adventure and the miraculous at every turn, and may even perform miracles, he is a showman, not prophet or priest. In fact, most Champions of the Gods are not clergy nor religious, and sometimes are not enlightened, or kind, or merciful, at least, not at first. Rather they tend to be warriors and want-to-be world builders who use their swords and wits to slay monsters, right wrongs, and make the world a safer place to live. Many are warriors and adventurers from ignoble beginnings, and even ruffians and scoundrels out for personal wealth and glory, but possess a heart of gold or hidden potential for goodness or greatness (or redemption) that the deity can see or sense, and seeks to unlock. And so, he empowers and inspires and challenges the would-be heroes to rise to their potential and make the world a better place in the deity's name. More than that, to shout the god's name and sing the deity's praises about the many great feats they accomplish together. The deity cares not if his Champion does so from

every street corner, rooftop, or tavern, as long as he promotes and makes the Forgotten god known to others. The Champion's job is to serve as the god's advocate and PR guy with the express purpose of winning over an ever-growing legion of worshipers.

For many a Paladin, Knight, or adventurer, to win the support and Miraculous Blessings of any god is the stuff of dreams and could make them legends. The promise of fame and glory, not to mention power, is motivation enough to accept the challenge of becoming *the herald* for a god. Meek and humble, yet unrealized heroes are likely motivated from the beginning with good intentions and a desire to do good. For these modest heroes to have a deity ask of them to serve as Champion is an honor beyond imagination, and one that cannot be denied. In blind arrogance, rogues and scoundrels serving a god of good intentions are likely to think they are so clever and canny that they have pulled the wool over a deity's eyes, and are happy to take advantage of a foolish god willing to empower them. Never suspecting that it is the god who is playing them, or sees more to the ignoble mercenary, thief, or assassin than they have ever seen in themselves.

Showmanship and spectacle is required of the Champions of the Gods. Slaying an evil dragon, hunting a coven of Witches, destroying demons, rescuing fair maidens, protecting women and children or entire villages, stopping power-mad Wizards, building an orphanage or temple, righting wrongs, and defending the innocent are all *the stuff of songs and stories that last for generations*. Songs and stories that are told and retold, over and over again, and spread across the land attracting attention to the deity and his or her great Champion, first as exciting gossip, then as songs and stories, and eventually, with any luck, into the storied history of the god or pantheon of gods of a growing church and its devoted followers.

These exploits may make such heroes famous, but being a Champion of the Gods is not about the herald garnering fame and glory, it is about drawing attention and praise to the god he serves and represents. To win the deity's ever increasing attention and a growing number of worshipers. Each new spectacle generating more songs and stories to be told. And the more they are told and spread far and wide, the more weight they carry. People impressed by the miraculous feats and grand adventures may start praying to that god themselves, even if they have no firsthand knowledge of the events told. The more people talk about, and begin praying to, the god, the more likely a base of believers begin to worship that deity (or pantheon of deities) on a regular basis. This is likely to generate a belief system and mythology that takes on a life of its own. In the vernacular of today, the Champion is a *networker* who helps the god to *go viral*, and overnight (really a matter of years or decades), that lost god is rediscovered and reborn into the world of mortals.

The hardest part is getting things started, but the next difficulty is keeping the momentum going. To keep attracting new followers and to build upon the base. It is only when a loyal and growing *base of worshipers* is established that shrines and statues are built, dogma established, and *priests* and *churches* develop.

It is the job of every Champion of the Gods to lead the way and kick-start the process, and for priests and acolytes to keep the faith and the god(s) alive in the hearts and minds of the people. With additional preaching and work by priests and followers, new worshipers are cultivated and more churches are established and maintained. If a forgotten god is able to win over enough worshipers, he/she is **reborn**. The more worshipers and greater

the belief in that god, the more powerful the deity becomes, and the stronger his connection to that world. This fuels the deity and his excited and dedicated followers who keep the momentum going for generations, growing the deity's power and influence in that region.

This is no easy task in a world where there are many pantheons of popular gods and powerful, established churches. It is hard to compete. Lost gods and old religions experiencing rediscovery and resurgence are likely to be methodically undermined and viciously persecuted by the existing powers that be. Not by the deities directly, but rather by their mortal followers. On most worlds, church, politics, and power go hand in hand. The people who have risen to power via a particular pantheon or church are not going to share it easily, nor give it up without a fight. Competition and rivalries between churches can get very ugly. Reputations deliberately smeared, lies spread, scandals exploited, acts of sabotage, theft, arson, extortion, and even murder deployed to undermine and destroy upstart rivals, all to hold onto their own power base.

This is where **Champions of the Gods** may be deployed again, though as a rule, Champions are only recruited to get things started. Still, they can serve a purpose in maintaining allegiances to a pantheon and to churches, especially during war, disaster, and other challenging times. Gods and churches may need a Champion to be their poster child and public relations guy at various points in their existence.

Becoming a Champion of the Gods – a way to empower any O.C.C.

Becoming a Champion of the Gods can, in theory, happen to anyone, however it is a rare privilege. One that comes with great responsibility, danger, and true commitment, if not devotion, to a specific god and perhaps others in the same pantheon.

It is the deity who chooses his Champion, and approaches him or her with the offer. Not that this stops an endless cavalcade of warriors and heroes who engage in courageous and noble acts and make daily prayers offering their services to the gods in hopes that such a great honor may one day fall upon them.

When a deity offers a person the opportunity to become his Champion, the individual is under no obligation to accept and will not be punished for refusing. Intelligent and aware people realize the position of Champion is as much a burden and a curse as it is a blessing and an honor.

The Vessel of a God

First, the chosen mortal must understand that the deity works through him. This means the person who accepts the honor of Champion of the Gods must open his heart to that deity in order to receive the Miraculous Blessings. Powers that are meant to help the Champion accomplish the important task placed before him.

This creates a lasting and powerful bond between the deity and his Champion(s). A shared connection and purpose that enables the deity to see into his Champion's heart. Some see similarities to the bond that is established between a Witch and her evil supernatural master. However, there is no pact, just a sincere and genuine promise and commitment to serve and promote that deity and his causes. A commitment the Champion may walk



away from at any time, though many find that to be difficult. And though some Champions eventually retire and live out the rest of their life as an ordinary person, most meet their end in the line of duty at the hand of a villain or monster.

The words and actions of a Champion must be sincere in order to keep a god's favor. Lip service is not enough for a Champion of the Gods to receive favor and blessings from his god or pantheon. He must be active and sincere. HALF of his earnings, for many Champions two thirds, are invested in promoting the deity he has chosen to champion. That means feeding the poor ("This feast comes from god X"), defending the weak and innocent ("In the name of god X I shall protect you"), righting injustice ("God X has sent me to bring you justice"), and so on. This may include paying for the building of statues, shrines, orphanages, hospitals, and defenses, while encouraging people to pray to and acknowledge his deity or the pantheon of gods. If these things are not done on a constant basis, and the Champion loses favor from his god, the Blessings and connection with the deity may stop. Likewise, over time, or when the appreciative but fickle deity feels he no longer needs his Champion, such favor may come to an end, leaving the Champion to fend for himself without divine guidance or the powers of a god to back him.

Commitment to Duty

Second, the Champion must be truly committed to the god he serves. As described above, the Champion of the Gods is responsible for great deeds in the name of the deity who has chosen and blessed him. Not only that, but he becomes a living representative of that deity and his pantheon. The Champion's job is to make the deity look good, to spread positive word about the deity, and to win over converts and worshipers. Failure to make this a priority in the Champion's life or hurting the deity's reputation shall see the Blessings removed and the title of Champion revoked.

It is important to understand that Champions of the Gods, though pitchmen and representatives of the deity, are NOT priests, shamans, prophets, or acolytes, though any of those could, in theory, become a Champion. Champions of the Gods may come from any walk of life and be any occupation. The position and responsibilities of the Champion make it most attractive to, and often best suited for, men-at-arms and adventurers, but it may be a practitioner of magic, a psychic, a Ranger, a farmer, or any profession or station, though seldom clergy as their calling is different.

The exact criteria for being chosen is known only to the gods, and they vary considerably from deity to deity based on the gods' alignment, level of power, and purpose. Ultimately there is some intangible quality or aspect of character that attracts a deity to a potential Champion. A yearning and sincerity, perhaps, that calls out to the deity louder and more vibrantly than the multitude of others seeking divine favor. Being a Paladin or a hero, good and brave, is not enough.

In some instances, the Champion has already proven himself to be noble and heroic when he gets the call. Said individual or small group of heroes has managed to capture the attention of the deity via his, her, or their devotion, tireless promotion of the deity, and impressive deeds they do in the deity's name. Deeds that inspire stories and songs of praise for that god. As

a result, the deity decides to make one or a few members of the group his Champions, the others their heroic companions or entourage. However, if such an individual or group is already doing the deity's work, the god doesn't need to empower any of them to become an "official" Champion of the Gods, unless the deity believes by doing so he/she/they would be an even greater advocate and asset.

In other cases, the individual or small group is recruited by the deity via a vision, dream, or physical appearance by the deity. (If a small group or team of adventurers, all may have the same vision, dream, or visitation.) Regardless of the manner in which the deity communicates, the person is able to accept or decline without negative consequences.

As soon as the chosen candidate accepts becoming a Champion, he automatically understands that he is the deity's hand and responsible for doing great things in the god's name. As well as becoming a relentless promoter of that god. From that moment on, everything the hero does is done in the name of that particular god or pantheon. Triumph in battle and good fortune is by the grace of the deity. Defeat and misfortune are a test of the Champion's mettle and commitment. Whenever evil or injustice is uncovered, and wrongs righted, the Champion gives credit to his deity and encourages everyone to give thanks to the god with him. He is the vessel through which the deity does good works, helps people, and delivers his message. Most importantly, such public acts of heroism are how the Champion recruits people to follow the deity or pantheon he represents. (Of course, in the case of Champions serving dark gods, this may start with acts of heroism, but is likely to turn manipulative and corrupt, even fear-inducing over time, like gangsters taking over a town.)

The Champion of the Gods may be one lone individual, or one person within a larger group, or an entire, small group of adventurers who are all Champions of the same god/pantheon, though such a group is seldom more than 8-12 people. It should be noted that most Champions do not insist that every member of their team or family believe in the deity he champions. It would be nice if they at least acknowledged his god along with their own, but it is not a requirement. The Champion simply takes it as part of his mission to win them over to his god's side over time through his good example and great feats.

Some established and cocky Champions conduct crusades and quests and battle tyrants and monsters in the name of a particular god or pantheon, but most are much more subtle about it. They don't make a public spectacle or give credit to the deity they champion until **after** they have completed their quest or finished a successful crusade. To make too much of a fuss before a campaign succeeds can lead to folly. A very public defeat can hurt the deity's reputation and turn away potential followers. Only in certain triumph should a Champion praise the deity. Such acknowledgment and praise is also best delivered with humility, not in boastful arrogance, as the latter has a habit of coming back to haunt the Champion.

When grateful people ask how they can repay the Champion and his assembly of heroes for dethroning a tyrant, slaying monsters, or righting a terrible wrong, the Champion tells them to raise a statue and pay homage to his god(s). He explains how he could not have accomplished what he/they have done without the blessing of his god. Of course, Champions often give their deity(s) much more credit than the deity's actual involvement

may warrant. Seeing all good fortune as a blessing of that god or pantheon. After all, the Champion is a dedicated front-man and promoter for his deity, humbly asking the grateful people to give thanks and praise to his god – the god who has saved them all – and if they can, to build a shrine and praise the god or start a church in the deity’s name.

By giving the god or pantheon all the credit, declining reward or giving reward money to the community or the poor, requesting only that those they have helped thank the deity and praise his glory, the Champions of the Gods are creating lasting goodwill and further spreading knowledge of their god through their benevolent actions. Each great deed for which a song or poem is written, or story recounted, names the god whom the Champion serves. Moreover, the deity’s Champion tells the people that they are now under the watchful eye of said deity, and that if they continue to revere and worship the god, they will remain under his or her protection and receive more blessings. Something most grateful people are happy to consider.

As a rule, a *Champion of the Gods* does not demand people give up the deities they may already worship, but to simply acknowledge the god who has delivered them, and if they can find the place in their hearts to do so, to *add the deity* to the other gods they revere. Of course, the Champion may gently point out that these other gods were absent or powerless in this matter, where his god was not. Inferring his deity is superior and more worthy of their worship.

The more impressive the Champion’s deed, the more likely the people are to happily agree. However, many small good deeds and acts of charity can be just as effective as a spectacular event. “I give money to your orphanage in the name of god X.” “We will help you rebuild your farm, your home, your town square, your defensive wall, etc., in the name of god X.” And as he and his teammates or hired hands rebuild, they speak of god X and all the exploits and miraculous things god X has done for the Champion and other believers.

Such stories and myths are often exaggerated, but effective. “It was only by the wisdom of god X that I came to your town.” “God X gave me the strength (or insight, or endurance, etc.) to save/rescue/protect your town, or to destroy evil so and so, etc.” Depending on the Champion’s gift for gab and alignment, the exaggerations may be quite extensive.

“There I was traveling to the Old Kingdom, when the heavens opened and the sun painted a golden path to your town. I immediately knew this to be a sign from god X and that your people were in dire need of deliverance from a great evil. I followed the path of light to your village (town, city, kingdom) where the moment I arrived I knew it was my destiny to bring you liberation (or justice, peace, whatever.)” And so on.

All quite dramatic and entertaining. After all, this storyteller *is* the hero who saved the day against impossible odds through the divine intervention (whether real or imagined) of god X. He is the triumphant hero, so why should they not believe him? Why would he lie?

This method of evangelizing is extremely powerful and effective. People love exciting and dramatic stories, the more dramatic and spectacular the better. (“Did you hear about – fill in the blank – it’s unbelievable.” The reaction of most people is, “What? No. Please tell us more about it.” Fantastic “real” stories sweep across

the countryside as fast as juicy gossip, and are told and retold. Often becoming even more outrageous and overblown, and may be told for generations if the event is truly unbelievable and miraculous, or saved hundreds or thousands of people. (“Remember the time when god X sent the great hero So and So to save us from villain Y, or monster Z?”) And as the tale is repeated, the name, wisdom, mercy, and power of god X and his Champion gain more awe and admiration.

When combined with many such events by the same god at the hand of his Champion and his teammates, people really take notice and both god and man may become the stuff of myth and legend that stands the test of time. In addition, the people who hear these amazing stories, not just the people who lived through them, are likely to start praying to that deity so that they too may be liberated from evil, or tyranny, or whatever plight they suffer. And if deliverance should come, whether it be by their own hand and courage, or the intervention of an outsider(s), they are likely to give that deity the credit, and all become worshipers. Ironically, growing the god’s reputation and mythology, and attracting more worshipers.

A Target

Lastly, a Champion of the Gods must realize that accepting this position and title makes him the target of evildoers and rivals. The deity’s enemies and rivals become his enemies. The deity’s history becomes part of his legacy. There is no escaping it. Champions of the Gods have a target painted on their backs, and there are plenty of ne’er-do-wells all too happy to take a shot at it. The very nature of who the Champion is and what he represents makes him the enemy of those who serve the forces of darkness, and vice versa if a Champion of an evil god. There is always someone looking to take the Champion down. Some hope to make a name for themselves by slaying a great hero, criminals and other villains may see the Champion as an obstruction to their plans or goals that needs to be eliminated, while others want to defeat or destroy the Champion as a service to their own dark god or criminal organization, or out of revenge, or sense of justice. Many villains, evil monsters, demons, henchmen, and Priests of dark gods enjoy hunting and destroying Champions of the Gods just to remove one more inspirational force of good from the world (or vice versa). Just as there are demon slayers, there are *hero slayers*.

Champions of the Gods often serve a deity of good alignment, but evil gods may also have their Dark Champions. Selfish and evil cutthroats who seek power and glory, or like to hurt others, or believe in the evil agenda of the deity they serve. As you might imagine, Dark Champions and Champions of Light clash if for no other reason than their beliefs are diametrically opposed. They are the yin to the other’s yang, and always in opposition and conflict with one another.

In addition, there may be religious and political rivals who are also out to undermine or destroy the Champion in order to preserve or further their own agenda. Kings, Lords, powerful merchants, warlords and criminals, as well as the leaders and priests of rival religions, may see a Champion as a threat, rival, enemy, or an obstacle to be removed.

Being a Champion of the Gods comes with plenty of baggage and danger. Yet, few turn down an offer directly from a deity and that comes with blessings and superhuman powers.

Game Mechanics for the Champions of the Gods

1. Anyone can, potentially, become a Champion of the Gods. There is no O.C.C. restriction and the Champion is NOT an O.C.C. in and of itself. Rather, *Champion of the Gods* – or *Champion of Light* or *Dark Champion* – is a title and position that comes with Blessings and the special abilities, bonuses, and skills that accompany them.

Though there are no O.C.C. restrictions, few members of the clergy ever receive this honor. Most Champions seem to rise up from the *warrior* and *adventurer classes*. Perhaps because the very nature of the occupation requires courage, daring, risk taking, a willingness to fight, and an understanding that a violent death is a likely end. Only sometimes is a Champion of the Gods a practitioner of magic, psychic, or other O.C.C., but ANY person of any occupation from peasant to nobleman to rogue, can become a Champion should he or she win the attention and favor of a god.

2. Being a Champion of the Gods is not a free ride to power, fame, and glory, and few ever amass a great fortune. Great responsibility, sacrifices, and duty comes with the title and position. The fate of the vast majority of Champions is to die in the line of duty.

Fail to live up to those responsibilities and the god may not just strip the person of his or her Blessings and cut-off all communication with his ex-Champion, (the most common consequence), but the deity may also punish him by seeing to it that trouble and challenges plague him for the rest of his life or until he finds his way back to the deity or destiny. Some deities, particularly cruel and vengeful gods, may curse their former Champion. That said, the gods understand their Champions may stumble, make mistakes, and lose their way, and try to give them the chance to correct mistakes and find themselves. Cutting them off, or worse, only when the Champion seems hopelessly lost, betrays the deity or one of his causes, or no longer represents the deity and his agenda. Also see Duration.

3. Gifts from the gods. All Champions receive the following:

- Two Miraculous Blessings of choice.
- One Deific Blessing. This may be of choice or at the discretion of the deity (i.e. the G.M.).
- Prayers heard: 40%, +10% if on a quest or adventure specifically given to the Champion by his deity or acquired at the Garden of the Gods. Remember that connection between the Champion and the deity who has chosen him? This special relationship and favor has the benefit of the Champion's prayers being answered, including special one-time miracles, especially when they are for a greater good and for the benefit of others, or one of the deity's causes.

4. Duration of Service and Blessings: The length of time one may serve as a Champion of the Gods varies greatly. It may be for one specific quest, crusade, or military campaign, but it is more likely an honor and responsibility that lasts many years, decades, or a lifetime. Sometimes a prolonged lifetime.

A Champion of the Gods earned the favor of a god either through his or her deeds or because the deity recognizes the individual's potential and wants to cultivate it while at the same time furthering his or her own needs and agenda.

A Deific Blessing or Miraculous Blessing may be granted to anyone as a reward or thank you gift from a deity. Such Blessings usually last for one use, or a limited time. Often a very limited time of one hour, a few hours, a day, or a week.

The Blessings bestowed upon a Champion of the Gods usually last for as long as he manages to keep the deity's favor and his services as Champion are desired. That is usually years to a lifetime. Champions are, as a general rule, people destined for greatness and chose by a deity for that reason.

Note: A Deific Blessing or Miraculous Blessing may be granted to *anyone* as a reward or thank you gift from an appreciative or moved deity. Such Blessings usually last for one use, or a limited time. Often a very limited time of hour, a few hours, a day or one week.

The Blessings bestowed upon a Champion of the Gods lasts for as long as he manages to keep the deity's favor and his service as Champion are desired. That is usually years to a lifetime. Champions are, as a general rule, people destined for greatness and chosen by a deity for that reason.



Random Methods & Quests to Help Restore Lost Gods

There are events, relics, artifacts, and people that can help restore a Fading or Forgotten deity. The random table that follows provides a number of quests, challenges and opportunities that can help to restore a god. Usually by attracting followers, destroying an enemy, or exacting justice or revenge.

01-06% Quest – Discover a Lost Temple: There is a lost shrine or temple out there, likely in the land where this god was once worshiped. Probably a remote, sacred location or secret site located in a hostile and dangerous land. In order to restore the god, the temple must be found and a holy relic or artifact found and returned to a particular church, the Garden, or other specific location for all to see.

In the alternative, the group may need to take an artifact or relic to the lost shrine or temple and place it there on the altar or in the hands of a statue, etc. In either case, this item is not magical or worth money. However, it may be sacred or hold other significance to those who recognize it. For example, the local people upon seeing it returned may immediately renew their worship of the deity and/or the entire pantheon, and spread the word that their beloved god has returned (or is trying to). In addition, the player group may have had to defeat or destroy an evil mage, monster, or other villain to make this possible, in the process liberating the town and enabling the people to worship freely – or the heroes may still have to liberate them in order to complete this quest.

07-12% Quest – Find the Prophet: There is at least one true-believer out there who remembers and worships this god. The players must find him or her and either bring the prophet back to civilization or deliver to him a relic or message to get him to believe again and spread the word with renewed faith and energy. This prophet may have no idea of the importance attached to him-

self, and might need to be convinced of the role his god requires him to play. Or is a political criminal who must be smuggled out and escorted back to civilization because he is persecuted and hunted for false crimes.

13-18% Quest – From the Garden to the Church: A sacred object, possibly part of the god's statue or symbol or relic provided by the deity (or they might need to recover it first), must be taken to the center of worship for whichever religion or pantheon the god was once a part of, or that which has taken his place. This has important significance to the deity's fading followers or enemies.

19-25% Quest – Recover Lost Knowledge: Teachings, myths, and doctrine relating to this god have been lost to time. They exist somewhere, however, in the form of forgotten scrolls, books, or inscribed tablets. Once these are located and brought to the deity's remaining followers or to scholars and historians, they will happily announce this great find and share these myths with the public, making the lost god be spoken of once again, and attracting worshipers.

26-31% Quest – Recover Sacred Object(s): A holy object associated with the deity must be found and returned to the Garden or some other location or a specific person, in order to help restore this god. The object could be a Holy Weapon, symbolic object, relic, an enchanted article of clothing, magic amulet, etc. Whatever the item is, it is likely to be incredibly valuable (worth 2D6 million gold) and possibly revered as well, so whoever or whatever is in possession of it is unlikely to easily part with it. In addition, there will be plenty of brigands who will try to steal or take it for themselves, so the Player Characters need to be prepared for plenty of intrigue and trouble on their return trip, especially if rumors spread about what they have come looking for and have in their possession.

32-37% Quest – Reveal the Unbelievers: False teachings have been spread throughout the remaining cults or church regarding this deity, and blasphemers and heretics are now in key positions of power to deny the deity his or her rightful place in the heavenly order. Once this handful of priests are exposed and removed, or killed, a proper balance of worship is restored, gradually bringing more people into the fold and jump-starting the return of worshipers.

38-43% Revenge Quest – Ancient Being: One or more old foes or evil force, such as an elder dragon, Greater Demon or Deevil, Sphinx or other mighty creature or group, was responsible for the downfall of this god or the destruction of the last church or group of worshipers who believed in that god. They (or perhaps their wicked followers) still exist. In order to allow the deity to get a foothold in the world, those responsible must be hunted down, one by one, and brought to justice or destroyed.

44-50% Revenge Quest – Kingdom or City: A particular kingdom or royal family played a pivotal role in undermining this god, possibly by formally rejecting the god and forbidding the people from worshipping the deity. They either put all statues, shrines, and symbols into storage or tore them down and smashed them to pieces. Then replaced the deity with another god or pantheon, or Demon Lords. The descendants of that royal family must be won back, perhaps through good deeds performed by the Player Characters or by destroying an unspeakable evil, or otherwise made to reinstate the lost deity and the kingdom's people encouraged to once again celebrate and worship the god. This may involve toppling the current regime and/or rival priest(s) pulling

the royals' strings, and replacing them with followers who support the old god.

51-56% Revenge Quest – Pantheon or Religion: The pantheon that once was family to this deity, or the religion that worshiped him or her, turned their backs on the deity; similar to #44-50%, above. To help restore this god's place in the world, that slight must be corrected, or avenged with attacks on the gods themselves, the heads of the religion/church, or the descendants of those responsible.

57-63% Revenge – Race or Species: Like #44-50%, above, the leaders or a particular clan/tribe of a single race either abandoned or helped to destroy this god and/or churches and followers in ages past. This might include their wiping out the people who once worshiped the deity or toppling the god's churches and persecuting his or her followers. They must pay for the sins of their ancestors in order for this god to rebuild his place in the world.

64-69% Revenge – Specific Deity: Another deity was responsible for slaying or banishing this god into near oblivion, and perhaps stole or caused the deity's followers to switch their allegiance to that other god. This may have involved lies and deception, threats and persecution, etc. Exacting revenge against the deity's hated adversary is required for the wronged god to find his footing and return to the world of mortals. Of course, fighting a god or Demon Lord is no small matter, but even the divine can be brought to justice for their crimes. Involving other gods in the matter may be the only realistic way to find a resolution, however, or toppling his church and replacing it with their deity's.

70-75% Rescue: A prophet, priest, king, hero, or a seemingly ordinary person imprisoned and locked away in a dungeons, chained, and condemned to hard labor, or sold into slavery. This individual (or perhaps a small band of people) has some significance to the god and importance in the restoration of the deity, and must be rescued!

A prison break can be tricky when the prisoner is held captive by the forces of evil, but can be even trickier if imprisoned by the forces of good! In the latter case, the prisoner has, most likely, been framed or falsely accused of wrongdoing, or is a victim of mistaken identity. To free the falsely imprisoned individual, the heroes may have to fight heroes, and if caught, would be imprisoned themselves. To avoid this, our heroes may need to get the accuser/liar to recant the accusation, or to find the true perpetrator and get him to confess, or find conclusive evidence to prove the prisoner is innocent and get the authorities to set him free. This can be made all the more difficult if the prisoner has powerful enemies with influence in high places. A great service or heroic deed, like saving the queen or prince, or the high priest, might win a powerful ally who can provide amnesty for the prisoner or can pull strings to get the prisoner release. However, if the prisoner has enemies out to get him, released from captivity may only make him or her a target for further skullduggery and attacks. Perhaps deadly attacks. More intrigue and adventure ensues, because the deity won't be happy if the person is released only to be slain. Good luck.

76-81% Build It and They Will Come: The mission is to find the many pieces of a statue, shrine, holy relic or artifacts, or a collection of relics (stone tables, talismans, holy symbols, bones, jewels, objects, books, scrolls, etc.), and put them back together and restore them to where they belong, or to build a new place for them to be publicly displayed (a shrine, temple, church,

etc.). Of course, the pieces and objects have been scattered across the world and lost or are in the hands of others not amenable to turning them over; at least not for free. This would be rather like the *Knights-Fossar's quest* to find and restore the missing pieces of the Titan statue, or finding the scattered body parts of Osiris.

In the alternative, the heroes may be assigned to rebuild or erect from scratch a new monolithic statue, shrine, temple, church, etc., on the ruins of a similar place of prayer and worship. One probably destroyed ages ago. This may require raising the funds to buy the land, and hire the workers (or recruiting a sufficient number of new worshipers with the right skills) to build what is needed.

The situation may become complicated if a rival church, powerful merchant, noble, or group of people are opposed to the reconstruction of the structure, or are opposed to the deity or his religion, or the type of people who worship the god. This could lead to all kinds of trouble to undermine construction: permit problems, threats against the workers, sabotage, theft, destruction, and so on. Or the site may be in a remote wilderness, and building it seems foolish or pointless. However, if the characters are true to the god and build it anyway, after it is built, people are attracted to it like flies to honey. Its presence is an inspiration and encourages worship.

82-88% Restore a Person: An important person has been toppled from a position of power, leadership, or place to do good. This may be the rightful leader of the land, a knight, a noble priest, a healer, a heroic protector, a peacekeeper, or anyone who was devoted to helping people, preserve law and order, stand up for what is right, and so on. A rival, enemy, cruel opportunist, or the forces of evil have conspired to remove him from his place of influence for their own foul agenda, be it revenge, power, or profit. It is the job of the Champion and his allies to help restore this individual to his rightful place or to help him find a new way to help people and do good.

This assignment gets more difficult if the forces continue to work against them, or if the person's spirit has been broken. The individual may feel abandoned by his god and/or the people, defeated and beaten (perhaps physically as well as metaphorically), overwhelmed, lost to self-pity or depression, or be too afraid to continue. Afraid not for himself, perhaps, but for those who follow him and who will be victimized and hurt by the forces against them. The adventurer group must find a way to champion this person, refuel his passion and commitment to continue his important work, and if required, to protect him and his people from the forces working against them, or destroy those forces.

89-91% Sacrifice a Rare Treasure: A difficult to obtain rare and precious treasure trove, object, weapon, book, scroll, object stolen from a deific realm, a rare alchemical substance, a relic, or artifact must be found, acquired, and either destroyed, or more likely offered up and given to the god who requested it in order to help bring the deity back into the realm of mortals. *The treasure* may be a single powerful holy or magical object, or several objects, and have symbolic power and/or great historical or religious significance, in addition to sentimental and monetary value; or could just be a huge quantity of gold or gems. Acquiring this rare treasure may very well hurt or undermine a noble family, leader, church, religion, city-state, rival, or enemy of the deity.

92-94% Sacrifice a Rare Creature: An extremely rare and valuable creature must be sacrificed to this god in order to help power and restore the deity. Could be a dragon (hatchling

or adult), giant, Lizard Mage, Ki-Lin, Nymph or other rare Faerie, Sphinx, Unicorn, Waternix, Za, Zavor, Angel-Demon Serpent, Skreed or other rare monster from the Northern Hinterlands or Land of the Damned, an angelic being such as a Spirit of Light, and similar. Sometimes a specific creature or person that is one of the last of its kind. Generally only a requirement from an evil or selfish god, death god, vengeful god, Demon Lord, and other foul deific beings, and those with a unique moral perspective.

95-96% Sacrifice a Specific Individual: Someone in particular must be sacrificed to this god. This might be the high priest of a church or religion, a king, queen, nobleman, chief, famous hero, enemy, rival, or descendant of someone involved with the god in ages past, or an innocent person designated by the deity. In many cases, this is someone responsible for great harm or painful betrayal.

97-98% Sacrifice the Blood of the Innocent: Ritual Blood Sacrifices are necessary to help power and restore this lost god. To make matters worse, those offered up should, ideally be innocent of any serious wrongdoing. Generally only a requirement from an evil or selfish god, death god, vengeful god, Demon Lord, or deity from a distant time when worshipers frequently gave their lives to grant power to their gods. This may be a quest the Player Characters cannot accept, even if those to be sacrificed are limited to one or more hated members of the monster races, the people of a specific kingdom or race, or a rival band or church. The deity requires a sacrifice of 1D6 people a week. Death cults and worshipers of the dreaded Old Ones happily agree to this bloody carnage.

In the alternative for any of these Sacrifice options, the quest may be to prevent the sacrifice by rescuing the intended victim or by slaying the would-be sacrificer(s), probably a High Priest, Witch, Necromancer, Summoner, etc.

99-00% Sacrifice – Willing Victim: This god requires the death of one specific person of significance (his or her Champion or Priest, perhaps) or of sentient, living beings to be empowered and restored, but there is a twist: the victim(s) must offer their lives up to the god willingly! For some religions known for producing zealots, this process will be as easy as sharing the news with the right people, but for most deities long lost to the world, legions of fanatical followers are a thing of the past. One specific individual or one willing sacrifice a month as part of an arcane ritual of the past.

Artifacts as a Reward or Gift from the Gods

Most gods have enchanted artifacts, Holy Weapons, and magic items associated with them. These are often weapons or tools the god, himself, has used, or created in the past and given to other Champions, kings, priests, or heroes. This also means the item may be a part of the mythology that makes up the deity's background and have additional symbolization and meaning, or historic significance. Sometimes the presence of the artifact buoys spirits, inspires people to action, and can turn the tide in a battle. Most, if not all of the god statue descriptions, elsewhere, include one or more *Artifacts of Note*.

Sometimes the deity personally hands the artifact over to the recipient, but more often than not the recipient must earn

it. This usually involves going on a quest to search for the lost artifact (the god providing clues to its possible whereabouts) or performing a mission, favor, or service for the deity (nothing easy), during which the artifact should be something the adventurer group can recover, or for which new clues to its whereabouts are unearthed. A location that could be anywhere in the world, and sometimes is located on another planet or dimension.

As you might expect, the artifact is likely to be lost or locked up and hidden away in the treasure trove of a dragon, a powerful wizard, king, one or more powerful monsters, or other villains. Or it may have been hidden and guarded by cultists, monsters, or other villains who oppose the deity and do not want it to be found. Or the object may be wielded by an evil noble, a priest or wizard, monster, or other villain (or hero!) who uses it as one of his own weapons, perhaps his favorite or most valuable weapon. Ultimately, the adventurer group must locate and acquire the artifact in a way that fits the alignment and values of the deity they represent or are trying to help. Wholesale murder is not likely to be condoned by most gods.

Acquisition may mean fighting the current owner and his henchmen, or battling the priests, sorcerers, monsters, or people guarding it, or sneaking in to steal it, or negotiating a deal to get it. A deal is likely to involve the Player Characters having to perform a dangerous or morally challenging service, or acquiring something (or someone) the owner of the artifact wants in exchange. Again, this will not be an easy task, but should provide the G.M. with fodder for adventure, maybe even many nights of adventure.

By the way, a recovered artifact does NOT automatically go to the deity's Champion or Priest. It should go either to the team member who can use it best or the person who earned it the most, i.e. sacrificed the most to acquire it, played a crucial role in its acquisition, etc. Sometimes a recovered artifact is not intended for any member of the player group, but for someone else entirely! Another hero or people who needs it, a king, a church, perhaps returned to the family of the rightful owner, or to make good a promise, inspire people, or have some other purpose. Sometimes these artifacts are the key to restoring a Fading or Forgotten deity's place in the world, or reminding people of the god's power and the importance to once again worship him.

If the artifact or relic is intended for a Champion or a specific member of the player group, the deity may or may not weigh in on the matter. Should the recipient of this gift later lose the weapon, he and his teammates should assume they are expected to get it back.

Note: The gods can often sense the location of the artifacts associated with them, and if it suits their purpose, can share this information with their followers, or even random visitors to the Garden of the Gods. This is how they are able to provide clues to its location or who may possess it. However, since the adventurers must earn a god's favor and trust as well as earn this great prize, there are always challenges or a hidden agenda on the part of the god. For example, in the process they may liberate a village or town from bad guys or monsters, save lives, destroy an enemy, undermine a rival, and/or raise awareness of the deity's return to the world of mortals, and so on.

Other Rewards from the Gods

Helping to restore a Fading or Forgotten god is an enormous undertaking, and the generosity of the god is of a scale to match. Deities are beings of immense age and power, and in addition to magic wisdom, they have worldly knowledge, access to artifacts, and the ability to manipulate the minds and bodies of mortals. Having won the favor of a god is a rare and incredible achievement. The smart and delicate application of a deity's power and influence can leave the favored fulfilled with purpose, rich, famous, or even sitting on a throne.

What follows are gifts and rewards that are not Blessings or Miracles per se (though a few border on them), but rather gifts and rewards that may be given to those who help the Champion. This may include teammates to people encountered along the way and who play a pivotal role in the success of a mission, helping the heroes, or furthering the deity's agenda.

Game Master Note: G.M.s, when granting such a gift or reward, select one gift that is the most appropriate for the character being rewarded or which should come in handy for the next quest or upcoming adventure. If it doesn't matter or you want a random, quick pick, roll percentile dice.

01-05% Call to the Divine: A godly means of communication, whether it be a talisman, amulet, enchanted instrument or other magic device. When in need, this will summon the god to the player(s)' location within 1D4 melee rounds! Can only be used once.

06-10% Mental Strength: +1 to I.Q. and M.E. or M.A. attributes.

11-15% Physical Strength: +1D4 to P.S., or P.E., or Spd; pick one.

16-20% Physical Toughness: Add 1D6+4 to Hit Points and 1D6+6 to S.D.C.

21-25% Artifact, Enchanted Bow: A magic bow or cross-bow that fires magical arrows made of pure energy that appear when the bow string is pulled back. Range: 350 feet (107 m). Damage: 3D6 damage each. Unlimited availability of energy bolts but only for the person to whom this gift was given, not anyone else, not even a Priest or Champion of the Gods.

26-30% Artifact, Symbol of the God: This is a lesser magic weapon based on one of the weapons the deity is known to use or a weapon that is shaped in some way to be a holy symbol associated with the deity. The weapon inflicts 4D6 damage, is +1 to strike, and when held above the wielder's head, holds at bay animated dead and Wild Vampires.

31-35% Lesser Rune Weapon: See page 250 of the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition** for more information.

36-38% Greater Rune Weapon – One Greater Power: See page 250 of the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition** for more information.

39-40% Greater Rune Weapon – Two Greater Powers: See page 250 of the **Palladium® Fantasy RPG 2nd Edition** for more information.

41-45% Heaven's Kernel: This magic seed grows into an enchanted tree in 1D4 minutes after being planted in the ground. The tree bears a dozen different types of fruit and vegetables, enough to feed over a hundred people. Anyone resting beneath the shade of the tree recovers Hit Points, S.D.C., I.S.P., and P.P.E. at four times their normal rate. The tree remains for one week before fading away.

46-50% Magic of the Gods: Select a single magic spell from first, second, or third level, and add 2D6+6 P.P.E. to the recipient's base P.P.E. If the recipient is a spell caster, he or she receives the bonus P.P.E. and may select a magic spell from any level equal to or less than his or her own experience level.

51-55% Psychic Awakening: Select a single Psychic Sensitive or Healing psionic ability and add 1D6+6 I.S.P. If the recipient is a psychic character, he or she may select a total of two powers from any psionic category, *except* Super-Psionics.

56-60% Skeleton Key: This enchanted key can open any lock or door. Even those that have been sealed by magic are not immune to its power, unless the spells to Seal them were put in place by an extremely skilled spell caster (11th level or above). As a magic object it is worth 500,000-900,000 gold, but is probably a priceless tool and memento to the recipient if for no other reason than it came from a god! Something to be passed down for generations as a family heirloom.

61-65% Talisman – Dimensional Portal: Same as the spell. Can be used up to three times before the talisman no longer functions, but is worth 1D6x100 gold as a piece of jewelry, and may be priceless as a keepsake from a god to the recipient.

66-70% Talisman – Restoration: Same as the spell. Can be used up to three times before the talisman no longer functions,

but is worth 1D6x100 gold as a piece of jewelry, and may be priceless as a keepsake from a god to the recipient.

71-75% Talisman – Resurrection: Same as the spell. Can be used up to three times before the talisman no longer functions, but is worth 2D6x100 gold as a piece of jewelry, and may be priceless as a keepsake from a god to the recipient.

76-80% Talisman – Summon & Control Storms: Same as the spell. Can be used up to three times before the talisman no longer functions, but is worth 1D4x100 gold as a piece of jewelry, and may be priceless as a keepsake from a god to the recipient.

81-85% Talisman – Teleport Superior: Same as the spell. Can be used up to three times before the talisman no longer functions, but is worth 1D4x100 gold as a piece of jewelry, and may be priceless as a keepsake from a god to the recipient.

86-90% Wisdom of the Gods – Impart Knowledge: Select a single skill from the Communications & Performing Arts, Domestic, Medical, Science, or Scholar, Noble & Technical category. The skill starts at the base level +20%. Permanent.

91-95% Wisdom of the Gods – Skill Boost: Increases three skills of choice by 10% each. Permanent.

96-00% Wisdom of the Gods – Increase in Experience Level: Instantly boosts the character's experience level by one, with all of the subsequent bonuses, Hit Points, and effects.

The Dark Side of the Garden

Evil exists in the Garden

Uninformed outsiders might believe the entire Garden to be a con job, a ruse set up by the government of Lopan or prankster Faeries, but those who are familiar with its wonders know the true dangers the Garden possesses. While it is a magnet for heroes and crusaders, for pious pilgrims and faithful priests, it is also home to selfish and evil gods alongside the good, and the servants of Darkness are drawn to the Garden as well as those of Light.

Lured by the promise of great power, wealth, fame, or vengeance, Champions of Evil, Priests of Darkness, cultists, and followers of evil gods also make their way to the Garden. They visit for the same reasons as anyone else, to feel close to their deity or pantheon, commune with their gods to find inspiration, purpose, and quests, and in the hope of receiving Blessings, inspiration, and guidance. The only difference is they do so with wicked and sinister intentions in their hearts.

Others come in search of malevolent patrons among the fading and forgotten gods. A deity they feel they can relate to or who understands them. A deity to help them find themselves and release their dark potential. In such cases, the individual may be hurt and lost. Consumed with hatred, anger, jealousy or lust for power, revenge, or a hunger they cannot quite understand themselves. A hunger that can only be satisfied with blood or cruelty. Others seek fame and fortune and are willing to take it by any means necessary. Still others believe that to be feared is the same as to be respected, and are willing to do or become something strange and terrible to be feared and respected. All these misanthropes come to the Garden of the Gods to find validation and hope, laced with wickedness and cruelty.

And many find it.

They give themselves to the comforting darkness, becoming the willing instrument of foul-hearted gods who desire to bring suffering, death, and chaos into the world. These savvy deities dangling the promise of whatever these tortured souls want most – for a price. Most dark gods can feel the ache of regret and sense the boiling forbidden desire inside a person a mile away, and know exactly how to nurture it inside their new disciple. Convincing their pupils of evil and treachery that they can make them feel whole again or can help them feed the insatiable hunger gnawing inside of them. An evil deity may offer his or her dark disciples lost secrets of magic, powerful weapons, blessings, or a sense of belonging and purpose to win their undivided support. Spiritually empowered, the servants of Darkness go into the world using lies, betrayal and force to take what they or their deity desire. These are selfish and evil people who relish fast rewards and share little if any empathy with those they victimize or torment. Each step down the path of Darkness is easier than the last. Self-indulgence, lies, trickery, and depravity are all part of their wicked ways.

Dark gods are no different than any other deity in that they seek Champions, worshipers, followers, and priests to keep their names alive and rooted in the hearts and minds of mortals, even if it involves fear and disdain. Like other deities, they too offer inspiration, visions, miracles and blessings, twisted though they may be. And they too search for Champions to spread their name and attract followers who promote the god and the virtues of selfishness, ruthlessness, greed, aggression, avarice, theft, murder, and all the other deadly sins. To these gods and their followers, the forces of good and Light are weak fools and sheep waiting to be eaten by the bold lion or stealthy

wolf, which of course, *are them and their followers*. The reward for being bold and ruthless? The power, wealth, and fear/respect, or whatever else it is that the individual may seek, or think they need to be happy and content.

Gods of Chaos and Darkness, especially the fading and forgotten evil deities, are often more active in recruiting potential new followers and making unholy alliances with mortals, than the gods of order and virtue. Of course, these gods of Darkness are anxious to stir up trouble and create fear and chaos because it has been such a long, long time since they have had the opportunity. They may even seek revenge against rival churches and old enemies, or delight in killing heroes and Champions.

These foul beings are experts in exploiting human weakness, and know how to speak to the lonely and disenfranchised and fuel the raw emotions to make people snap and do terrible things. As such, they like to target the downtrodden, outcasts, and the shunned (including the monster races). Their angry and tortured souls are like putty to be molded by the forces of evil who know exactly how to prey upon their emotions, fears and desires. Angry and vengeful misfits, scoundrels, thieves, and murderers may be willing to do almost anything, and kill whomever they must, one at a time or by the multitude, when an evil god encourages them to do so, or convinces them that they are special. One of the “chosen,” destined for greatness.

Such foul deities are happy to grant a motivated, disturbed individual Dark Blessings, an Unholy Weapon, ancient artifact, or forbidden magic to help their new disciple of evil get on their way. Such misbegotten mortals are only too happy to start a cult or secret sect in the name of their new supportive god. And bring chaos and suffering upon those they hate or despise. Just as most have no qualms about conducting ancient and forgotten rituals that involve the sacrifice of animals or people. For the powers of Darkness, it is all about balancing the cosmic scales between good and evil, and just having fun at the expense of others. The forces of Darkness lack empathy, so they never seem to tire of watching mortals suffer and destroy each other.

Gods of good and evil are distributed in somewhat equal measure throughout the Garden of the Gods, usually clustered within a pantheon of deities, or gods of a particular realm, such as the Demon Lords of Hades and the Lords of Dyval, both collected in their own areas as two different, evil pantheons. As far as the gods of the Garden are concerned, there is a bit of a gray area when it comes to good and evil. Many are from ancient times and primitive eras where their concept of right and wrong and the distribution of justice may be more brutal or stark than can be expected in the current age of chivalry. Followers of some of the elder gods – especially those of Unprincipled, Anarchist, and Aberrant evil alignments – may view cannibalism, ritual torture, slavery, the summoning of demons, and the sacrifice of human captives and animals as a normal part of life and ritual. These norms vary from culture to culture, though obviously heroes, Champions of good, other crusaders of Light and Order, the Imperial forces of Lopan, and the Knights-Fossar, are all going to take issue with these extreme and brutal forms of worship taking place anywhere within their jurisdiction. Such acts are never allowed nor take place within the Garden of the Gods, not even in the shadowy tangle of the Primeva. Magic and rituals of any kind, good or evil, must be taken elsewhere, outside the Garden. Most black-hearted villains don't engage in their evil ways until they leave Lopan entirely, but not always.

Catching the Attention of Evil Gods

Gods of Light and goodness may reach out to visitors in the Garden and offer knowledge, healing, and guidance to help inspire mortals to do good and charitable acts, promote peace and acceptance, and engage in quests and crusades that champion the deity's good name, but so do the gods of Darkness.

Dark gods are also present in the Garden. Waiting for those who share their self-serving and cruel outlook on life and the world. They are happy to encourage, bless, and make arrangements with ruthless and untrustworthy individuals hungry for power, fortune, fame, or vengeance. There is no shortage of people willing to compromise their morals in return for personal gain, but filling a church with these self-serving personalities creates a very different group of followers than the normal selfless, devoted types that are most often associated with religious faith and the heroic adventurers who are attracted to the fabled Garden. With that said, a common enemy or goal, coupled with personal gain, avarice, and vengeance against said enemy, are often the glue that holds many sinister cults and secret societies of like-minded rapacious cutthroats together.

Dark gods are also always on the lookout for new converts. Often relying upon the manipulation of strong emotions, trickery, deception and treachery to tempt and lure good people into their service. Those who are – in the moment – under duress, feeling desperate or lost to hot emotions such as love, hate, sorrow, anger, desire, or who lust for revenge or justice that seems unlikely to come from any other means, are the most vulnerable during this time to the promises that come from a dark god.

Temptation and justification are the specialty of dark gods. Evil has a way of justifying what it does and preys upon the festering sorrow and shattered dreams of the hopeless, calling upon them to consider a darker option. The promise of a fast, seemingly easy path to power, glory, fortune, and sweet revenge can tempt people of any alignment, causing them to consider compromising their virtue and to let dark emotions and desires override reason and goodness, even if it is just for a moment. But for many, that one moment is all it takes to send them tumbling into the abyss and on a new, dark path. Doing what's right and good is often the more difficult way to go. And one that requires conviction, self-discipline, and painful sacrifice, while the dark path is usually direct and easy, because it doesn't care about consequences or who might get hurt along the way. Depending on the circumstances and emotions involved, making the right choice can be difficult for the best of us, let alone for someone who is in emotional pain or who may already be predisposed to selfishness, greed, and cruelty.

This means even pilgrims of good alignment who visit the Garden of the Gods in hopes of divine enlightenment may open their minds and hearts only to find a much darker presence waiting for them. One that tugs at their own inner darkness and insecurities, promising reward in exchange for simple acts of justifiable selfishness and cruelty in an allegiance to a different sort of deity.

Fading and forgotten evil deities in the Garden are especially anxious to attract and corrupt visitors in the hopes of rekindling a cult of new followers in their name. It only takes one fanatical devotee or Champion of the dark god to begin actively recruiting others and circulating forbidden knowledge.

It is important to note that the powers of Darkness have no greater sway over visitors than gods of Light and goodness. In the end, it is left to each person as to whether they listen to the voices of good or evil that may speak to them. It up to every person to choose from right or wrong. Those who choose to do the right thing can silence the beckoning darkness and stay on the path of goodness. However, those who grow tired of being good and kind and patiently awaiting their just reward, may choose otherwise. That said, the powers of Darkness (and goodness) cannot force anyone to do anything against their will. For a person in turmoil about to make a tough decision, simply approaching the statue of an evil god may be enough to begin hearing whispers and seeing glimpses of tantalizing rewards for going down a dark path. People who find themselves considering that dark passage need to extract themselves from such tempting but morally wrong thoughts before they compromise themselves. Time to approach a god of Light or leave the Garden, for the moment, entirely.

Champions of Dark Gods

Despite the presence of kind and gentle pilgrims, visiting heroes, the Knights-Fossar, and the watchful eyes of the self-appointed caretakers, **Witches** and **Champions of Dark Gods** are certainly *born* within the Garden's bounds. A dark god, especially a fading or forgotten god of darkness, may be willing to invest a lot of his waning deific energy and efforts into one or a few followers. Making them into dark messiahs who will hopefully reignite the flames of belief in that evil deity. (See the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®** for information about Witches and Priests of Darkness.)

Champions of Dark Gods work very much the same way as any Champion of the Gods, though some are less flamboyant and may be downright secretive (leaders of cults and sects). That said, some are just as bold and in your face as any Champion of the Gods, making big moves, slaying or undermining heroes (i.e. enemies of Darkness), conquering people, murdering kings and wizards, taking what they want, and causing all sorts of grief and trouble. For every triumph, they, of course, give credit where credit is due, to themselves and their dark god.

Such Dark Champions are magnets for monsters and other cutthroats who see them as a means to power and opportunity for themselves. For them, if worshiping and promoting a new god is required to get the power, fame and wealth they long for, then so be it. That's how insurrection sometimes starts among hordes of Ogres, Orcs, Goblins, Coyles, and other members of the monster races – all they need is one powerful and/or charismatic leader offering freedom, bloody revenge, or power – and they flock to him. The fact that he or she offers them the opportunity to raid, rob, and kill the people they hate (e.g., humans, Elves, Dwarves, Titans, Gnomes, and others), is the delicious frosting on the cake. As word of each successful raid, attack, and conquest spreads, more monstrous people and evildoers join their ranks and agree to worship that dark god of blood and fortune. In addition, other groups may begin to call upon that dark deity and rise up to start their own campaigns of savagery, raiding towns and villages, raping and kidnaping people, and engaging in other nefarious or murderous deeds. The most hate-filled and wicked may engage

in wholesale slaughter or genocide, sending hundreds or thousands of people to their doom on the sacrificial altar to appease their dark god, as well as engage in all manner of terrorism and bloodletting. All of it to the delight of the dark god(s) that inspires them.

The same can also be said for scoundrels, thieves, tormented or hate-filled survivors of a war, gang violence, or other brutal life experience. Likewise, excommunicated priests, banned or disgruntled fighters, exiled nobles, heroes and warriors who have lost more than they can bear (loved ones, land, title, homeland, position, etc.), may succumb to their hate or sorrow and become unexpected candidates to be a **Champion of the Dark Gods**. Willingly choosing to serve a selfish or evil deity so they may be Blessed darkly and exact a terrible vengeance or acquire the wealth, power, and station denied to them in the name of the selfish or evil deity who has empowered them. Worse are the villains who are agents of chaos and evil to begin with, that intentionally seek out the opportunity to serve a force of darkness. Offering their service to a selfish or evil deity as a dark Champion for their mutual advancement and reward.

Rather than serving good, the Champion and worshippers of dark gods are expected to perform feats that align with the pur-



pose and goals of their selfish or evil deity. This may include theft and blackmail, murder and destruction, or acts of terrorism and wholesale slaughter. And though you might think such despicable and violent actions are par for the course, all too often evil comes wrapped in an attractive and alluring package. One that *seems* sincere and compassionate, helpful and caring, but is a corrupting and manipulative influence to lead people astray. Such vile individuals are sneaky and cunning. They use their honeyed words and deeds to encourage wrongdoing of every kind. A wolf in sheep's clothing secretly preying upon the flock it walks among at every opportunity. Such black-hearted Champions of dark gods take pleasure in turning people against each other, creating an atmosphere of distrust or outright paranoia, causing discord and insurrection, and getting good people to do terrible things.

Wicked agents of Darkness and chaos – be they cultists, Witches, zealots, or Champions of dark gods – like to create and spread lies and false rumors, cheat, trick, rob, vandalize, sabotage, seduce, instigate trouble, and engage in all kinds of heinous acts to harass and hurt their rivals and enemies. Most lack empathy and seek only to improve their own fortune and those of their deity.

The worst of the lot have no qualms about threatening, blackmailing, kidnaping, beating, or killing people to get what they or their deity wants. Freeing imprisoned criminals and madmen, unleashing monsters or sending bandits upon a village, restoring or defending evil cults, assassinating high officials and noble leaders, and leading like-minded followers into battle against rivals and the forces of good are all par for the course for a Champion of dark gods. Some even develop a taste for bringing down good Champions of the Gods and heroes, and hunt them down. Such blackguards may strike by trying to destroy their reputation via slander or by framing the good guys for a crime they did not commit, but many enjoy hunting down heroes and good Champions of the Gods and killing them outright. The attacks by such hero slayers run the gamut from one-on-one duels and gunslinger-style showdowns in the street to ambushes and surprise attacks, or by tricking others to do their dirty work for them.

Champions of dark gods can be just as resourceful and dedicated to their deity as any force for good. Like all Champions of the Gods, they are inspired and empowered by the foul deity they serve. Since the forces of good and evil are philosophical opposites, the Champions of Light and those of Darkness are natural enemies and opposing forces. While this may make Champions who are encouraged and empowered by selfish or evil gods scorned outcasts or self-serving criminals in law abiding societies, they are heroes and leaders to people who share their dark view of the world. Like any Champion, even the worst of villains willingly and happily spends his money (and compels people) to build statues, shrines, and temples to his deity(s), and insists his god will bring him and all of them freedom, power, glory and wealth.

To barbaric and brutish societies where the law of the jungle reigns supreme, and cunning and might makes right, the savagery and ruthlessness of such dark Champions are seen as strengths and virtues. Moreover, these selfish and evil Champions understand the dark side of human nature enough to share their ill-gotten gains with, and very publicly fight for, the violent rabble who are candidates to worship their deity. After all, everyone appreci-

ates anybody who spends money on them, improves their lives or station, or saves their lives or community. Desperate people are less likely to question their benefactor's motives until it begins to negatively impact them. So help them and give them a piece of the action (money and prestige), and many will turn a blind-eye to wrongdoing or try to justify it.

It is common for a Champion of dark deities to spend half to two-thirds of his earnings/treasure to further the goals of the deity he champions. Money used to hire thugs and henchmen or mercenaries and specialists (assassins, wizards, healers, scouts, spies, snitches, etc.), make bribes and payoffs, acquire special services, re-supplies and upgrades to weapons and gear, get poison and magic items, fund secret rituals and cults, pay for hideouts and meeting places, etc. All are necessary expenses the Champion must fund. So is money spent on parties, booze and food to keep his underlings and the people he is trying to win over to worship his deity, impressed and happy.

Such acts of kindness and generosity are just another sort of bribery and manipulation to make his underlings and marks feel important and appreciated and willing to support the dark Champion and pray to his deity. Of course, such a villain's generosity only goes so far before intimidation, extortion, and brute force are applied. Most evil beings resort to threats and physical violence to command and use fear and force to maintain their hold over others. Defy them, cheat them, betray them, perhaps even question them, let alone challenge or humiliate them in public, will bring about swift and brutal retaliation. Beatings, leg-breaking, torture, and murder are the common responses to enforce their will and maintain control. Toe the line and do what your are told, *or else*, is the golden rule of evil, violent people.

Allow such dark Champions, tyrants, and ruthless criminal elements to establish a foothold, the more corruption, fear and discord will spread. Where people are impoverished and desperate, and acts of wickedness and criminality go unpunished, the seeds of evil find rich soil in which to bloom. And dark Champions are only too happy to plant those seeds whether it is through empty promises and lies or by instigating growing discord, fear, and violence.

Blessings from Dark Gods to their Champions

In addition to the usual range of Deific Blessings, dark gods may give their Champions, Priests, and select devotees special "Blessings" that suit their dark nature and foul intentions.

Same as always, the Champion of dark gods receives two Miraculous Blessings and one Deific Blessing. Everything that applies to the Champion of the Gods of good alignment, applies to the Champion of selfish and evil gods. The difference is that a Blessing may be in reverse.

Examples: 1. Instead of being a *Demon Slayer*, use those same bonuses and skills to be an *Angel Slayer* or a *Hero Slayer*. The Blessing is fundamentally the same, only the targets are different. Someone who hunts and destroys Spirits of Light, good Champions of the Gods, demigods and other supernatural beings of good alignment and reputation. Perhaps that includes Paladins, Knights, and heroes of good alignment known for fighting the forces of evil or who oppose the Blessed individual's deity and/or his followers.

2. *Protection from Evil/Keep Us Safe*, would become Protect us from Good/Keep Us Safe. The Blessing is largely unchanged, except the bonuses apply to fighting good, and the skills or abilities apply to hiding from good, not evil. Simple.

3. *Blessed with an Eye for Danger* is fundamentally unchanged though now the danger is the authorities/lawmen, heroes, and adventurers of good alignment who may be out to stop the evil Blessed individual from stealing or cheating or killing. Likewise with Rescuer, the only difference being who the dark Champion is rescuing and from whom. Most likely the rescue is from heroes or the authorities rather than a criminal or monster, but it could be both!

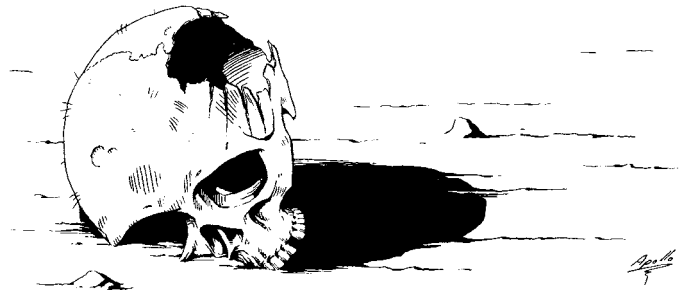
4. Others like Luck in Battle, Insight and Understanding, Safe Journey, Good Fortune, Sharp Blades, and many others are the same for characters of any alignment. The same for Dragon Slayer, as the bonuses and skills/abilities apply to all dragons, though a character of evil alignment may now target dragons of good alignments.

The Danger of Awakening Gods Long Forgotten

Some of the fading and forgotten gods that rest within the Garden are innocent victims of the progress of time. Their followers long since extinct. Others, however, were deliberately wiped from history, their temples destroyed, their priests and acolytes slaughtered, their monuments knocked over and shattered or buried beneath the earth. Lost gods that are the embodiment of pure evil and chaos that have been rightly cleansed from the world at the expense of the lives of many heroes and innocent victims.

It is only with the utmost care, research and prayer that a being possessing the overwhelming power and authority of a god should be brought back to active worship within the mortal realm. Some dark gods are truly monsters consumed with bringing pestilence, war, and suffering to mortals. These beings may border on the insane, and consume any mortal they come across once they are set free again within the mortal realm. Or the wicked, revived forgotten deity may take perverse delight in releasing something terrible back into the world which should have been left lost and long forgotten. While most clergy and scholars insist that such primal and depraved deities are NOT part of the Garden, just as the dreaded *Old Ones* are not represented in the Garden, they cannot know that with absolute certainty.

Waking an evil god that has been long forgotten is an extreme and dangerous act. One that could have consequences far beyond what the people responsible (the Player Characters?) had ever intended. There is a balance among the gods, and restoring the wrong deity might result in a disturbance of the heavenly balance of power and the Celestial Order. While the negative results of making an incredibly powerful enemy are obvious enough, even having a deity as a friend or patron can draw those associated with it (especially the Player Characters) into a conflict far beyond their ability to understand or influence. For many deities, particularly the dark gods, demons and most supernatural evil beings, humans, Elves, even dragons and lesser gods, are nothing more than playthings for their amusement and pawns in their own twisted games and sardonic agendas.



Curses

While the Gods of Light and most deities do not usually lash out at people — the gods are usually very subtle and almost invisible, leaving people to the fates of their own making — some of the Gods of Darkness are petty and vindictive, while others are pranksters who like to cause trouble for mortals. Just as beneficent gods can bestow a Blessing, a god, especially a dark god, may curse those who provoke them or earn their ire. Such deities may make the lives of the mortals to whom they take a disliking, and especially servants whom they consider to be a disappointment, failure, or traitor, miserable and tormented via a curse.

Such curses are usually limited to the deity's Champions, allies, servants, minions, priests, and elite worshipers who annoy or fail them, not innocent bystanders, common worshipers, noble heroes, or even enemies — UNLESS such heroes humiliate and disrespect the god in person, right to his or her face. A curse may also be inflicted upon any character who comes into direct physical contact with an evil and hostile god, or to someone who attempts to engage a god in any kind of psionic link or magical communion. Opening oneself up to the wicked deity for any reason, even something as simple as trying to read a deity's mind or the performance of a Mind Bond, let alone a foolish attempt to mentally possess, charm, dominate, or control a deity, even his avatar, can result in receiving a curse. No saving throw when opened and connected to a deity. **Note:** Demon and Deevil Lords are considered dark gods, as are Alien Intelligences and Vampire Intelligences.

Duration of a Curse

Duration of a Simple Curse: 2D6+24 hours. The dark god or trickster deity just wants to lash out, make a point, or have a little cruel fun, so the curse lasts for only 2D6+24 hours. Sometimes twice that long; G.M.'s discretion.

This curse can be lifted by another deity, a Spirit of Light or via a successful Exorcism at half its usual level of success, provided the character performing the Exorcism is no less than 10th level. It may also be removed via a successful Remove Curse magic spell.

Duration of a Long-Lasting Curse: Special. An angry or cruel dark god is able to make a curse long-lasting. This curse can only be lifted when the afflicted individual either redeems himself in the eyes of that angry or malevolent deity, apologizes and performs a quest or service (nothing easy or good), or has the curse lifted by a powerful priest, practitioner of magic, or another deity. If a quest or service is required, the curse remains in place until the quest or service is completed, whether it takes days or decades.

Permanent Curse! Location or Object. These powerful curses are considered permanent, but are the least common and typically placed upon an object of great importance or great magical or divine power, such as a magic weapon, Holy Weapon, holy relic, or artifact, or a location.

Cursed Location

A particular location that is cursed delivers that curse upon those who enter, unless they save versus magic. Such a location is usually a small and defined location such as a specific crypt, tomb, cave, shrine, sepulcher, room, treasure chamber, or secret sanctum. This curse afflicts anyone who enters the forbidden place. Roll to save vs magic with a penalty of -2 to save.

Sometimes, the curse at a location only applies to the persons who *remove any objects* from it (coins, weapons, books, statues, holy symbol, artifact, sacred items, or other objects), or who disrespect or deface the location and/or the objects inside (walls, statues, altar, relics, valuables, the dead, etc.). This location is under the protection of a god or a pantheon of gods, and anyone who tries to destroy, deface or disrespect it and the items inside (steals, trashes or vandalizes the place, defecates inside, etc.), pays for their actions with one, two or three curses depending on how much they angered the god(s).

Note: The god who inflicted the curse upon a person, object or location can lift it at any time, from any distance, across dimensions, and without making a personal appearance.

Cursed Object, Weapon or Artifact

A deity may place a curse on an inanimate object, usually an important and/or magical weapon, shield, helmet, armor, piece of jewelry, magic item, or an artifact. This is particularly true of dark gods and trickster gods. In all cases, such a curse becomes a permanent part of the *object*.

Who is affected by a cursed object? Most cursed objects (70%) affect anyone and everyone *who owns it*, regardless of that person's alignment, race, or allegiance. In this case, whoever takes possession of the cursed object suffers the effects of the curse for as long as the object is in his possession. This is automatic. No saving throw. The curse takes effect after 24 hours of possession or upon drawing blood with it, whichever comes first.

Curse of a Specified Nature: Thirty percent (30%) of cursed objects are intentionally designed to affect only a specific target. Such targets are usually very *broad*. For example, the curse might only afflict an owner of a specific *alignment group* (i.e., good, selfish, or evil), but not any other alignment; or it might affect a *specific race* (for example: affects only humans or Elves, or Dwarves and Elves, and no one else, or everyone except that race), or the curse may be designed to afflict those of a certain *allegiance or affiliation* such as people loyal to a particular god, pantheon, king, nation, religion, church, organization, O.C.C., etc.

Rune Weapons, Holy Weapons, religious artifacts, relics, and powerful magic items are the types of objects most likely to contain a curse, whether it affects anyone who owns it or is designed to include or exclude people of a specific alignment, race, place of origin, or affiliation.

Ownership. Ownership means that the character claims it for himself as one of his possessions/belongings, acquired by one

means or another, and keeps it on his person or among his other possessions. This means that even if the cursed item is not actually on the person, but placed in a container or hidden in a vault a thousand miles away or in another dimension, it still belongs to that person, thus the curse remains in *full* effect. Since most cursed objects are a powerful ancient artifact or relic, Holy Weapon, magic weapon, or other type of magic item, they are coveted for their power and used despite the danger of a curse.

Any attempt to use a magical or clerical "Remove Curse" on an individual who possesses a cursed object will fail as long as that person *lays claim to it*. It is not enough to put the cursed object in the closet or in storage. As long as the person who owns it keeps it as one of his possessions, the curse remains in place. Only after the object in question has been given up, sold, or thrown away is any lingering enchantment broken. For this reason the term "ownership" is clearly defined.

Possible immunity. A devoted true believer who has the favor of the specific deity who placed the curse upon the object, may be immune to its curse(s). Whether the person be a priest or ordinary person, as a devout worshiper and servant of the deity, he is impervious to the curse and is able to handle and use the object without suffering from the effects of the curse placed upon it.

Likewise, a **simple courier** who knows not what he transports, and does not use the cursed object, nor covet it for himself, is also immune to the curse. However, if the person transporting the object knows what it is and wishes it was his, or puts it to use, he suffers the curse until he delivers it to the intended recipient/owner of the package containing the cursed object.

Knowledge of the curse. It should be noted that most cursed objects are *known* to be cursed. In fact, there is often an inscription on the object or where the object is kept, housed, or hidden, that warns people it is cursed and to leave it be. Many cursed objects also have a history known in lore and told in stories. Still many people take possession of a cursed object because of its power or value hoping the stories of a curse are false or because they believe they will be spared.

The Commonness of Cursed Objects

Ultimately, whether an object is cursed, and which curse that may be, is left in the hands of the Game Master (see the table that follows). However, the following is a basic guideline that may be useful in determining the likelihood of an object being cursed. Remember, most of these items are rare to begin with.

- Newly crafted magic weapon or item made in the last 900 years: 1%
- Modern religious artifacts, relics, and magic weapons 1,000-5,000 years old: 5% are cursed.
- Ancient religious artifacts, relics, and magic weapons 6,000-45,000 years old: 10% are cursed.
- Ancient religious artifacts, relics, and magic weapons 50,000-100,000 years old or older: 20% are cursed.
- Ancient religious artifacts and magic weapons created by the Old Ones or one of their elite minions: 25% are cursed.
- Royal artifacts, weapons, or heirlooms: 3% are cursed.
- Royal artifacts, weapons, or heirlooms from a despot, evil, or hated king or royal family: 7% are cursed.
- Ancient Elven weapons and artifacts: 8%
- Ancient Dwarven weapons and artifacts: 12%

- Newly created Holy Weapon or Artifact: 1%
- Holy Weapons older than 6,000 years: 10%
- Lesser Rune Weapons: 15% have one curse.
- Greater Rune Weapons: 22% have one curse, 9% have two curses, and 2% have three curses! Always ancient, thousands of years old.
- Greatest Rune Weapons (super rare): 14% have one curse, 4% have two curses, and 1% have three curses! Always ancient, thousands of years old.
- Powerful magic weapons and sacred artifacts of Demon or Deevil Lords, elite minions and officers: 22% are cursed and may be of ancient or alien origin.

Breaking the Curse of the Gods from an Object

1. The simplest way to break a curse placed upon an object is for the “owner” to **intentionally rid himself of the cursed object**. It must be deliberately relinquished and gotten rid of, abandoned, thrown away, sold, or given away. Do this, and the curse *should be* broken as it is attached to the object, not the person. **Note:** Putting the cursed object in storage is *not* disposing of it. Throwing it in a river is. Furthermore, in some cases, particularly cursed religious artifacts, it may require the object be returned to the rightful church or temple for the curse to end. In the latter case, just getting rid of it may not be good enough to remove the curse. The cursed individual must return it to its rightful place for the curse to be lifted from him or he remains cursed till the end of his life.

2. Lost. If the cursed object is lost or abandoned for more than 72 hours, the curse on its recent owner should come to an end.

3. Theft. If a cursed object is **stolen** and claimed by the thief, or sold or given to another person, it becomes that new person’s property, and the curse begins on its new owner after 24 hours. This breaks and ends the curse upon the previous owner.

4. Death. Many times the curse results in the death of its owner, at which point the object is either lost or changes hands and finds a new owner. That new owner becomes the latest victim of the curse.

5. A Conditional Curse. In some cases, the curse may be conditional and comes with a method to lift the curse attached to the object. This is likely to be a particular deed, fulfilling a quest, or performing a service or favor on behalf of the god or person who put the curse upon the object. This may range from slaying a specific dragon, rescuing somebody, liberating a town, restoring something, etc., but the mission is never easy. After this feat has been accomplished, the cursed object must be returned to where it was found or delivered to a specified place or person (priest, noble family, cult, church, etc.) and *the curse shall be lifted*. Seldom is a cursed object allowed to be kept by the person it has afflicted without the curse remaining in place. This message and conditional terms/challenge/quest/mission may come from the god himself, his avatar, a vision, a dream, or agent such as a priest, caretaker, angel, demon, etc., or just someone who knows the object and its legend.

In all cases, whoever comes into *ownership* of the cursed object next, suffers the same curse. Though in the case of a conditional curse, it may end when the deed required to break the curse is accomplished (think, Beauty and the Beast) – or – a new, equally difficult mission/quest may be required for the new owner to break the curse.

A curse always begins 24 hours after taking possession of it and lasts for as long as the person *owns it* or until the condition/deed required to break the curse is accomplished. As noted, the Conditional Curse remains in effect even if the object itself is not on its owner’s person. It doesn’t matter if the cursed object is kept at home or in a vault miles or dimensions away, as long as the person lays claim to it – owns it and keeps it – the curse remains upon him.

Curses are tricky, deific magic and may linger. There is a 20% chance a powerful curse remains with the person for 1D6 months *after* getting rid of the cursed object. Likewise, any insanities that may result from a cursed item will remain until cured by a Mind Mage or other means. The cursed item will, of course, continue to inflict its enchantment on every “new” owner who claims it. Only a Conditional Curse ends the moment that condition is met.

Removing a Curse

Removing a curse is different than breaking a curse imposed by an object.

Removing a curse from a person can be attempted by a variety of means. The Remove Curse spell can be quite effective, and a Priest (the more experienced/higher the level, the better) can also attempt to remove a curse; both subject to the limitations of the process. Most deities can remove a curse from a person even if they are not the god who imposed it in the first place, but ALL these means are likely to require a high cost on the part of the person being alleviated of the curse. The price to remove a curse from a living person is likely to be more than money. In most cases, it requires a trade of services, the performance of a quest, or the granting of a favor that can be asked in the future, at any time, and cannot be denied or refused.

Removing the curse from an object is infinitely more difficult than removing its effects from an afflicted person. Curses placed upon an object (or location) by gods, Demon Lords, Alien Intelligences, and Rune Magic are almost impossible to negate. A Priest or Alchemist must be 10th level or higher to even attempt such a daunting task and has a pitiful *half percent per level of experience to temporarily negate* a curse imposed by a god or by a supernatural being of god-like stature. Rune Weapon Curses are included in this elite category because Runes are the magic of the dread Old Ones and draw upon the life essence of one or more living beings trapped within the Rune Weapon. If the object has more than one curse, the process must be repeated for each.

As usual with a curse, a Priest or Alchemist can attempt to remove the curse only *once*. Either the one attempt works, or it doesn’t. However, other experienced Priests *may* try their hand on the same cursed object (once each). Note that the *Remove Curse magic spell* or a *magic scroll* is completely ineffective in removing a curse from an enchanted object or location.

If by some miracle a high level (10th level or higher) Alchemist or Priest manages to make a successful Remove Curse from an Object (has a 5% chance at 10th level), roll percentile dice on the following table to determine how long the curse remains negated. Most return to the object (or location) over time because the god’s magic is greater than any mortal.

01-30% Curse is removed from the object for 1D4 weeks.

31-55% Curse is removed from the object for 1D4 months.

56-70% Curse is removed from the object for 2D6 months.

71-85% Curse is removed from the object for 2D6 years.
86-98% Curse is removed from the object for 2D6 decades.
99-00% Curse is permanently removed! Rare.

Only the most powerful of gods, like Thoth, will even consider trying to remove a curse that is permanently embedded upon an object or a location, and even that deity may not be able to remove it. Only the deity who imposed it can do that with any certainty, and most are not willing to do so voluntarily.



Random Curse Table

Using Curses in a Game (optional)

By Kevin Siembieda, Randy McCall & Matthew Clements

Game Masters may want to add spice or mischief to a campaign by making a particular magic item cursed. A curse can make for some nasty additions to ancient relics, Rune Weapons, objects of magic, religious artifacts and other odds and ends. Most cursed objects have magical properties and infamous histories that go back thousands, or tens of thousands, of years.

Matthew and I (Kevin Siembieda) have expanded the list of curses presented in the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition**, page 262. Any of these delightfully wicked curses can spice-up a game and keep players on their toes. Of course, the inclusion of these foul enchantments are *entirely optional* and left up to each individual Game Master. They are *not* a requirement for the game.

Game Master Warning: It is unfair to give a character a curse or cursed object without the player knowing what he or she is getting into. Ninety percent of the time, the Player Characters (potential owners of a cursed object) should be given fair warning, in advance, via legends, myths, ancient writings, lore, rumor, or the fact that an item is said to be cursed.

Speaking of Warnings: As noted earlier, the object itself or the pedestal or altar upon which it rests, or the crypt or chamber where it is kept, is likely to bear a warning etched or mounted onto it. Such inscriptions maybe go something like this: *Be warned all who enter. Take nothing lest ye befall a terrible fate at the whim of the gods.* Or, *Only the chosen may use this weapon/artifact/etc. All others shall be cursed and suffer until their death.* And similar warnings. Such a warning may also be delivered by a priest, acolyte, caretaker, worshiper, or person who knows the local history or legends.

Determining the Curse

Roll percentile dice to make a random determination of a curse, or select the one that seems most appropriate under the circumstances and the nature of the deity. **Note:** Many curses have specific penalties while others have environmental or obvious consequences. All involve role-playing and character interaction.

01-02% Accident Prone: The victim of this curse is plagued by clumsiness, knocking things over, dropping things, stumbling, bumping into people (perhaps the wrong person), stepping into a puddle or manure, spilling drinks, accidentally overpaying, and not noticing possible danger or trouble (trap, brawl, thug, bandit, law enforcement, etc). Many of which make noise and draw attention to him. Likewise, his words, actions and intentions may be interpreted the wrong way.

Penalties: Drops weapon on a roll of 1-6, is -2 on Perception Rolls, -1 on initiative, -1 to strike, parry and dodge, -1 on all saving throws, and -10% to Physical and Domestic skills, Rope Works, Sailing, any kind of building, and skills involving deception, hiding, and stealth.

03-04% A Grim Fate Awaits at the Hand of a Dangerous Monster: Whenever the cursed individual faces a true monster such as a demon, Deevil, vampire, werebeast, dragon, Scarecrow, Scorpion Devil, Sea Monster, Sphinx, Manticore, Maxpary Shambler, Melech, Mummy, Mummy Immortalus, Worm of Taut, Yema, and countless other demonic, supernatural, or monstrous foes (but not the monster races, see below), he is nervous and off his game.

Penalties: -1 attack per melee round when fighting such beings, and -3 on Perception Rolls, -2 on initiative, -2 to roll with impact/fall, -2 on all saving throws, -2 to save vs possession, and -2 to save vs Horror Factor.

05-06% A Grim Fate Awaits at the Hand of One of the Monster Races: Whenever the cursed individual faces any of the so-called monster races – Wolfen, Coyles, Ratlings, Giants, Trolls, Ogres, Orcs, Goblins, Lizard People, Bug Bears, and others, he is nervous and off his game.

Penalties: -1 attack per melee round when fighting such beings, and -1 on Perception Rolls and initiative, -2 to dodge and disarm, -2 to pull punch, -2 to roll with impact/fall, and -1 on all saving throws.

07-08% A Grim Fate Awaits at a Dark Place: In dark, dank environments such as basements, cellars, caves, tunnels,

dungeons, attics, and even a dense forest, or any land known as a “place of darkness,” like the Land of the Damned, the cursed individual cannot shake a sensation of impending doom and functions at a diminished capacity while in that dark place.

Penalties: -1 attack per melee round when fighting at such a location, -2 on Perception Rolls, -1 on initiative, -1 to strike, parry and dodge, -1 to roll with impact/fall, -2 on all saving throws – *double the penalties* when fighting Shadow Beasts and demons or gods of night/darkness or death.

09-10% A Grim Fate awaits from the power of Ancient Magic: Whenever facing ancient magic whether it be a person, an ancient sorcerer, good or evil, including the minion/Witch of an ancient deity or demon, an elder dragon, Rune Weapon, Holy Weapon, artifact, relic, magic ward, magic symbol, etc., that is more than 2,000 years old, the cursed individual is ill at ease and off his game.

Penalties: -1 attack per melee round when fighting/opposing ancient magic or the being who wields it, -2 on Perception Rolls and initiative, -2 to roll with impact/fall, -3 to save vs all magic including magic illusions and mind control, as well as magical possession, -2 to save vs Horror Factor involving ancient magic, and a penalty of -10% on all Lore skills.

11-12% A Grim Fate Awaits in a Distant Land: Any place more than 900 miles (1,440 km) from home or an exotic realm very different than where the cursed individual was raised. This includes the Land of the Damned, alien worlds, and other dimensions.

Penalties: -1 attack per melee round when fighting at such a location, -2 on Perception Rolls, -1 on initiative, -2 to roll with impact/fall, -15% on all Wilderness skills as well as Climb, Detect Ambush, Detect Concealment and Traps, and Rope Works.

13-14% Anger: Hot temper and emotion clouds the cursed individual’s judgment and decision-making ability whenever he is mocked, humiliated, pranked, feels helpless, cheated, threatened, bullied, tricked, provoked or drinks too much. This character is an angry drunk.

He responds by lashing back with angry words, foul language, breaking things, punching a wall, shoving, or fighting without thinking about who it is he is lashing out at, or the consequences his angry outburst may reap for himself and his teammates. This hotheadedness makes him unpredictable and unreliable, especially in situations requiring self-control and discretion. Time for some role-playing.

Anger Penalties: In addition to the above, whenever angry and fighting, the cursed individual is -4 on Perception Rolls, -3 to pull punch or disarm, -10% on skill performance, and generally oblivious to the time, goings-on and people around him except for the target of his anger.

15-16% Animal Enemy: All animals, even domesticated dogs, cats, and bunny rabbits, take an instant disliking to the cursed individual. They are uncooperative and fearful of this person. They do not follow his commands and will snap or claw at him when he tries to pet or hold an animal. If he manages to hold a pet in his arms, the animal squirms and tries to get away, run off, and hide. This is true even of his own pets, and horse or riding animal. Cattle, sheep, chickens and other livestock whine, grunt, bark, squeal, and run away as soon as he approaches them.

Wild animals immediately assume the cursed individual is a threat to them and their mate or young, and either run away or attack. An attack always happens when the cursed person comes

face to face with the animal (lion, bear, stag, bull, wild boar, snake, spider, monster, etc.), startles it, or has it cornered. Even blackbirds, blue jays, and crows may swoop down to chase this person away (at least 50 feet/15.2 m) from their nest or young. **Note:** Not applicable to an animal Familiar or any beast with whom the character shares a magical, mental or empathic link.

Penalties with Animals: -30% to all skills involving working with or handling animals, including all Horsemanship skills, Animal Husbandry, and Track & Trap Animals. This curse is especially painful for Druids, Knights, horsemen, breeders, farmers, and animal handlers. **Note:** Not applicable to an animal Familiar, because it is one with the person to whom it is linked, and remains loyal and true.

17-18% Bad Luck: The victim of this curse is plagued by misfortune. As a result, he is most likely to be targeted by pranksters, Faerie Folk, mischievous children, bullies, drunks, punks, thieves, pick pockets, con artists, brawlers, attackers, unwanted solicitation, and other types of trouble. Bad luck also follows him in cards and games of chance as well as being overcharged, sold inferior or defective products, getting stale beer, foul wine, spoiled food and so on.

Bad Luck Penalties: -1 to parry and dodge, -3 to pull punch, -2 to disarm, and -20% to the skills Land Navigation, Camouflage, Detect Ambush, Detect Concealment & Traps, Locate Secret Compartments/Doors, Tracking (all), and -20% to ALL Espionage and Rogue skills!

19-20% Boils: The victim of this curse is covered in boils or warts or other type of inflamed lumps on the skin across his body. The boils are irritating and uncomfortable, especially when trying to sleep and when struck. Many people avoid the cursed individual for fear that his boils may be contagious.

Boils Penalties: Reduce M.A., P.B., and Spd attributes by 20%, the latter because movement and the weight of armor is uncomfortable when moving; -1 on Perception Rolls, -1 on initiative, -1 to strike, parry, dodge, entangle, and roll with impact/fall; double all penalties, including reduced Spd, when wearing any type of armor heavier than studded leather.

21-22% Breaking: The victim of this curse seems to be extremely unlucky or clumsy; any breakable object in his possession somehow becomes broken within 24 hours of acquiring it, no matter how well wrapped or protected it is. For example, a potion in a bottle placed in the character’s backpack may be broken when he is knocked backwards, an arrow miraculously strikes only the bottle, a runaway horse plows into him, or tramples the pack, or the item breaks when he takes off the pack and sets it down regardless of how gently. This curse is extremely subtle, but very effective, and may extend to the breaking of straps, rope, belts, reigns, shoelaces, string, and similar items.

Breaking Penalties: In addition to the above, -30% to Brewing, General Repair, Rope Works, Sculpting & Whittling, Sailing, and Play Musical Instrument.

23-24% Clouded Vision: This cursed individual finds it difficult to see whenever he is in a dangerous or stressful situation, afraid, and whenever he needs to read.

Penalties for Clouded Vision: Vision becomes blurred as if looking through a pair of very smudged and dirty eyeglasses or a filter. -4 on Perception Rolls, -1 on initiative, -2 on all combat maneuvers (strike, parry, dodge, disarm, pull punch, etc.), -4 to strike with a long-range weapon, thrown weapon, bow and arrow, etc., and -30% on skills requiring clear vision, such as Art,

Forgery, Pick Pockets, Pick Locks, Tracking, Writing, etc., under dangerous, stressful and scary situations, and whenever reading is required.

25-26% Cold: The victim of this curse is always cold. No matter how many layers of clothes he is wearing or how hot it may be. If the combined temperature around the character (blankets, fireplace, furnace, etc.) exceeds 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.7 Celsius), there is a chance the character may fall unconscious from heat exhaustion (must roll above 16 on a 1D20, P.E. bonuses can be added to this saving throw), but at least he feels warm. If there is no one around when he collapses, the victim of the curse continues to lose one S.D.C. or Hit Point every 1D4 hours from dehydration and heat exhaustion. The character recovers in a few hours if given water and his temperature is lowered, but he will again feel cold and uncomfortable. Loves hot environments and layers of clothes.

Penalties for Feeling Cold: -2 on Perception Rolls, -1 on initiative, -1 on all combat maneuvers (strike, parry, dodge, etc.), skill performance suffers a -5% penalty, and reduce speed by 20% due to encumbrance from many layers of clothes, blankets, gloves or mittens, etc., and the character tends to be irritable and short-tempered; triple penalties when the cursed individual is suffering from heat exhaustion.

27-28% Confusion: This curse reduces the victim's I.Q. by two points. If this reduces the I.Q. below the minimum needed to perform the functions of the O.C.C., then the character is unable to use any of his O.C.C. Special Abilities (forgets them), and all O.C.C. Skills and O.C.C. Related Skills are performed at -10%.

Confusion Penalties: In addition to those above, -5 on Perception Rolls, -2 on initiative, and -30% on skills that require memory and direction such as Forgery, Heraldry, History, Land Navigation, Lore, Identify Plants & Fruits, Medicine, Use & Recognize Poison, and Wilderness Survival. Moreover, the character is easily distracted, has no sense of time, and may not recognize a dangerous situation or people – friends and enemies alike – he has only met in passing or seen a few times, forgets names, addresses and secret codes. *Practitioners of Magic, Mystics, and Priests* cannot remember new spells learned within the last six months and may need an extra moment, 7-15 seconds (half to one full melee round), to remember a spell or to recognize a magic ward, Rune, symbol, or circle.

29-30% Cravings: The unfortunate victim of this curse suffers cravings for a particular type of food or drink, G.M.'s discretion. This might be a particular fruit, vegetable, flower, root, or bark, the most expensive Dwarven beer or mead, wine, brandy, whiskey, or the cheapest rot gut moonshine possible, or a specific ordinary and common food, or exotic dish, unusual cooked animal (cat, dog, muskrat, Gruunor, Land Squid, Rock Crawler, Giant Spider, etc.) or uncommon animal part (brain, tongue, heart, liver, kidney, hoof, tail, etc.), animal blood, or the notorious and ubiquitous *Goblin Stew*, or some other food equally disgusting to humans. **About Goblin Stew:** Goblin stew can be found wherever there are groups of Goblins and/or Orcs. It consists of potatoes or other root vegetables, available vegetables of all kinds, but especially carrots and radishes, rat meat, and lots of it, and worst, including the flesh of other animals and humanoids. Goblin Stew is a potluck brew that may also include most any meat byproduct, or meat from any animal, but typically cat, dog, horse, mice, moles, snakes, lizards, amphibians, worms, and insects, as well as tree bark, a little dirt and/or horse dung for flavor, and so on, but *rat* is

the key ingredient. Goblins and Orcs love Goblin Stew and could eat it very day. Ogres, Trolls, Ratlings, Kobolds, and some other monster races tolerate it or substitute rat and bugs with the meat and bones of their humanoid victims. Most "civilized" people – including humans, even barbarians, Elves, Dwarves, Coyles, and Wolfen, avoid it like the plague.

The craving occurs 1D4 times per day. To resist it the victim must make a successful save vs magic of 15 or better. A failed roll means the cursed individual will do *almost anything* to satisfy his craving, which lasts for 1D4 hours every occurrence. **Game Master Note:** Which is why it should be something fairly common and reasonably available, even if it is disgusting or expensive.

Cravings Penalties: Until the cursed individual is able to satisfy this consuming craving, he is distracted for 1D4 hours or until he can get some, whichever comes first. The cursed soul keeps thinking about "it" and how he might get hold of some above all else, and is -4 on initiative and Perception Rolls, -2 to strike, parry, dodge, and disarm, and -10% on all skills. Generally, the G.M.s should not make the desired food or drink too rare or obscure.

31-32% Dislike: The victim of this curse effectively becomes an irritant to all people around him, and strangers take an immediate dislike to him. Merchants and wait staff either overlook the individual or do not want to deal with him, service for this guy is terrible, he may be overcharged (1D4x10%), people tend to avoid or move away from him, drunks and trouble makers take a dislike toward this person and give him grief or start a brawl, and similar incidents that occur when someone doesn't like a person. They probably don't even know why they dislike him, just something about the cursed individual makes him unlikeable.

Penalties for Dislike: In addition to being targeted for trouble, reduce M.A. attribute by half. After 6 months, there is a 01-44% chance of the character becoming paranoid to some degree. Probably not extreme at first – see insanity tables for some possibilities. This curse and the accompanying paranoia usually vanishes after the curse is removed or the cursed item is eliminated. However, if the character has the cursed item for four years or more, any insanity will remain.

33-34% Envy: A resentful covetousness toward the abilities, fame, wealth, a possession (one particular item or loved one), or a number of possessions of another person. This may include being jealous/desirous of another's success, possessions, social status, abilities, popularity, wealth, etc., to the point of distraction and resentment. Envy may lead the envious cursed individual to target the object of desire and try to acquire it by any means necessary. In the alternative, the cursed individual's envy and resentment may turn into an obsessive rivalry and hatred that leads to theft, sabotage, defamation of reputation, mockery and belittlement, and/or violence directed at the person he envies. Takes satisfaction in other people's misfortune, seeing others harmed, brought low, or knocked down a peg or two, if he envies them or what they have.

Penalties of Envy: This cursed individual becomes petty and meanspirited. After two months duration of this curse, change the character's alignment to *Anarchist* if he was of a good alignment, *Miscreant* if selfish or evil, and reduce M.A. and M.E. by 20% for the duration of the curse. After the curse is removed or broken, the victim may have regret for his actions motivated by envy,

and may seek to make amends. He is also likely to have made his share of enemies during this period.

35-36% Fatigue: The cursed individual feels tired and worn out even when he gets sufficient sleep and rest.

Fatigue Penalties: Reduce Endurance and Speed attributes by 30%, -1 on initiative, -4 to damage after six minutes of fighting or heavy work, because the character is feeling fatigued and weak, -20% to ALL Physical skills, and suffers from fatigue in HALF the time as he should, requiring frequent rests.

37-38% Fleas: The victim of this curse attracts fleas, is covered in bites and is scratching all the time. Cannot seem to get rid of the fleas no matter how much he tries washing and cleaning his clothes, bathing, etc.

Penalties for Fleas: Reduce the victim's M.A. and P.B. by 30%, and any corresponding bonuses from high attribute numbers to impress, charm and intimidate, etc. Moreover, people keep their distance for fear of getting fleas (never pleasant) and the character may not be allowed inside some boarding houses, taverns and other establishments, particularly if they are clean and wholesome or upscale and expensive.

39-40% Fumbles: The cursed individual has trouble holding onto objects, from his weapon to a spoon, because his fingers just seem clumsy and unsuitable for delicate work.

Fumble Penalties: Drops weapon or object on a roll of a 1-6 on a D20, -20% on skills that require dexterity and nimble hands, including Art, Carpentry, Climb, Disguise, Escape Artist, General Repair, Rope Works, ALL Medical skills, ALL Rogue skills, and any other skills that require nimble hands and fingers.

41-42% Glow (Glowing Body): The flesh of the cursed individual glows softly with a white light. This light is not enough to illuminate an area to read in darkness or guide the way, but is more than enough to attract attention and be seen in the dark. The light can be concealed only under several layers of heavy clothing or wrappings that need to include covering the face and hands. This makes the victim look strange, perhaps diseased, and appear menacing. In fact, the cursed individual may be mistaken to be a mummy or a leper, or a fugitive trying to conceal his true nature or identity.

Penalties for Glow: Without a hood, mask, gloves and body coverings, the odd effect reduces the Physical Beauty by 20%, and instills a Horror Factor of 9. The unusual glow attracts both night insects and first attacks in combat due to suspicion and fear of the glow or the means taken to conceal it. In addition, these distractions make the character -2 on initiative and constantly concerned about how people will react to him, good or bad. Prowling at night without a heavy covering is impossible, and -5% with one. The victim must have the curse removed or suffer its effect even after the item is discarded.

43-44% Glowing Eyes: The victim of this curse has his eyes glow with white, yellow, or red light and energy. Most people who see such a person assume he is inhuman and probably an evil monster, a demon, or possessed by a demon, and will attempt to kill or drive him out of town, or exorcize him. (**Note:** While clerics and wizards know the proper methods of Exorcism, there are a lot of people who think that physical pain can drive a demon out of a person through beatings, whippings, burning, torture, etc.)

Penalties for Glowing Eyes: Although this curse raises a character's M.A. to 22 it only serves to *intimidate* and create an atmosphere of distrust and fear, rather than cause trust or charm; Horror Factor 10. Furthermore, those who can use magic or

psionics to *See Aura*, see a strange aura emanating around the cursed individual, causing friend and foe alike to view this person with suspicion, fear and distrust. As a result, anything the cursed individual says is generally regarded as lies, half-truths, or temptation. And the glow and ripple of energy from the eyes only increases when the person is angry, scared, or frustrated.

45-46% Greed: The cursed individual is consumed by the pursuit of material gain, and is willing to risk everything to get more of whatever it is he desires, especially if the reward is great. Like a gambling addict, he may take chances that risk his money, belongings, savings, or his life, to get what he wants. That may include making a deal with the devil and other unsavory types. Secretive about what he owns and, like a dragon, may hoard valuable objects, and may consider stealing and using trickery, lies, and manipulation to get what he wants. Actions may be blinded by greed. Easily tempted.

Penalties: -30% to save vs Seduction, -2 to save vs magical charms and mind control. +5% to the skills Card Shark, Gemology, and Locate Secret Compartments/Doors, but they drive him to take risks and he never knows when to cut his losses.

47-48% Gluttony: Excess overindulgence of food, alcohol, drugs, money, and other pleasures and extravagances – addictive behavior and selfishness – the cursed individual is likely to withhold the subject of his gluttony/wantonness (food, booze, money, etc.) from the poor and even teammates, friends and family in need. (“Let them eat cake.” “Mine, mine, mine.” “Sorry, can’t spare any.”) Regardless of the character’s alignment, when it comes to the subject of his gluttony (one or more vices), this cursed individual puts his own needs and desires above all others. Loves to party and overindulge (doesn’t know when to quit) in all the good things and vices life has to offer. Conversely, he may greatly overpay or promise services to get an exotic morsel of food, drink, drugs or exotic pleasure.

Penalties of Gluttony: In addition to earning the resentment of others, the cursed individual is so obsessed by his gluttonous desires and overindulgence that he loses track of time, has little or no empathy for others, and is -4 on Perception Rolls and initiative and -20% on all skills when partying, drinking, or indulging in his desires; -30% to save vs Seduction and -3 to save vs magical and psionic illusions, charm and mind control when they appeal to his gluttonous desires.

49-50% Hallucinatory Noises: The victim of this curse hears suspicious noises and strange sounds throughout the day and night. The noises are always suggestive that they come from one or more intelligent living creatures, such as whispering voices with words that cannot quite be heard, the scratching of clawed feet on stone, the tread of footsteps, the clank of armor, the creak of floorboards or a door opening, the rustle of a cloak, a cough, a groan, a growl, laughter, etc. The cursed person can never be sure whether the noise is real or just a hallucination, so he is always on edge and often suffers from anxieties, paranoia and exhaustion.

The noise occurs most often during quiet times when the character is about to relax, rest, or sleep. They also happen in darkness especially when alone, during guard duty, when listening at a door, while waiting in ambush, hiding, etc.

Penalties/Insanity: Months or years of this constant stress can lead to insanity. After the owner of this cursed item or cursed existence has experienced the noises for 90 days, the person will acquire his first *phobia* (fear and apprehension). Note that in this case the initial phobia is more like paranoia and extreme

jitters rather than outright terror. However, after another 1D4+2 months, it becomes a full blown phobia. Add one of the following phobias for every six months the cursed item is owned or the person is cursed: 1) darkness, 2) closed doors, 3) graveyards, 4) undead, 5) Shadow Beasts, 6) the invisible, 7) sleep, 8) Elementals, 9) vampires, 10) werebeasts.

After five years, there is a 60% chance of acquiring one of the paranoid or schizophrenic insanities (see neurosis). Roll for each year after three years of ownership of the cursed item. Stop once the illness appears. **Note:** The insanities will remain even after the curse is lifted.

51-52% Haunted: The victim of this curse is haunted by something he has done or failed to do. This may be guilt or regret over a wrongdoing (lying, cheating, tricking, stealing from someone, cowardice, etc.), failing to help or rescue someone, or feeling responsible for someone's death or other loss. The guilt may be deserved or undeserved. In the latter case, the Haunted feels guilt, because he wasn't there to help save the day, or failed despite his best efforts, or feels guilty because he survived while teammates or innocent people died. Not only is this cursed individual haunted by guilt and/or regret, but he may actually think he sees the person(s) who died or whom he cheated, failed, or caused to die, as a face in the crowd or standing across the street, but disappears when he gets closer, or even as a ghostly visitor. This person(s) may also haunt his dreams.

Penalties from Being Haunted: -2 on Perception Rolls, -1 on initiative, -1 to dodge and disarm, -2 to save vs illusions and possession, and reduce M.E. and M.A. by 20% for the duration of the curse.

53-54% Headaches: The cursed individual is constantly afflicted by painful headaches, especially when under stress and in life and death situations.

Headache Penalties: -1 to strike, parry, dodge, and disarm, -15% on all skills. Under crisis situations, the headache gets worse, making concentration and spell casting difficult, and the cursed victim is always *the last* to strike or take action. Spell casters and psychics can only cast two spells or use two psionic powers per melee round.

55-56% Heat: The victim of this curse is uncomfortably warm all the time, even when sitting in a cold bath or standing out in the snow. Loves cool weather, snow, and winter conditions.

Heat Penalties: In addition to possibly catching a cold from wearing too little clothes (resistant to frostbite, +2 to save, and lasts 10 times longer before frostbite occurs), -2 on Perception Rolls, -1 on initiative, -1 on all combat maneuvers (strike, parry, dodge, etc.) and reduce speed by 10% when in an environment warmer than freezing temperatures. Double the penalties when the cursed individual is subjected to heat greater than 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32 Celsius).

57-58% Heavy Arms: The character's arms and hands become heavy and unmanageable whenever a sure and steady hand is necessary. This includes combat, when carrying weight, when strength is necessary, and the performance of skills under stressful conditions (combat, danger, an emergency, etc.), making every task difficult and inaccurate when it matters most.

Heavy Arms Penalties: -20% on all Physical and most Rogue skills, and any skill requiring the dexterity of hands (Climb, Palming, Pick Locks, etc.) and strength of arms; -1 to strike, disarm and pull punch, -2 to parry, pin, and entangle, and the character finds it virtually impossible to write for more than five minutes.

59-60% Heavy Legs: The character's legs become heavy and slow, as if trying to run through deep snow or water. This affliction occurs whenever speed, surefootedness, stealth or strength are required. This includes combat, when carrying weight, when strength is necessary, and the performance of skills under stressful conditions (combat, danger, an emergency, etc.), making every task difficult and ponderous when it matters most.

Heavy Legs Penalties: Reduce Speed by half, -20% on all Physical skills (including Prowl), Horsemanship, and Tracking (all). The victim of this curse finds it virtually impossible to run, walk, or stand for more than 30 minutes and needs frequent rest stops.

61-62% Ill at Ease: The cursed individual feels uncomfortable and worried that something bad is going to happen to him, his teammates, or people he cares about. This knocks him off of his game and makes him distracted and tense as if there is too much on his mind or he is only half listening.

Penalties for Being Ill at Ease: While the curse is in place the victim is constantly looking over his shoulder and is likely to misunderstand things said to him, lose track of time, have trouble relaxing and sleeping, and finds it difficult to trust strangers. Reduce M.A. and M.E. attributes by 20%, -2 on Perception Rolls, -20% on Communication and Performing skills, -10% on all other skills, but +1 to dodge and roll with impact/fall, and +1 to save vs Horror Factor (always expecting trouble).

63-64% Insect Attraction: This curse attracts annoying insects. Flies, bees, wasps, and gnats circle around the head and body of the cursed individual. Mosquitoes, lice and ticks love to infest his clothes and armor, and live on his body. Such insects in the area are drawn towards the cursed character before anyone else.

Penalties: The omnipresent and repulsive insects reduce the person's P.B. and M.A. attributes by half, and cause a Horror Factor (revulsion) of 12. After all, it's not pleasant to sit near somebody crawling with bugs and with another couple dozen winged insects buzzing around him. **Note:** While an Alchemist may be able to create some type of insect repellent, it will not repulse insects attracted by the curse. They remain no matter what is done. This does *not* apply to such monstrous insects as Gruunors, Rock Crawlers and giant insects.

65-66% Lead-Foot: The afflicted is unable to walk softly, prowl or be stealthy. He has a heavy foot and makes loud footfalls when he walks, no matter how hard he may try to walk slowly and softly.

Penalties of Lead-Foot: Reduce Spd by 10%, -20% on Acrobatics, Climb, Dance, Gymnastics, and Swimming; -40% to Prowl and Surveillance skills, and anyone tracking him enjoys a bonus of +20% to follow his trail. Cannot walk discretely or quietly.

67-68% Loss of Confidence: The cursed victim loses confidence in himself. This curse may be inflicted in an attempt to teach the character humility or as punishment.

Penalties: Reduce M.A. and P.B. attributes by 30% for the duration of the curse. Reduce any corresponding bonuses and abilities related to those attributes, such as charm, impress, intimidate, etc., according to the new (temporary) cursed attributes. Skills and fighting abilities are unimpaired UNTIL the cursed individual is faced with a life and death situation such as combat, a duel, someone else's life hangs in the balance, etc. Under such circumstances, the victim of this curse becomes hesitant and

unsure of himself: -1 attack per melee round, reduce ALL combat bonuses (initiative, strike, parry, dodge, disarm, roll, etc.) by HALF! Likewise, -10% to all Communication and Performance skills. Saving throws are NOT affected by this curse.

69-70% Lost: The Wrong-Way Charlie has no sense of direction and constantly loses his way unless there is a companion to lead the way. If trying to figure out which road to take or which direction to go (even if he's gone there a thousand times), the cursed individual inevitably selects the *wrong way*, or the one that has trouble (washed out road, muddy, rocky, rickety bridge, etc.), or leads to danger (Wolfen raiders, bandit ambush, monster, ghosts, wicked Faerie Folk, evil sorcerer, dangerous wild animal, people in trouble and in need of help, etc.).

Penalties for Lost: -5 on Perception Rolls involving directions, travel, and finding a location, -40% to Land Navigation, Surveillance, Tracking and Wilderness Survival skills, and -10% on ALL other Wilderness and Espionage skills.

71-72% Magic Disruption: The cursed individual is not in touch with magic and has difficulty using and controlling it. A truly terrible curse for magic users and priests of any kind.

Penalties for Magic Disruption: Reduce P.P.E. by 30%, reduce the range of spells and magic abilities by 20%, -1 to Spell Strength, and -2 to save vs ALL magic, including spells, Wards, Circles, Charms, Illusions, and magical mind control.

73-74% Misery: Sadness fills the heart and mind of the cursed individual. The victim is weighed down by a sense of grief or a great sadness or loss. He tends to see the sadness, suffering, and misery in the world, which only fuels his own melancholy. This person is quick to lose hope and want to give up in the face of adversity. Sympathizes with the poor and downtrodden, widowers, and orphans, and feels their pain and is likely to try to help them and protect them.

Penalties for Misery: Reduce M.A., M.E., and Spd attributes by 20%. Motivation becomes a challenge: -5% on all skills, triple the skill penalty when things look hopeless, and -1 to save vs Horror Factor and psionic attacks.

75-76% Misunderstanding: In dealing with people of other races and customs, the victim of this curse *always*, even upon making a successful Language, Literacy, or Lore skill roll, misunderstands what he has read or what others have said to him, just as he will misspeak and others misunderstand him and his intentions. This too often results in accidental insults, fistfights, brawls, challenges to duels, paying too much money for a product or service, false accusations leveled at him, and constantly putting his foot in his mouth and getting himself in trouble. **Note:** If a mage, scrolls cannot be properly read and do not work, and mystic symbols, wards, Runes and circles are misinterpreted/misread, always with negative consequences.

Penalties of Misunderstanding: -30% to ALL Communication skills, Heraldry, History, Intelligence, and Lore skills, as well as the use, reading, and interpretation of magic circles, scrolls, symbols, Runes, and Wards.

77% Mumble: No matter what the victim of this curse tries to say, no one is able to clearly hear and understand him because he "mumbles." Volume goes up and then down to a mumble or slur of words. Even if the victim tries to shout, it will come out as nothing more than a "Look owwoohmuhhhuhmhhhyaaauh!" All who hear the cursed individual speak only have a 50% chance of completely understanding what is said. Characters listening must roll for every two sentences spoken.

Penalties of Mumbling: -40% to ALL Communications and Performing skills and cannot convey messages or information to others. Magic spells may be cast but nobody knows what the incantation may have been. Telepathy is not affected by this curse, though the character's thoughts may be a little jumbled and filled with frustration.

78% Phantom Odor: The cursed individual suddenly smells odd or badly at random times for no apparent reason; 10 foot (3 m) radius. Farther when it is carried by the wind. Lasts for 4D6 minutes at a time.

No amount of bathing or perfume can conceal these odd and often foul odors. The smells come and go 3D4 times a day. After awhile, the victim of such a curse is unable to tell whether the odors he smells are from something in the area or a manifestation of the curse. Depending when the odor appears, it can ruin a successful Prowl or Tracking, reveal where the character is hiding, or his location when invisible, and enable others, especially animals and beings with a keen sense of smell and track by scent, like the Wolfen and Coyles, to easily track him (and anyone with him) by the unusual smell. Of course, the strange odor is also annoying and disturbing to other people and keeps many away.

Penalties for Phantom Odor: Reduce the victim's M.A. by 20%, and P.B. by 10%, as well as any corresponding bonuses from high attribute numbers to impress, charm and intimidate, etc.; -30% to Prowl and hide when the smell is active, and people keep their distance whenever the odor appears, because it smells so bad, like sour milk or rotten eggs. People are likely to assume the individual has bad personal hygiene or a strange illness to smell that bad, and avoid him. Likewise, the cursed individual may not be allowed to stay at boarding houses, taverns, and other establishments, particularly if they are clean and wholesome or upscale and expensive, and is likely to be denied entry or asked to leave parties, festivals and gatherings. **Note:** This curse can be played for laughs and drama.

79% Pride/Hubris: Regardless of the cursed individual's alignment, he exhibits extreme selfishness, an overblown sense of importance, and a lack of empathy and compassion toward others. The victim of this curse becomes obsessively self-absorbed and prideful. He seeks excessive admiration and exalted personal image to the point of lacking dignity or self-respect. This cursed individual takes foolish chances, always assumes he'll figure things out off the cuff and come out on top – often putting other people in jeopardy. When he fails, he throws someone else under the bus or blames unforeseen circumstances, but never takes responsibility even when the mistake and his troubles are clearly his own doing. Pride compels him to blame others for his failings, never to accept blame, never apologize (finds an excuse or lies about it), and always tries to paint himself and his decision in the best light. All that ever matters is that the cursed individual is seen in a positive light and he gets all, or most of, the credit for good things and feats of heroism. He takes credit for the work and sacrifice of others, lies about his own accomplishments and failings, may bribe/pay others to lie on his behalf, and puts himself before others. Too prideful to ask for help even when desperate, only makes matters worse.

Penalties for the Curse of Pride: In addition to the obvious, this is likely to earn the cursed individual many enemies and the resentment and disdain of others. People who have suffered as a result of his mistakes and lies will want nothing to do with him, don't trust or respect him, and the aggrieved and angry may tar-

get him and his associates for revenge, robbery, sabotage, and physical violence (beaten, tarred and feathered, run out of town, and worse). After the curse is broken, the victim of it is likely to feel shame and have regret over his past actions motivated by the curse of pride. He may seek to make amends. A difficult, if noble, task.

80-81% Psionic Disruption: The cursed individual is not in touch with his third eye and psychic abilities. Any cursed individual with psionic abilities feels a clouding and confusion within his mind, making it difficult to use his mental powers. A truly terrible curse for psychic characters of any kind, and this curse is usually reserved for such people.

Penalties for Psionic Disruption: Reduce I.S.P. by 30%, reduce duration of psionic powers by half, and -2 to save vs ALL psionic attacks, as well as possession, illusions, and magical mind control.

82-83% Rage: The cursed individual becomes a hot head ruled by intense anger. This rage causes him to throw caution to the wind and to start hurling insults or throwing fists, or pulling his sword and fighting whenever he feels disrespected, bullied, mocked, humiliated, or attacked. Don't call him a coward or stupid, because he'll fight you to prove he is not or to make the accuser apologize. The cursed individual may also rather fight and escape rather than being taken prisoner, even if it is just for questioning. In the heat of rage the character loses sight of consequences and will fight larger, more powerful opponents and fight when outnumbered, and inflicts a considerable amount of damage from his brutal attacks. Though he stops short of killing someone, he may beat them badly, break bones, damage property (smash windows, furnishings, etc.), and hurt someone much more than he intended.

Penalties: +1 to strike and +1 to save vs Horror Factor in rage fueled brawls and duels, but -6 on Perception Rolls (does not notice the authorities coming to arrest him or reinforcements coming to kick his behind, etc.), -4 to dodge and disarm, -6 to pull punch, and forgets what he was supposed to be doing until the fight is over, even if it is of critical importance. Such violence is likely to get the individual into plenty of trouble, get him jailed and owing restitution for damages, and earn plenty of enemies. Probably considered a dangerous and violent loose cannon avoided by disciplined and honorable people such as Knights, Paladins and other heroes. After the curse is removed, he may feel shame and have regret over his past actions motivated by the curse of rage, and may want to make amends.

84-85% Rags: The curse of rags causes any clothing, belts, bags, and armor worn/carried by the cursed individual to deteriorate, tear and break, rapidly becoming nothing more than tattered rags by the end of a one week period after being acquired. Normal armor and clothes lose 10 S.D.C. per day, while *magical armor* loses only one S.D.C. per week. Likewise, any pouch, coin purse, bag, or water skin carried by the individual also tatters and causes the belongings and valuables to spill out. When the S.D.C. of the armor or clothing is exhausted, reduced to zero, it becomes useless tattered rags and remnants that barely cling to the cursed person's body and offer no protection.

Penalties for Rags: As per physical deterioration of clothes, bags, and armor described above. In addition, reduce M.A. by 10% and P.B. by 20% as the person wears tattered rags. The cursed individual is likely to be mistaken as a penniless beggar or other person of low station due to his shabby appearance. Many

afflicted with this curse wear only an inexpensive robe or toga that can be replaced when it falls apart and have allies carry their armor and belongings.

86-87% Reduced Healing: The cursed individual heals painfully slowly.

Penalties of Reduced Healing: A person afflicted with this curse only heals *one S.D.C. and Hit Point per day* by natural means. Magical and psionic healings restore half the usual amount when used upon the cursed individual; e.g. a healing that would have restored 9 points of damage only restores four (round down). The spell of Restoration automatically *fails* to restore lost limbs, and even a Resurrection has only a 25% chance of working successfully! When attempting to recover from a coma, the victim of the curse gets *no bonuses* to save, base recovery only.

88-89% Reduced Vision: The victim's day and night vision is reduced to a maximum of 30 feet (9 m)! Past that point the vision is blurred and faces, features and signs are impossible to distinguish.

Reduced Vision Penalties: Attempting to fire ranged weapons at targets beyond 30 feet (9.1 m) has a penalty of -6 to strike, and the cursed cannot recognize familiar faces, enemies, banners, crests and symbols, nor people, animals, and monsters that may represent an impending danger.

90-91% Rust: The cursed individual's metal weapons rust and weaken, inflicting less damage and may break upon impact. Wood, bone, and stone weapons are not affected, but any metal bands, wire, nails, screws, or clamps that may hold the weapon together or hold it in place in a handle *are* affected. Metal armor is also affected.

Rust Penalties: All metal weapons are -3 to damage for the first month. After that, the dull, wobbly, rusty weapon is -5 to damage and has a 50% chance of breaking, or the metal blade/component falling away from a non-metal handle when involved in heavy combat and at the beginning of every new week. Reduce the A.R. (Armor Rating) for all metal armor by one (so if an A.R. 14, reduce to 13 and so on), and reduce S.D.C. by 10% per month until zero S.D.C. remains and it falls apart.

92-93% Sloth: Lack of empathy and motivation. Cold and indifferent to the suffering and plight of others. This curse undermines and hinders the character's undertakings, causing him to be lazy, bored, and dispassionate about everything. He lacks empathy for others and has no passion for life, doing only the minimum to get by, to the point of his own undoing. (Gets fired, loses or gambles away his possessions, lets people down time and again until they abandon him, fight him in anger, or worse.)

The cursed individual is careless and unconcerned about his own needs, and could not care less about anyone else's. Nothing has a sense of importance or urgency, even when it involves matters of life and death. Deadlines and meetings are missed, messages to be delivered are forgotten, preparations are put off, timeliness is nonexistent, and important duties and responsibilities are ignored or performed without care. Everything this character is assigned is performed with bored indifference, careless attention or inadequate craftsmanship. When something goes wrong, the slothful individual shrugs and doesn't care. He's more concerned with drinking, partying, sleeping, and just watching the world go by.

Penalties: In addition to the above, the cursed is always the last on initiative, reduce M.A. and M.E. by 10%, and -20% on all skills.

94% Sickness: The cursed individual presents with the constant symptoms of a severe cold or the flu. As a curse, after 30 days, the penalties are reduced by half for one week (7 days) and the victim seems to be getting better. Then the curse and penalties come right back with force for another 30 days, and repeat until the curse is lifted. Symptoms include body aches, fatigue, fever, nausea, occasional vomiting from running or other means of moving fast, runny nose, watering eyes, stuffed up head, and coughing.

Penalties from Sickness: Reduce Speed by 30%, -2 attacks per melee round, -2 on Perception Rolls, -2 on initiative, -2 to strike, parry, dodge and disarm, -10% on the performance of ALL skills, and -1 on all saving throws. Fatigues in half the usual time and coughing and the sniffles inflict a -20% penalty to Prowl, Track, and hide.

95% Spoilage: This interesting curse causes all food, wine and water carried by the cursed individual to spoil within 24 hours. Even food preserved in containers, dried or smoked becomes a rotten mess not suited for consumption by people. Wine and beer become sour and undrinkable, and water discolored, bitter, and tainted. This curse is also applied to food and drink carried by any porter hired by the character and supplies carried on a horse or other creature owned by the cursed individual.

Penalties of Spoilage: Eating or drinking spoiled items causes food poisoning, fever, nausea, stomach cramps and vomiting. -1 attack per melee, reduce Spd by 40%, -4 to ALL combat maneuvers (Perception Rolls, initiative, strike, parry, dodge, etc.), and -20% to all skills for the next 4D6+20 hours.

96% Stink: The cursed individual exudes a constant, putrid stench that is enough to make everyone within five feet (1.5 m) gag and choke and want to move away as far and as fast as possible. It can still be smelled for a 15 foot (4.6 m) radius, but not to the point of gagging, and much farther down wind. No amount of baths or perfumes can cover or disguise this stench.

Stink Penalties: Prowl, Invisibility, Chameleon magic, and hiding *are impossible*, and creatures who can track by scent are +20% to follow and find this character. Reduce the victim's M.A. by 30%, and P.B. by 20% as a result of the terrible stench coming off his body, as well as any corresponding bonuses from high attribute numbers to impress, charm and intimidate, etc. People keep their distance and assume the individual is "cursed" or has some strange and terrible disease, so they avoid him like a leper. The cursed individual will NOT be allowed to stay at even dive boarding houses, trashy taverns, and other low establishments – a barn or tent out back, maybe – and is likely to be denied entry or asked to leave parties, festivals and gatherings.

97% Voices: A pair of voices only the cursed individual can hear, fill his head whenever an important or moral decision needs to be made. Each voice offers moral advice about his intentions, choice or plan. This is like the cartoon devil appearing on one shoulder encouraging bad behavior, revenge and criminal activity, while the angel sits on the other shoulder advising against it and encouraging kindness and goodness. Ultimately, this unwanted discourse can be distracting and maddening, or just plain perplexing.

Penalties from Voices: -2 on Perception Rolls, -1 on initiative, -1 to strike, parry, and dodge, -10% on ALL Communications

skills, and the victim of this curse may engage the voices only he can hear in verbal conversation, yell at them, cuss at them, etc., which may make him seem to be schizophrenic, unstable, and dangerous. Reduce M.A. by 20% as a result. **Note:** The voices listen and respond when he speaks to them, but they often only confuse or annoy the cursed person.

98% Vulnerability: The cursed individual is vulnerable to all manner of attacks. This *may* include emotional vulnerability, making him too trusting, kind, and merciful even to those who do not deserve such consideration.

Penalties of Vulnerability: -2 to parry, dodge and disarm, -2 on ALL saving throws (magic, psionics, illusions, possession, Horror Factor, etc.), and has no ability to roll with impact/fall/punch (takes full damage).

99% Weakness: Physical weakness no matter how muscle-bound he may be.

Penalties: Despite the cursed individual's P.S. attribute, he has NO damage bonus from P.S., inflicts -2 damage from all physical attacks, and can only lift, pull, and carry one third the amount he should be able to.

00% Wrath/Revenge: The victim of this curse becomes obsessed with revenge on anyone who hurts him or those he cares about. This quickly turns into uncontrolled feelings of anger, hatred, and lust for retribution against the offender(s). This may result in cruel and publicly embarrassing pranks, pointless duels, brawls, feuds and acts of sabotage and violence, even murder. All in the name of justice and fair play, but which often goes well beyond fair retribution. Wrath is often cruel, merciless, and over the top (think The Punisher). Such as beating someone within an inch of their life because they bumped into the cursed individual or accidentally offended or harmed him or a teammate, or insulted them, or tried to rob or cheat them, or flirted with his girlfriend, etc. As a rule, the punishment/retribution does not fit the offense, it is much too brutal and extreme. And is sometimes self-destructive or directed at an innocent person. Likewise, innocent bystanders sometimes get hurt.

Penalties of Wrath: Has trouble controlling his rage, and becomes obsessed with revenge even though it may have negative, painful and even deadly consequences for himself or his associates. Good aligned characters become Anarchist for the duration of the curse, and selfish or Aberrant characters become Miscreant or Diabolic. Is likely to be feared as a psychotic, violent brute and a dangerous loose cannon. After the curse is removed, he may feel shame and have regret over his past actions motivated by the curse of wrath, and may want to make amends.





The Ghost Knights

A Legend of Lopan

Of Lopan's many secrets and mysteries, one particular thorn in the side of the Knights-Fossar and the inhabitants of Lopan near the Garden is the legend of the **Ghost Knights**. A trio of infamous specters known to haunt the roads and woodlands around the Garden, but never within the Garden of the Gods itself.

The legends and tall-tales surrounding the Ghost Knights are conflicting and contradictory. Some claim they are fallen heroes who died in service to the gods of the Garden, and now forever ride through the night still protecting the ancient grounds. Many others believe them to be the opposite, fallen knights whose acts of selfishness and treachery have condemned them to forever walk the countryside, haunting the living and slaying those to whom they take a disliking. Others claim they are demons jealous of the Garden and of the Knights-Fossar, so they dress like knights and haunt the roads and woodlands around the Garden of the Gods where they kill and feast upon the flesh and blood of heroes and the innocent.

Stories and reports of encounters with the Ghost Knights are equally conflicting and contradictory. Not all who encounter one, two or three of the Ghost Knights have a harrowing experience. While the ghosts are known to threaten people, challenge warriors to combat, and chase, beat, rob, torture, and kill many of those they encounter, other times they simply accompany a traveler for a while. Talking and exchanging pleasantries before riding off into the evening fog without incident.

Some encounters are so benign that it is only afterward that the travelers realize they had ridden with one or more of the fabled Ghost Knights without incident. In these tales of encounters, the unknown knight(s) simply walks or rides out of the darkness or the fog that often envelops the island of Lopan, to accompany the traveler(s) for a ways. Conversation can be about anything, but is mostly small talk about where the person hails from, whether they live on Lopan, who they are visiting, why they are here, their experience in the Garden of the Gods, and which gods and religions they hold dear. But conversation could just as easily pertain to subjects of war, combat, adventuring, the politics of kingdoms away from Lopan, crimes, women, drink, family, hunting, fishing, and the weather. There are even some reports of the Ghost Knights coming to the aid of travelers under attack by bandits or a monster, or by showing the lost travelers the right way to their destination. Many people realize they have just had an encounter with the Ghost Knights when they turn around and the Knight has vanished into the night mist.

When the apparitions share something about themselves, what they say is mostly lies. They may claim to be knights of the realm, or visiting crusaders from a distant land visiting the Garden or come to experience the Lopanic Games. Sometimes they claim to be on a pilgrimage or a quest, and other times they pose as members of the Knights-Fossar on patrol to keep the roads safe for gentle folk, or are in search of a fugitive.

There seems to be no reliable pattern for whom the specters help or victimize. For every tale of a friendly, helpful, or benign encounter, there are ten involving violence and savagery. Thus, the Ghost Knights are the stuff of legend and feared by all. If you

think you are being approached by one or all three, word to the wise is to run like the wind and pray they do not catch up with you.

More often than not, an encounter with even one or two of the Ghost Knights is a terrifying experience. The ghosts seem to like to chase and harass travelers, especially warriors and clergy. Riding them down on horseback, or appearing on foot out of nowhere to beat and rob them along the road, or challenge one of them to a duel; usually to the death, winner taking possession of the loser's weapons, armor, and valuables. Other times the ghost(s) demand steep payment, or combat, in order for the traveler(s) to pass unmolested, or they attack without warning or provocation and beat the travelers to within an inch of their lives, or kill some without mercy and leave a few to tell the tale. Such combat may be done without the ghost(s) saying a word, or it may involve taunts and challenges.

The Ghost Knights may appear on foot or on horseback in full armor and knightly regalia, or buck naked. A Ghost Knight may ride out of the fog and mist or step out of the darkness as if they were part of it. A few stories suggest the ghosts may also drop down from the night sky above, snarling and ready for combat. Other times what starts out as a friendly conversation suddenly turns bad and violent, leaving any survivors wondering what they said to spark the onslaught.

Those who claim to have fought a Ghost Knight and survived to tell the tale – usually because the ghost found them to be a worthy opponent and allows them to live – say that the ghost feels solid, though they do not bleed, and of course, can vanish and reappear anywhere at will, as ghosts are wont to do. When the chase or the battle is done, the specter simply vanishes. Riding away on horseback or melting into the fog or the surrounding darkness.

Whenever someone goes missing at night, especially along the woodland roads and when the missing are men-at-arms, adventurers, Wizards or noblemen and their bodyguards, the Ghost Knights are blamed. For while some are allowed to live and others are left dead in the road where they were slain, other people vanish completely. Never to be seen again.

The Truth Behind the Legend

These knights are neither ghosts nor jealous demons, they are *vampires* created by something terrible and unknown deep under the Garden that even the Order of the Knights-Fossar, said to know everything about the Garden of the Gods, do not know exists. Each drawn to the pull of an ancient evil that calls itself **Muareota the Hidden**. This parasitic would-be deity has languished in an area of the catacombs beneath the Garden of the Gods for so many tens of thousands of years that even the gods have seemed to forgotten she is there.

Muareota has been long forgotten by the outside world. Buried in catacombs that predate the Garden itself, and cloaked from all but those to whom she wishes to reveal herself. Which are few. Her name and her followers cleansed from the annals of history long before Elves and Dwarves rose to dominance. A primitive Vampire-Like Intelligence from a bygone era, Muareota could only whisper temptations of power and evil for thousands of years, until she finally caught the ear of an aging Elven warrior. One of the first Knights-Fossar by the name of *Sir Amar Lelambac*.

Sir Lelambac was lured into the catacombs one night by a curious voice that spoke to him while he camped at what would become the Garden of the Gods. Then, it was an unkempt tangle of forest and vegetation known to harbor some statues from a forgotten time. Though he had camped here many times before, he had never noticed an opening down into the earth. The voice softly, sweetly, called to him, and so he went. Down into the crypts and catacombs he had never known existed. Through twisting tunnels he was pulled down further and further, until finally, beyond the veil of roots and fallen rock, he came face to face with the idol of *Muareota*. There she sat, resting inside the little, ancient shrine that was her prison for the ages. The horrid thing – resembling a miniature version of an Old One with many eyes and tentacles, and bat wings – sat surrounded by eternally-lit candles that never burned out, flickering in the darkness. A smiling, mocking face carved from pale gray stone seemed to welcome the Knight. Stranger still, Sir Lelambac felt safe and at home.

The monstrous thing invaded Sir Lelambac's mind with the gentleness of a kiss and the welcoming embrace of a woman. Intoxicating and inescapable from so close, not that he wanted to escape, Muareota pulled him to her and he submitted, willingly. Hungrily.

Before he could shield his soul or his thoughts, Sir Lelambac was bombarded by visions of wealth and power and an existence that would last a thousand lifetimes, even to an Elf such as he. The knight, bitter from not advancing further and faster within the human-dominated Knights-Fossar, accepted Muareota's sensual embrace. He agreed to a pact for immortality with full knowledge of the monster he would become. In that moment he writhed and twisted, and the smiling idol of Muareota looked down with loving approval upon the *Master Vampire* born that night. Her Champion and consort.

As dark gods often do, Muareota's promises were all lies ... or at least only half-truths. Now that she granted Sir Lelambac immortality and the powers of the living dead, he was forever linked to her and her alone. He and she were as one. Partners in darkness, bound to one another in eternity. And since Muareota's shrine is actually a prison that binds her to the forgotten catacombs, her night spawned powers are dampened by the *Garden of the Gods* above her. Suffocating her, holding her below the earth, unable to move or break free to soar into the night sky where she belongs.

So too is Sir Lelambac trapped. Able to rise only on nights when the moon is full or nearly so, as well as when there is no moon at all. When he rises, he can travel no more than 100 miles (160 km) from his creator and master. The rest of the time he sleeps in his underground lair and dreams of freedom and the conquest of the human race and all mortals of this world. It is the same for the other two so-called *Ghost Knights* who serve him and Muareota. Each a Secondary Vampire of his creation.

Their shared goal is to find a way to free the vampire-like god of darkness buried in the catacombs so that she may again enter the world of mortals. When that glorious day happens, Sir Lelambac shall be seated next to her as her right hand, consort, and emperor. The other two Ghost Knights serving as generals destined to build and lead an army of darkness, composed of the living and the dead, to conquer and bring the world to its knees.

To make this promise happen, they must find a way to release Muareota from the enchantment that imprisons her beneath the Garden. A task made all the more difficult for the fact none of

them can travel more than 100 miles (160 km) from the location of her shrine, and are only active at night some 5-7 days a month.

So when Sir Lelambac and the other two Ghost Knights are hungry or angry, or frustrated, they lash out at the living, attacking and killing travelers, or beating them to a pulp and taking their valuables to fund their search for Muareota's freedom. They feed by tearing out the throats of their victims or bleed them in such a way that it looks like torture or battle wounds. Leaving no marks or evidence that vampires prowl the soil of Lopan. It is a ploy that has worked for centuries as not even the Knights-Fossar and the legions of adventurers and heroes who visit the Garden of the Gods and the Lopanic Games have any suspicion that vampires are at work anywhere near the treasured bastion of peace and enlightenment that is the Garden.

The Ghost Knights emerge and travel on the nights they are able, prowling the land around the Garden in search of clues, rumors, legends, and unwitting agents to help them find a way to release Muareota, and themselves with her. The Ghost Knights seem like phantoms because they are able to turn into mist and seem to float away or vanish into the fog or among the trees. When out of sight, they may then turn into a bat or wolf for a faster method of travel and other means to spy upon the living. The rare few who ever discover their dark secret are hunted down and murdered, if not by the vampires, then by one of their many agents.

The cunning Ghost Knights are careful not to make more of their kind, because they too would be trapped in the same area on Lopan, and too many vampires are likely to be noticed. For now, they make use of mortal agents to serve them.

Agents are any evildoer or witless pawn willing to take coin to perform a task and not ask too many questions. Such agents include thieves and pirates, spies and snitches, but more often they are tavern-keepers and well-intentioned pilgrims, scholars, priests, mages, and adventurers hired to find a particular bit of information or to acquire an ancient artifact, tome, or magic item. Other individuals are charged with unraveling certain mysteries of the past and to unearth theories about magic that could capture and contain a Vampire Intelligence or a dark god, and how to break such a spell. As such, many unwitting "agents" (which are most) of the Ghost Knights believe they are serving a good cause and helping one of the Knights-Fossar or a champion of the realm. To this end, each of the three Ghost Knights have many such well-intentioned agents – unsuspecting pawns in a dangerous game – and a network of spies and snitches in the towns and cities of Lopan, and every port city of the Old Kingdom and the Eastern Territory along the Inland Sea. All with ears to the ground and eyes open for anyone who might be able to provide answers or clues to what their imprisoned master seeks. **Note:** The Ghost Knights attack and rob wealthy travelers to get coin, jewelry, and other valuables to fund their operations and pay their agents.

People who may hold the answers these fiends seek or may have connections that could lead to new clues to pursue, sometimes go missing in the night. Snatched off the street or at the edge of the Garden, sometimes pulled from their beds as they sleep. Most simply vanish. Their belongings and all, gone with them. Resources with which the Ghost Knights pay the agents and spies, or taken to make it look like the missing person had simply moved on, or skipped out on their hotel bill. These abductions and disappearances are so well crafted and there are so many visitors to this part of Lopan, that foul play is seldom ever

suspected. If there is no sign of violence, there is no crime, and who could possibly keep track of all the people who come and go? Visitors come and go without notice or bidding farewell all the time, and people skipping out on a rooming bill is not uncommon.

Over the centuries, Sir Lelambac has demonstrated his Elven patience by biding his time and slowly gathering information and support for Muareota. A Death Cult that worships the dark god has been established in the *Land of the South Wind* where her followers search for ways to free their god. The cult leader was recruited by Lelambac personally when she visited Lopan in search of a purpose. In her case, the Garden held no special insight nor inspiration. That came from a handsome Elf she met outside a tavern. A man who said he could feel her yearning and could give her the purpose she so desperately sought.

There is also a *Western Pirate Captain* who attacks ships leaving Lopan that Sir Lelambac has identified as carrying riches and targets for capture and ransom. The money is split 50/50 between the pirate and one of Sir Lelambac's most trusted henchmen on Lopan – a man and his sister completely under the knight's vampiric thrall. He also has scholars and mages plumbing the depths of the *Western Empire* for ancient lore and magic concerning the living dead. The Empire of Sin has been plagued by vampires for ages, so it seems an ideal place to find someone familiar with the ancient Muareota and the dark magic that could break her imprisonment. He also has a band of thieves plotting to steal an ancient tome from the *Library of Bletherad*. A forbidden book kept under lock and key, out of sight from visitors to the Library. An ancient text which may hold the answers he seeks. He is also considering sending intrepid heroes on a fool's quest into the Land of Damned to secret for the answers he seeks. After all, is it not the last bastion of the oldest and most forbidden magicks? If the answers he seeks are anywhere, surely it must be there. The trick is getting agents in and out of that god-made prison, alive. No easy task for the greatest of heroes or tenacious of madmen.

Hired agents and pawns are scattered across the world. Finding people worldwide is one of the advantages to living on Lopan where people of all races and stations of life come from all lands in search of divine insight at the Garden or glory and wealth in the Lopanic Games.

Lady Breineta Tarnim and **Sir Ecago Iddav** are the other two Ghost Knights, Secondary Vampires created by Sir Lelambac in service to Muareota. There have been others created by Sir Lelambac, but they proved to be disappointments, requiring him to destroy them. These two, however, have proven worthy servants to him and Muareota.

Each of the trio have secret, underground lairs around and beneath the Garden of the Gods. Protected chambers where they can shelter during the day. They journey out into the world of the living only on the nights they can, a few times a month. Always outside the Garden, never within, for they cannot walk upon the hallowed ground of the Garden itself. For these three undead, the Garden of the Gods is like an open-air church or holy place they can cannot enter. At least not on the surface and among the Garden itself. They can, however, function just fine in the pitch black catacombs beneath the Garden.

Occasionally, one of the Ghost Knights adopts a cover persona and attempts to infiltrate the Knights-Fossar for a short period of time, looking for another suitable victim to persuade over to the darkness, or to ferret out any information the Knights-Fossar and

their knowledgeable Wardens may have about them, vampires in general, and Muareota and the magic that condemns her. So far, the Order of the Knights-Fossar know nothing about them, Muareota, or their secret network of agents and spies. Nor do the Knights-Fossar, or anyone anywhere, seem to know about the dark goddess Muareota. For the desperate Ghost Knights, this is both welcomed news confirming they are, indeed, superior to mortals and worthy to be Muareota's chosen elite, but also a source of anguish, for how can they release her if she is forgotten and unknown by all but the three of them?

When making contact with a Knight-Fossar, the vampires usually pretend to be crusaders or minor nobles on missions from one noble lord or another. Representatives from far away whose stories cannot be verified or disproved. Claiming exhaustion and having just arrived before the break of day, the infiltrating vampires can justify sleeping throughout the day, until dark for a few nights before suspicions may arise, but by then, the vampires will have moved on. In some cases, the wicked undead use their vampire powers to make the Knights or innocent visitors forget they ever met, or to plumb their minds and try to pull secrets out of their heads. These clever and methodical monsters like to know their enemies very well, and prefer to be the ones pulling the strings whenever they can. Likewise, the handful of mind controlled servants of Sir Lelambac and his two Secondary Vampires are completely loyal to them and would die before betraying their masters.

The stories and rumors surrounding the **Ghost Knights** who haunt the woods have persisted for centuries, and many a knight has tried to uncover the truth and hunt these "men or monsters" down. So far, without luck. The few who get too close to discovering the truth are found slain on the road, or perish under mysterious circumstances, or disappear. If **Sir John Perrenact**, current leader of the Knights-Fossar, were to discover that such monsters lurk under the Garden of the Gods and impersonate the bold knights of the Order, he would likely conduct an organized campaign to sweep the catacombs on a mission to destroy the vampires. But there, Muareota can manifest some level of power in the dank darkness, and she is able to cloak her location and those of her loyal servants from the eyes of the living. Revealing herself and the shrine that represents her only to those she wants to find her. As a result, neither Sir John nor any member of the Order of the Knights-Fossar have any clue about the Darkness that lurks below the Garden, and perhaps it is better that way. Not even the *Mind Mage Clerah Odhaln* has yet sensed this monster. However, if she should ever meet one the Ghost Knights herself, that might change, and the Ghost Knights might have to slay her or capture Clerah and turn her into one of them before the Mind Mage could sound the alarm.

Sir Amar Lelambac

Sir Amar Lelambac is the Master Vampire who created the other two Secondary Vampires who serve him. He is a brilliant strategist and tactician, a planner with keen insight on human behavior, and leads the campaign to free Muareota with relentless resolve. His vampire abilities to control and manipulate others to get what he desires have only improved over centuries of practice, even if it is only for 5-7 days a month. He is truly the mastermind behind the vampires' operations on Lopan, and if anyone can find a way to release the dark god Muareota, it is he.

Sir Lelambac is a monster with a mission. All his life his superior mind and talents were never appreciated and he was always held back and thwarted by those envious of him. At least, that's the way he sees it.

The truth is, Amar's cutthroat tactics, treachery, and arrogance never earned him many friends or respect. In life, he was more feared and hated than trusted and admired, and that kept him from advancing among the Knights-Fossar. Now, at



last, he serves a master who appreciates his talents and methods. She has put him in an elevated position and he shall not fail her.

Lelambac's vampire lair is in a deep, dark offshoot of the **Elven Ossuary**, a place where he feels at home among long-dead spirits of his kind, even if their faces and voices torture and condemn him as a traitor to all living things. A concealed door built into a wall of Elven bones hides the chamber, well-crafted and long-aged to the point where it is almost indistinguishable from its surroundings (-45% to Locate Secret Compartments/Doors). He is so old that no one within the Knights-Fossar has any memory of him whatsoever. His name, of course, is listed among the Knights as one of the early members of the Order, but there is nothing else noted about him other than that he went missing and his body was never recovered.

Sir Amar Lelambac, Quick Stats Elf, Master Vampire of Muareota

Alignment: Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q. 23, M.E. 21, M.A. 25, P.S. 33 (Supernatural), P.P. 26, P.E. 22, P.B. 24, Spd 24.

Age: 1904 (494 at the time of conversion into a vampire).

Experience: 10th level ex-Knight-Fossar, now a Master Vampire.

Horror Factor: 14

Hit Points: 205. **S.D.C.:** 67. Vampire Bio-Regeneration.

Natural A.R. (Vampire): 12

P.P.E.: 40

I.S.P.: 163

Disposition: Cool, calm and calculating, but burns inside with a lust for power and recognition. Cunning, patience and the ability to see the big picture are three of his greatest assets, and makes him more dangerous than any of the others.

He is quite fond of Breineta despite the fact that she has refused to be his bride. He just cannot help but to admire her spirit and talents. He finds the brooding and brutish Ecago to be an effective weapon against their enemies and enjoys watching him intimidate, interrogate, and tear people to pieces. Both Secondary Vampires remain loyal allies whom he feels he understands and can trust.

Skills of Note: All Fossar-Knight O.C.C. skills frozen at 10th level proficiency, all other skills (O.C.C. Related, Secondary, etc.) are forgotten.

Natural Abilities: All abilities of a Master Vampire, including Nightvision 1,600 feet (488 m), echolocation, vampire metamorphosis (mist, wolf, bat), Vampire's Bite, create vampires, mind control, Hypnotic Suggestion, Summon and Control Vermin (rats and mice), Summon and Control Canines, impervious to most weapons, Super Regeneration (2D6 Hit Points/S.D.C. per melee round and completely regenerates overnight unless utterly destroyed), does not breathe or bleed, can smell blood up to one mile (1.6 km) away, Prowl 50%, etc. (See **Western Empire™**, page 208, for complete details.)

Attacks per Melee: Six.

Bonuses (all): +3 on initiative, +8 to strike, +9 to parry, +8 to dodge, +7 to pull punch, impervious to all forms of mind control, magic sleeps and paralysis, impervious to most ordinary

weapons, impervious to normal fire and cold, and +5 to save vs Horror Factor.

Damage: Fights tooth and claw, or may use a weapon, magic, or psionics.

Bite Attack – 3D6+6 (not to turn an opponent into a vampire)

Punch, Restrained – 1D6

Punch or Claw Strike, Full Strength – 5D6+18

Power Punch/Claw Strike – 1D6x10+18 but counts as two melee attacks.

Kick, Full Strength – 5D6+18

Vulnerabilities: A wooden stake through the heart instantly puts it into a coma or stasis sleep (remove the stake and instantly returns to bloodthirsty life), weapons made of wood inflict normal damage direct to the vampire's Hit Points, silver weapons do double damage, sunlight does 1D6x10 damage direct to Hit Points per melee round, a magical Globe of Daylight does 3D6 damage per minute and should keep most Secondary and Wild Vampires at bay. A vial of Holy Water/Blessed Water does 3D6 damage per six ounce (177 ml) vial, and running water does 6D6 damage (first from S.D.C. then Hit Points) per melee around when the vampire is exposed to running/moving water.

Psionic Abilities: As is standard for a Master Vampire. Considered a Master Psychic and saves vs psionic attack on a 10 or higher. Mind control over other vampires it has created and any Wild Vampires, and all other Master Vampire powers (see **Western Empire™**, page 208, for more details). **I.S.P.** 163.

Magic Items: A magical map of the Garden of the Gods with the ability to Teleport the user and anyone within physical contact to any point in the Garden that they choose. Can be used once every 24 hours.

Equipment of Note: Nowadays, he uses his Supernatural Strength and vampire powers to overcome his enemies, but he still keeps his gold inlay, magic broadsword (2D6 damage, +1 to strike and parry; Dwarven quality, and enchanted to be indestructible and ever sharp). He also has a ball and chain (2D6+2) and a set of knives and picks for torture.

Plate and Chain Armor the exact colors of the Fossarian Order, as he was once one of their members, magically made to be silent, and still maintained as a measure of pride. A.R. 15. 100 S.D.C.; looks new.

Money and Valuables: Sir Lelambac has accumulated a small fortune that he uses to pay his "agents." He has the following at his beck and call: 497,000 in gold, gems and a little silver. In addition, he has a couple dozen common magic potions for his mortal agents, things like Healing (4), Chameleon (3), Invisibility (3), Negate Poison (5), Sleep (3), and Shrink (2). Game Masters may add 1D6+2 other potions at a quantity of one each. He also possesses a few vials of poison, a bottle of Faerie Wine, a few lesser Holy Weapons, a few magic items, and a pile of quality weapons and a few suits of armor taken from some of his victims. He would have much more wealth accumulated, but his worldwide network of spies and agents searching for the puzzle pieces to free Muareota requires much coin.



Lady Breineta Tarnim

A Western Noble and something of a maverick, *Sir Tarnim*, as she prefers to be addressed, is one of a few, rare females in the world who is an actual trained knight, not just awarded an honorary position of knight and allowed to ride with her male

counterparts. It is a title and rank that was earned, not bought, and that makes her proud and cocky. When the visor of her helmet is down, her skills and fighting acumen are such that her opponents never know this knight is of the “weaker sex.” A term she abhorred, so she delights in being the best of the best, and enjoys defeating and besting male knights, warriors and louts whenever the opportunity present itself. And that was before she gained the Supernatural Strength and powers of a vampire.

In life, she was what indelicate company might call a “bad ass.” She always felt more comfortable on the field of battle or in a tavern partying and debauching with her fellow knights and soldiers, than sitting among the nobility. Though she started her knighthood with noble intent, the “real world” made her hard and cold, turning a Scrupulous alignment into Anarchist, and as a vampire, Aberrant evil.

As one of the living dead, Breineta retains something of her code of honor, and her *word of honor* will not be broken. She must swear on that honor, however, or her word means nothing, and she curses and lies and cheats with the best of them.

Sir Breineta Tarnim is cold and merciless in combat and as treacherous as they come toward those she does not respect, which is most people. Her idea of mercy is a quick death rather than a slow and painful one, and she is no stranger to the art of torture. As a vampire, more than ever she sees herself and her on-again, off-again lover *Sir Lelambac*, as superior to most mortals.

Amar seduced her before granting her the gift of undead immortality. He may have had intentions to make her his immortal bride, but Brei is too wild and free-spirited to be tamed, even by him. She likes men, particularly knights and fighters of every variety, and enjoys having her way with them. A proclivity that annoys Sir Lelambac and sometimes puts their secret existence in jeopardy. She insists her partying with, and seduction of, men is to get information to further their cause, and for the most part that is true, but her bold and blatant overconfidence is troubling for the much more cunning and subtle Master Vampire.

“Sir” Tarnim’s vampire sanctuary is hidden in a cleft near the Krigan Heights. A small cave that is difficult to spot unless one is standing right in front of it and looking for it (-25% to Locate Secret Compartments/Doors). Protected by spiked pits, rock falls and often guarded by wolves, her coffin is a crude, stone sarcophagus that she took from the tomb of a Lopan noble. It is hidden away among dead-ends and circular tunnels, making it difficult to pick out from many similar sarcophagi.

Lady Breineta Tarnim, Human, Secondary Vampire, Quick Stats

Alignment: Aberrant evil.

Attributes: I.Q. 20, M.E. 17, M.A. 24, P.S. 25 (Supernatural), P.P. 21, P.E. 18, P.B. 15, Spd 17.

Age: 591 (36 at the time of conversion).

Experience Level: 8th level Knight (Western Empire).

Horror Factor: 12

Hit Points: 130. S.D.C.: 57.

Natural A.R. (Secondary Vampire): 10

P.P.E.: 30

I.S.P.: 95

Disposition: A natural leader with a good head for strategies and tactics, Brei is bold and confident, even haughty and arrogant. In combat she is deadly and merciless, bold and daring. Some-

times too bold and too daring. She is very cocky and likes to prove she is as good or better than any man by besting them in battle. She especially loves to go against Knights, Palladins, and Champions of the Gods.

Skills of Note: All Knight O.C.C. skills only (Western Empire) frozen at 8th level proficiency, all other skills are forgotten.

Natural Abilities: All abilities of a Secondary Vampire, including Nightvision 1,600 feet (488 m), echolocation, vampire metamorphosis (mist, wolf, bat), Vampire's Bite, create vampires, mind control, Hypnotic Suggestion, Summon and Control Vermin (rats and mice), Summon and Control Canines, impervious to most weapons, Super Regeneration (2D6 Hit Points/S.D.C. per melee round and completely regenerates overnight unless utterly destroyed), does not breathe or bleed, smell blood up to one mile (1.6 km) away, Prowl 50%, etc. (See **Western Empire™**, page 209, for complete details.)

Attacks per Melee: Four.

Bonuses (all): +2 on initiative, +4 to strike, +5 to parry, +5 to dodge, +3 to pull punch, impervious to all forms of mind control, magic sleeps and paralysis, impervious to most ordinary weapons, impervious to normal fire and cold, and +3 to save vs Horror Factor.

Damage: Fights tooth and claw, or may use a weapon, magic, or psionics.

Bite Attack – 2D6+3 (not to turn opponent into a vampire)

Punch, Restrained – 1D6

Punch or Claw Strike, Full Strength – 3D6+10

Power Punch/Claw Strike – 5D6+10, but counts as two melee attacks.

Kick, Full Strength – 3D6+10

Vulnerabilities: It is difficult for Brie to refuse a challenge, especially in physical competition with men. A tendency that can get her into trouble.

As a vampire, a wooden stake through the heart instantly puts her into a coma or stasis sleep (remove the stake and instantly returns to bloodthirsty life), weapons made of wood inflict normal damage direct to the vampire's Hit Points, silver weapons do double damage, sunlight does 1D6x10 damage direct to Hit Points per melee round, a magical Globe of Daylight does 3D6 damage per minute and should keep most Secondary and Wild Vampires at bay. A vial of Holy Water/Blessed Water does 3D6 damage per six ounce (177 ml) vial, and running water does 6D6 damage (first from S.D.C. then Hit Points) per melee round when the vampire is exposed to running/moving water.

Psionic Abilities: As is standard for a Secondary Vampire. Considered a Major Psychic and saves vs psionic attack on a 12 or higher. Mind control over other Secondary vampires she has created, and any Wild Vampires (see **the Western Empire™**, page 209, for more details.). **I.S.P.:** 90.

Magic Items: A pair of Gryphon Claws (2D6 damage) she rarely uses these days and a pair of silver daggers (1D6+2 damage) that returns when thrown.

Equipment of Note: The Lady uses her Supernatural Strength and vampire powers to overcome her foes, but she still carries her Western Scimitar (2D6 damage), and a matching pair of silver, Dwarven daggers (1D6+2 damage each) enchanted to return when thrown.

Her old armor is black and red Splint armor (A.R. 16, S.D.C. 78), but she seldom wears it anymore, except when the

three ride out impersonating knights and crusaders. Always a warrior at heart, she is more likely to be seen wearing soft or studded leather armor, more for show than function, with leather straps and armbands, tall leather boots and a short skirt.

She also tends to the dark steeds that are stabled and cared for at a local farm off the beaten path. The family is only too happy to make extra money by caring for the three horses of what they believe are noble knights. There is her dusky grey mare, Sir Lelambac's black stallion and Sir Iddav's dark brown, black maned mare.

Money: She wears only a simple gold band with a small emerald on her right hand, and a pair of diamond earrings. Together they are worth 15,000 gold. She also has 4D6x1,000 gold worth of valuable in her lair, but otherwise tends to spend her money freely. She carries on her person 2D4x1,000 worth of gold and gems at any given time. However, she considers it an art to get foolish, lusty males to buy her whatever she wants. She's very good at it and seducing men without using her vampire powers.

Sir Ecago Iddav

Sir Ecago Iddav was a hulking brute of a man who lived for combat and victory even before he died and rose reborn as a Secondary Vampire. Raised in the *Eastern Territory*, he grew up with a chip on his shoulder and an agenda to prove he and his family deserved their noble status as much as any Timiro, Western Empire, or Old Kingdom family with a long lineage. For Ecago, that proof came on the field of battle.

The man has always been a bully and becoming a vampire has only exacerbated his contempt for lesser beings. Which is most people, mortals and otherwise. He is the least patient of the trio and the most discontent with being such a powerful being trapped on Lopan. When there is a fight to be had and people to kill, it is Sir Iddav who is sent to dispatch them. Not because he is the best for the job, but to let him vent his blood lust and give him a moment of joy. The towering 6 foot, 5 inch (1.9 m) brute longs for the time when he can lead armies of vampires and mortal minions in conquest against the kingdoms of the known world.

Sir Iddav sleeps through the day in a chamber cut into the roots of one of the massive trees found on the outskirts of the Godsmire. The roots more resemble giant, curling tendrils that arch up out of the ground and plunge back in. Each covered in moss and fungus. Carved into the side of one of the largest roots is a secret door, with another root leading to a walkway. The door is a secret panel covered in moss and is camouflaged against intruders (-25% to Locate Secret Compartments/Doors). Inside is a simple cell with a heavy, wooden coffin, watched over by bats and ravens that roost in the nearby trees.

Sir Ecago Iddav, Human, Secondary Vampire, Quick Stats

Alignment: Miscreant evil.

Attributes: I.Q. 17, M.E. 18, M.A. 19, P.S. 30 (Supernatural), P.P. 20, P.E. 19, P.B. 9, Spd 28.

Age: 407 (41 at the time of conversion).

Experience: 6th level Knight (Eastern Territory).

Horror Factor: 12

Hit Points: 151



S.D.C.: 82

P.P.E.: 110

Disposition: A skilled warrior who likes to throw his weight around, bully others, and is given to violent outbursts. He lusts for battle and killing, and is happy to fight over the slightest altercation. Keeping this mad dog reined in all the time can be a problem for Sir Lelambac. Like most males, Sir Tarnim has Sir Iddav wrapped around her little finger, but she has little respect for him except as a warrior.

Skills of Note: All Knight O.C.C. skills only (Eastern Territory) frozen at 6th level proficiency, all other skills are forgotten.

Natural Abilities: All abilities of a Secondary Vampire, including Nightvision 1,600 feet (488 m), echolocation, vampire metamorphosis (mist, wolf, bat), Vampire's Bite, create vampires, mind control, Hypnotic Suggestion, Summon and Control Vermin (rats and mice), Summon and Control Canines, impervious to most weapons, Super Regeneration (2D6 Hit Points/S.D.C. per melee round and completely regenerates overnight unless utterly destroyed), does not breathe or bleed, smell blood up to one mile (1.6 km) away, Prowl 50%, etc. (See the **Western Empire sourcebook**, page 208, for complete details.)

Attacks per Melee: Four.

Bonuses (all): +3 on initiative, +4 to strike, +3 to parry, +3 to dodge, +2 to pull punch, impervious to all forms of mind control, magic sleeps and paralysis, impervious to most ordinary weapons, impervious to normal fire and cold, and +5 to save vs Horror Factor.

Damage: Fights tooth and claw, or may use a weapon, magic, or psionics.

Bite Attack – 3D6+6 (not to turn an opponent into a vampire)

Punch, Restrained – 1D6

Punch or Claw Strike, Full Strength – 5D6+18

Power Punch/Claw Strike – 1D6x10+18 but counts as two melee attacks.

Kick, Full Strength – 5D6+18

Vulnerabilities: A wooden stake through the heart instantly puts it into a coma or stasis sleep (remove the stake and instantly returns to bloodthirsty life), weapons made of wood inflict normal damage direct to the vampire's Hit Points, silver weapons do double damage, sunlight does 1D6x10 damage direct to Hit Points per melee round, a magical Globe of Daylight does 3D6 damage per minute and should keep most Secondary and Wild Vampires at bay. A vial of Holy Water/Blessed Water does 3D6 damage per six ounce (177 ml) vial, and running water does 6D6 damage (first from S.D.C. then Hit Points) per melee around when the vampire is exposed to running/moving water.

Psionic Abilities: As is standard for a Secondary Vampire. Considered a Major Psychic and saves vs psionic attack on a 12 or higher. Mind control over other Secondary vampires he has created, and any Wild Vampires (see the **Western Empire™**, page 209, for more details.). **I.S.P.:** 110.

Magic Items: *The Axe of Nyrravi*, a magic weapon conjured by the Elves during the Elf-Dwarf War and is a family heirloom. How his family got possession of this weapon is a matter of questionable circumstance and is part of the family's secret and seldom spoken of history. It turns into a flaming axe upon command 5 times per day for up to 10 minutes (40 melee

rounds) at a time. It delivers 4D6 damage and returns when thrown when not aflame, and 6D6 damage and returns when thrown when covered in magic fire.

Equipment of Note: His other favorite weapons are a silver-plated bastard sword (2D6+4 damage, +1 to strike; Kobold quality) that he could wield one-handed even before he had Supernatural Strength, as well as a war hatchet (throwing axe, 2D4 damage) he won in combat from a Coyle war chief during a campaign in what is now the Disputed Lands a couple hundred years ago. He also has a matching pair of pearl handled knives (1D6 damage each).

His Full Plate Armor is a blue-grey color with blue accents that resembles that of the Knights-Fossar. A.R. 17, 133 S.D.C. remaining and shows signs of wear and combat. Though he doesn't need to wear armor as a vampire, he still likes to do so as he believes it is befitting of his stature as a knight.

Money: The angry warrior has 59,000 in gold and gems, and 20,000 gold worth of weapons and gear, all stashed in his lair. When on the prowl at night, he seldom has more than 60 gold coins and gems worth 1,000 gold on his person.



The Ancient Order of the Fossarians

“To protect the Garden, to protect the innocent – and to fight forever more for the honor of the gods.

Steel and silence.

Fellowship and faith.”

- The Pledge of the Knights-Fossar

Long before humans settlements began to dominate the shores of Lopan, trappers and adventurers of many races have visited the island only to return with tales of vast wilderness,

monsters, Centaurs, and strange knights living in the forested interior. Whether they were rescued from a brigand or a monster, or simply glimpsed a figure on horseback riding through the wilderness, the stories of mysterious Elven and human knights on Lopan have persisted for centuries. Alongside tales of the mythic knights are countless legends about a Glass Keep that appears and disappears into thin air, ghosts, godly visitations, dragons, tribes of Centaurs, Faeries, Sphinxes, and a hole in the earth that leads straight to Hell.

As Elven and human settlers would learn, many of these stories had elements of truth. The reality behind tales of mysterious but heroic knights is not a myth or a legend, but a long-held secret. Nearly a 3,000 years ago, an Elven Paladin by the name of *Sir Langer Accenhal* uncovered evidence of a long lost deity of knights and heroes. A forgotten deity once worshiped by the Titans of old. The very Titans who stood against the Old Ones and fought many of their minions. Only a few passages in the *Tristine Chronicles* mentions the name Fossar as the god of the Titans, but he is there. One deity in a small pantheon of gods worshiped by the giant Paladins of old.

Sir Accenhal had followed a lead that brought him to the remote island of Lopan in search of this deity. Elves and Titans had once been close allies, and he thought if he could find proof of this god and restore knowledge of the deity to the world, it would help restore the ancient friendship between his people and Titans that had been destroyed during the folly of the Elf-Dwarf War.

Sir Accenhal had already journeyed near and far in search of wisemen and scholars who might know something about the Titan deity Fossar. Just as he was about to give up, clues brought him to the island of Lopan. After weeks searching through the island's wilderness, the Paladin met a wizened Gnome Druid who told him of a dense area of forest that generations of his people called the *Forest of Mystery*. A place that legend held was touched by the gods. Here, he told the knight-errant, he might find what he sought.

His resolve pushed to its limits, Sir Accenhal told himself, one last investigation, and then he would go back home to the Old Kingdom. The night of his journey into the forest was black as pitch and tried to drown him in a torrential rain that had lasted all day and into the night. Miserable and downtrodden, his squire having abandoned him and most of his possessions gone, Sir Accenhal was leading his horse through the storm when he spotted a roaring fire flickering through the trees. Curious, and suspecting witchcraft, he approached with sword in hand, only to find that the fire was protected from the rain by a strange glass structure. A *Glass Castle Keep*, almost invisible from afar, and most certainly the result of enchantment which he decided was the work of the divine.

Apart from the blazing fire in the hearth, the little castle and its translucent halls were empty. Sir Accenhal tied up his confused horse near the fire and both exhausted souls fell asleep, sheltered from the pouring rain. When he awoke, the forest around him was gone. The Glass Keep had reappeared within a lush garden full of stone statues. Educated and familiar with the *Tristine Chronicles* and other legends, Sir Accenhal instantly knew they were someplace touched by the gods.

He took the reins of his horse, and they left the Glass Keep to set off into the garden. The path was a like a maze and he thought he could catch glimpses of people – pilgrims – admiring and praying to the various gods but they appeared and disappeared like phantoms not really there at all. He recognized many of the god statues, while others were figures of mystery to the knight. When Sir Accenhal would later recount his journey, he said he couldn't remember how long he walked through the garden of statues, but it felt like the better part of an entire day, though he did not feel hungry or fatigued.

Finally, he found himself standing before a stone monument that featured only a pair of stone feet, broken below the ankle. He remembered later, in that moment, thinking how odd that this

was the only broken statue, its pieces missing. Looking up, there was a flash of light and suddenly, standing before him was a giant ethereal knight, standing upon the pedestal of the stone feet. It was a Titan, stern and noble. The very symbol of chivalry and gallantry from a different age. Though Sir Accenhal could make out every detail, the figure was transparent like the phantom people he had seen during his trek through the garden.

The phantom knight looked down upon Sir Accenhal and spoke:

"What you witness before you is what once was, and what is yet to be. I am Fossar, God of Knights and Heroes who oppose Chaos and Evil, protectors of the Good and the Innocent.

"But I am lost to time and to this Garden, just as this Garden of the Gods has been lost to the world of men for millennia. But that shall not always be. A new age is creeping upon us. In time, the Garden shall be rediscovered, and with it, many of the Lost Gods. Yet without my statue present, my pantheon and I shall remain forgotten and lost for the ages to come. Never to walk upon this world again.

"I beseech you, noble knight, return my statue to its place in the Garden so that we may be remembered. So that we may inspire a new age of heroes to stand against the powers of darkness. Promise me you'll do this for us, no matter the cost, or how long it may take, and I shall grant you the power of the Glass Keep and grace you and those who follow with out blessings. Champion this cause in my name, good sir, and this shall help guide your way and defeat those who oppose you."

There was another flash, and a sword floated in the air before Sir Accenhal. Dwarven Runes bore the name *Compass Point*, a weapon made beautiful and deadly through ancient craftsmanship and magic. Upon studying the blade, he realized that a decorative jewel in the hilt was actually a compass that pointed off towards the horizon, always to the same place. Sir Accenhal felt the power of the silver blade as he took hold of the hilt, looked up, nodded, and accepted his divine mission.

"Yes, I will do this. I have already spent years searching for you, Lord Fossar."

Yes, I know," said the Titan deity, a thin smile on his face, and tears welling up in his eyes. *"How else would you have ever found me?"*

"Should I seek out the Garden first, or am I...?"

"The Garden shall be found by others," interrupted the Titan deity. *"That is ordained. And when it is, it shall help those who follow in your footsteps find what you seek on our behalf.*

"Know this, Good Knight, if you and yours do not restore my statue before the last of the Forgotten are unveiled within the Garden, making it whole, but for me, we shall be lost forever. Our fate rest in your hands. Fight with honor and live well, my Champion."

A flash of lightning and an eruption of thunder awakened Sir Accenhal. It had all been a dream.

No. Not a dream. Though he and his steed were in the exact location inside the Glass Keep where they had fallen sleep, he clutched in his right hand the sword, *Compass Point*, and above him stood the *Glass Castle Keep*.

With renewed vigor and the energy of an Elf half his age, Sir Accenhal rode off to where the magic sword pointed. Its true north being the next piece of the statue to uncover and liberate. After a long and harrowing journey that lasted a decade, Sir Accenhal was eventually led to the Lost Hand of the Titan god. The

first missing piece of seven lost pieces. A quest in which he had nearly perished a dozen times. If he were to recover the remaining six to fully reassemble the Titan, he knew he would need help.

Sir Accenhal sought out other knights known to him as well as others he knew only by reputation. He also spoke to a few sympathetic minor nobles. He shared with them his story of the Titan Fossar and his vision of the Garden, told them of his vision quest, and solicited their help. To his surprise, most agreed to join him, and those who did not, took his secret to their grave. On that day, the **Order of the Knights-Fossar** came into existence. His new team and noble patrons constructed a monastery-style fortress on Lopan at the location where Fossar and the Glass Castle Keep had first appeared to him. This seemed both appropriate and an ideal location. If they were to scour the world searching for the missing statue pieces, Lopan, at its center, seemed like a good base of operations. As it would turn out, when the Garden of the Gods was rediscovered centuries later and long after Sir Accenhal's death, it was only an hour's distance, at full gallop, to the West Verdant Gate. Two or three hours at a more reasonable pace.

Sir Accenhal eventually succumbed to the long years, but not before passing on his knowledge and his quest to the dedicated men and women of the **Order of the Knights-Fossar**. Kept secret for a few thousand years, the monastic order of Knights-Fossar has never wavered from its mission to restore the Titan deity and keep the Garden safe. As settlers began to arrive, first a new generation of Elves from the Old Kingdom and elsewhere, then humans, and in the last several centuries as the result of mass expansion into the Eastern Territory, more Elves and humans and myriad other settlers and heroes. To the Knights-Fossar, the Lopanic Games are a godsend bringing ever more paladins, knights and heroes to their doorstep to help the recruit eyes and ears from across the world, as well as new members to join their order. The Knights-Fossar have struck deals with the rulers of the island over the many centuries that have allowed them to maintain their independence, autonomy, and secrecy. To this day, even most inhabitants of Lopan know little about the old monastery or the noble Knights-Fossar who live there. Nothing beyond rumors and speculation, but all accept the Knights-Fossar as trustworthy heroes because they have proven themselves to be heroic defenders of the land and the people of Lopan many times for as long as anyone can remember.

As the population of settlers on Lopan grew, mostly human settlers, some Elves and Dwarves, and some others, the **Garden of the Gods** was discovered, but it has been only over the last one hundred years, that so much of it has been revealed and shared for all to see. As spectators, patrons and combatants flock to the Lopanic Games in ever increasing numbers, they also go to visit the Garden. Thus, the rest of the world is learning about the *Garden of the Gods* making it an attraction that is growing in popularity along with the Lopanic Games. Some are already calling it one of the wonders of the world. Which in turn, attracts an increasing number of visitors and religious pilgrims. A fact that both pleases and worries the Order of the Knights-Fossar.

On one hand, the Knights-Fossar are pleased people are able to enjoy the beauty and splendor of the Garden and rediscover fading and forgotten gods, most of whom seem to represent order and virtue. On the other hand, they worry about the future of the Garden, Lopan, and the fate of Fossar and his Pantheon of Hero Gods. They cannot fail him. Yet when they succeed, the mission of the Knights-Fossar is complete. Do they disband? Join

the defenders of the realm? Find a new purpose? Will Fossar appear to give them a new mission? All questions for another time, as the Knights must still find the three remaining missing pieces of the statue. Meanwhile, while the Knights and the Fossarian Wardens search for new clues to lead them to the missing pieces of the statue, others watch over the Garden of the Gods as the ancient order has done for more than two thousand years, now, and speak with other knights and visitors in the hope of uncover new clues to the whereabouts of the three remaining parts of the statue. Their presence and good example responsible, in part, for making the Garden of the Gods being open and available to all people without exception.

It has been long rumored that one or more members of Lopan's monarchy have been, and still are, secret members of the Knights-Fossar, and that is one of the reasons the order has been allowed to exist and operate as an independent military force that does not answer directly to the Crown. Some also suspect the Order of the Knights-Fossar are supported and financed, at least to some degree, by the Crown. That includes horses and the renovated Solarium which has been expanded and reinforced with additional masonry and magic. There is even a conspiracy theory among a few outside powers that the Knights-Fossar have been the power behind the **Imperial Court of Lopan** since the beginning. And that the entire kingdom has been founded as a kind of cover for their activities and a bid to control the destiny of the Garden of the Gods and its homeland. That theory is completely false, but it is one of the more recent rumors as Lopan and the Garden grow in prominence.

The people of Lopan really don't care who the Knights-Fossar are or who finances their operations. They are heroes and protectors, and that's good enough for them. The ancient order stays out of politics and has never been accused of anything untoward. They have always been honest and valiant, and quick to help people against all threats. They are everything knights are supposed to be. The fact that the order is predominately humans and Elves sits well with the settlers of the past few centuries as they mirror the composition of the island's population and ruling body. Most local inhabitants automatically presume the Knights-Fossar are the Protectors of the Garden of the Gods and the realm, and never question that assumption. Besides, most members of the Order were born and live on Lopan, so they are seen as noble friends and neighbors, and fellow citizens of the country.

As for the Order's "veil of secrecy," that's only something that bothers people in power *outside Lopan*. The ruling body, as well as the people, endorse and support the noble Order of the Knights-Fossar. Most common folk do not think twice about it. The rich and powerful have a long history of doing as they please without ever notifying or consulting with the people. It is just how monarchies and feudal kingdoms work. So to the common people, the Knights-Fossar are no different. As long as the knights remain trustworthy and kind, they are accepted without a second thought. Not just accepted, but celebrated as heroes and defenders of Lopan. And because the knights have a long record of helping during all manner of crisis, be it rebuilding after a storm, finding a child lost in the woods, repelling pirates, and many other acts of heroism, the Knights-Fossar are held in the highest esteem and respected and welcomed by all.

Whatever the knights true role in Lopan's history and government, the age-old quest to reassemble the statue of the **Lost Titan** remains their primary purpose and ongoing mission. Though four

of the seven pieces are displayed with pride at the Solarium, there are still three left scattered out across the world, many leagues distant from the Garden of the Gods.

Compass Point only functions in the possession of a true champion, but the noble Knights-Fossar fit that role to a tee. The quiet support of the Imperial Court of Lopan, among others, has helped the knights search far and wide on behalf of their patron god. However, the sword only points out the general direction of the next missing piece, it does not indicate a precise location or who may possess it. The search has been a long, difficult task with many decades passing without a viable lead. In that time, legends of the Knights-Fossar have spread alongside tales of the Garden of the Gods, and people are starting to take note and wonder about the deity that has inspired such conviction and heroism.

Already several Knights and Wardens have fallen in the pursuit of the fifth piece. Every time the bearer of Compass Point perishes, the sword re-materializes within the Glass Keep, and the Knights-Fossar hold a solemn ceremony for the loss of another of their members. Still, the Order of the Knights-Fossar vow to find the Lost Titan and to protect the Garden of the Gods for all time. These committed soldiers are inspired by a thirst for truth, justice, and for completing the statue so that Fossar and his pantheon of heroes gods become known to new generations of people. Of heroes. And with any luck, help bring peace and harmony between the Eastern Territory and the Wolfen Empire.

Defenses of the Knights-Fossar

The Order is small in number, and many of its Knights and Wardens are away from Lopan looking for new leads about the remaining pieces of the Titan's statue or off on goodwill missions in other parts of the world. About half of the Knights-Fossar have a Squire or other assistant of some kind, and when out in the world, the Knights and Wardens often join forces with local heroes and adventurers who are glad to join a knight's journey.

Some of the Fossarian Wardens are **Psi-Mystics**, but the majority of the Order are **Knights** and **Paladins**, or **Fossarian Wardens** who might be thought of as scholar-knights and spies. (See Knights-Fossar and Fossarian Warden O.C.C.s at the end of this section for details.) However, there is also a smattering of other men-at-arms, Long Bowmen, Rangers, Druids, Wizards and psychics who consider themselves to be friends and allies of the Order that volunteer to assist on missions or help around the Solarium on Lopan on a regular basis. Out in the world, adventurers, mages, and mercenaries are often happy to join a good cause, especially if they can get a percentage of any booty they might acquire together. Working with knights of any kind is always good for a freelancer's reputation and credibility, and it's good to have a friends in high places when you need a favor. Likewise, the Knights-Fossar's sterling reputation on Lopan attracts friends and allies who are residents of Lopan as well as visitors to the island who are happy to assist whenever called upon. It is a badge of honor to be able to tell stories about defending the Garden of the Gods or riding with the Knights-Fossar righting wrongs and fighting evil.

The Order's numbers fluctuate as champions come and go, or are killed in the line of duty in foreign lands or in service of the Garden of the Gods, and protecting the innocent. At their smallest, there were only a few dozen. Today, however, their numbers approach three hundred. Only the actual Knights and Wardens

are considered members of the Order, privy to all its secrets and assets. Many are born into, and raised within, the Order of the Knights-Fossar. Offspring of the members who see following in the footsteps of their parent(s) or relatives as their duty or destiny. Other knights and outsiders are invited into the Order after proving themselves many times in battle and on quests with the Knights or Wardens, or on behalf of the Order.

In addition to the Knights and Wardens there are Squires, volunteer militia, retainers, helpers and family members who help out with the more mundane tasks of maintaining the Order – kitchen duty, cooking, cleaning, tending to the horses, and similar duties. A few hundred who help on a daily basis live in and around the Solarium. Others are scattered across Lopan.

Estimated Members of the Knights-Fossar

100-120 Knights-Fossar, half of whom are away.

130-160 Fossarian Wardens, half of whom are away.

Helpers and Attendants

60-80 Squires, half of whom are away.

40-60 Sworn Retainers on site at the Solarium.

40-80 Bowmen and various Men-at-Arms on site at the Solarium.
300-350 Family members of the Knights and Wardens at the Solarium.

800-1,000 extended family and friends, as well as 30-40 retired knights living in nearby villages, towns and cities, but most residents of Lopan will happily assist the trusted Knights any way they can.

The Solarium

Stronghold of the Fossarian Order

Poised on a strategic hill overlooking the Korbeo River, the Solarium is home to the Order of the Knights-Fossar. Around it are open plains of cleared forest that are now home to a few rustic farms and grassy fields used by shepherds. Glinting in the sunlight, it is a small, stone edifice, wrapped protectively around the Glass Keep, a magical greenhouse at the castle's center.

Parts of the Solarium have been in place for generations, the old fortress-monastery that sheltered the Fossarians during their long centuries of secrecy. In the last hundred years, however, the castle has been renovated and expanded, as the monarchy of Lopan has taken a private interest in the Order, so it sends masons and builders from time to time to maintain and improve the facility. The Crown also sends supplies to them every spring.

The Solarium is intended to be a light fort, a safe haven and base of operations for the Order of the Knights-Fossar who own the land where the Solarium sits and the fields around it. It is more of a fortified monastery than a true castle. The Glass Keep at the center of the castle is a source of potent magic, and one of the secret tricks in the Order's defenses. It is not intended to withstand major assaults or dominate a rebellious countryside.

It is a castle, to be sure, much more imposing than a simple walled village. And it is well-provisioned with a year's supply of grain on hand at all times, and has its own well whose waters cannot be cut off by outside forces. The stables at the Solarium usually house 100-200 horses, 50 mules, donkeys and draft horses for work around the castle, and there are four catapults and a dozen large arbalests to help break a potential siege. However, a large army equipped with catapults and trebuchets, not

to mention giants, mythical beasts, or powerful magic, would be able to take the Solarium in a matter of a few weeks rather than months.

Within its walls, the outer ring of the castle features stables, storehouses and quarters for the villagers in case of siege. Another wall protects the inner ring, home to the living quarters of the Knights-Fossar, the ranking Fossarians, the castle's well, library and strongroom where gold, artifacts, and valuables are kept. This inner ring is built with a "hollow" section at its interior. However, the courtyard at the very center of the Solarium is where the mysterious **Glass Keep** manifests. This area is kept clear at all times, and if a sudden twinkle begins to appear in the air, any children or animals playing in the castle's center are quickly shooed away, as the Glass Keep is about to reappear.

Inside the great hall of the Solarium where the knights gather for special guests, meetings, festivals, and special events, is a large, guarded display where the recovered pieces of the Lost Titan are kept. There are seven pedestals upon four of which rest the right leg, left arm, hip, and torso of the Titan. Three remain empty, waiting for the left leg, right arm, and the head. All are guarded by magic and knights. Moreover, most people do not know they are kept here, nor do they realize the importance and value of these artifacts. One of the Order's many secrets.

Should the Solarium ever come under attack (it never has, yet), the Knights-Fossar will fight bravely to defend it, but only for as long as it takes to evacuate via the magical **Glass Keep**. The small village of people and those who support and help maintain the Solarium would take shelter inside the Glass Keep at the castle and be whisked to safety first. Once they have been ushered away, the Glass Keep would return for the knights, teleporting back within the Solarium to enable the estate's embattled defenders to likewise retreat, regroup, and devise a response. Once the people and the knights are magically carried to safety, attackers find only an empty compound, while the Knights-Fossar reorganize nearby. Undoubtedly, a few riders will be sent to the Imperial Court of Lopan to solicit aid or ascertain if they too are under assault, while the rest reorganize and plan their response to the invasion.

For assaults that the knights choose to face, the Solarium has a **tall outer wall** around it at the base of the hill upon which it stands. Archers and Wizards stand guard in the five guard towers, prepared to shower would-be attackers with arrows and magic spells. The walls are thirty feet (9.1 m) tall and 10 feet (3 m) thick, with the towers itself reaching 50 feet (15.2 m) toward the heavens. The knights have a handful of arbalests mounted on the battlements, along with four catapults and a single trebuchet on the inner defense.

A second set of walls, the same height and size as the first, is near the top of the hill, closer to the Solarium. The three towers around this central area are all poised overlooking the castle's gates, so attackers that breach the outer wall must face the withering fire of the inner defenses; again, arrows, spear men and magic users. The climb up the hill is physically demanding in armor, slowing down and tiring out invaders making the ascent across the open field.

All of these defensive measures are designed to slow down assailants, buying time for the Knights-Fossar to mount a defense while the people are evacuated via the Glass Keep located inside

the Solarium. If the Glass Keep is currently manifested somewhere else, the Order's leaders need time to summon the Keep back to the Solarium, and then send it on its way again filled with refugees.

Of course, if the Order believes it can repel the invaders, they all stay and fight.

The Glass Keep

Some visitors to the Solarium speak of the beauty and curiosity of its fabled Glass Keep, while others swear that no such structure exists. There are guests who have spent long weeks at the Solarium and never seen the notorious Glass Keep, while others are lucky enough to catch a glimpse of it, the sunlight dancing off its glassy surface from afar, the very first time they come by. It is the magical nature of the Glass Keep that is the source of these rumors, with both types of visitors only reporting what they have seen with their own eyes.

For generations, the Glass Keep was just a legend. Travelers and herdsman would see its reflection upon the horizon, but few reliable individuals claimed to have ever touched or set foot inside. Whenever someone tried to prove the stories, riding to the site of the Keep with a throng of people eager to see the legendary tower for themselves, it would be gone. Gone without so much as a single blade of grass out of place. The individual making the claim teased and taunted for the wild goose chase that must have been born out of hallucination or too much to drink. It was not until *Sir Langer Accenhal* found the Glass Keep that the phenomenon finally found a worthy champion to partially control it and use it for good.

Today the Glass Keep is associated with the forgotten god of the Titans, Fossar, champion of knights and heroes, and the Order of the Knights-Fossar. Now the Glass Keep has found a permanent ally and subsequent place to rest, though even today it appears and reappears at the Knights-Fossar's Solarium at random, without apparent rhyme or reason. Some speculate that because the statue of the Titan has been defaced and scattered across the world, the Titan god all but forgotten, and the Titan giants themselves a fading species, the forgotten god can only maintain its existence in the realm of mortals for brief periods of time. The Knights-Fossar neither confirm or deny the existence of the Glass Keep, but it does exist and the Solarium seems to be its primary landing zone. When it does appear, 4-5 times a year, it remains for 1D4 weeks before it vanishes again, the glass becoming a bit yellow and cloudy 24 hours before it vanishes. Moreover, they know it will appear during a crisis. It serves as their secret refuge, whenever it does manifest, and is their most sacred sanctuary. They are happy to let the rest of the world believe the Glass Keep is the stuff of legend.

The Order of the Knights-Fossar know this, as do some Faeries, Centaurs and Gnomes, but the Glass Keep periodically manifests at four different locations on Lopan, north, south, east, and west. The Solarium has been constructed around its manifestation in the east, not far from the Garden of the Gods. A ready-made castle that has a large courtyard which the Glass Keep appears within. At the other locations, however, the Glass Keep appears in the middle of the countryside, with no evidence of its presence after it vanishes. Though sometimes there are some footprints and hoofprints that seem to come out of nowhere and ride off into the distance. That's because the

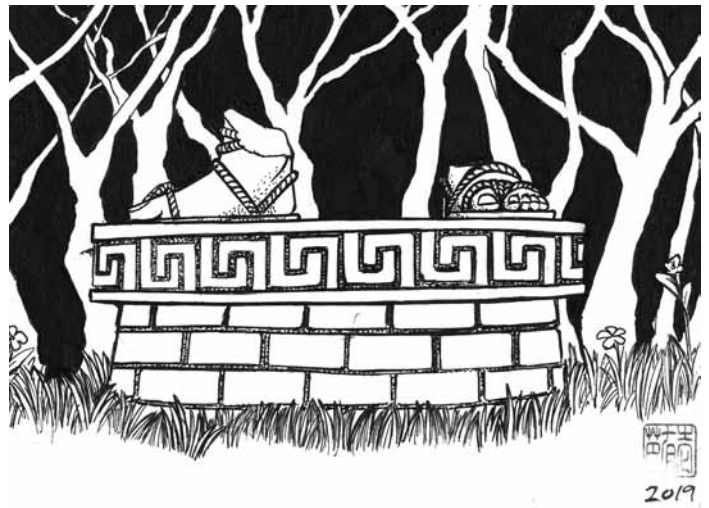
Knights-Fossar use it to move about the countryside of Lopan like a magical teleport machine. Whenever the Glass Keep vanishes, everyone inside at the time goes with it. This enables the knights, horses and all, to travel from one part of the island continent to another with unnatural speed or seem to appear out of nowhere.

Before the Knights-Fossar, the Glass Keep would appear and disappear at seemingly random intervals and locations, sometimes remaining in one place for 3-4 weeks, sometimes only for 3D4 minutes. After intense study by the Order's own Psi-Mystics and allied mages and psychics, they have learned how to "encourage" the Keep to teleport, accelerating the process even though they have little control over which location the Keep chooses to manifest or how long it will linger there. The Knights-Fossar use the Glass Keep to move rapidly around the outskirts of the island, and their sudden appearance and disappearance has certainly contributed to certain legends surrounding the Order that suggest the knights themselves are superhuman, demigods or celestial beings of some sort.

The various wings and chambers of the Keep hold strange and exotic plants that the knights have found within the Garden or in their quests around the world. Some of them bear herbal/medicinal or magical properties of their own, and some are connected to various deities. The Garden of the Gods is very, very old, and certain plants from distant times and long-lost eras can only be found within its reaches. Others are dependent upon magic or the presence of the divine, and cannot be removed from the Glass Keep without instantly shriveling to dust and blowing away on the next breeze.

Once the Titan's statue is fully reassembled, Sir Accenhal's pact with the god shall be fulfilled, and the Knights-Fossar believe the Glass Keep shall become theirs to inhabit and command evermore. They also believe they will be entrusted with a new mission or purpose, though they do not know how any of this will manifest. Nor do they know whether the Glass Keep and its magic is tied to the Lost Titan god (that's what most believe) or whether it is linked to the Garden of the Gods as some believe. There is a belief among some of the Knights-Fossar that, should the Garden of the Gods ever come under threat, the Glass Keep shall manifest in the middle of the Garden, and they will be tasked to fight as Champions of the Gods, empowered by the many deities all around. Others wonder if the Keep might not expand to encompass the entire Garden to protect it from attack. Both notions are pure conjecture, because the Glass Keep has never appeared within the Garden nor any closer than the Order's castle.

Another mystery pertaining to the Glass Keep is the strength of its walls, for they have never been tested. Many believe the Glass Keep is indestructible or is 10 times more sturdy than the walls of an ordinary castle, and is self-healing – self-repairing any damage that might befall it. Truth is, nobody, not even the Knights-Fossar, knows what magic is at work, the limits of its power, or exactly what role they truly play in the mystery of the Glass Keep. Despite the Fossarian Wardens' best efforts, they have uncovered no information about a magical Glass Keep throughout the annals of history.



The Search for the Lost Titan

Over the centuries, the Knights-Fossar have located four of the seven missing pieces, each one on display at the Solarium, the stronghold of the Fossarians near the Garden of the Gods. Once the remaining three pieces are recovered, the Lost Titan can be fully reassembled, and he and his pantheon of fellow gods can join the Garden of the Gods and be rediscovered.

No one knows who or what could have shattered the Titan's statue or absconded with the seven pieces to scatter them across the world. If the deity knows, he has not chosen to reveal the answer, so the Order searches for those answers as well. It seems unfathomable that any being other than a god or an Old One could possess the secret to overcoming the powerful magic of the Garden, or escape the wrath of the gods. Whatever feud or ancient grudge led to the breaking apart of the statue of the Lost Titan is almost certainly a holdover from a different age.

Whoever has possession of the pieces is likely to be using them in some way, and drawing power from the artifacts (and the Titan god, himself?). That was certainly the case with the previously recovered pieces. Which means recovering the missing components is never as easy as finding one in an ancient crypt or buried in a farmer's field. It is always in the clutches of someone or something wicked and powerful. It makes sense; otherwise the Titan would not have needed knights and heroes to recover them. The Knights and Wardens had hoped those who possessed the missing pieces might be the descendants of those who stole the statues pieces so that they could unravel the origin of the theft and who was responsible, but that has not yet been the case. Whoever is responsible for the deed appears to have deliberately hidden the pieces where beings with evil intentions could find them and use them for purposes most foul. Some of them passed down for generations before being lost and rediscovered ages later. All who have it hold it in high regard or worship the piece, and always seem willing fight to the death to keep it. And those who have a lost piece often have it well hidden in a place not easy to find or survive. A place where dark forces are at work to forever keep the statue from being assembled. These evildoers will fight to the death and call upon other dark gods, perhaps even a slumbering Old One, whom the Titans fought so long ago, to help keep the Knights-Fossar from recovering it.

The search for the statue of the Lost Titan is an ongoing quest. One that has occupied the Knights-Fossar for centuries, and one that is becoming more urgent as more and more elder and forgotten gods are excavated from the Primeva. Aspiring knights and heroes who wish to prove themselves within the Order are known for gathering together in small groups and taking up the enchanted sword **Compass Point** to guide them to the next missing piece of the Lost Titan, *the left leg*.

The last party to head off in search of the Lost Titan followed Compass Point southeast, sailing for the coast of the Old Kingdom and riding off into the lowlands. No one knows what befell the party of knights and retainers, but almost three months after their departure, Compass Point reappeared within the Glass Keep of the Solarium, indicating the death of those champions. None of the last knight's companions have returned to Lopan or sent word, leading many to believe that the entire party met its fate on one of the Old Kingdom's ancient roads. Since then, Compass Point has not lit up in the hands of another, whether they are a sworn Knight of the Fossarians, or a promising crusading hero from a distant land. Some have wondered if the enchanted Rune Blade or the Titan needs time to mourn, or is waiting for more clues to be uncovered as to who possesses the relic, rather than send another party of inadequately prepared heroes to their doom. At least now the Fossarian Wardens and Knights have a location to research and investigate undercover.

In the time between quests, the search for clues leading to all three of the remaining pieces continues, as well as lesser missions and good deeds to occupy the Order of the Knights-Fossar. Errands for other gods, duties protecting the Garden and the Solarium, and the occasional *favor* for the Empress of Lopan and other allies. It is the search for the Lost Titan, however, that elevates the Knights-Fossar to notoriety.

Anyone, Knight-Fossar or heroic stranger who rides back to the Solarium with a piece of the Titan in tow, is due for extravagant feasts, fine drink, stories, and songs of his or her triumph, and a general outpouring of small gifts, respect, and oaths of service. No one is completely sure what will happen when, or if, the Titan is completely reassembled. "The power of the Glass Keep" are the words that Sir Accenhal supposedly heard told to him by the Titan. None among their number are sure what will happen to the individual who completes the Titan statue, or the Order as a whole. To ask the Lost Titan in prayer would be to show a lack of faith in him and their destiny.

The Three Remaining Pieces of the Titan

Since the inception of the quest, four of the seven pieces of the Lost Titan have been discovered. The remaining three, the left leg, the right arm, and the head of the Titan, remain to be found, scattered someplace unknown across the world. No one is certain where they may be found, only that the next piece, the left leg, is somewhere to the southeast of Lopan. And based on recent events, that someplace is in the Old Kingdom Lowlands. Near or far, it is impossible to be sure, and the three groups that have set out for the leg have all failed, perishing in the process.

While no one knows where the other two pieces might be, the Fossarian Wardens are always searching libraries and halls of records for clues that might lead to them with or without the help

of the sword Compass Point. Generally impossible to confirm or cross-reference, these clues tend to be rumors and speculation, often part of history or mythology. Tales of enchanted statues, stolen away from their distant home are of particular interest. So far, only one of the four recovered pieces was found entirely using clues and ancient texts without the help of Compass Point.

The Titan's Left Leg

The current focus of the Knights-Fossar, locating the left leg of the Titan, has already cost the lives of three parties of knights. All that is known for sure is that the leg is either somewhere in the *Old Kingdom* or on the other side of it, southeast of Lopan. In *Timiro* or *the Land of the South Winds*, perhaps, or even the *Floenry Isles*. Each of the three doomed champions set out through the Old Kingdom, taking the land route, and each of them disappeared in turn. That could mean the Titan's Leg and those who possess it are in the Old Kingdom, or it means taking the land route through the Old Kingdom is too dangerous at the moment. It is common knowledge that savage hordes of Ogres, Orcs, Goblins and others are on the rampage at the moment. Perhaps taking a sea route to the South is a better plan of action.

Only one alleged survivor has returned from any of the three missions sent after the Titan's Left Leg. A Dwarf prospector who claims to have fallen in with the Knights-Fossar and the heroes they assembled along the way. The Dwarf managed to make it back to Lopan where he shared his story with the Order in one of Lopan's coastal cities.

If he is telling the truth – and he does seem to know the names of the knights and allies from that group – a tribe of Ogres in the Old Kingdom are believed to worship the leg and draw magical power from the stone relic. They are not ordinary Ogres, however. They are covered in strange, mystic symbols of power and exhibit an unknown type of magic they used against the Knights-Fossar in three different assaults by the knights. It was during the second assault that the Dwarf was severely injured and taken to a Dwarf/human outpost to have his wounds cared for. Wounds that became infected and led to a series of fevered dreams that nearly killed him and ultimately cost him his lower leg.

In those dreams, he claims to have been haunted by a massive black shape. A naked warrior the size of a Titan, but which seemed to be more shadow than flesh and bone. Black as night it was, save for the glowing red and gold symbols across its ebony body. Orange flames seemed to burn from the monster's eyes and show from the mouth whenever it spoke or laughed. As the fever and the tortured dreams worsened, the Black Titan (or was it something else ... something worse?) would mock the Dwarf and his companions, reporting how its minions, the strange Ogres, fought pitched battle after battle, and defeated the Knights-Fossar at every turn, whether it be a stealth raid with the intent to steal the leg or outright battle. On the night the Dwarf nearly died burning with fever, the horrid blackness showed him the battle in which the knights and their allies perished. Betrayed by one of their own, boasted the Black Titan.

The Black Titan laughed mightily and told the Dwarf that he would soon join them in death. And he might have, if a human Psi-Healer had not extracted a tiny piece of stone still inside his body. A weapon fragment from one of the Ogres' weapons that the Healer claims was hot to the touch and glowed orange until it was removed and thrown out the window and onto the dirt.

As soon as the fragment had been removed, the fever broke and recovery happened quickly.

According to the Dwarf, the fever has burned away much of his memory about his time with the Knights-Fossar, including any idea where the battle with the strange Ogres took place, and the outpost that cared for him while wracked with fever. His caretakers might very well have been nomadic Wayfarers. He does not recall and cannot remember a face. Nor can he recall whether the confrontation took place in the Old Kingdom or elsewhere.

After the fever broke and he was well enough to travel, he vaguely remembers wandering, half out of his mind, across all manner of terrain, but nothing he can identify. Nothing he can recall as a landmark. It was only after he found himself at the edge of the Inland Sea that his mind calmed, and he knew he must find the Knights-Fossar on Lopan to report what he could. Something inside him, a sense of duty to the fallen knights he had befriended, compelled him to make the long journey to Lopan, so that the Knights-Fossar would know what had befallen their comrades. The crippled Dwarf's tale seems credible, and since he is penniless and broken in body and spirit, the knights have asked him to stay with them at the Solarium. The Dwarf is forever grateful and has become one of the monastery's resident caretakers.

Now, all he wants to do is forget the entire affair. There at the monastery and in the Garden, his mind is quiet. Peaceful. Free of the tortured shards of memory that surface as nightmares. Understandably, he does not like to speak of the experience (what little of it he can remember), and loyally serves the Knights-Fossar. To speak of the experience causes pain and fear. The Dwarf, Leopold Sturn, never leaves the grounds of the Fossarian monastery except to visit the Garden of the Gods. He will not even venture into one of the neighboring farms, let alone one of the port cities. He will never agree to join a mission to find the Ogres or the Left Leg for any reason. No threat of death nor any reward is great enough for him to go back again.

The Titan's Arm

The missing right arm of the Titan is supposed to hold the magic sword Compass Point. Scholars amongst the Fossarians have uncovered a few clues, placing the arm somewhere on a northern island. Whether it is one of *the* Northern Islands that make up Bizantium, or another smaller, possibly uncharted isle, is unknown. Some fear it could be an island somewhere within the **Sea of Despair** or off the coast of the Land of the Damned. Knights of Bizantium are just as uncertain of such an island as their southern comrades, though they wonder if the clue points even further north than the Kingdom of Bizantium and into the domain of the Iceborn. They also wonder if earning the guidance or blessing of a god in the Northern Pantheon might be of help.

The Titan's Head

The final piece of the Titan is its missing head and face. The most powerful component, this is most likely to be worshiped as a god or idol of its own. It is possible that whoever smashed and stole the Titan discarded the other pieces and made off with just the head as their primary objective. With eyes looking off into the future beneath the raised visor of a helm, the Titan's head is said to ever stare towards Lopan and the Garden of the Gods.

The masterful Fossarian Wardens have uncovered a few clues leading to the Head of the Lost Titan, but what the clues suggest is dire indeed: *The Yin-Sloth Jungles* or a *Cult in the Land of the South Winds* near the edge of the jungle. Others argue that it rests somewhere in the *Land of the Damned*, which might also explain the source of dark magic capable of removing a statue of a god from the Garden's sheltering embrace. There are a few optimists who believe the head is somewhere in *Ophid's Grasslands*, but Sir John Perrenact, Lord of the Knights-Fossar, believes the Order's greatest battle will come when it is time to recover the Head of the Lost Titan, and may require the entire force of the Knights-Fossar and every brave soul foolish enough to ride with them.

Knight-Fossar O.C.C.

"Blessed is the blade that cuts down evil in any guise, and blessed is the hand that wields it.

We are servants of the gods, and no king may command us. For the Titan! For the Garden! For the Glass Keep! For all that is good!"

The Knights-Fossar and the Fossarian Wardens are not a standing army nor a police force. They have only taken to the field as a whole a few times in their entire history, and for centuries they operated completely in the shadows, with no formal connection to even the Imperial Court of Lopan, which functions as one of their patrons. They do not answer to a king or queen. That makes the Order of the Knights-Fossar one of the few independent combat forces in the world that is not a pirate or mercenary company, and not directly under the supervision and control of a sovereign kingdom. A fact not realized by outsiders, and kept secret by the Order and the Empress of Lopan.

Though they help people in need and right wrongs, they have their own agenda in the service of their god, Fossar the Titan, patron of Knights and Heroes. All members of the Order serve and worship Fossar as their main deity, and as his Champions, they took his name for their order.

As part of their self-appointed duties, the Knights-Fossar have watched over the Garden of the Gods for generations, guarding its sacred grounds. They typically ride through and around the Garden in ones or twos, in search of pilgrims in distress and monsters and evildoers to thwart. The Garden of the Gods is usually a tranquil sanctuary, but sometimes dangerous beings and wicked minions of dark gods slip through the Verdant Gates looking to defile the peace of the Garden. While the knights maintain the Divine Neutrality of the Garden as one of their highest principles, anyone who dares to spill blood inside the Garden's boundaries earns their wrath and brings down vengeance upon themselves at the hands of the Order.

They are also searching the world over for texts, clues and secrets that can reveal more about the Garden's many mysteries, the Glass Keep and their beloved Titan deity. Their crusade is for knowledge, their quest to serve the gods as holy warriors in pursuit of lost history and to restore Fossar to his rightful place in the Garden and in the world.

The Knights-Fossar also patrol the countryside around the Garden and across the island continent. They uphold order in the many smaller ports, fishing villages, and communities across the island. And not just the obvious Elf and Human communities.

The Knights-Fossar stop in to check on, and help out at, the Centaur villages, Gnome communities, and Faerie villages. The Order has, over the centuries, established a special bond with most people on Lopan, and the many non-humans and Faerie Folk, in particular. This is especially true of the Faerie Folk that live in the Garden or count themselves among its protectors. Brigands who think the Lopan back-country is a completely lawless free range, learn otherwise the hard way at the hands of the Knights-Fossar.

Every one of the Knights-Fossar and Wardens is an experienced warrior trained in the ways of the knight and the code of chivalry. All are ready to ride into battle at a moment's notice and give their life for cause and country, god and Garden. The Knights-Fossar recruit both squires and battle-hardened knights and heroes to join them on their crusades, teaching squires, and learning from fellow knights new information on many subjects as well as different approaches to strategies and tactics. They may also invite some to join their Order. As a result, the Order has Knights-Fossar and Fossarian Wardens who hail from many kingdoms and nations, from one side of the Palladium World to the other. All brought together by the desire to help bring back a noble god, protect the Garden, and help the innocent.

The heroes are trained to appear and disappear like the legends they are supposed to be, striking before an enemy can get their bearings and vanishing back into the wood and shadows.

Unlike knights who serve within large militaries, the Knights-Fossar are really only trained to fight singly or in small squads or platoons. They are not soldiers in an army, and members of the Order are taught to be self-sufficient, resourceful, independent, and highly motivated. Quests away from the shores of Lopan can take years to unfold, and knights have to be trusted to carry on without the encouragement or support of their brethren. There is no pay or salary kept for them back home, and even the renown and fame that other knights get from their good deeds may be denied a Knight-Fossar, as they often work in secrecy.

One of those secrets is continuing the search for the missing pieces of the Lost Titan's statue and clues that might lead to them. While not every knight will lead a quest to liberate a missing piece himself, many band together behind those knights and heroes who have had personal visions or unearthed a lead worth investigating. Every member in the Order of the Knights-Fossar works to support others within the Order as well as other noble causes, Champions of the Gods, and anyone who stands to protect the innocent and smite evil. Whether in search of the missing pieces of the Titan's statue, tracking down different relics or lost magic, digging through tomes and ruins searching for clues hidden in the past, or championing some other good cause, all members of the Order of the Knights-Fossar (both Knights and Wardens) are part warrior, scholar, and archaeologist, who seek out buried truths with sword and shield to protect them.

Special Abilities of the Knight-Fossar O.C.C.

1. Champion of the Titan: The Order of the Knights-Fossar, as a group, are warriors who fight in the name of the Titan god, Fossar. They are his Champions and may receive 1-3 Blessings from the Titan or any like-minded deities within the Garden who take a liking to one of the knights, or if their quest will benefit that deity or people he or she cares about.

In addition, ALL Knights-Fossar are recognized by supernatural enemies to serve with conviction a higher power, imposing a Horror Factor of 13 (Greater Demons, Demon Lords, demigods

and gods are impervious). Moreover, any weapon in the hand of a Knight-Fossar, whether magical or not, does its normal damage to supernatural evil such as vampires, demons, Deevils and Entities. The knights are also +1 to save vs possession, disease, and Horror Factor, and are +10% to save vs coma and death.

2. Glass Armor: The Knights-Fossar use a variety of techniques to grant themselves stealth and secrecy, from simple tricks like basic camouflage, to soft-soled boots and wrapped armor to muffle sound, to enchantments that quiet their horses' hooves.

Their most potent magic, however, has been derived from the power of the **Glass Keep**. When completely still and desiring not to be seen, their connection to the Glass Keep allows light to pass through them and their armor, making the Knights-Fossar essentially invisible as long as they don't move. If they attack, cast a spell, walk, swing their arm, use a psionic power, or move from their spot, the enchantment is lost, making them fully visible in an instant. The knight automatically has initiative during the first melee round of combat when he attacks an opponent who did not know he was there, invisible, a moment ago. The magic is imbued within the knight himself, not the armor he wears, so as long as he is clad in metal armor (chain mail, splint, plate, plate and mail, etc.), this power is available to him.

Duration: For as long as he stands, sits or lies still, but requires at least 30 seconds (two melee rounds) without movement for the invisibility to engage. The knight remains invisible while standing still, not intangible, so they are vulnerable to damage from blind attacks and area effect attacks. Likewise, they are visible to people who can see the invisible and may be revealed by smoke, paint, mud, etc.

3. Champion of the Garden: Whenever fighting *inside the Garden of the Gods* to defend the Garden or to protect visitors inside the Garden, all the knight's usual bonuses get an extra +1 and the knight magically heals from damage at the rate of 2D6 per melee round!

Knight Fossar O.C.C. Stats

Alignment: Principled, Scrupulous, or Unprincipled alignment.

Knights-Fossar are champions of good, and while some may become embittered over the years (Anarchist or Aberrant), there are few Anarchist or evil knights among the Order.

Minimum Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 9, P.S. 10, P.P. 12 and P.E. 9 or higher.

O.C.C. Skills: Knights and Paladins within the Order of the Knights-Fossar both get the same skills.

Archaeology (+10%)

Camouflage (+10%)

Dance (+10%)

Heraldry (+20%)

History (+20%)

Horsemanship: Knight

Land Navigation (+15% due to their travels as knights-errant)

Language: Native Tongue at 98% plus two of choice (+15% each).

Literacy: Elven (+20%)

Locate Secret Compartments/Doors (+10%)

Lore: Religion (+15%)

Military Etiquette (+15%)

Mathematics: Basic (+15%)

W.P. Lance

W.P. Shield

W.P.: Two of choice.

Hand to Hand: Expert, which can be changed to Hand to Hand: Martial Arts or Assassin (if evil) for the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select two other skills from the Communication skill category and five other skills at level one, plus select one additional skill at levels three, six, nine and twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+10%).

Domestic: None.

Espionage: Any (+10%).

Horsemanship: Exotic only (+5%).

Medical: First Aid only.

Military: Any (+10%).

Physical: Any; except Acrobatics and Gymnastics.

Rogue: None.

Science: Any (+5%).

Scholar/Technical: Any (+10%).

Weapon Proficiencies: Any.

Wilderness: Wilderness Survival and Track & Trap animals only.

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select four Secondary Skills from the previous list at level one, and one additional skill at levels five, ten and fifteen. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in the parenthesis. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level. Also, skills are limited (any, only, none) as previously indicated in the list.

Experience Table: As per the Knight and Noble O.C.C. or Paladin, if the Fossarian is a Paladin.

Starting Equipment: Two sets of clothing, boots, a pair of high-quality leather gloves, belt, bedroll, backpack, two large sacks, two small sacks, a water skin, and a tinder box.

A riding horse of good to excellent quality, probably raised by the knight. The horse has 30+2D6 S.D.C. and 6D6 Hit Points, running speed 33, value 1D4x1000 gold!

Special Magic Items: 1D4+3 Magic Bandages, 1D6+20 feet(6.4 to 7.9 m) of Cherubot Rope, Gem of Direction, Quill of Endless Ink, and a bottle of Mystic Ink (invisible ink) all kept in a large Enchanted Bag.

Additional resources depending on the mission: Knights-Fossar are also able to requisition horses, chain mail, basic weapons and other goods from the supplies the Order keeps at the Solarium. This includes select magic items such as Cherubot Rope, Fire Wick, Cloak of Guises or Invisibility, Cloak of Shadows, Chasers, Gem of Direction, Eye of the Cat, Magic Restraints, enchanted armor and magic weapons, in addition to the Knight's own, personal weapons, some passed down through generations. Special items may be awarded only for the accomplishment of the special mission or quest and are required to be returned to the Order's armory at the end of the mission. Knights and Wardens are especially careful to protect and return such items, even more than their own.

G.M.s, use your discretion and consider the character, his or her level of experience, the circumstances, and importance of the mission, before allowing anything too powerful or elaborate. Experience and reputation within the Order go a long way. The Order of the Knights-Fossar is well-equipped and its knights are the Champions and defenders of the Order, the

Garden and the gods, and often sent out to deal with threats and enemies, as well as to explore and research some of the most dangerous clues concerning the pieces of the Titan statue. It is they who are sent out to "recover" the pieces and other rare, ancient tomes and artifacts that have fallen into the hands of evil and powerful villains. They are also placed in charge of security, quests, scouting missions, gathering information, construction and other undertakings that might require skilled warriors.

On Lopan, at least, the Order of the Knights-Fossar is supplied and funded by the crown and various pious benefactors the world over, and can count on support from the Imperial Court, local nobles, local authorities, and of course, members of their own Order. However, visiting heroes, Champions of the Gods, and adventurers may be honored to help the knights and fight at their side, especially in times of crisis. Though separate and independent from Lopan's own military, it may supply the Knights-Fossar with a ship, siege equipment and magic support. G.M.s, use your discretion, but the Knights-Fossar are an elite fighting force and long-standing heroes of renown, and champions of justice. They are well provisioned, especially when setting off in search of the Lost Titan or on missions to far-flung kingdoms to spread word of the Garden or as emissaries of one of the gods or the Kingdom of Lopan, itself. Though they do not serve Lopan per se, the Knights support the ruling body and will go on missions for the Crown and fight to defend their homeland.

Armor: Starts with a suit of chain mail (A.R. 14, S.D.C. 44) or scale mail (A.R. 15, 75 S.D.C.).

Weapons: Starts with a small shield, a dagger, a lance (2D6 damage), and one weapon for each W.P., plus one additional weapon of choice (a minor magic weapon with one or two abilities such as a special Color, Glow, Eternally Sharp, one Extra Die of Damage, or Turns Holder Fire Resistant). All are basic S.D.C. weapons of good to very good quality.

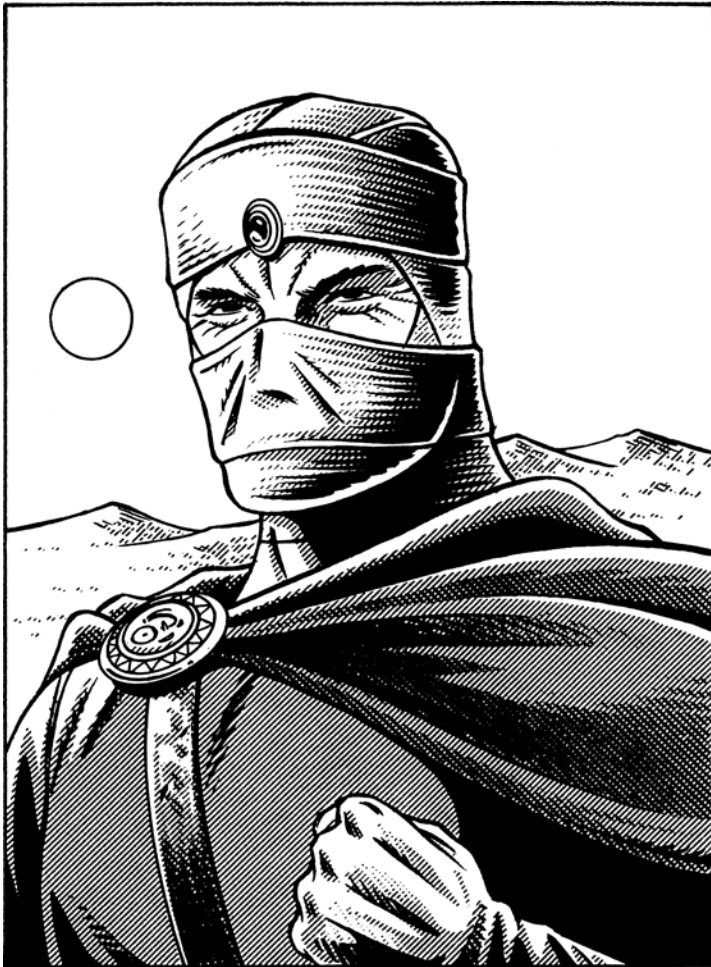
Any one of the aforementioned weapons can be of exceptional quality (Kobold or Dwarven), with a bonus of +1 to strike and parry or +2 to damage. Additional weapons, Holy Weapons, and magic weapons/items are usually acquired later.

Money: The character starts with 1D6x100 in gold to start, plus the Order provides free room and board, conventional and magical medical care/healing, and takes care of all of the Knights' and Wardens' basic necessities. In short, they live in comfort.

Booty acquired on quests and missions goes to the Order to fund its continuing operations and re-supplies, and the Knights are usually reimbursed for all reasonable (and confirmed) expenses. The knights and heroes involved get a small percentage for their role in the acquisition of money and supplies, but seldom more than 10% divided between them and those who may have been hired or volunteered to help. The Knights-Fossar on special missions may also be entrusted with large sums of money from the coffers of the Order (usually in gemstones as they are easier to transport than heavy gold or silver). Such money is used to purchase additional supplies, magic, information, pay bribes, hire adventurers, to purchase ancient tomes and relics, etc., and so on.

Like other knights, the Knights-Fossar are usually part of a family of landowners with holdings somewhere in the world, often Lopan or the Eastern Territory. If they are operating

in an area where they have family (parents, siblings, uncles, aunts, or other relatives), they may be able to call upon them for lodgings, food, water and basics like fresh horses, weapons, medical treatment, a place to hide and lay low, current rumors, and basic supplies. Moreover, the Knights-Fossar are recognized by most (not all) kingdoms and settlements throughout the Eastern Territory, so they can expect cooperation from many people there. G.M.s, use your discretion and keep in mind the time and difficulty required for travel in the Palladium World. A “quick” trip back home is usually a matter of weeks or months, a journey that is generally too long to be attempted in the middle of a campaign.



Fossarian Warden O.C.C.

“Every mystery has its source, every myth its grain of truth. If we must question the gods themselves in order to make reason of the world, then the Garden is the place to start.”

The Fossarian Wardens are the scholars and mystics who study the Garden of the Gods and try to make some sense of its supernatural properties. These men and women are explorers and skilled thinkers who have made their way to the Garden from a thousand different origins, some drawn to Lopan by divine providence, some by their own curiosity, and some actively recruited by the Knights-Fossar.

Often found copying and combing through texts at the Solarium, Wardens are tasked with putting together some kind of time

line for the Garden of the Gods, and have assembled a complex overall picture of the divine infrastructure that supports the world of mortals. They are sometimes priests and monks from the various religions of the world, those who have followed the teachings of their spiritual leaders to a dead end, and now seek to broaden their horizons by learning from the great divine graveyard that is the Garden.

Most are scholars and historians first, Protectors of the Order second, and theologians last. They try to focus on facts and truth, and view all faiths with equal weight as they seek to catalog and understand all the gods just like any other aspect of the world.

Whatever their personal motivation, Fossarian Wardens are intimately familiar with the Garden of the Gods, the gods themselves, and the religions of people. They meet on a regular basis to compare notes, share knowledge and new theories, and to inform their brethren of new discoveries, ideas, and developments. Wardens are at the forefront of unearthing new clues regarding the whereabouts of the Titan God’s missing pieces of statue, and may lead missions and quests with adventurers of all kinds in attempts to follow-up leads, find new leads, and to recover the last pieces of the Lost Titan. They are based out of the Solarium on Lopan, the home of the Order, located at the center of the known world. They work hand in hand, alongside the Knights-Fossar, their comrades and brethren in the Order of the Knights-Fossar. Wardens and the knights are equals and fellow truth-seekers.

Wardens are generally the overseers of all operations, and work to keep the Order fully manned, supplied, and focused on its various responsibilities, goals, and missions. All while staying small and unobtrusive enough to avoid being targeted by a major world power or religion. Their loyalty to the gods and the Garden, the Titan God in particular, supercedes any obligation to family, faith and kingdom, and every Knight-Fossar and Warden is willing to sacrifice his or her life to protect the Order, the Garden, and the statue of the Titan.

Special Abilities of the Warden O.C.C.

1. Lore – The Garden and the Gods: Base Skill: 25% +5% per level of experience, +20% when it comes to lore about the Garden and/or the known gods.

The Wardens are the scholars and historians of their Order and have mapped and scouted out the Garden of the Gods as much as is possible. They are familiar with all the gods, are the ones who usually ascertain the identity of fading and forgotten gods, and are able to navigate the enchanted, ever-shifting terrain of the Garden with absolute reliability. They know the many myths and legends of the Garden and all known gods, and work on discovering the identities and histories of the lost gods as they are excavated and cut loose of the Primeva.

Arguably, the Fossarian Wardens are the greatest authorities on the gods (not just the history of Lopan and the Garden) in the known world. In large part, because they try to stay impartial and take a scientific and analytical approach that does NOT involve trying to prove or support any particular church, religious dogma or political position. They want the truth, with all its warts and ugly spots. Thus, Wardens try to analyze religion from the perspective of an outsider and without bias. They are knowledgeable about the relationships between deities more than the individual tenets of faith, and they study many gods without necessarily worshipping them. This skill can be used to identify a newly encountered god’s place in the pantheons of the world, if any, as

well as their past history with the other gods and the various races of the world.

To this end, they have secretly acquired an exact *copy* of the most complete and ancient volume of *The Tristine Chronicles* known to exist. The original is kept under lock and key at the Library of Bletherad and the Fossar's precise, handmade recreation of this copy took 50 years to complete by expert archivists and artisans at the Library. It should be noted that the Fossarian Wardens and the keepers of the fabled Library often quietly and secretly share and exchange knowledge, secrets and ancient artifacts with each other. In fact, there are 2-4 Wardens living on site at the Library of Bletherad at any given time. Some spending years sifting through ancient tomes, scrolls, tapestries and relics searching for clues and information they may have missed in the past, or misinterpreted, or only recently unearthed. Likewise, there are usually one or two representatives from the Library staying with the Wardens at the Solarium.

Whenever one of the Knights-Fossars or Wardens recover an ancient tome or artifact they do not need, or which they feel would better serve the public at the Library, they sell or trade it (for other relics, information or help) to the Library of Bletherad.

2. Protectors of the Order (Counterespionage): Base Skill (for Wardens only): 30% +5% per level of experience.

The Wardens are also the Protectors of the Order and all its knowledge. As such, they are vigilant of threats to their Order, their work/research, the often forgotten and forbidden knowledge they collect and keep in books and journals, their secret treasure trove of books and artifacts (perhaps second only to the Library of Bletherad), the Garden of the Gods, and Lopan.

Information and suspicions about potential threats and danger are passed on to the Knights-Fossar who quietly investigate and, whenever possible, nip nefarious schemes and plots in the bud, their perpetrators disappearing or meeting with a grim fate, before they become a serious problem.

The Garden of the Gods, itself, has many enemies. Primarily envious and worried church and religious leaders who fear Lopan and/or the Knights-Fossar will, one day, use the Garden of the Gods to undermine and usurp their current positions of power and authority. As a consequence, these outside powers believe the Garden, Knights-Fossar and the leaders of Lopan must be spied upon and watched like a hawk. From time to time, spying evolves into undermining, stealing or destroying evidence and relics that might contradict their religious teachings and dogma, or into simple theft because they want some of the valuable or magical artifacts, and similar skullduggery. It is not uncommon for a Knight-Fossar, Warden, or hired adventurers away from Lopan and known to be working for the Order or engaged in a vision quest from the Garden of the Gods to be detained, even kidnaped, and interrogated by people in power, be it a king, queen, noble lord, church leader, cultist, zealous faithful, or the henchmen of a rival god. Don't forget the Order of the Knights-Fossar collect secrets and ancient artifacts and magic, all things that worry people in power, and which are also valuable, attracting robbers and evildoers happy to steal whatever they have found, and fight or kill to get it.

It is the job of the Fossarian Wardens to learn of such plots and help the Knights shut them down. This makes the Fossarian Wardens a sort of *secret police* with their own network of friends, fans, supporters, assets, snitches and spies. In our modern real world, this would be considered *counterespionage*.

The skill also involves recognizing undercover agents and spies, thieves and assassins, and enemies of the Garden, the Order, the Gods and the Garden. This may involve their own spying, but many keep their ear to the ground, analyzing information, recognizing a potential threat and alerting the Knights-Fossar to investigate and quell the problem. If diplomacy and further intelligence gathering is required, one or more Fossarian Wardens may be part of the investigatory team.

Note: Sometimes when a Knight-Fossar is not available or a threat seems minimal, or the investigation is better served to bring in outsiders as to not implicate the Order of the Knights-Fossar, the Wardens or a Knight may hire or manipulate a group of adventurers or mercenaries (i.e. the player group) to do the job. This may be under the false pretense of protecting someone of importance from a stalker, guarding somebody or someplace from assassins or thieves, transporting something of value, stealing something for them, protecting the Garden, a vision quest from a god, and so on. Such covert operations are probably contracted through a go-between, so that the Order is never implicated. The go-between/front-man may not know he or she is doing a service for the Order of the Knights-Fossar either!

3. Champion of the Garden. Whenever a Fossarian is fighting *inside the Garden of the Gods* to defend the Garden or to protect visitors inside the Garden, all their usual bonuses get an extra +1 and the Warden magically heals from damage at the rate of 2D6 per melee round!

Fossarian Warden O.C.C.

Type One: Scholar and Protector of the Order

Alignment: Any good alignment or Unprincipled. The Fossarians are pious men and women who seek to serve the gods and others before themselves, even if some are more upstanding than others.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 11 or higher, P.S. 10; a high M.A. and M.E. are helpful but not necessary.

O.C.C. Skills:

Anthropology (+15%)

Archaeology (+15%)

Basic Math (+20%)

History (+20%)

Intelligence (+20%)

Languages: Native Tongue at 98% plus two of choice (+20% each).

Literacy in Elven (+20%).

Lore: One of choice (+15%).

Prowl or Escape Artist (+10%), pick one.

Streetwise or Cryptography (+15%), pick one.

Surveillance (+20%)

W.P.: One of choice.

Hand to Hand: Basic can be selected for the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill, Expert for the cost of two, or Martial Arts for the cost of three O.C.C. Related Skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select five other skills at level one, plus select one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9, and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+10%).

Domestic: Any.

Espionage: Forgery (+10% to recognize forgeries), only.

Horsemanship: General or Exotic only.

Medical: Any.
Military: Heraldry only (+10%).
Physical: Any, except Acrobatics, Gymnastics and Wrestling.
Rogue: Any.
Science: Any (+10%).
Scholar/Technical: Any (+10%).
Weapon Proficiencies: Any.
Wilderness: Land Navigation only.

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select two Secondary Skills from the previous list at level one, and one additional skill at levels three, six and nine. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in the parentheses. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level. Also, skills are limited (any, only, none) as previously indicated in the list.

Experience Table: As per Knight and Noble O.C.C.

Starting Equipment: One weapon for each W.P., two sets of clothing, a pair of boots, hat, belt, bedroll, backpack or satchel, one large sack, one medium sack, 1D4 small sacks, a waterskin, food rations for 1D4 weeks, 1D4 sticks of charcoal, 2D4 sticks of graphite (for writing and drawing), two crow quill pens, a bottle of ink, 4D4 sheets of parchment paper, a 100 page note/sketchbook, small mirror, and a tinder box.

Special Magic Items: Book of Secrets, Quill of Endless Ink, and a bottle of Mystic Ink (invisible ink), all kept in a medium-sized Enchanted Bag.

Wardens are also able to requisition horses, chain mail, basic weapons and other goods from the supplies the Order keeps at the Solarium. This includes select magic items such as Cherubot Rope, Fire Wick, Cloak of Guises or Invisibility, Cloak of Shadows, Chasers, Gem of Direction, Eye of the Cat, and Magic Restraints. G.M.s, use your discretion and consider the character's level of experience, reputation, and circumstances before allowing too much or anything too powerful. However, the Order of the Fossarians is well-equipped and Wardens often deal with matters of counterespionage, scouting missions, gathering information, research, and the acquisition of clues and information, as well as undertakings to ferret out spies and enemies, all of which might require special equipment and resources.

Armor: Starts with studded leather (A.R. 13, S.D.C. 38) and generally like light or medium armor. High ranking and experienced Psi-Mystic Wardens can get a magical Scholar's Leather of Iron which looks like soft leather armor but has 55 S.D.C. and an A.R. of 15.

Weapons: Starts with a dagger and one other weapon as per each W.P. All are basic S.D.C. weapons of good quality. Magic weapons and other equipment must be acquired later.

Money: The character starts with 200 in gold, but may be able to draw more from the coffers of the Order if there is a specific purpose in mind, like paying a bribe, hiring a ship, or offering a gift in return for passage through hostile territory.

Fossarian Warden O.C.C.

Type Two: Psi-Mystic Warden

The Fossarian Wardens also recruit and count among their numbers **Psi-Mystic Wardens**. This character has the same background and orientation as the Fossarian Warden O.C.C., but

possesses magic and psychic powers. Abilities they use in their research and as Protectors of the Order.

This character has ALL the magic and psionics of the Psi-Mystic O.C.C. but a different range of skills, weapons and equipment, as follows, below. It should be noted that most orient their magic spells and psychic abilities to further the goals of the Order of the Knights-Fossar and best serve them in their position of Warden.

Alignment: Any good alignment or Unprincipled. The Fossarians are pious men and women who seek to serve the gods and others before themselves, even if some are more upstanding than others.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 11 or higher; a high M.A. and M.E. are helpful but not necessary.

O.C.C. Skills:

Anthropology (+15%)

Archaeology (+15%)

Basic Math (+20%)

History (+15%)

Intelligence (+10%)

Languages: Native Tongue at 98% plus two of choice (+10% each).

Literacy in Elven (+15%).

Lore: One of choice (+15%).

Surveillance (+15%)

W.P.: One of choice.

Hand to Hand: Basic can be selected for the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill, Expert for the cost of two, or Martial Arts for the cost of three O.C.C. Related Skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select one Related Skill at levels 1, 3, 6, 9, and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+5%).

Domestic: Any.

Espionage: None.

Horsemanship: General or Exotic only.

Medical: First Aid only.

Military: Heraldry only.

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics, Gymnastics and Wrestling.

Rogue: Any.

Science: Any (+5%).

Scholar/Technical: Any (+10% on Lore, Language and Literacy only).

Weapon Proficiencies: Any.

Wilderness: None.

Secondary Skills: The character also gets one Secondary Skill from the previous list at levels 2, 5, 9 and 13. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in the parentheses. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level. Also, skills are limited (any, only, none) as previously indicated in the list.

Experience Table: As per the Psi-Mystic O.C.C.

Starting Equipment: Two sets of clothing, a pair of boots, hat, belt, bedroll, backpack or satchel, one large sack, one medium sack, 1D4 small sacks, a waterskin, food rations for 1D4 weeks, 1D4 sticks of charcoal, 2D4 sticks of graphite (for writing and drawing), two crow quill pens, a bottle of ink, 4D4 sheets of parchment paper, a 100 page note/sketchbook, small mirror, and a tinder box.

Special Magic Items: 1D4+2 Magic Bandages, Quill of Endless Ink, and a bottle of Mystic Ink (invisible ink), all kept in a medium-sized Enchanted Bag.

Wardens are also able to requisition horses, chain mail, basic weapons and other goods from the supplies the Order keeps at the Solarium. This includes select magic items such as Cherubot Rope, Fire Wick, Cloak of Guises or Invisibility, Cloak of Shadows, Chasers, Gem of Direction, Eye of the Cat, and Magic Restraints. G.M.s, use your discretion and consider the character's level of experience, reputation, and circumstances before allowing too much or anything too powerful. However, the Order of the Fossarians is well-equipped and Wardens often deal with matters of counterespionage, scouting missions, gathering information, research, and the acquisition of clues and information, as well as undertakings to ferret out spies and enemies, all of which who might require special equipment and resources.

Armor: Studded leather (A.R. 13, S.D.C. 38). Most prefer light armor. High ranking and experienced Psi-Mystic Wardens can get magical Scholar's Leather of Iron which looks like soft leather armor but has 55 S.D.C. and an A.R. of 15, or some other enchanted armor.

Weapons: Starts with two silver-plated daggers (1D6 damage), and one weapon for each W.P. All are basic S.D.C. weapons of good quality. Magic weapons and other equipment must be acquired later.

Money: The character starts with 200 in gold, but may be able to draw more from the coffers of the Order if there is a specific purpose in mind, like paying a bribe, hiring a ship or offering a gift in return for passage through hostile territory.

Notable Members of the Knights-Fossar

Sir John Perrenact

The current headmaster and leader of the Ancient Order of the Knights-Fossar, lifelong crusader, pilgrim and champion of the realm, is Sir John Perrenact. The Lord of the Solarium and the most revered and honored knight among them. Born into one of Lopan's eldest families, many of his Elven ancestors have counted themselves amongst the Fossarians. Sir Perrenact conducts his duties out of respect for them, and the traditions they stand for, as well as reverence for the gods, and his Great, Great, Great, Grand Uncle, *Sir Langer Accenhal*, founder of the Order.

Born in one of Lopan's wealthy, coastal cities, young John Perrenact grew up enjoying a life of privilege and education. Training in the arts of the horse and knight was expected of him, and his family was part of Lopan nobility. As a squire, he undertook a long mission into Lopan's countryside with a pair of fellow aspiring knights, the three youngsters setting out to prove themselves and test their mettle against the island's bandits and monsters known to gather in the northern wild lands.

Riding along the coast, they spotted a Wolfen longboat putting a raiding party ashore. Heavily outnumbered, the squires let the raiding party move inland before they attacked the longboat, slew the pair of guards left behind, and set the craft ablaze. The raiders must have seen the rising smoke, however, for as the would-be knights set off in pursuit, they found themselves ambushed by a

dozen experienced Wolfen warriors. Both of Perrenact's fellow squires perished in the attack, and though they cut down two of their foes, the future Knight-Fossar stood face-to-face with ten snarling Wolfen, hopelessly outmatched. As he was about to meet his fate, he said a quiet prayer to any god who might be listening, and the sound of hooves approached. With no more warning, a force of six knights bearing a strange banner charged the Wolfen, lancing any who tried to fight and riding down the survivors. The knights returned to find young John Perrenact saying prayers over the bodies of his companions, and were impressed with the squire's bravery and piousness.

The knights took the lad back to the Solarium, and John Perrenact was surprised to find both an uncle and a distant cousin amongst the knightly order. They explained to him the mission of the Knights-Fossar, and the realities of the Garden of the Gods, as opposed to the myths spoken of by children and superstitious peasants, and even nobility. His uncle explained that the lad's mother and father had different, safer, plans for his future, which is why they never told him about the Knights-Fossar or his family connection to them. For Sir Perrenact, however, it seemed as if the hand of destiny – or perhaps it was the Titan Fossar – had guided him to the Order. The lad held no resentment toward his parents, but decided to ride with the Knights-Fossar on a quest in the Old Kingdom where he could learn more about his Elven heritage. That was all it took for him to realize his place belonged with the Order of the Knights-Fossar. He had actually felt that way the moment he set foot into the Solarium, and received his own knighthood from the commander of the Order. In deference to his parents, the young knight returned to the life of a noble on Lopan for another several decades, supporting the Order and quietly promoting their interests at the Imperial court. After the loss of a dozen Knights-Fossar and the Order's commander, who led a campaign on a disastrous mission in search of one of the Lost Titan's missing statue pieces, Sir Perrenact took leave from his lordly position and returned to the Solarium to help the Order rebuild. He rediscovered his passion for being a crusading knight and protecting the innocent, and secretly serving as a humble steward to the gods, and rose to a position of leadership. Seven years later, when the Master of the Fossarians stepped down, the Order almost unanimously nominated Sir John Perrenact as their new commander, and for nearly a century he has guided the Order of the Knights-Fossar with a firm hand and a level head.

Bold yet level headed, experienced, and physically strong, Sir Perrenact is a true champion who can hold off a dozen foes at once and is a terrifying opponent for any evildoer who tries to escape justice or stop the Order from fulfilling its quest for the Titan God. He is skilled with a dozen different weapons and fluent in just as many languages, capable of conducting a diplomatic mission or a cavalry charge with equal grace and tact. His days of personally following the Compass Point in search of the Lost Titan are over, however, and the rare occasions that Sir Perrenact takes to the field are always to protect the Order, the innocent, or the kingdom of Lopan.

Sir John Perrenact, Quick Stats

Alignment: Principled.

Attributes: I.Q. 19, M.E. 15, M.A. 17, P.S. 22, P.P. 17, P.E. 14, P.B. 21, Spd 18.

Age: 356

Race: Elf.

Experience: 14th level Paladin.

Hit Points: 71

S.D.C.: 25

P.P.E.: 11

Magic Items of Note: First and foremost, Compass Point! The mystical sword said to have actually belonged to the Titan Fossar, Compass Point is entrusted to Sir John Perrenact. Part of his duty as Master of the Order of the Knights-Fossar is to seek out new champions to bear the sacred blade, and also to judge their worth as warriors and examples of knightly virtue.

The Compass Point, a Greater Holy Weapon and a Weapon of a God:

Indestructible: Compass Point cannot be destroyed by any mortal means. Any attempt to melt, dissolve or break the sword apart will force it to disappear and re-manifest back at the Glass Keep.

Recall: When the champion(s) in possession of Compass Point fall in battle, the sword will vanish into thin air with a flash of light, only to reappear 1D4 days later within the Glass Keep of the Fossarians.

Bonus: +1 to strike, +1 to disarm, and +5% to all prayers to Fossar.

Magic Spells: It can cast *Healing Touch* (3D6 Hit Points/S.D.C. six times per 24 hours, double to Titans), *Remove Curse* (70% chance, once per curse), *Sense Evil* (changes color in the presence of evil, turning black, 50 foot/15.2 m radius), and once per generation (every 20 years) Resurrection with a rate of success of 70% (+10% on a Knight-Fossar or Fossarian Warden, or when used on anyone in the Garden of the Gods), but can only be tried one time on the deceased. It either works or not. Resurrection cannot be attempted again until at least another 20 years has passed.

Magic to Locate the Missing Pieces (Special): Guide to the missing pieces of the Titan's statue from the Garden of the Gods. The compass embedded in the handle of Compass Point has a needle within a gemstone that points toward the next piece of the Lost Titan, no matter how far away it may be. No magic or magnetic field can disturb the orientation of the compass, and after a piece is found and returned to the Glass Keep, Compass Point automatically seeks out the next piece of the Titan's statue.

Damage: 5D6+6 against most opponents, 1D6x10+30 against supernatural evil, demons, etc., and 4D6x100 damage against Old Ones and their empowered lieutenants. And though nobody knows it, Compass Point makes its wielder impervious to the magic and mind control of all *Fangs of the Old Ones* and is one of the few things that can be used to destroy a Fang! **WARNING & DANGEROUS SECRETS:** When a Fang is destroyed by Compass Point, it releases the tiny fragment of the Old One contained in that weapon. When that happens, there is a 25% chance the essence infuses itself into another magic weapon, seeking out a Holy Weapon first, so that it may corrupt it and turn it into an instrument of evil, a less magic weapon next, or weapon of Dwarven or Jotan quality (turning into a weapon of evil with 1,000 S.D.C. and all the powers of the Fang *reduced by half*.) If that does not happen, the essence finds its way back to the Old One who created it and merges back with it. The danger with that is there is a 1% chance it awakens that *slumbering Old One!* Pray that never happens. These secrets are known only to the Titan Fossar,

but he is unable to share them (too weak) until his statue is restored inside the Garden. Upon that day, the Compass Point becomes part of the statue, held in the Titan's right hand. It is then an artifact that Fossar may elect, from time to time, to give to a Knight-Fossar or other hero for special quests. **Note:** Should the Order fail, and the statue not be made complete by the time all the other Forgotten Gods are revealed from the Primeva, Compass Point turns to ordinary stone, all its magic disappears, and the Titan and the other deities in his pantheon are forgotten by all but the Order of the Knights-Fossar. All O.C.C. bonuses and magic provided to the Order by the Titan also vanish.

High Wizard Miasar Vaas

The most powerful spell caster among the friends and allies of the Order is Miasar Vaas, a Wizard born in the city of *Caer Nettebe* in the Western Empire. In his studies of the mystic arts, he began to dig up information on lost gods and religions, and found evidence of the ancient patron god of the ancestors of House Inindri, rulers of the Kighfalton Plains. Once a powerful pastoral culture of mounted warriors, they were absorbed into the early Western Empire, their religion displaced and buried beneath thousands of years of history. Through various magical means, Vaas was able to detect an echo of the forgotten god he sought, coming from the island of Lopan.

The young mage closed up his laboratory in Caer Nettebe and hired a ship for Lopan. While the Garden was still mostly unknown in those days, Vaas' knack for trusting his feelings and finding the unusual served him well. It wasn't long before he found himself at the Garden of the Gods.

Vaas staggered through the Verdant Gates like a man fighting his way through a blizzard, the power of the gods practically deafening to his ears. Voices pulled him in, deep into the Briar of the Fallen, to an overgrown statue hidden amongst twisting roots. Instantly Vaas knew he had found the ancient god he sought, Loecin, Horseman of the Plains, lost to time. The mage carefully cleared away the vines and roots, brushed the statue clean, and spent the next three days in solemn meditation, absorbing wisdom and communing directly with a different era. When Vaas was done, he returned to reality to discover he was lost, starving and disoriented. Weakened, he was on the verge of collapse when a mounted knight strode out into a clearing like a vision or hallucination.

When Vaas awoke, he was in a strange tower made of glass. The knight who had rescued him was sitting there, helmet in hand. She identified herself as Lady Kelsin Murroe, a minor noble from the Eastern Territory who had left her lands behind years before, after a pilgrimage to Lopan. She admired the mage's bravery and commitment, and was humbled by the nature of his quest. Lady Murroe's Western Empire ancestors had once ridden across the Kighfalton Plains, and Loecin had long ago been a revered war-god to her ancestors. The god had been a mystery to her until she joined the Knights-Fossar, their knowledge of the gods and history being vast. The Knight explained that if Loecin had reached out to Vaas' from hundreds of miles away, that his fate must be tied to him or Lopan in some way. After all, he had been chosen and called here by a god few knew or remembered. In the months ahead, Vaas studied the

Knights-Fossar and watched as the Glass Keep disappeared and re-materialized. He knew that he had stumbled across unique spellcraft, here in the Lopan countryside, and that it had to mean something for him. A fast friendship developed between Vaas and Lady Murroe and others in the Order.

Miasar Vaas never returned to the Western Empire. He has made the Solarium his home for decades now, married Lady Murroe, and was sworn in as a Fossarian Warden by Sir John Perrenact, nearly 25 years ago. The mage has gone on many quests for the Order and uses his significant magical acumen to invoke ancient powers, communicate with the ethereal spirits of the Garden and assist the Knights-Fossar in battle.

The strange properties of the Garden of the Gods are difficult for laymen to navigate or even understand. And they confounded the young Vaas for many years, as well. It was not until he realized that the power and wonder of the Garden wasn't magical per se, but the divine. A product of the gods' will and essence rather than magic energy as understood and used by mortals. The High Wizard uses his extensive experience and knowledge to educate new, young Fossarian Wardens and allied spell casters who come into the service of the Order, always careful not to share too many secrets, too soon.

Miasar Vaas, Quick Stats

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 21, M.E. 19, M.A. 17, P.S. 11, P.P. 10, P.E. 9, P.B. 12, Spd 10.

Age: 53

Experience: 10th level Wizard.

Hit Points: 65

S.D.C.: 6

P.P.E.: 214

Skills of Note: Horsemanship: Knight, Language and Literacy: Western (native), Eastern and Elven, all at 98%, Lore: Magic 98%, Lore Religion 90%, Math: Basic 98%, in addition to the abilities of the Wizard and the Special O.C.C. Abilities of the Fossarian Warden.

Spells of Note: Armor of Ithan (10), Astral Projection (10), Blinding Flash (1), Breathe Without Air (5), Calling (8), Call Lightning (15), Carpet of Adhesion (10), Charm (12), Climb (3), Cloud of Slumber (4), Commune with Spirits (25), Concealment (6), Create Magic Scroll (100+), Decipher Magic (4), Detect Concealment (6), Dimensional Pocket (30 or 140), Energy Bolt (5), Escape (8), Eyes of Thoth (8), Extinguish Fire (4), Heal Wounds (10), Heal Self (20), Faerie Speak (5), Familiar Link (55), Globe of Daylight (2), Heal Self (20), Impervious to Fire (6), Invisibility: Simple (6), Invisibility: Superior (20), Levitation (5), Locate (30), Magic Pigeon (20), Memory Bank (12), Mute (50), Mystic Alarm (5), Mystic Portal (60), Negate Magic (30), Phantom Horse (60), Protection Circle (Simple) (45), Remove Curse (140), Seal (7), See the Invisible (4), Sense Evil (2), Sense Magic (4), Sleep (10), Speed of the Snail (50), Swim as a Fish (6), Tongues (12), Water to Wine (40), and Words of Truth (15).

Magic Items of Note: Medallion with the ability to Teleport three times daily, Cloak of Guises, and a medium-size Enchanted Bag (a pouch) that contains a Fire Wick, Gem of Direction, Book of Secrets, Quill of Endless Ink, a bottle of Mystic Ink (invisible ink), 3 Magic Bandages, and 20 feet (6.1 m) of Cherubot Rope.

Additional resources depending on the mission: As a high ranking member of the Order, Vaas is also able to requisition horses, chain mail armor, basic weapons, and other goods from the supplies the Order keeps at the Solarium. This includes select magic items, Magic Restraints, enchanted armor and magic weapons, in addition to those above.

Note: His wife Lady Murroe-Vaas is an 11th level Knight-Fossar, age 55, Scrupulous and a good influence on her husband.

Clerah Odhaln

Just as Miasar Vaas serves as the chief wizard to the Order, Clerah Odhaln is a psychic who uses her abilities to further the Order's goals and invade the minds of its enemies. While she may be young compared to Vaas, Odhaln is a psychic powerhouse and a force to be reckoned with.

Hailing from the far north of Bizantium, Clerah Odhaln once worked as an acolyte of Od, father of the gods in the Northern Pantheon. However, she began to obsess over the teachings of Algor, the lost Sea God of the North, long ago separated from the other gods of the Northern pantheon. Searching through the church's texts, she found references not just to Algor, but to other gods and goddesses gone long unheard of. When Odhaln tried to bring her revelation to the attention of the priesthood, she was rebuffed and told focus on the Northern Pantheon, the greatest of the gods. When she made too much noise and tried to take her findings directly to the nobility and then the people of Bizantium, she was banished from the islands and excommunicated from the church of the Northern Pantheon.

Living on the mainland for the first time in her life, Odhaln found the Shadow Colonies to be just an extension of her troubles in Bizantium. No one was interested in her "new" beliefs and questions about the gods, as long as they flew in the face of the traditional church teachings. Soon Odhaln was on a ship heading south, in search of a refuge that worshiped Algor and was willing to discuss the rest of the gods no longer part of the Northern Pantheon.

Odhaln never found that refuge. In heavy fog in the Great Inland Sea, the captain of the blinded ship was relying on Clerah's psychic intuition to navigate when the ship smashed into a rock and foundered, drowning everyone else onboard. Odhaln drifted through the foggy netherworld, treading water, carried by the current, unsure just how long she floated before the dark shape of land emerged from the fog ahead.

The sandy shore on which she had washed up was Lopan, and the pair of crab fishermen who picked her up off the beach took Odhaln to the nearest port town. There she learned of the Garden of the Gods without even needing to be told, gleaned the information right out of the minds of people who were uncertain whether or not they should betray the secret. Once she saw the Garden for herself and felt the presence of the divine, Odhaln was able to use her mind powers to learn about the Knights-Fossar, said to know more about the Garden and the deities than anyone.

Clerah realized that it was fate that had driven her ship into the rocks, perhaps the god Algor's grisly way of drawing her to the Garden and/or the Knights-Fossar. For a time, she decided

to make exploring the Garden her primary occupation, and she might have become a Caretaker, had it not been for a chance meeting with one of the Fossarian Wardens. One night, she caught a stranger performing a ritual in front of one of the statues in a dark corner of the Garden. Odhaln could sense the evil emanating from both the statue and the mysterious visitor, and was going to try to interrupt the ritual when an armored figure rode up with a lantern in hand and challenged the stranger. The two of them did battle, warrior against witch, until it seemed that the evil spell caster would prevail, fighting below the smiling idol of the evil god the witch served. Clerah chose this moment to emerge from the shadows and silence both witch and weakened god with her overwhelming mental powers. With the field of battle leveled, the Fossarian Warden was finally able to dispatch his foe.

He introduced himself as a fellow warrior, and Odhaln, still young, finally began to respect herself for the fearsome mental weapon that she was. When the Warden offered to introduce her to the Knights-Fossar, she jumped at the chance to meet this group she had already learned much about. Back at the Solarium, she made her own introduction as a searcher of truth in need of a purpose. The exile and castaway was finally home. She has spent years now as one of the Knights-Fossar's most trusted friends and allies. She studies the gods, still worships Algor, as well as Fossar and a few other forgotten gods, and uses her powers to help the noble knights and heroes who accepted her and have shared the knowledge the gods.

Clerah Odhaln, Quick Stats

Mind Mage

Alignment: Unprincipled. She was Anarchist when she first met the Knights-Fossar, and their good influence has kept this powerful Mind Mage from using her abilities for personal gain and sliding into selfishness and power-mongering.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 26, M.A. 19, P.S. 9, P.P. 13, P.E. 12, P.B. 14, Spd 15.

Age: 31

Experience: 8th level Mind Mage.

Hit Points: 40

S.D.C.: 6

P.P.E.: 9

I.S.P.: 252, high even for a Mind Mage of such a young age and level of experience.

Psionic Abilities (special): ALL Psychic Sensitive Abilities (her focus), Ectoplasm (varies), Exorcism (10), Levitation (varies), Lust for Life (15), Nightvision (4), Bio-Manipulation (10), Bio-Regeneration (20), Empathic Transmission (6), Group Mind Block (22), Hydrokinesis (varies, and what really saved her in the shipwreck, not that she remembers it), Hypnotic Suggestion (6), Mind Bolt (10), Mind Bond (10), Psi-Shield (30), Psi-Sword (30), Resist Fatigue (4), and Resist Hunger (6). In time, she'll master most psionic abilities.

Magic Items of Note: A pair of enchanted throwing axes that magically return when thrown, family heirlooms she took with her when she left Bizantium.

Syindal

Syindal Population:

400+ Villagers; farmers, laborers, shepherders, and noncombatants.

100 Specialists; cooks, bakers, stablehands, smiths, carpenters, wheelwrights, and a few merchants and Druids.

Note: Does not include visitors, which can range from a dozen to a hundred at any given time. More during the Lopanic Games.

This village has grown outward from the Solarium and has adopted the name **Syindal**, the word ancient Elves first used for the region. Syindal is a sleepy little town that would be little more than a farming village if not for the Knights-Fossar whom they support as well as help secure the Solarium's food supplies.

The most infamous venue in Syindal is the **Margoode**, a tavern and boarding house known for its philosophical debates before its food and drink. It is here that priests, monks, scholars, theologians and average folk from all walks of life gather for heated discussions regarding the gods, the Garden, the Old Ones, the churches that seem to run the world, and any other controversial topics that might arise. People feel a sense of pride and ownership of their own culture and religion (most worship the Titan Fossar here), and this is still certainly true at the Inn, but there is also an unspoken agreement that religions are all equally valid here, or at least open for discussion. Intellectual debates, exposure to foreign ideas, and strong drink all contribute to make the Margoode a place where many visiting hardliners see with new eyes. Converts are made here, and priests, prophets and pilgrims already excited by their visit and experience at the Garden of the Gods, speak with a passion and conviction rarely found in the average church or temple, let alone a tavern.

While debates and arguments and comparisons are constantly ongoing, the **nightly disputations** are the main event. An hour after sundown, the tavern is at full capacity, the patrons are loosened up, and two different sides are brought out for a theological debate. Sometimes these affairs are quite formal, planned and researched and presented, sometimes they descend into drunken shouting matches, where the faithful speak from their heart (or their gut) more than their brain. Disputations often take on a "my god is better than your god" kind of quality, despite the sense of fairness that the facility generally represents. There are "referees," as well, usually Fossarian Wardens or Knights, present to enjoy the spirited debates and to keep people from engaging in fisticuffs and head bashing. The Margoode is generally packed to capacity during these events, the biggest social gathering in the village outside of holidays, and people from neighboring farms, homesteads and villages sometimes join in on the action.



K. SIEMBIEDA . 2014

The Lost Gods

All the known and worshiped gods from around the world have statues and well-attended gardens in the Garden of the Gods. They are the most prominent and well appointed garden areas, though none are larger or better than any other god in the Garden. They just have a larger number of pilgrims who visit their areas, and a dedicated number of caretakers to make sure their area is always maintained and in good to excellent condition. **Note:** These popular and notable gods are described in detail in the **Dragons & Gods sourcebook**.

The deities in the pages that follow are, for one reason or another, either the gods fading from the public consciousness, or lost gods. Many of the Fading and Forgotten gods were once worshiped by people and civilizations that have, themselves, slipped into obscurity or no longer exist, and may also be forgotten. Their statues in the Garden may be one of a few places left in the entire world where their statue remains. And in some cases, may be the only remembrance left anywhere. The areas of the Garden with the Fading and Forgotten gods are often overgrown or poorly kept, as they have few, if any followers or caretakers.

Since they are little known or completely forgotten deities, their descriptions and history are kept short. We focus upon a short summary, their Holy Artifacts, and their unique Blessings they may bestow upon those they deem worthy to help encourage their rebirth into the world of mortals, or with whom they feel a special bond and seek to help them find their potential and purpose. In addition to these special, notable Blessings, most gods, good and evil, can bestow any of the Blessings described in the earlier pages of this book.

Remember, by reaching out and touching mortals of any species, these Fading and Forgotten gods may be able to find a Champion and followers to prevent themselves from vanishing completely. With additional work from mortal Champions, knights, heroes and followers, the deity may be able to rekindle his or her base of followers and be reborn.

About Artifacts of Note: Each statue description of the deities in this section includes a category called *Artifacts of Note*. These are unique and infamous or legendary Holy Weapons and magic items associated with that particular deity. As these are ancient and Fading or Forgotten gods, most artifacts listed are also ancient and may be little known or forgotten, except by the deity himself and the most learned of priests or scholars.

About Blessings: Theoretically, any deity, of any alignment, is able to grant any of the *Deific Blessings* and *Miraculous Blessings* described earlier in this book. Based on the god's history, alignment, orientation, and what they may symbolize, specific deities are likely to lean toward particular types of Blessings (healing, knowledge, combat, magic, etc.).

In addition, each statue description includes one or more Blessings that are special and unique to that particular god. Like the Artifacts of Note, the Blessings listed under a deity are just the most infamous or legendary. There may be others that are forgotten and lost in time (G.M. discretion). Those listed can be granted as short-term Deific Blessings or as Miraculous Bless-

ings, and long-term granted to a Champion of the Gods, with the all the same condition as described early.

Unless stated otherwise, any Blessings or Artifacts of Note that provide magic spells also provide the P.P.E. necessary to cast them. The Blessed individual or wielder of the artifact or magic weapon does not need to use their own P.P.E. reserve (if any). The same is true of psionic abilities and I.S.P.

Pantheon of Aco

The Forgotten Gods of the Cosmic Pantheon of Aco & the Juggernaut

Long before human or Wolfen rose up from barbarism, the Palladium World was a very different place. The dreaded Old Ones ruled the world and everything in it suffered for it.

Few gods dared to stand against the dark gods and none – not even together as a deific army – could destroy these Lords of Chaos and Sorrow. Those who tried, like the gods of the *Z'ka Pantheon*, were systematically hunted down and destroyed in spectacular fashion, one god after another tormented and killed. Their worshipers forced to bend their knee to the gods of Chaos and Sorrow, or else. Those who refused or whose proclaimed devotion was recognized to be untrue, suffered by the hundreds of thousands in torment and finally, in death.

While other gods wrung their hands or schemed in futility, only *Aco of the Cosmos*, the *Juggernaut* ever at her side, and other members of their pantheon dared to openly speak against and quietly oppose the Old Ones. Aco used her powerful magic to hide women and children, protecting them in her sheltering darkness from the wrath of the Old Ones. Their survival saved entire species of people, gave mortals hope, and bought time for the seeds of resistance to take root and grow among the rest of the gods.

While Aco and her mighty friend, *the Juggernaut*, hid and protected mothers and children, insuring a future, the other gods in her pantheon whispered conspiracy and insurrection in the ears of celestial deities who they knew also despised the Old Ones. Some say, it was Aco (other ancient and half forgotten myths suggest it was Kule or Wunja) who hatched the notion of putting revenge aside, and not trying to destroy the unstoppable Old Ones, but to render them powerless in eternal slumber. And that it was Aco, herself, with the Juggernaut and Abo (or Kule or Wunja, or perhaps all five deities working in concert scouring infinite realities) who are said, by some, to have found the magic necessary to lock the Old Ones in everlasting sleep.

As one of the oldest religions in the world, Aco and the members of her pantheon were revered and worshiped, long ago by ancient people such as the Titans, Rahu-Men, Cyclops, Algor and other giants, reptilians, and people much older and long since forgotten. As millennia passed, civilizations rose and fell. As the

eldritch races faded from existence, so did their gods. Blinking out, one by one. Of the Cosmic Pantheon of Aco, only Aco and the Juggernaut remained half-remembered and cherished enough to stay entrenched in the consciousness of many diverse people, but they were no longer a major influence in the world. It was only Aco's great deed to hide countless millions of children and their mothers from the vengeful eyes of the Old Ones that kept her legend alive, and the Juggernaut by association.

In a way, the gods of the Cosmic Pantheon brought this fate upon themselves. Aco and the gods associated with her are shockingly humble and unassuming. They have never been showy or grandiose. They have never encouraged big, fancy temples and cathedrals. Nor do they endorse hate or elitism among their followers. Instead, they try to inspire all people, regardless of race or social status, to find their passion and place in the world, and champion creativity, goodness, and acceptance. These exalted ideals rarely inspire fanaticism. Perhaps that is because no member of Aco's pantheon appeals to the fundamental greed and avarice of their worshipers.

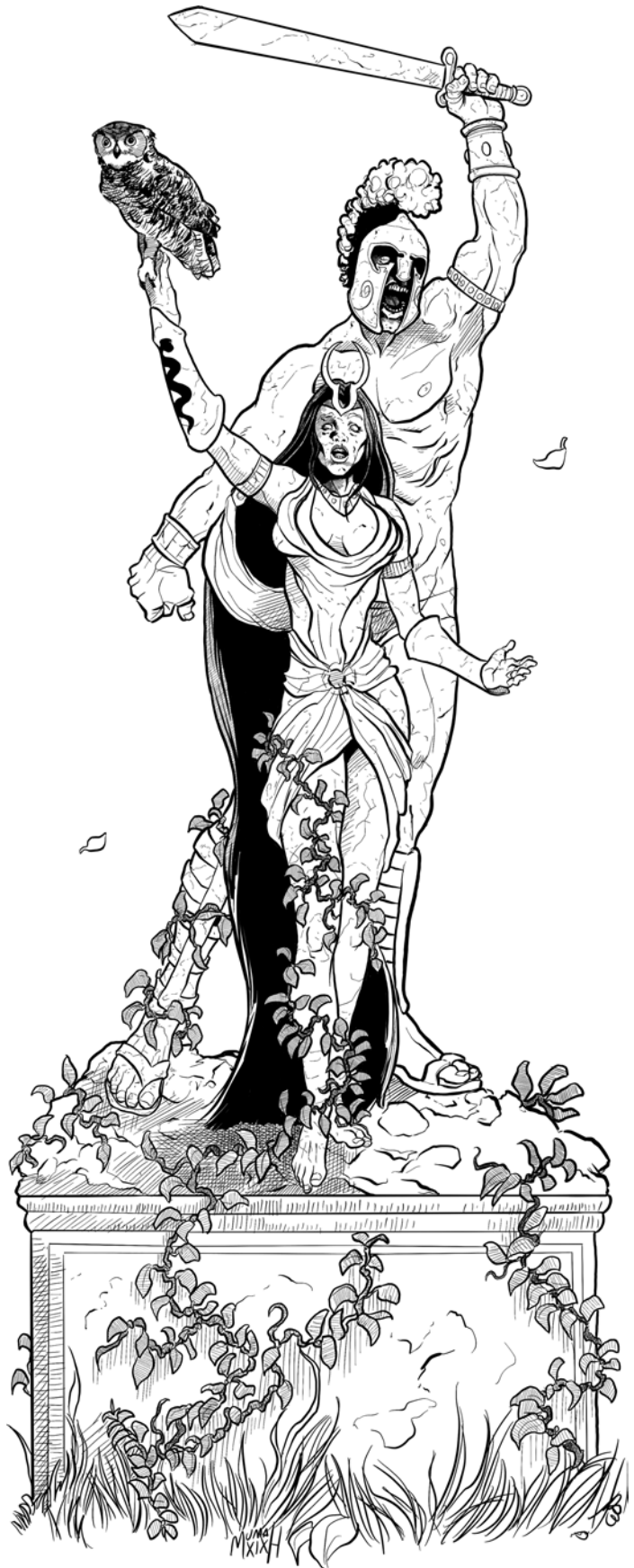
The past aside, Aco, the Juggernaut, and the rest of the forgotten pantheon are being rediscovered thanks to the **Garden of the Gods** and the **Lopanic Games**. On Lopan, away from the feuding nations and powerful churches of established kingdoms across the rest of the known world, **Aco and the Juggernaut** have grown to be the *unofficial gods of Lopan*. Many of the ideals, hopes, and dreams of these noble deities are embraced by the hearts and minds of most island inhabitants, as well as by legions of athletes and dreamers who come to watch and participate in the Lopanic Games – a noble idea in and of itself. And as they and their rediscovered pantheon become known by word of mouth to the many who visit Lopan, word of these forgotten gods spreads across the world. Many are learning about Aco and the Juggernaut and the other deities in their pantheon for the very first time.

Pantheon of Aco and the Juggernaut

Aco and the other gods within her pantheon have more interest in high ideals and encouraging enlightenment and wonder, than getting involved in the petty interests and ugly political squabbles of their mortal followers. None of them condone inequality or injustice for any justification, and they represent the spark of humanity and compassion in all beings from Elves and humans to Orcs and Wolfen. Perhaps another reason this pantheon has had trouble keeping followers in the past.

Aco

Aco has never really been forgotten. Over the millennia, be they human, Elf, Dwarf, Goblin or Troglodyte, Aco dolls have been given as toys to children of all races as a good luck charm. Newborn babies are often brought to a temple of Aco, or a Priest of Aco is summoned for a "Blessing of Baptism" to welcome the child into the world. Yet despite this, Aco's role in saving the world and stopping the Old Ones had become systematically undermined by the larger, more powerful religions like the *Church of Light and Dark*, and the early millennia of Dragonwright. In



recent decades, that has been changing. *The Garden of the Gods* and the ever growing popularity of the *Lopanic Games* has played a huge role in this for her and the Juggernaut.

Aco is the undisputed head of the pantheon – the All-Mother if you will – with the ever loyal and incorruptible **Juggernaut** seated at her right hand. The two are practically inseparable and trust each other above all others.

For Aco, in particular, everyone has value and something to offer the world even if it may seem to be on the least significant level to mortals. For her, everyone is a building block that creates the greater cosmos. That is why in her secret war against the Old Ones, she hid children and women from the monsters' terrible wrath. And in so doing, infused those she protected with hope and a quiet inner strength to persevere against all odds.

Mythologically, Aco is the symbol of the ultimate, overwhelming blackness upon which the entire universe is built. She is the darkness behind the celestial bodies that glow so bright that the darkness is often overlooked, and she is at peace with that.

Aco is best known for her ability to hide herself utterly. Vanishing from all, even the gods, who, try as they might, cannot find her when she wishes not to be found. None of the gods have ever figured out where or how she is able to disappear so completely. Some speculate that Aco has the power to “unmake” herself, so that she actually ceases to exist for a time, but neither god nor mortal knows if this is true, and if it is, how she manages such an impossible feat.

Though Aco is known to be able to hide, she is no coward. Quite the opposite, she has become the symbol of hidden strength and inspires courage and tenacity. She is a resourceful thinker known to defeat her enemies by outwitting them rather than outright destroying them, and she is revered among the deific as a god among gods, so when she chooses to address them, her words carry great weight and all stop to consider them.

For ages, Aco has been regarded as the patron god of women, defender of women, and protector of mothers and children. Many of the larger temples dedicated to her have an orphanage and childcare facility associated with it. The majority of her priests are female, usually middle-aged and mature women, but also includes male priests (20%). All are sympathetic to the plight of females and always try to help and protect women. More than ever, Aco represents the emancipation of women, but without emasculating males. That is why the virile and masculine Juggernaut is almost always depicted at her side. Not as her protector or husband, but as her equal and friend.

Aco believes in second chances and redemption, and she champions those who choose such a difficult and admirable path. She always has a soft place in her heart for anyone who feels as if they must hide in the shadows or face persecution. All of this has drawn women of all races to see Aco as their deity, but also Changelings who must hide their true face and identity lest they be destroyed, and others who live in the shadows or in shame. Many a female knight, athlete, or adventurer looks to Aco and the Juggernaut as their gods.

Alignment: Aberrant (was Principled).

Statue Description: A beautiful young maiden standing next to her companion and equal, the Juggernaut.

Caretakers: There is a group of grandmothers, mothers and daughters calling themselves the *Women of the Starlit Night*, all of whom are residents of Lopan. They have maintained the garden around the statues of Aco and the Juggernaut for generations,

and know every detail about the two gods and their heroic past. Since the rest of the pantheon has been revealed, they now tend to the garden around them as well, and seek to learn everything they can about these deities.

Some of that information has come to the Women of the Starlit Night, and others, in visions, as well as vision quests that send gladiators, heroes, and adventurers, male and female, to find lost texts and artifacts about the other deities in the pantheon so that the world may come to know and worship them. After all, these non-assuming gods have played an important role in inspiring mortals since the beginning of time.

The Women of the Starlit Night are not the only ones who tend to the gardens around the Pantheon of Aco and the Juggernaut. Female warriors, priests, mothers, and most female visitors feel a connection to Aco and the Juggernaut, and are likely to take time to tend to the garden around them. Many female visitors and children also leave flowers and Aco dolls at the god's feet as a token of their respect and love. As a result, the garden around Aco, though small, is one of the most beautiful of them all, filled with roses that bloom year round, as well as other flowers.

Artifacts of Note: The Cloak of Aco: This legendary item has not been seen in 50,000 years. It is a hooded black cloak covered in black lace and tiny gemstones around the edge of the hood and collar that sparkle like stars. Three times per 24 hours, should the wearer wish to be hidden and unseen, all she or he needs to do is to pick a place to sit, stand, or hide, pull the hood over her head, and wish to be unseen. This is not invisibility, and the ability to see the invisible does not reveal the hidden person. She is unseen as if she was not there at all. This may take place on a crowded, sunlit street or inside a crowded room, hallway, an open field, anywhere. Though people do not see the wearer, they move around her without running into her. No known magic, psychic ability, nor power of the gods can pierce this veil of “unseen.” Moreover, any child in the arms of the Cloak wearer, or tucked under the Cloak with her, even if not completely covered, is also unseen. The magic remains in place for as long as those under the Cloak of Aco remain in place without stepping away from where they stood when activated and do not attack or use any other magic or psionic abilities. As long as the Cloaked person or people (as many as two adults or six children, in addition to the Cloak wearer), stand in place, they remain unseen for hours.

Silver-Eyed Aco Doll (Protection): A simple Aco doll made of faded burlap that is an off-white color with eyes made of silver-colored buttons (unique because Aco dolls always have black eyes), sewn to the doll with black thread. Any child in possession of the doll, as well as her siblings, are impervious to disease, magic (all), psionic attacks, possession, curses, and demons and Deevils. Evil supernatural beings barely take notice of them and choose not to bother them when they do notice. However, no such demon, evildoer, or adult recognizes the doll to be special or magical in any way.

When the doll is put under the roof of a school, orphanage, hospital, temple, or home with children, all the children feel safer and are protected from disease, curses, possession, and disaster (they miraculously survive fire, flood, plague, etc.). Evil supernatural forces, including ghosts and Entities, immediately sense the protection of Aco and will not set foot inside the building nor dare bother these children or their caretakers and pets; the evildoers stay their hand against these children and do them no

wrong. The kids are also +1 to save vs magic, psionic attack, and poison, double when inside the building itself, for as long as they are a member of that school, orphanage, or home where the doll “resides,” until the age of 16 or the doll is removed and taken away from the building. Moreover, whatever a child prays to Aco or the Juggernaut while holding the Silver-Eyed Aco Doll, his or her prayer is heard and one of those two gods will take action to answer the prayer. It is not likely to be handled directly by either god, but the deity will send someone to help the child or the institution that cares for the child/children. The gods only answer prayers essential to safety, creativity, and happiness. Thus, neither Aco or the Juggernaut answer a prayer to make the family rich or turn them into royalty, or similar outrageous requests, but will protect and hide them from danger and evil, reunite child with parent or a loved one, liberate them from cruelty, and similar.

When this holy artifact is placed in a room where a woman is giving birth, whether she knows the doll is there or not (it could be under the bed, under a pillow, in a dresser drawer), the mother always survives childbirth free of trouble or complications, and the child is born healthy and whole.

The Silver-Eyed Aco Doll is, of course, indestructible and seems to quietly, subtly, get passed along to other children in need over and over again.

Blessings: Safe Birth: Mother gives birth without risk of life or complications, and the child is born healthy and beautiful, even if there had been concern about breach birth, premature birth, or other issues about child birth, deformity, or health.

Hide the Innocent: Just as detailed in the legends telling how Aco hid women, mothers, and children from the wicked Old Ones, she is able to hide any child and siblings, mother, or grandmother from evil, provided they are traveling or hiding together in a close group; within 100 feet (30.5 m) of the child or the mother in possession of an ordinary Aco doll. Such a Blessed child, woman, or group somehow manage to escape the notice of the dark gods, demons, Deevils, evildoers, and their minions who may seek to do them harm. The one requirement, besides being female or a child (young ones can be males and females under the age of 16), they must be actively hiding or fleeing from the evildoers wishing to kill, enslave, abuse, or otherwise harm them. Not only are they hidden from discovery, but they leave no trail that can be followed.

Protection: Keep Hidden from Danger and Evil: Same as the Blessing of the same name described earlier in this book, page 64.

Note: For more powers, details, and information about Aco, see **Dragons and Gods**, pages 96-99.

The Juggernaut

The Juggernaut is the embodiment of the fighting spirit, bold, playful, and eager for challenges to test his mettle, accompanied by a powerful sense of fair play, sportsmanship, and teamwork.

The Juggernaut has always been associated with the sun, and represents raw primal strength and unbridled passion. In bygone days he was also the god of the harvest and the earth, but over the eons he has been largely recognized as the patron god of athletes and gladiators throughout the world, as well as knights and warriors who embrace chivalry and honor. While it may not sound important, Aco holds the elevated position of helpmate and pro-

teCTOR of Aco, making him her hand, and the second most important god in the pantheon.

With the Lopanic Games becoming the Mecca for athletes and athletic competition, knowledge about the Juggernaut and his number of followers has grown a hundredfold. Even before the games, athletes *everywhere* made small sacrifices to the Juggernaut and sought his blessings. Most arenas, large gymnasiums, and other buildings devoted to athletic events and gladiatorial games, worldwide, have included a small shrine to the sun god somewhere near the changing rooms. But on Lopan, the Juggernaut is the *most iconic and revered god* of the Lopanic Games. Small shrines and statues of the Juggernaut are everywhere, especially in and around the arena, the pavilions, and the fields where competitions take place. His visage graces archways and appears on medals awarded to the winners of the games. His name is called out in thanks and praise when an athlete wins a competition, and in hushed whispered prayers for blessings of courage, strength and good fortune before every event. His likeness – or he and Aco together, like their statue in the Garden – is even sold as small statues, pendants and charms for necklaces and bracelets by merchants who cater to athletes and tourists who take them back home, from wherever they came, as a keepsake and remembrance. All of which advances his reputation and Aco’s around the world, far and wide. Increasing the number of worshipers and devotees, not just for them but even bringing attention to the recently rediscovered gods in the remaining pantheon. Of course, since this pantheon was nearly completely forgotten, with only Aco and the Juggernaut being widely remembered, the Cosmic Pantheon is now known as the **Pantheon of Aco** or the **Pantheon of Aco and the Juggernaut**, or much to the chagrin of the Church of Light and Dark and other regional gods, as **the Gods of Lopan**. The latter being a bit ironic since these deities do not originate from the region nor are they the kingdom’s official church or gods, though that may change in another generation or two as the Lopanic Games and their patron gods grow more celebrated and famous.

Alignment: Unprincipled (bordering on Scrupulous). The symbol of the sun, harvest, power and earth, patron of athletes, gladiators, acrobats, honorable warriors, and fathers.

Statue Description: A muscular, human-looking warrior, usually clad in nothing more than sandals, a loincloth and a gladiator’s helmet. Usually in the company of Aco, which is certainly the case in the Garden of the Gods.

Artifacts of Note: Helm of the Night sky: This indestructible, gladiatorial helmet is made of a dark metal said to come from a star. It is a dark, cobalt blue color with silver trim and gives its wearer the following special bonuses and abilities:

+1 to save vs illusions and mind control, see in darkness (Nightvision 1,200 feet/366 m), see Shadow Beasts even when they are cloaked in darkness (a huge advantage), and four times per 24 hour period the wearer can Shadow Meld, the same as the spell, but as if it were cast by a 20th level Wizard. There is one more ability, the wearer can turn invisible outdoors at night and leaves no footprints, not even in mud or snow at night, provided he is away from a strong light source such as a campfire, lit torches, or a lantern.

According to legend, the Helm of the Night sky was a gift from Aco given to the Juggernaut. In turn, he gave it as a gift to an honorable warrior in the distant past and told the warrior to have the Helm passed on to another deserving fighter before

he died. A tradition said to have been continued for tens of thousands of years. The Helm of the Night sky is said to surface for a new fighter whenever its powers are needed the most, especially in the defense of the innocent, women, and children. **Note:** The bonuses and abilities described above are NOT available to anyone who has cruel or evil intentions, or who abuses women and/or children. For him, the artifact is nothing more than an unusual helmet.

Trident of Justice: This golden trident seems to have been forged entirely from one metal mold from top to bottom, each tip eternally sharp. Whoever wields this magical artifact is +1 to strike, +2 to disarm and entangle, +3 to pull punch, and can hurl the Trident up to 1,000 feet (305 m). The Trident of Justice returns to the thrower after it strikes, magically teleporting from its target back into the hand of its owner. It inflicts 3D6 damage; double damage to tyrants and supernatural evil, 3D6x10 damage against dark gods, Greater Demons, Demon Lords, Old Ones and other Alien Intelligences. Hence the Trident is also known as the *God Slayer*.

Celestial Discus: A heavy black disc with white dots representing the constellation of Aco in the sky such as those thrown in the Lopanic Games and other athletic competitions. This is another fabled artifact that has not been seen in at least 10,000 years. The disc has a few different uses. In all cases, the Discus flies back into the hand of the thrower a split second after it strikes. Each toss counts as one melee attack.

1. When the Celestial Discus is hurled at a gate or door, including the reinforced fortified doors and/or iron gates/portcullis of a castle, it blows them wide open, one at a time. The structure suffers minimal (5D6) damage, but is forced wide open.

2. When the Celestial Discus is thrown at an enemy and hits (+2 to strike), it does 5D6 damage and has a 75% chance of knocking an opponent off his feet no matter how large, heavy, or powerful that opponent may be. A victim of knockdown loses initiative and one melee attack. Moreover, if the victim is a giant, a dragon, or a supernatural being, including Greater Demons and gods, they know they face someone wielding a powerful artifact of a god, and that realization may give them pause to reconsider their attack or to stop and parlay.

3. When the Celestial Discus is hurled into the sky, night or day, it blazes like a comet across the heavens before returning to the thrower; counts as two melee attacks. Whenever this happens, it signals the Juggernaut (and don't forget Aco is likely to be with him) to look at what is happening below where the Discus just flew, because it is important. Any prayer for help, a Deific Blessing, Miracle, or request for a divine intervention directed toward the Juggernaut or Aco, and made by the owner of the Celestial Discus, a Champion of the Gods, or a Priest, Monk, or Shaman in the group, is +40% to be heard. G.M. discretion as to whether or not the Juggernaut (and/or Aco) responds, and to what degree of power.

Blessings: Fighting Spirit: The Blessed individual has a keen sense of right and wrong, honor, and courage that is not easily destroyed by his enemies or the forces of evil.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize the innocent and the meek, and when they are in trouble or under the thumb of wickedness and cruelty.

Whenever the Blessed individual is fighting to protect or liberate the innocent and the meek, or is fighting to save lives (not for personal gain of any kind), he or she fatigues at half the usual rate

and is +1 attack per melee round, +1 to strike and parry, +2 to disarm and entangle, +1 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +2 to save vs disease and poisons (and symptoms, penalties, and duration are half when he or she does succumb), +1 to save vs Horror Factor, and +40% to save vs coma and death. When the Blessed comes out of the coma, twice the usual amount of Hit Points and S.D.C. are restored, and healing is at twice the normal rate.

Skills: Forced March, Military Etiquette 80% and W.P. Blunt or W.P. Staff.

Juggernaut's Favor: Applicable only to athletes, gladiators, and characters of any O.C.C. entering into athletic competition/contest be it arm wrestling, axe throwing, boxing, wrestling, jousting racing (running, swimming, riding a horse, etc.) and other sports and physical competitions. The Blessed individual feels confident and sharp as he or she enters into athletic competition, but has a realistic idea of his/her own abilities.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Roll to recognize trained athletes and gladiators and size them up, as well as to recognize ways to take advantage of an opponent's weaknesses, including playing to their vanity and arrogance.

Skills/Abilities: +1D6% bonus on all Physical and Horsemanship skills during combat and competitions, General Athletics (and the bonuses associated with it), Swimming 75% (or a +10% bonus if the character already has this skill), and Recognize Weapon Quality 70%.

Word of Honor: The Blessed individual's word of honor cannot be broken and is a sacred vow.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to recognize ways to fulfill his promise, +1 to strike and parry, +5% skill bonus on the skills required to fulfilling the promise, and +6 damage against those the Blessed individual has vowed to bring to justice or destroy!

Skills: Escape Artist 65%, Public Speaking 80%, and 2D6+80% to evoke truth and inspire confidence whenever he or she gives their word of honor privately or in a public speech, but the character must live up to his or her promises and word of honor. Even deities and demonic beings are willing to trust this individual's word of honor.

The Forgotten Gods of the Pantheon of Aco and the Juggernaut

The deities of the Pantheon of Aco and the Juggernaut all tend to be idealists who see the larger picture and harbor high hopes for the future of mortals and gods alike. For them, the meaning of life has little to do with war and the attainment of power (which all too often lead to corruption, injustice, and destruction), and everything to do with finding joy and fulfillment in life through creative expression, the arts, athletics, and appreciation of each other's differences, strengths, and weaknesses, for no one is perfect, not even the gods.

These empathetic deities are free thinkers who often reject convention and the values of many mortals, including those who think of themselves as "civilized." For example, they reject the notion that women are the weaker sex; that Ogres, Orcs, and Goblins are incapable of rising out of barbarism and can never

be more than second-class citizens unworthy of equal rights; or that Wolfen and even Coyles are evil, savage monsters to be destroyed, or that any of the races in the world are inherently superior to any other.

In general terms, the gods of the Aco Pantheon despise slavery, tyrants, bullies, and all manner of injustice by those who need to prove themselves superior through acts of cruelty, degradation, and war. They had high hopes for the Elves and Dwarves who, at one point, seemed to be attaining wisdom and enlightenment, and wept when the two destroyed all they had built in an insane war that took the noble Titans, Rahu-Men, and other people down with them. Now, the Aco Pantheon looks warily toward humans and Wolfen for hope of a better future.

Despite the Aco Pantheon's high ideals and the fact that they were among the first to stand against the powerful Old Ones to bring an end to the Age of Chaos, many of the deities are *Unprincipled* or *Anarchist*. An aspect of their dual natures. Most are pragmatic yet philosophical and idealistic, accepting that with good there must be evil, that with order is born chaos and vice versa, and that injustice and war are inevitable as is entropy for all things. They and mortals alike must wait through such storms and hope for the best outcome. While they watch and wait, they nudge certain mortals they come to admire or favor toward what they hope is wisdom and a better way. But they seldom take sides or a direct hand in the affairs of mortals, nor heavily favor any one civilization over another. Inspiration is one thing, direct involvement is quite another. The only exception may come when another god or pantheon's involvement has unfairly tipped the scales or when there is a grievous wrong that demands to be righted. Aco and the Juggernaut and most members of her pantheon believe the destiny and achievement of mortals should be left in their own hands.

It should be noted, that the farther in the past one is able to look – to the *Time of a Thousand Magicks* and before – it seems clear that the Pantheon of Aco and the gods of Light and Dark (Isis, Osiris, Thoth, Set, etc.) were equally celebrated and openly associated with one another. There is no doubt they stood together to lead the charge against the Old Ones with many other ancient and little known gods and forgotten people. Yet, over time, something happened to divide them and conspired to cause one pantheon to be nearly forgotten and the other to shine and be embraced by millions for generations. It has been only the memory of the heartfelt courage and heroics of Aco and the Juggernaut that has kept the pantheon from being forgotten completely.

As the gods of the Aco Pantheon and their storied history are being rediscovered, the Church of Light and Dark is not pleased and seems worried that their deities may be toppled from their elevated station. The two pantheons are clearly rivals now, and though the gods do not speak of it, there is undeniable tension and animosity between the two. Ancient secrets and hard feelings that are yet to be seen as to how they may play out.

Abo

The Lightning Bringer

Abo is a four-armed, one-eyed giant said able to see across the cosmos and into a person's soul, and even glimpse possible futures. He is the symbol of light and power, and known as the Lightning Bringer. However, Abo is not just the Bringer of

Lightning, for just as lightning pierces black storm clouds and illuminates dark skies, so does he bring the light and power of knowledge.

Once worshiped by many people, including Elves and Dwarves, today Abo is nearly forgotten, worshiped almost exclusively by the fading races of the Cyclops, the four-armed Rahu-Men, the heroic Titans, and other giants who use their might to bring justice, peace, and enlightenment, not unnecessary war or destruction. According to ancient Titan and Elven religious texts, Abo is credited for bringing reason and knowledge to the ancient world in regard to the use of fire, the forging of metal, and the making of weapons and armor. Knowledge that can be used to build and protect or to kill and destroy. Abo, though a fierce warrior, is also the god of fair play and mercy, and the All-Father of the Cyclops, who say it was Abo who brought the Cyclops the secrets of making their lightning weapons.

One of the world's most ancient Elven texts is preserved under lock and key at the Library of Bletherad. This scroll, known as the *Titan's Words*, is believed to refer to a much older Titan scroll or book. According to the Titan's Words, Abo once studied magic under the Great Old One known as Xy, Power Incarnate. The two might even have been friends, because this text says Abo dared to challenge his mentor on more than one occasion and lived to tell the tale.

This text goes so far as to claim Abo foolishly believed himself Xy's equal and tried to fight him in a one-on-one battle. This happened when the gods of the Cosmic Pantheon first began to rise up against the Old Ones. Abo thought a defeat of Xy would bring a swift end to their war. He was very wrong. Abo was handily defeated by Xy during this battle of magic. Crushed and humbled in short order, he was shown rare mercy from Xy, and allowed to crawl away, broken and near death, but alive.

The author of this ancient text was also a firm believer that *Thoth* is really Xy transformed by his own dark magic. (An unsupported and hotly contested matter of great controversy by the enemies and rivals of the Church of Light and Dark.) He goes on to claim that Abo is responsible for that transformation. That after his crushing defeat, he knew none of them could take on Xy, alone or together, and that a different tack needed to be taken. Abo used his knowledge of Xy to eliminate the Chaos Lord to inflict a different sort of defeat. He did this by pulling the strings of the Old Ones Ya-Blik (Betrayal) and Al-Vil (Envy) and planting the seeds for their epic treachery against Xy. Tricking Xy into using his own magic to take himself out of the picture, inadvertently transforming himself into something different, the deity that would become known as *Thoth*. And *Thoth* would fight the Old Ones and contribute mightily to their defeat. A brilliant scheme conceived by Abo, or so this author claims.

As further evidence he quotes the following passage in the *Tristine Chronicles*. A passage that naysayers insist could be about anyone and mean almost anything:

And lo, the Light of One-Eye did see a Path, and whispered into the ear of Betrayal and stoked the fire of Envy to bring about what would be the end to Power as known, and put forth into motion the ruination that would lead to a new and most welcomed of beginnings.

Other fragmented historical records and myths confirm that Abo's knowledge included the art of magic and that he somehow knew Xy and had associations and conflicts with him. Whether



that was as a student, willing servant, spy, or slave is unclear. It is also known that Abo was one of the first gods to strike out in defiance against the Old Ones, attacking Xy in righteous indignation and disdain. These writings also confirm that as an example to other nascent gods, Abo was savagely punished for his insolence and nearly perished. Which may be why his face is never shown, always covered to conceal the scars that cannot be healed. Though the mighty and once beautiful body of Abo was broken in countless places, his incorruptible spirit remained unbreakable. So impressed was the Power Incarnate that he let Abo live, confident that the god had learned his lesson and would never dare to defy him again. He was wrong. Abo's sacrifice and courage inspired others to join him to plot in secret from the shadows to find a way to overthrow the Old Ones. And when they were ready to stand united against the Lords of Chaos, Abo led the charge with Thoth, Anhur, and the Juggernaut at his side.

According to another source, an ancient Rahu-Man song, Abo was once the handsomest of gods, only the Juggernaut came close, but when he raise a fist against his cruel master, he was beaten and brutalized and left half dead. The experience, the song says, left him all the wiser and more cunning, but "though he strode among the clouds with his celestial brothers and sisters, never did he show his tortured face again."

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Statue Description: A hulking 9 foot (2.7 m) edifice of blond stone, with four arms and a stylized with face white and black faceplate for a head. In the classic tradition of depicting Abo, one right hand bears a lightning bolt, raised and ready to throw, another bears a small shield, one left hand clutches a large hammer with a spike at the opposite end, and the other is balled into a tight fist. Teeth are clenched, and one eye looks out.

Caretakers: As shocking and unnerving as it may be, since the statue of Abo was uncovered, small groups of Cyclops make regular pilgrimages to the statue of their revered deity and tend to his statue and the surrounding garden. They sometimes look in on the statues of the other members of the pantheon, particularly *Ginja* and *Puno*, and contribute to the care of their garden areas as well.

Holy Artifacts: Abo's Hammer: A magical hammer that can be used by a metal worker, blacksmith or armorer to make any weapon or armor in one-third the time! The Hammer does 2D6 damage in combat, but when raised above the wielder's head it can be commanded to unleash a 4D6 damage lightning bolt as often as twice per melee round (each blast counts as one melee attack, 200 foot/61 m range, +3 to strike with lightning). The wielder of Abo's Hammer is also impervious to lightning and fire.

Abo's Lightning Javelin: A crooked javelin or short spear that has unerring accuracy and strikes as a thundering lightning bolt. Range: 900 feet (274 m). Damage: 6D6. Vanishes after it strikes and reappears in its owner's hand, wherever he may be, so that it can be hurled once per melee round. The wielder is also impervious to lightning.

Abo's Shield: A small, round shield for giants, a large shield for human-sized warriors, it is a simple metal shield that doesn't look like anything special. In fact it has a few small gashes and a crack running down one side. However, it is indestructible and three times per 24 hours is able to cast an Armor of Ithan upon its wielder or one other; 200 S.D.C. and a duration of one hour or until all S.D.C. are depleted.

Abo's Helmet: An oddly featureless helmet with an oval, white and black face-covering that conceals the face except for the mouth. The wearer sees through one long slit. The indestructible helmet conceals the voice and identity of the wearer and gives him the constant ability to See the Invisible and Nightvision (600 feet/183 m) whenever the helmet is worn on his head. In addition, the wearer can cast each of the following spells two times per 24 hours: See Aura, See Wards, Sense Evil, and Sense Magic (10 minute duration for each), and Tongues (2 hour duration).

Blessings: Hawk-like Vision: Enables the Blessed individual to see like a hawk, can read a sign or see an insignia or face up to one mile (1.6 m) away, as well as notice details. Archers and spearmen get one extra attack per melee round, are +1 to strike, and can hit a target 50% farther than normal range.

Far Sight: A glimpse of a possible future or future detail, usually as it relates to an important or life and death situation, that can change the outcome. This may be seeing the face of an enemy, learning a secret about an enemy or rival, seeing a coming danger, and similar.

Lightning Bringer Miraculous Blessing: Described elsewhere. May also grant any Deific or Miraculous Blessing but tends to favor the Knowledge and Wisdom Blessings.

Any Deific Blessings or Miraculous Blessings that involve Knowledge and Magic are also favored by this deity.

Note: As an unintended consequence of unearthing the statue of Abo, and Lopan authorities allowing Cyclops to visit the Garden and tend to the statue and the other forgotten gods of the Aco Pantheon, the *Isle of the Cyclops* is establishing diplomatic relations and trade with the Lopan government. A fact that makes some kingdoms uneasy.

Damu or Daymu

A beautiful female god, Damu (pronounced day moo) represents nature, the seasons, and the forces of nature; namely earth, earthquakes, rock and mud slides, plants, growth, wind, rain, and birds. According to myth, she lives among the clouds and when you see a cloud that resembles an animal, person, or object, it is one of her sky sculptures or a bit of whimsy meant to delight and inspire mortals. She is also responsible for rainbows and spring and summer showers. As sweet and delightful as Daymu can be, her anger manifests as terrible storms, thunder and lightning, and may bring about flooding, making her a bringer of life and destruction.

Among some ancient cults in the South, there are forbidden myths that speak of how Daymu once had a torrid love affair with *Anhur*, *Slayer of Enemies*. He is the Warlord of the dark Gods of Taut in the Pantheon of Light and Dark. Anhur is said to have been irresistibly attracted by Daymu's duality; her warmth, beauty and kindness on one hand, and her wild, reckless, and dangerous nature on the other. Their romance burned hot until she left him in a fury over matters unknown, but it was a serious matter. According to some tales, whatever the reason for the break up, it caused a lasting enmity between the Gods of Light and Dark and the Cosmic Pantheon of Aco, and may be the reason the Gods of Light and Dark have tried to undermine (destroy?) and ostracize their relationship with mortals and steer away potential new worshipers. Daymu and Anhur still long for one another, but know their love can never be, not without one of them betraying their own pantheon.



Alignment: Anarchist.

Statue Description: A beautiful, angelic, winged Elven woman. Tall, thin, shapely, with a pretty face and Elf ears, long blonde hair cascading down between her white feathered wings. Daymu wears a wreath of leaves and her legs are always entwined in leafy vines; connection to the earth and life. In the left hand of the statue is a small, eternal flame that burns with the colors of autumn; vibrant reds, orange, and yellows.

Caretakers: Faeries and Sprites, and of all people, Leprechauns, who all adore her. Gnomes, who generally gravitate to nature gods, are also among those who worship her and tend to her statues and the garden around her. However, Gnomes, like Faeries and Sprites, are a dying species, which is why Daymu is a fading god, forgotten by the world at large and never known to humans, Wolfen, or other members of the monster races, until recently. Since her statue's rediscovery in the Garden, Kankoran, Wolfen, and Bearmen, as well as others close to nature, have gravitated toward her. In fact, the Wolfen find all the gods in the Pantheon of Aco alluring and worthy of their respect and honor. If the Wolfen should adopt and actively worship the Pantheon of Aco, Daymu and the other nearly forgotten gods of the Pantheon may all find renewed strength, life, and presence in the world.

For their part, the gods of the Aco Pantheon have no qualms about being worshiped by canine people and other non-humans. They welcome all people.

Artifacts of Note: Damu's Tears: A pocket-size, metal flask capped with a cork attached to the flask by a thin chain. The flask holds eight ounces which magically replenishes at a rate of one ounce (29.5 milliliters) every 24 hours.

When the water inside is sprinkled upon a field of crops or orchard – only a few drops waters 40 acres – the crops grow tall and bountiful, with triple the usual yield, and do not suffer from drought, disease, or infestation. Moreover, the soil is replenished with nutrients for a good, normal crop next season.

In addition, a single drop is able to purify 50 gallons (189 liters) of contaminated or poisoned water making it fresh and safe to drink.

Drinking one ounce (29.5 milliliters) from the flask magically provides all the water and hydration a person needs for an entire day (24 hours) even with heavy exertion; ideal for traveling through deserts.

Crimson Wreath of Leaves and Vines: This artifact makes the wearer +1 to save vs poison, +2 to save vs punch, fall or impact, +10% bonus to all Wilderness skills, and three times per 24 hours, the wearer can perform the Chameleon spell and Climb spell at no P.P.E. cost, equal to a 10th level Wizard.

The most impressive power, however, is once per 24 hours the wearer can summon and create a suit of armor that appears to be made of fall leaves with hues of brown, red, and yellow, but offers the protection of splint armor: 182 S.D.C., A.R. 16, virtually weightless and silent. The armor lasts until the armor is reduced to three or less S.D.C., or the wearer no longer wants it in place and wishes it away. The wearer can remove the armor to sleep or other reason by wishing the leaves temporarily away. The leaves float off the wearer and into a small pile next to him. If the wearer walks away more than 12 feet (3.7 m), the enchantment ends and the armor is no longer available until the next 24 hours passes. The time table starts when the armor is destroyed or wished away. **Note:** Leaves do not actually need to be present and available, they magically appear in a swirl of wind and color, and the armor can be created indoors or outdoors, in a desert, or anywhere.

The Hawk Feather of Daymu: Though it looks like an ordinary feather from a red-tail hawk, it radiates of magic. At will, the person who has the Feather, whether it is held in hand, attached to a staff, walking stick, or bow, or worn around the neck as a talisman or as a piece of jewelry (necklace, earring, brooch, etc.), stuck into a hat, wreath, headdress, or simply tucked into

the hair (the Feather must be exposed to the air), can hover, float, or fly. There is no limit to the number of times the person uses the Feather for this purpose nor duration. If the person wishes to fly above the trees for hours at a time, he may do so. Speed: 60 mph (96 km) maximum, but may float and ride the wind, or hover and float above the ground; VTOL capable. Altitude: 5,000 feet (1,524 m). **Warning:** Flying is fun and helpful for adventuring, however, enemies will assume that a flying person is dangerous and target the individual for attack in order to take this flying threat out first. A person floating or flying in the air, especially above the trees or buildings, is likely to give away his and his teammates' position and alert evildoers and bushwhackers to their approach. Likewise, a flying man or woman (not applicable to animals), and even someone floating inches above the ground, is going to attract attention, perhaps unwanted attention. Such a feat shouts magic or magic object, money, importance, power, and potential trouble from the flyer and all associated with him. People are likely to look upon them with a concerned and wary eye and may assume the worst. Use flying with caution. **Note:** Whoever has possession of the Feather has the power to fly.

Sky Hawk Pendant: Whoever wears this gold pendant studded with blue sapphires is perceived as a friend to birds and most animals that soar through the sky. As a friend, these animals will not attack the Pendant wearer unless he or she attacks them first, and even then, unless cornered, the animal is likely to fly away rather than fight. This applies mainly to birds and bats, but also includes the Pegasus, Peryton, Gryphon, Owl-Thing, Feathered Death, Drakin, Dragonductyl, and similar winged, flying animals. Animals that are familiars or are tamed and have an owner or master will only attack or spy upon the wearer of the Sky Hawk Pendant if commanded to do so by their master, or if attacked first.

The magical pendant has no effect on intelligent winged beasts such as dragons, the Sphinx, Dragon Wolf, Loogaroo, Waternix, Wing Tips, Za, Faerie Folk, and other beasts with human-level awareness and intelligence. Nor the monstrous undead Yema which is usually controlled by a sentient being, or other undead and supernatural beings.

Blessings: Guidance from Daymu's Children: The Blessed individual is watched and, in a way, protected by ordinary birds. When the individual has lost his way, a single bird or a small flock of birds will land near him and look him over. Then it chirps or sings and flies a short distance, lands, and waits, perhaps chirping, singing, or calling out like a crow but in a cheerful or playful tone. This bird wants him to follow it, and the animal repeats the process when he comes close to its perch, until he finds his way back to the road or right path, or the direction he needs to travel.

The Blessed instinctively knows the bird(s) is trying to lead him down the right path, sometimes physically and other times metaphorically. Thus, if the bird is leading him a direction other than where he and/or the adventurer group had intended, it is because he/they are needed elsewhere. This is most likely to be someone in need of help, but it could also lead to something he/they should see, a source of information, food, or help, or to someplace/someone that provides a clue or a warning sign, or an opportunity. Likewise, the Blessed individual knows that when birds are singing and playful, the path and area around him is safe. When they stop singing, outsiders and possibly danger lurks within earshot of the Blessed. And when a crow, raven, blackbirds or other birds cry out in a loud, agitated manner, danger is near or coming. Should such a bird or flock fly

past very near the Blessed individual, calling out as they flee and quickly zoom away and out of sight, he knows the danger is near. The larger the fleeing flock, the larger and more serious the danger, or the greater the number of the enemy or monsters. And often the threat comes from the direction the birds are flying away from.

Sky Sculptures: Periodically, the Blessed individual sees images and omens in the clouds that only he or she can see that provide clues or encouragement, or point the way. For example, a gathering of beautiful clouds and bright sky with the sun behind them is a sign of a job well done and a stamp of approval, so is a rainbow. Dark or ordinary clouds with beams of sunlight shining through means the worst is behind him. A shape in the clouds that resembles an arrow, spear, or figure pointing means go in that direction or keep heading that way, just as a cloud that looks like a hand with the palm facing out, a fist, toppled trees or a wall or mountain, means stop or proceed with caution, as does dark clouds ahead. Walking toward a cloud that resembles any creature with its jaws wide open means that the Blessed and his team are heading into danger, probably serious danger or an enemy that wants to devour/destroy them. And similar.

Water Leaf: The Blessed individual floats on water like a dry leaf and cannot be drowned even if submerged and held underwater for more than an hour. The Blessed can also swim at a base skill of 55% (or +10% to that skill if the person already has it) and may submerge or dive underwater when it is so desired.

Note: Blessings involving travel, survival, healing, restoration and resurrection are also among her favorites to bestow.

Ginja

The deity known as Ginja represents raw power and the *subterranean world* and all people who live underground: Kobolds, Dwarves, Goblins, and Troglydites, and also appeals to Orcs and Trolls, the giant Jotan and some Titans, so he is often depicted without much detail to his hulking, rough hewn, masculine form. Thus he can represent many different people. Nor does he usually wear clothing or armor, or carry a weapon. He doesn't need them. Ginja is said to be the most physically powerful of the gods of the Aco Pantheon and draws strength from the earth and its molten core, but draws inspiration and strength of spirit from all living things. The bowl Ginja is often depicted holding or carrying represents the world and the bounty it holds, while the pestle represents the power to extract and shape what the world offers its inhabitants.

Built like a bear and as strong as any warrior god, many are surprised to learn that Ginja is gentle and shy. Like the people he represents, he would rather hide underground or wander remote mountaintops, canyons, and wildernesses where he can enjoy the natural beauty and avoid the politics and squabbling of people (and gods). A gifted artist himself, Ginja likes to sculpt and work with his hands, and it is said that some mountains and volcanoes, canyons and strange rock formations are examples of his greatest creations. Among them, the *Great Northern Mountains* designed to contain the minions of the Old Ones locked inside the Land of the Damned and to keep other people out. It is no surprise then that Ginja has a soft place in his heart for sculptors, metal workers, blacksmiths, artists, poets, musicians, and most creative, artful people.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Statue Description: A rough, powerfully built, male figure carved from stone. He is crouched, his right hand touches the ground, the left hand holds a bowl (sometimes a mortar and pestle) which represents the world and all it holds.

Caretakers: As a rule, visiting subterranean people – Dwarves, Kobolds, Goblins, etc., the occasional Jotan Giant, Titan, Rahu-Man, Troll, and Spriggan, and sculptors and artists of all races. However, Ginja does not mind if his garden area is a bit overgrown or wild, because it is more natural.

Artifacts of Note: Ginja's Stone Hammer: A simple looking hammer carved from a single piece of stone. It bestows the skill and endurance of a blacksmith to whoever possesses it. The character can work with metal to make basic objects and tools, shoe a

horse, and maintain, sharpen and repair weapons and armor as if he possessed the *Field Armorer skill* at 95%, and does so in one quarter the usual time! The wielder of the hammer is also impervious to heat, fire, lava, and molten materials.

As a weapon, Ginja's Hammer inflicts 4D6 damage to most mortal beings, 4D6+20 to Earth Elementals and Golems made of stone, metal or any earthen substance.

Ginja's Mighty Pickaxe: This indestructible holy artifact is a metal pick attached to a simple wooden handle that has magic symbols burned into the wood in silver. One end of the of the metal tool is a sharp, pointed pick, the other end a shovel-like axe blade, both one piece shaped from the same piece of iron. According to legend, Ginja made the Pickaxe himself and it was



his favorite tool for mining, tunneling, and fighting. He lost the Mighty Pickaxe toward the end of the war against the Old Ones, only for it to be found and taken up by a Titan Paladin who slew many enemies with it. Ginja took this as a sign for him to pass it on to others, so he blessed it with magical powers said to be drawn from his own essence and lets the tool/weapon find its way into the hands of others as the fates may decree.

Ginja's Mighty Pickaxe was originally giant-size, but magically shrinks or grows to accommodate whoever possesses it. That person is able to make a tunnel his full height through dirt or solid rock at the inhuman speed of two feet (0.3 m) per minute and is said to be able to chop through any substance as if it were weak sandstone. In addition, any tunnel dug by the Mighty Pickaxe is secure and will not collapse for 14 days. If the tunnel is reinforced with timber and support beams during that time, it will stand secure for decades.

The Mighty Pickaxe also bestows the following skill abilities: *Masonry* 95%, *Land Navigation* 90% (+5% underground), *Gemology* 85%, and *Locate Secret Compartments/Doors* 70% (+20% when the structure is made of stone or built underground). Moreover, two times per 24 hours the wielder can cast each of the following spells at no P.P.E. cost to himself: *Breathe without Air*, *Reduce Self*, and *Mystic Portal*, equal to a 20th level Wizard.

As a weapon, Ginja's Mighty Pickaxe inflicts 4D6 damage to most mortal opponents, 5D6+20 to Earth Elementals and Golems made of stone, metal or any substance derived from the earth, and 2D4x100 against Old Ones, Dark Gods who once served them, and Alien Intelligences like them. **Note:** The A.R. (Armor Rating) of opponents with Natural A.R. as well as the A.R. of man-made armor is *two points less* against the Mighty Pickaxe. Thus, an A.R. of 17 is reduced to 15, an A.R. of 15 is reduced to 13, and so on.

Ginja's Mortar and Pestle: Any food or drink placed in the bowl is purged of any poison, parasites, or harmful minerals. Any herbal medicines, brews, soups, stews, or food prepared with the mortar and pestle turn out perfect for whatever is needed. Bonuses for whoever possesses the artifact are +10% to Brewing, Cooking, and Holistic Medicine skills.

Blessings: Find the Earth's Bounty: The Blessed individual can sense the location of edible berries, fruits, nuts, vegetables, crops, mushrooms, roots, bark, and honey, as well as tobacco, healing herbs, healing minerals, and water. When it come to water, the Blessed individual can sense the location of a body of water that is safe to consume up 100 miles (160 km) away, will know what direction to travel and if it is large (probably a lake or river) or small (a pond, stream, etc.). When water is scarce on the surface, and the land is parched, the Blessed individual can sense when there is an underground source of water and how deep he must dig to access it. **Note:** Does not include the ability to locate precious ore and minerals like bronze, silver and gold, nor gems, but the Blessed individual is able to recognize the value of gemstones while this Blessing is in effect.

Subterranean Travel: The Blessed individual never gets lost and can always backtrack the way he came and find his way out, as well as sense underground water and whether it is safe to drink, sense underground peril and traps, and can understand and speak all the languages of subterranean people, including Dwarven, Kobold, Goblin, Trodloydite, and others, at 90% proficiency.



Kule

Among the Cosmic Pantheon, the enigmatic and mercurial deity Kule (pronounced kyool), is said to accept all people who seek enlightenment, and is a symbol of learning, knowledge, magic and mystery. According to ancient texts, Kule brought language and civilization to the Minotaurs, Titans, Rahu-Men, and other eldritch races. As such, the deity may be considered the patron of any people rising out of barbarism in the pursuit of culture and civilization. In these modern times that would be humans and the Wolfen. However, Kule is long forgotten by humans and after being rediscovered in the Garden, most humans have no interest in Kule. As for the canine people, from Coyles and Kankoran to the mighty Wolfen and Bearmen, they have alone taken a strong disliking to the deity and want nothing to do with him/her. Instead, the disenfranchised, the learned who are persecuted or feared for their pursuit of knowledge, sorcerers, Witches, cultists, keepers of forbidden knowledge, and assassins seem to be the ones who gravitate toward the god. While Kule likes to believe she/he is a god for all people, those who pursue knowledge above almost all else, schemers, and power-mongers are among this god's most favored followers. And in the last century, Changelings.

Kule has been discovered and embraced by **Changelings**, who fit many of the criteria noted above. They have quickly adopted this mysterious, faceless deity as their own, and Kule has embraced them for it. In fact, one cult of extremists claim to be the Children of Kule. What, if anything, may arise from this association is yet to be written.

Though the gods of the pantheon do not speak of it, Kule's endless curiosity and pursuit of knowledge leads the shady deity to conduct cruel and harmful experiments. Some of these "experiments" are psychological and sociological in nature, others are physical, and still others involve magic and transformation. To

study the effects of magic, as well as the nature of people and many aspects of the world at large, Kule has been known to set into motion events and ideas that cause discord, strife, and sorrow so he/she may study the outcome and observe how different people react to the same stimuli. This lack of empathy has earned Kule the less known reputation of being a cold and joyless monster. Among the gods in the Pantheon of Aco, only the trickster Puno finds Kule to be fascinating and delightful in her/his own way.

Alignment: Generally considered Anarchist, but other myths suggest Kule may be Miscreant evil. If nothing else, the deity seems to switch from one alignment to another, leaning toward good and helpfulness sometimes and toward evil other times, particularly when angry and vengeful. The rest of the time Kule keeps his/her thoughts and self-serving agendas to himself. The god finds anarchy and change to be exciting and interesting, so she/he is an instigator who likes to stir the pot, inspire ideas (good, bad, and indifferent), provoke people to take action, and can be ruthless, especially in the pursuit of that which the deity desires.

Statue Description: An androgynous figure (can't tell if it is a man or woman, or even human) dressed in a simple gown that hangs down to the sandaled feet and laced up the ankles. The oddly long sleeves hang down below the knees and completely cover the hands. There are no facial features. No nose, no lips, no ears, no eyes, no hair. In the Garden the figure stands as if waiting or looking outward. In other ancient depictions, Kule holds in the right hand a gnarled wooden staff with a small crystal ball at the top, the long sleeves, flowing behind it, and a book in the other.

Caretakers: There is no dedicated group of caretakers. In fact, nobody knows who tends to Kule's statue and the flower-filled garden area around it. Like many statues and their gardens, visitors stop to prune, trim, and care for the area as a gesture of respect and appreciation. Since Changelings now worship Kule, visitors of any shape and appearance could really be some of them in disguise.

Artifacts of Note: Crystal Ball of Mystic Knowledge: A small, clear as glass crystal that lets its owner cast each of the following spells, with no P.P.E. cost to himself, once every 24 hours: Constrain Being, Decipher Magic, Detect Poison, Eyes of Thoth, Locate, Sense Magic, Sense Traps, and Tongues, with the potency of a 6th level Wizard.

Note: If the Crystal Ball is smashed into pieces (it has an A.R. 10 and S.D.C. of 80), it releases a grateful Spirit of Light, a **Tharsis**. Kule had captured and imprisoned the Spirit of Light inside the Crystal Ball as the power source for its magic. As a sign of its appreciation, if it can, it will share what information it knows to help the Player Characters on their current quest or journey, and heal all injured in the party. If evil supernatural beings (or Kule) is in the area and a threat, the Tharsis will linger for up to 12 hours to either keep them at bay or to help fight them.

Mask of Conformity: This is a plain, white, featureless mask made of porcelain that mimics Kule's own. There are openings for the eyes and the thinnest of a slit for a mouth. When pressed against the face, the Mask gently adheres to the skin and stays attached without need of a strap. The Mask may be worn to conceal one's identity, but twice per 24 hour period, the wearer can perform a metamorphosis into any humanoid creature, from Grimbor to Rahu-Man, growing fur and extra limbs and increasing or decreasing in size and mass as required to fit in. When the metamorphosis happens the mask disappears, becoming an invisible

part of him. When slain, the Mask and its wearer return to their normal appearance and the Mask slides off the face.

The ultimate spy device, The Mask of Conformity enables the wearer to look like anyone of any humanoid species, and can change gender and the timber of his voice just as easily. Moreover, the mask wearer can understand and speak the language of the being he is imitating at 75% proficiency, but only while in that form. If the being has wings and can fly, or a prehensile tail and can climb or swing through trees, fins and the ability to swim underwater, etc., so does the transformed Mask wearer. The fake identity is always average in appearance, however, as to not attract unwanted attention because the purpose is to "fit in," but the wearer's attributes and learned skills are unchanged.

Though the wearer of the Mask may "conform" in appearance to fit in among those around him – or as any humanoid being known to him, if he so desires – the imposter does not conform to their ideals or values and is often a wolf in sheep's clothing.

The duration of the metamorphosis is one hour per experience level of the wearer to a maximum of 23 hours. The Mask of Conformity is not indestructible, but has 200 S.D.C. that recovers from any damage inflicted to it at a rate of 8 S.D.C. points per hour.

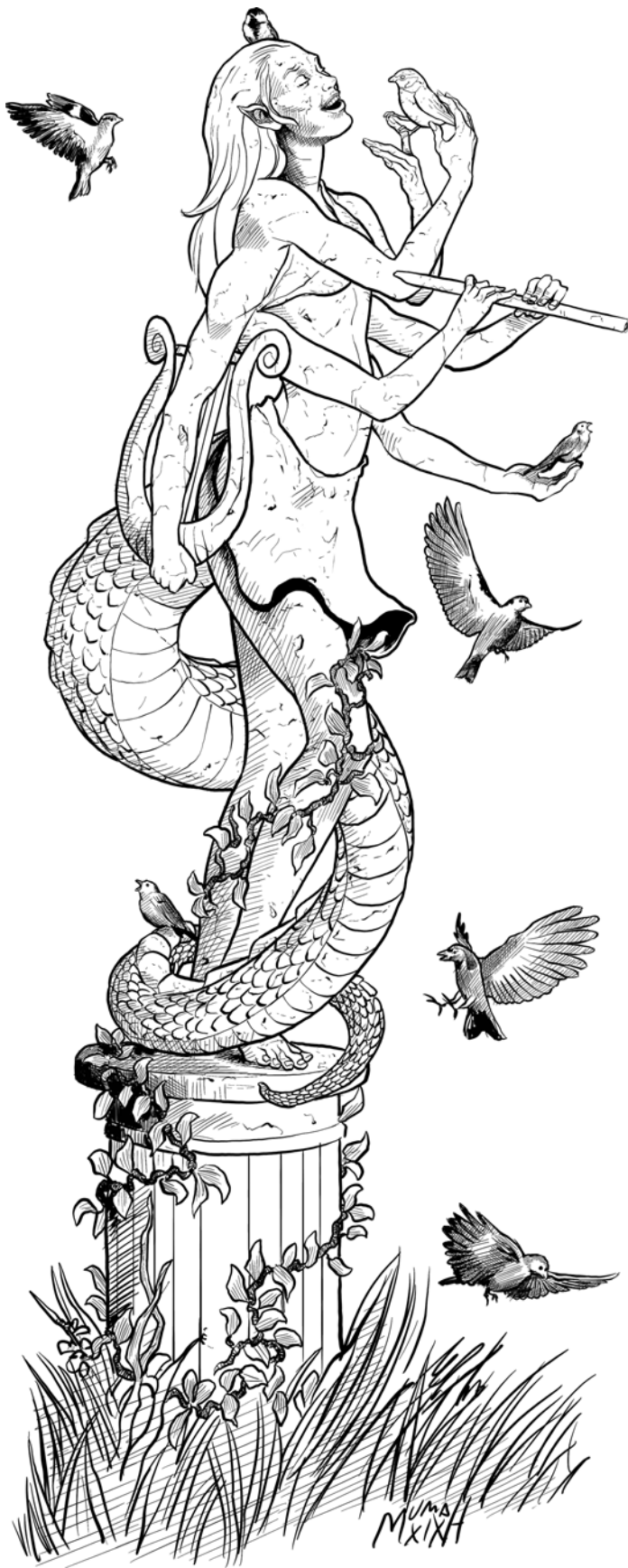
Staff of True Seeing: An indestructible, gnarled wooden staff with a half dozen different gems placed along its length, and a small crystal ball at the top of the staff. By holding the crystal up to his eye, its owner is able to cast each of the following spells, with no P.P.E. cost to himself, once every 24 hours: Detect Concealment, Eyes of the Wolf, Globe of Daylight, Second Sight, See Aura, See the Invisible, See Wards, and X-Ray Vision, with the potency of a 6th level Wizard.

Blessings: Adaptation: The Blessed individual adapts to changing circumstances, crises, and environmental conditions quickly and with minimal penalties or side effects from trauma, sorrow, fear, and insanity. The character heals three times faster than normal, is impervious to insanity, +2 to save vs disease, +3 to save vs possession, and the effects, penalties, and duration of curses, Faerie Food, and debilitating magic such as Agony, Befuddle, Blind, Charm, Confusion, Domination, and similar, are *reduced by half* and have no permanent effects.

No Mercy: The Blessed individual is cock sure of himself and his choices, makes decisive snap decisions, and seldom hesitates once he has made up his mind. Whether the outcome is good or bad for him or those around him, the Blessed individual never second-guesses his choices nor apologizes for them. Like the god who bestows this so-called Blessing, the recipient lacks an empathic connection to his opponents and cares not for what happens to them. When crossed or opposed, the Blessed individual shows his enemies and rivals no mercy, humiliating or crushing them utterly, and taking satisfaction and joy in their embarrassment and defeat. Bonuses: +1 on Perception Rolls, +1 attack per melee round, +1 on initiative, +1 to save vs illusions and Horror Factor.

Ruthless Resolve: The recipient of this Blessing can cast the following spells, once each, per 24 hours, without cost to his own P.P.E. reserve: Charismatic Aura, Calling, Charm, Domination, Escape, Life Drain, Memory Bank, Multiple Image, and Repel Animals.

Understand all Spoken Languages: Upon hearing any language, the Blessed individual is able to understand and speak it at 95% proficiency. This ability lasts for as long as the Blessing is bestowed which could be an hour, 24 hours, days, or years.



Ma or Mati

Mati (pronounce Mah-tee) or Ma for short, is the goddess of music, songs, and sounds. According to myth she filled the world with sound, from the humble cricket and howling wind, to song birds and music. Mati is the most innocent of the gods in this pantheon and functions as a muse to inspire singers and writers,

musicians and theatrical performers, all of whom she adores. She uses sound to charm and soothe, as well as to annoy and torment, and when she must, as a weapon of destructive power – a thunder clap to cause an avalanche or a sonic blast that deafens or inflicts damage. Though beautiful and lithe, sweet Ma is strong and resilient, and able to handle herself in battle. According to one ancient and forbidden text, she is said to be the daughter of an unnamed human-looking goddess (some say Rurga or Bennu the Phoenix) and one of the deities of Dragonwright.

To get around she soars through the sky, bareback, upon a white Pegasus and is often accompanied by a flock of song birds. Riding into battle she sits astride a mighty Sphinx accompanied by a pair of Gryphons, all of whom love her so they will sacrifice themselves to protect her. She is also friends with the noble Centaur God Kirron.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Statue Description: A beautiful Elven woman with pointed ears and the tail of a dragon! She is usually depicted scantily clad or completely nude. Ma or Mati has multiple arms, typically 6, but can make as many as 6-10 arms and hands appear and is sometimes depicted as such. A few of the arms hold various musical instruments like a Lyre (string instrument like a small, hand-held harp), flute, Pan pipes, a lute, finger cymbals, and similar, a song bird like a robin (or a small cute bird) perched on one finger.

The garden area around her is one of the most beautiful and always filled with song birds and other musical animals such as crickets, cicada, frogs, and buzzing insects. In fact, many a visitor swears to have seen birds and butterflies or fireflies, Sprites, and Faeries dancing around the statue in the early morning sunlight, evening, and nighttime.

Caretakers: There is no one dedicated group of caretakers. However Faeries, Sprites, and Brownies often tend to it, as well as the occasional Grogach. Visiting minstrels and bards who often find ideas and inspiration in Ma's garden as well as the four-armed giant Rahu-Men and some worshipers of Dragonwright also keep the grounds trimmed and lovely.

Artifacts of Note: Mati's Dance Drums: A pair of small, high quality tribal drums. *When used with positive intentions*, such as to celebrate, dance and have fun, as well as when accompanying other instruments or song, the drums add to the quality of the music (+10% to the skills of all others singing or performers playing an instrument). This happy music helps to uplift everyone's spirits. Ideal for celebrations and boosting morale as the people leave feeling positive and happy.

When used with negative intent, the beating of the drums sound ominous, and create a sense of worry and dread among all enemies or rivals who hear the drum (up to one mile/1.6 km away). They are -2 on Perception Rolls, -1 on initiative, -1 to on all combat bonuses (strike, parry, etc.) and -10% on the performance of skills, unless they make a save vs magic of 16 or higher!

When used in a magic ritual the Dance Drums raises the available amount of P.P.E., providing an extra +1D6 P.P.E. per *each participant* who is dancing, singing, an performing in the ritual. This can be a great amount when many people are willing participants in the magic ritual.

Golden Finger Cymbals: A pair of small, finger cymbals that when worn on the right hand and clapped together, lets loose a bolt of lightning and a delightful chime. The electrical blast is +4 to strike, does 4D6 damage and has a range is 700 feet (213 m). Each blast counts as one melee attack.

When worn on the left hand and clapped together, they unleash a sonic blast that inflicts 2D6 damage and has a 50% chance of knocking an opponent off his feet. Victims of knock down lose initiative and one melee attack. Range is 350 feet (107 m) and each blast counts as one melee attack.

Lyre of Serenity: Any gentle or happy song played causes the listeners within a 200 foot (61 m) diameter around the lyre player to relax and feel calm and lackadaisical, lazy and lethargic. This includes animals and monsters as well as people. They are not likely to notice anything unusual or odd, and are slow to respond when they do: -4 on initiative, -2 attack per melee, reduce all combat bonuses and Speed attribute by half. To save vs the Lyre of Serenity/magic, the victims must first be on edge or see something wrong or unusual, at which point they need to roll a 15 or higher to save. A failed save means they ignore what they thought they noticed and go back to listening to the dreamy music. If attacked, the spell is broken for that one person, the ensuing fight is barely noticed by those around them until they are attacked or roll a save in response to the fight near them.

Moreover, people whose ears are plugged with cotton or wax, magically made deaf, or are known to the lyre player and deliberately excluded from the effects of the enchantment, are not affected and perform at their full capacity. Not only that, but they can perform *Espionage* and *Rogue skills* against the lackadaisical victims with a +20% bonus. This is because serene and sanguine listeners of the sweet music are not likely to notice someone performing Pick Pockets even when they or the person in front of them are the victim, or Pick Locks in the corner, or a Disguise or an Escape, or Palming, or Concealment, or a search for a secret door (Locate Secret Compartment/Doors), a person sneaking around or out the door (Prowl), etc. **Note:** The victims of Serenity are NOT completely charmed and oblivious to what's happening around them, so the unaffected characters using such skills must still exercise finesse, expertise, and caution. A failed roll on their skill will be noticed by the individual they are performing it on or against, and counts as something wrong or unusual to give that victim a chance to save vs magic and break the enchantment on them. An attack or any physical pain automatically snaps the victim out of the daze.

In the alternative, if the player of the Lyre of Serenity deliberately plays a song or repetitive sound that is annoying and difficult to enjoy, it makes all who hear it agitated and aggressive. This makes them cranky, alert, and inclined to notice anyone or anything that is wrong, out of place or a threat. +2 on Perception Rolls, +1 on initiative, +1 to save vs magic and psionic attacks, and those not affected are -20% in the performance of Espionage and Rogue skills.

Nightingale Flute: The sweet music from this magic flute charms *feathered beasts*, making them passive and non-aggressive. This applies to all birds including birds of prey and game animals as well as Gryphons and the rare Pegasus, making them easy to catch. Moreover, the flute player can approach the animal, which is as tame as can be toward him, and immediately mount and ride the feathered animal bareback, provided it is large enough to carry him; Horsemanship skill of 80%. The animal remains obedient to the flutist for up to three hours, but only he can ride it. Should the animal sustain injuries, the enchantment is broken after it loses half of its Hit Points, and it flies away. **Note:** Though a sentient being, the Nightingale Flute also charms the strange being known as the **Adram**, compelling it to stay calm,

not attack or steal, and to mostly tell the truth and be helpful, but only for as long as the music is playing and the creature is not under attack. (See the **Monsters & Animals sourcebook** for details about the Adram, as well as the Gryphon, Pegasus and hundreds of other creatures.)

Blessings: Keen Ear (Imitate Voices and Sounds): Recognizes all sounds as well as the quality of music. The Blessed individual can identify the sounds of birds, bugs, animals, musical instruments, common noises, the squeak of a hinge, and the voices of peoples.

Not only that, but the individual can imitate voices, animal calls, and other sounds with pitch perfect quality that would fool a person's own mother. This provides a bonus of +15% to the following skills: Disguise, Imitate Voices & Impersonation, Public Speaking, and Sing; +5% to Language skills and Interrogation.

Play Musical Instrument like a Professional: The Blessed Individual is able to play one chosen instrument to divine perfection, solo or with a band or orchestra. All who accompany the Blessed up their game and play better (+10% skill bonus for each musician). The music is so beautiful and compelling, the Blessed individual is able to move his or her audience, filling them with whatever emotion he or she desires. This music is so wonderful it always raises people's spirits, boosting morale and making people feel positive, happy and productive; +5% bonus on the performance of all skills, and work 20% more quickly and efficiently for the next 8 hours.

In the alternative, the music may be melancholy and haunting, making listeners feel sad and introspective, -2 on Perception Rolls and -1 on initiative, work 20% slower, and are -5% on skill performance for the next 8 hours.

Sing like an Angel: The Blessed individual is able to sing with absolute perfection, solo or with another or a group in symphonic harmony. The singing is so beautiful and compelling the Blessed individual is able to move his or her audience filling them with whatever emotion he or she desires. Thus the singer may be able to move people to tears and get them to agree to be merciful (forgive a crime, release a prisoner), or kind and generous (help someone in need, feed, clothe, house, provide medical care and comfort, etc.). Or it can stoke emotions of patriots or righteous indignation to get them to take a stand, not to be afraid to fight or to want to fight right then and there. The latter can cause an impromptu protest, demonstration, a violent riot and looting, or an angry mob demanding justice and blocking streets, or seeking vengeance and blood (a lynch mob). Likewise, the singer can make people feel nostalgic, warm and fuzzy, loving and appreciative, moved to pray or sing or hold hands and hug.

It is a sort of psychic attack on the emotions requiring a save vs psionic attack of 14 or higher. A save means the singing sounds nice but does not touch their emotions nor compel them to action in any way. Those who do not save are caught up in their emotions for as long as the song can be heard, and for 1D6 minutes after it stops. In addition, those under the influence lose track of time and are unaware of things happening around them; -4 on Perception Rolls, -2 on initiative, and stop doing whatever they were doing to listen to the singing and get lost in the emotions or beauty of the singing. As you can see, this Blessing can be used for good, selfish or bad intent, so it is granted with great care and deliberate intent.

Ventriloquism: The Blessed individual can throw his voice up to 20 feet (6.1 m) away without the slightest trace that he is

speaking. This ability can be used for fun to entertain, to trick others, or to confuse and distract an opponent. (“What was that? Who’s there?”)

Curse (special): Earworm (curse): The victim of this curse cannot get a particular song or melody out of his head as it plays non-stop over and over again in an endless loop. This is distracting and frustrating and makes sleeping restless and difficult, meditation impossible, and inflicts the following penalties after 72 hours: -2 on Perception Rolls, -2 on initiative, -20% on skill performance and reduce Spd by 20%. If so afflicted for more than a month, the victim may develop an insanity. Roll percentile or pick one.

01-20% Hates music and musicians and tries to stop or destroy the source of the terrible noise.

21-40% Phobic response. Dislikes music and singing and wants to get as far away from it as possible. If he can make the music stop without resorting to violence, he will. Otherwise suffers the same penalties as above if forced to listen to it for more than 2D4 minutes.

41-60% Paranoia. Dislikes Bards, musicians, and singers, and never trusts them regardless of their alignment and good deeds, and always suspects and assumes the worst of them.

61-80% Depressive response. Becomes despondent as if in a trance when subjected to music by instrument or signing. Reduce speed, number of attacks, combat bonuses, and skill performance by half.

81-00% Psychotic response. Music in all its forms, even humming and whistling, causes immediate and intense agitation. The victim will demand it be stopped and is quick to resort to threats and violence to make it stop. (“I said no music!!”)

Puno the Devious

Puno represents the duality of human nature: Capable of great good and kindness, but equally capable of great evil and selfishness. He is considered to be the god of philosophy, writing, and politics, as well as lies, deception and trickery. Puno is disarmingly charming and playful and has a great sense of humor. He loves to drink, party, and enjoy the pleasures of life, but can turn sullen and vindictive at the drop of a hat. Puno enjoys practical jokes and surprisingly can take a joke, but does not like to be publicly humiliated, and the perpetrators of such humiliation shall pay dearly for such an offense.

This fickle deity is generally loyal to the gods in the Aco Pantheon, but to few others. A scheming opportunist, Puno likes to get involved in the schemes and conflicts of others, however, he may change his position and switch sides as circumstances develop or as his whims and desires dictate. He especially enjoys secretly supporting both sides in a conflict to get the best deal for himself from both. Puno also likes to pit one enemy against another, pulling their strings from the shadows, and all for the fun and challenge of it. Puno tries to take advantage of every situation that comes his way and seems to manage to come out on top regardless of who wins or loses. While some see his actions as betrayal, he considers himself to be ruthless and sharp; a player who knows how to manipulate and take advantage of any given situation (and people) and come out on top. However, he always does so with good humor and a “this is business, nothing personal” attitude. When someone beats him at his own game, Puno is likely to be a good sport about it, not hold a grudge, laugh,

and compliment them. He is impressed by those who are able to trick or outsmart him, and they win his respect and favor, at least temporarily, provided they did not publicly humiliate him in the process. To Puno, most of life is a game. One he enjoys playing and doesn’t mind cheating at to win.

This trickster god is not so much evil as he is a cunning con artist and instigator who only looks out for himself or whoever has won his favor for the moment. Speaking of which, the charming cheat has a soft spot for children and beautiful women. That includes Aco, who he adores and for whom he would consider doing almost anything. Though he would never admit it, he also grudgingly respects and admires the Juggernaut and all he and Aco stand for, not that Puno could live by their standards. As a result, the Trickster has helped and protected Aco and the Juggernaut as well as the innocent Mati, more times than anyone could imagine. That includes the gods themselves. Puno has worked hard to cultivate his image and reputation as the charming and irascible rogue who is only out for himself, and dangerous to any who crosses him, so he cannot be seen as soft or caring. Thus, his help and acts of charity for his fellow deities are done from the shadows and through third parties unaware they are doing his bidding. His affection and respect for the three gods are among his most closely guarded secrets. (Of course, Aco knows, but she returns the favor by not letting on, not even to the Juggernaut who dislikes Puno.)

Anyone who has dealings with the cunning deity should not be fooled by Puno’s gentleman gambler act. He is a profiteer who can be an utterly ruthless and manipulative cutthroat capable of cruel and terrible revenge. He seldom stops to think about how his actions may hurt others, and when he does, he seldom cares. It is all part of life’s game. This means you can never be sure when Puno is being sincere and true and when he is lying and trying to manipulate you; or when his whim has changed and you have gone from friend or ally to his next victim or a pawn in a bigger scheme.

Alignment: Anarchist through and through. Outside his own pantheon, Puno has a reputation among the other gods that he is an untrustworthy conniver who betrays his friends and allies.

According to dreams and visions given to people who know little or nothing about the deity, but are trying to connect with Puno, he tells them that he is noble and cunning, and only wants to help them. In reality, any quest he may send them on will have some benefit for him. He also informs them he was bold and clever enough to trick many minions of the Old Ones and set them up for ambush and defeat. And did so without the Great Old Ones ever knowing he was responsible. Whether such stories are true or lies is another matter entirely.

Statue Description: Puno has the head, horns, and upper body of a Minotaur warrior, and the legs of a bull as if it were standing on its hind legs (Minotaurs have human-like legs), and the black feathered wings of a vulture.

Caretakers: There is no dedicated group of caretakers and Puno’s garden is always one of the most unkempt and overgrown. The Minotaurs, gamblers, thieves, con artists, and scoundrels that worship him care little about the tending of a garden.

Artifacts of Note: Talisman of Change (Metamorphosis): The Trickster deity can assume any form and so can any wearing this talisman said to be made from two of his own feathers. It may be worn around the neck or on a bracelet or pinned to a hat or article of clothing. When held and the wearer concentrates upon the

metamorphosis desired, he may turn into any living creature larger than a rat but no larger than a Minotaur: a large lizard, snake, cat, dog, wolf, hawk, horse, Gnome, human, Elf, Orc, Wolfen, and any humanoid, male or female. If worn as a necklace the talisman can remain on the animal or person, its gold chain magically growing or shrinking to accommodate the size and shape of the new form. Otherwise, the magic item must be guarded by a trusted ally, and who can be trusted with such a powerful and rare magic item.

The duration of the metamorphosis is for as long as desired, be it minutes, hours, days, or weeks. The transformed individual can return to his true, original form at will even without the talisman, but cannot transform again unless he possesses it. If the creature he has metamorphosed into can fly, climb, swim, etc., so can the transformed user of the talisman, but his attributes and learned skills are unchanged. He can also speak in animal form.

When in possession of the talisman, metamorphosis can be performed as often as three times per 24 hours.



The Imposter's Talisman is not indestructible and had 120 S.D.C. If reduced to as little as one S.D.C. point Puno can magically restore it, if he should choose to do so. If destroyed while the owner is transformed, he is forever locked in that form. Only Puno or Abo (or Thoth) can return the person to normal, but they will want something in return.

The Little Helper: A small, indestructible, silver-plated throwing dagger, easily palmed and concealed. +2 to strike when thrown, inflicts 1D6+2 damage, and magically returns to the thrower. Maximum range is 100 feet (30.5 m). The other magical feature that helps one such as Puno and his followers is the dagger's ability to fit into any lock or manacle, no matter how small or large the space for a key, and open it.

Blessings: Craft of the Deceiver: The Blessed individual is charming and blessed in skills of deception and manipulation.

Bonuses: Increase M.A. attribute to 22 (+4 if M.A. is already 20 or higher), +1 on all Perception Rolls, and +1 to disarm.

Skills: Disguise 90%, Imitate Voices & Impersonation 80%, Prowl 70%, and the ability to understand and speak all languages the moment he hears it spoken 60%.

Craft of the Cunning: The Blessed becomes more aware of the criminal world and ways to avoid trouble and capture.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize thieves, con artists, smugglers, and other criminals, and +5% on all Espionage and Rogue skills.

Skills/Abilities: Escape 80%, Forgery 75%, Palming 70%, Streetwise 65%, and the ability to cast the spell Concealment two times per 24 hour period. The spell has the duration and potency of a 5th level Wizard.

Craft of the Seeker: The Blessed individual has an eye for finding and acquiring information and things of value.

Bonuses: +1 to all Perception Rolls and +1 to roll with punch/fall/impact.

Skills/Abilities: Surveillance 80%, Pick Locks 75%, Intelligence 70%, and Track Humanoids 65%; the ability to read Elven, Dwarven and all human written languages 60%, and the ability to cast the Decipher Magic spell upon himself once every 24 hours. The spell has the duration and potency of a 5th level Wizard.

Craft of the Thief: The Blessed individual is a thief and a scalawag who may use his Blessing to do good or for personal enrichment.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize fellow thieves, bandits, and pirates, as well as the authorities, and +5% on all Rogue skills.

Skills/Abilities: Gemology 65%, Prowl 80%, Pick Pockets 75%, Pick Locks 70%, and the ability to cast Fool's Gold once every 24 hours. The spell has the duration and potency of a 5th level Wizard.

Luck of the Gambler: The Blessed individual is a risk taker, whether it is with games of chance or in life.

Bonuses: +1 to dodge, +3 to roll with punch/fall/impact and +1 to save vs illusions.

Skills: Card Shark 90%, Palming 80%, Recognize Weapon Quality 70%, and the ability to cast Blinding Flash twice every 24 hours. The spell has the potency of a 5th level Wizard.

Wunja

Wunja is an aloof wunderkind even to the deities of its own pantheon. A god of ideas, creativity, and visions, Wunja instills inspiration and a sense of wonder to all people, and some say to the gods as well. The deity lives in a dream dimension as a spirit or energy without body or form. Wunja communicates only in dreams and through visions where he appears as a disembodied, soothing voice, or as a vaguely humanoid ghostlike wisp, or a simple sphere of light the size of a coconut. As the Bringer of Ideas, Wunja has little interest in material things, riches, or power. His area of interest is the metaphysical and conceptual, of intangible beauty and wonder, and of emotions, feelings, and the intellect. Wunja gets the same excitement and thrill from a new idea as an athlete in physical combat. It is little wonder then, Wunja the Dreamer is detached from the physical world. And yet his psychic connection to life and fascination with ideas and creation gives the deity a profound understanding of people and the emotions, fears, and desires that drive them.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Statue Description: People have trouble relating to a glowing ball of light or a flowing mist that takes on a vaguely humanoid shape. As a result, Wunja is usually depicted in sculpture as a humanoid figure who looks more like a featureless mannequin than any specific race or species of people, and there is no strong indication of gender. In the Garden, Wunja's statue has long legs, a thin body, undeterminable gender, and abstract arms and hands that could just as easily be the legs and hooves of a horse. Of all the statues in the Garden, it is arguably the strangest, for though it is presumably made of earthly, polished black stone, the universe seems to be reflected across it. Touching the statue, a visitor feels only the cool smooth surface of stone, but night and day, stars and glowing orbs slowly move across its visage. Whether they are real suns and constellations or a representation of Wunja, himself, is anyone's guess. A tongue of flame like that of a small campfire, burns floating above Wunja's head, and a shaft of sunlight shines through the trees and upon the statue like a spotlight, night and day, regardless of cloud cover.

Caretakers: There is no dedicated group of caretakers for the statue of Wunja. And though people from all walks of life visit and gaze upon the strange statue, often for a long time. Most walk away scratching their heads. It is the common man who is looking to advance his or her station in life, or who hungers to prove their valuable to those who only see a peasant or a nobody who seems to find inspiration and courage from Wunja. The god also attracts dreamers and visionaries of every stripe, from men of science and engineering to artists, poets, storytellers, and those who possess psychic abilities.

Artifacts of Note: Wunja's Black Box: A polished wooden, black cube that could be a child's building block, small enough to fit easily inside a pouch or pocket. Whoever possesses the cube is prone to finding solutions by thinking outside the box and sees the beauty and wonder of the world all around him.

The box instills its owner with a bonus of +2 to all Perception Rolls, the ability to see through illusions after one melee round, a sense of connection to the universe and everything in it, and instills the following psionic abilities: Commune with Animals (6), Commune with Spirits (8), Dispel Spirits (10), Empathy (4), Meditation (0), and Sense Dimensional Anomaly (6), along with 80 I.S.P. points. The abilities and I.S.P. come from the Black



Box, which regenerates the 80 I.S.P. at the start of every new 24 hour cycle. Without the box, the person has only 40 I.S.P. available and the abilities and I.S.P. vanish completely after 2D6+10 hours. Wunja's Black Box is what provides the I.S.P., the psionics, and bonuses.

The Spark: Also known as the Spark Gem, it is a clear diamond containing a tiny sphere of light that moves around inside the gemstone like a firefly inside a jar. The person who possesses this indestructible artifact sees the world in a positive light and has a hopeful and energetic attitude that is difficult to dampen even with magic or psionics (+2 to save vs Agony, Domination, and Charm spells, as well as the psionic attacks Catatonic Strike, Empathic Transmission, Mental Illusions, Mentally Possess Others, Mind Wipe, Nightmares, and any sort of Charm or mental manipulation.)

Touching The Spark to a another person's forehead or temple has a number of possible results:

1. It may spark an important or helpful forgotten memory, clue, or bit of information, provided it was there in the first place.

2. Calm and bring temporary clarity to a victim of shock, trauma, or madness to provide an important or helpful memory, clue, or bit of information. When the person slips back into his tormented state of mind, he is calmer and more at peace for the next 48 hours.

3. Sparks the person's will to reject demonic possession, +20% bonus for a successful of an exorcism (magic or psionic), or provides the victim of a magical Trance, Hypnotic Suggestion, or Charm, or an illusion, another chance to save, this time with a +2 bonus.

4. Spark Truth. When combined with a compelling or compassionate plea or argument, and touched to the forehead or temple, a person withholding information *may* feel regret and confess or reveal information that can protect or save lives, stop a tragedy or crime, or right an injustice. Game Masters, either use your discretion regarding the result or roll 1D20. A roll of 13 or higher sparks a moment of conscience and the truth, or the revealing of vital information or a clue.

In addition, when placed on the chest above the heart of a wounded or dying character, it sparks his will to live, providing a +20% to save vs coma, +2 to save vs poison or disease, and restores 1D6+1 Hit Points.

Blessings: Wunja is able to see the potential in mortals and likes to inspire and encourage those who have what it takes to make their dreams come true. Thus, his dream quests, missions, visions, and inspiration are often journeys of self-discovery for the Blessed individual.

Follow Your Dream: The Blessed individual is inspired to reach for the sky and to follow his dream and strive to achieve his heart's desire. This is almost always a noble desire, purpose, or high ideal.

Bonuses: +4 to any one attribute (this is permanent!) but is often one of the three mental attributes, +20% to one of his existing skills of choice, +10% to one other skill, and +5% to one other. Skill bonuses should be assigned by the player and ideally applied to skills that should help him follow his or her dream.

Skills: Art 65%, History 70%, Horsemanship: General 75% and Mathematics: Basic or Astronomy and Navigation 80%.

Sense of Wonder: The ideals and spirit of the Blessed individual cannot be disillusioned or crushed. The Blessed stays true to himself and his noble ideals despite the odds or the litany of naysayers. His resolve and nobility are an inspiration to others who are inspired to help him in any small way they can: medical treatment, food and water, a place to hide, information, clues, small amount of money (4D6 gold), and reasonable support.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to recognize clues and details others may have missed and impervious to torture and interrogation. No matter the amount of mental or physical torture, threats and questioning, the Blessed Individual cannot be broken. Not the threat of death or Telepathy probes or mind control of any kind can force him to betray a friend or confidence, or pry information out of him that could hurt another person. Loyal and trustworthy to a fault.

Skills/Abilities: Detect Ambush 75%, Public Speaking 70% and the psionic ability *Sixth Sense* at will and at no I.S.P. cost for five minutes at a time.

Sweet Dream of Redemption: This Blessing is reserved for individuals who are sincerely looking to redeem themselves for past wrongdoings, a terrible mistake, horrible wrong, or a wicked or selfish life. The Blessed individual seeks to change his ways and find his way back to honor and goodness, or to become a different, better person. This is likely to require 1D4+2 quests or missions.

Special: If the one who dreams of redemption manages to stay true to his personal goal of doing what's right and becoming a better person, the character's alignment changes to Scrupulous good, regardless of where it started. The trick then is to stay on the right track.

Bonuses: +3 to recognize temptation to fight or avoid it, and +3 to recognize injustice so he may be able to help right the wrong, +1 to disarm, +2 to pull punch, +1 to save vs punch/fall/impact, and +10% to save vs coma and death.

Skills/Abilities: Detect Ambush 75%, First Aid 80%, and the psionic ability of *Empathy* at will and at no I.S.P. cost for five minutes at a time.

Kirron

The Sky King (Centaur)

Though not an official member of the Pantheon of Aco, Kirron is an ancient deity known to have strong ties and associations with them. According to an ancient myth, Kirron, Mati, and Daymu have gone on adventures together as well as fought at each other's side across the cosmos many times. A heroic deity of the Centaurs, Kirron is said to have raced across the sky delivering messages, rescuing the wounded, and transporting combat troops across the world like a blazing comet in the fight against the Old Ones and their legion of minions.

Kirron is a noble warrior with the soul of a poet and a singer of songs. Though he is still worshiped by Centaurs, their numbers are small, and Kirron is mostly forgotten by all other people, including Elves and Titans who once worshiped him long ago. Thus the fading deity seeks to make himself known to modern people, particularly cavalry soldiers, knights, equestrians, and warriors. Knights errant and wandering adventurers, as well as Centaurs, should find this noble warrior god very appealing.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Statue Description: A handsome, male Centaur Warrior, shield in one hand, sword in the other, rearing up on his hind legs.

Caretakers: There is no one dedicated group of caretakers, though Centaurs living on the island do come to worship and take care of the statue's garden when the mood strikes them. Centaurs, long mistreated and enslaved by many other species of people, are reclusive and avoid contact with most people, so they visit



the Garden at night and the early morning hours when few if any people are present.

Over the last 50 years, Kirron has been discovered and adopted by one the most unlikely of people, the nomadic *Wayfarers*. They tend his Garden whenever they visit, as do calvary warriors,

knights, and equestrians, who recognize a kindred spirit in the Centaur.

Artifact: Hooves of Steel: A set of iron horseshoes that are indestructible, never wear out, and whatever horse or Centaur wears them sees its speed increase an additional 15 mph (24 km) added to the wearer's normal speed. The Centaur or animal wearing them never goes lame and does not fatigue, enabling the Centaur or horse to run at full speed for up to 48 hours before needing to slow down, stop to eat or drink water, and rest for 1D4 hours.

Sky Chariot: This legendary artifact is a war chariot with rails to hold onto along the edge. It is large enough to hold as many as four human-sized riders. When attached to a team of 2-4 horses, the animals' speed is increased by 20%, the warriors experience a smooth ride regardless of the terrain or speed, and can fire bow weapons or throw javelins and spears without needing to hold on for fear of falling off. Moreover, the horses can leap a distance of 15 feet across (4.6 m) and up to 10 feet (3 m) high, and have the steeds, chariot, and all, landing soft as a feather at full gallop without losing its rider(s).

When pulled by a pair or quartet of Centaurs, the team can run and pull the chariot up into the air to 300 feet (91.4 m) high, with as many as four human-size passengers riding in the chariot.

Speed on the ground when pulled by Centaurs: 30 mph (48 km) added to their normal speed.

Speed in the sky when pulled by 2-4 Centaurs: 60 mph (96 km), added to the normal speed.

Whether on the ground or in the air, the Centaurs can fight, usually with bows or javelins, but at half their number of attacks as they are focused mainly on racing at the enemy and doing what their warrior passenger(s) need of them.

Kirron's Flight Javelin: The Javelin is one of Kirron's favorite weapons and this slender, magic weapon, tipped with blue steel that faintly glows, inflicts 4D6 damage and returns to the thrower (teleports) after hitting. Throwing Range: 900 feet (274 m). When not needed as a weapon, the Flight Javelin turns into a toothpick that can be stowed in a pocket, pouch, saddlebag, or clenched between the teeth.

Human Gods

Humans have existed for tens of thousands of years, but the Time of Man only stretches back for the last six thousand years or so, and is considered to have begun after the collapse of Elven and Dwarven civilization two thousand years after the Elf-Dwarf war. The Stone Age spirits and gods from primitive eras millennia earlier in the human saga, before recorded human history, have been long forgotten. They never had the following or longevity of full-fledged gods with ties to great pantheons, and many of these small-time divine beings have been replaced.

Gods from the first human kingdoms, the era of the **Prestida Kings** in the Old Kingdom mountains, hail back to a lost age of prehistory whose records have been all but destroyed. At that time, humans were essentially hill tribes that grew in sophistication, mainly thanks to education and guidance from the Elves, and in the process of enlightenment many of their old idols were left behind for the worship of more "civilized" gods.

In their expansion, both the Western Empire and the Eastern Territory conquered, displaced or absorbed many smaller hu-

man tribes and nationalities, not to mention pockets of culturally unique Dwarves, Elves, Orcs, Goblins, Kobolds and other races. Many of the gods that these natives were once beholden to are now lost to time, their followers gone over to *Dragonwright*, the *Northern Pantheon*, or the *Church of Light and Dark*. See the *Yin-Sloth/Southern Gods* section for more ancient lost gods once worshiped in the vast southern jungles by ancient civilizations that rose and fell long ago, and nobody, not Elf nor dragon members.

Loecin the Horseman

Loecin the Horseman is an ancient god from what is now the Western Empire. Originally a patron of the horse-tribes of the *Kighfalon Plains*, his followers grew fewer and fewer as the tribes of horsemen settled down into cities and farms and left their nomadic lifestyle behind. Where horse-archers and mounted warriors once rode across hundreds of miles of grassy plains there are walls and fences, pastures and manors, and the fine horses raised here are all born the property of knights and nobles.

With long hair and leather armor, Loecin looks the part of an ancient mounted warrior from a time before humans had really developed knights and metal weapons. The world he remembers was one of campfires upon the open plains, where a camp or a caravan was the closest thing to what we would call civilization. These nomads prayed to Loecin for their horses to be sure-footed, give birth to strong foals, and that the land would always be plentiful for grazing.

Unlike so many gods who met a violent end or whose worshipers were slaughtered, Loecin simply faded away as his name was forgotten in the outside world. The days where lone riders would see the giant god and his fabled white horse off on the horizon were over. The ancient warriors who invoked his name as they tended to their mounts or charged into battle, are long gone.

Since being uncovered in the Garden of the Gods a few decades ago, knights and adventurers are rediscovering the tales of heroism and daring not only of Loecin, but of the horsemen who once worshiped him and called for his blessings. This is especially true in the kingdom of men – the *Eastern Territory* – where new knights of new nobility, heroes, and adventurers are carving out their place in the wild forests. It is also true on Lopan where the equestrian god has been adopted by the Centaurs living in the less developed portions of the island. The worship of Loecin is rumored to have also spread among some Centaur tribes in **Ophid's Grasslands**. The Knights-Fossar also hold Loecin in high esteem and count him among the deities they turn to for blessings and inspiration. For his part, Loecin welcomes all who choose to honor and worship him, be they human, Centaur, or other people.

Though such reports are usually attributed to too much drink, there have been a few accounts from visitors, often knights and equestrians participating in the Lopanic Games, who claim to have seen the fabled god riding across the land on his Great White Warhorse Windsteed. Others claim to have been visited by Loecin in their dreams or while meditating in the Garden. For them, the warrior and huntsman deity brings encouragement or suggests ways for them to challenge themselves to greater accomplishments. All of which gets people talking and wins the ancient horseman new believers who call upon his favor. Sadly, elsewhere in the world, Loecin's followers are few and far be-



tween. Civilized people in places such as the Western Empire, Timiro, Bizantium, and even the Old Kingdom and Land of the South Winds see Loecin as nothing more than a sentimental relic of a bygone era. Not a contemporary god for people of today.

Also Known As: Loecin the Equestrian and the Centaurs' deity.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

The Statue: An athletic horseman on the back of his mighty warhorse Windsteed. He has a sword at his side and a bow in his hands. Loecin and his horse both have eyes of diamonds inseparable from the statue itself, no matter how much a visitor may try to pry or dig them loose.

Caretakers: The **Kighfalon Riders** are a group of acolytes who worship Loecin, recruited from amongst the riders, horse breeders and stable hands of the Kighfalon Plains in the Western Empire. Their goal is to reintroduce the worship of Loecin into the Empire, but they are a small and poor organization with no ties to any of the large churches, so progress has been slow. The Knights-Fossar, Long Bowmen, and the occasional Lopan Centaur also drops by the statue to pray and clean up the area.

Artifacts of Note: Windsteed's Reins and Bridal: This enchanted set of reins allows any horse to be ridden comfortably and safely without a saddle. The rider sits on the horse secure and unable to be thrown off against his will. The reins add a bonus of +20% to all Horsemanship skills, and those without horsemanship receive the equivalent of Horsemanship: General at a proficiency of 65% when using the reins. Whenever the artifact is placed on a wild horse, the animal becomes tame enough for the rider to mount it, and after 30 minutes of riding, is tame and

willing to be saddled and ridden by anyone who treats it with kindness.

Loecin's Reins are rumored to have been lost somewhere in the Old Kingdom when the knight who had them was slain in an ambush while putting down an Orc invasion a few hundred years ago. Another rumor has it that Windsteed's Reins and Bridal were recovered and quietly brought back to Kighfalon Plains before vanishing again. This legend suggests the reins may be somewhere in the Kighfalon Plains. However, whoever possesses them may have no idea how valuable they are, or why they seem to make riding any horse so much easier.

Blessed Barding: Loecin's famed white warhorse Windsteed was said to be dressed in a leather and silver barding only when the warrior god was entering into the fiercest of battles. Eons ago, Loecin lent his armor to an Elven Longbow horseman entering into a battle against the forces of darkness. The gift helped the Elf warrior and his companions win the battle. Impressed, Loecin told him to keep the barding and when he no longer had need of it, to give it to another worthy horseman. The Blessed Barding has been passed on countless times and participated in many battles before it disappeared. According to legend, the Blessed Barding and its rider were lost during a ride across Ophid's Grasslands en route to the Northern Hinterlands. Rumor is the artifact has fallen into the possession of a Centaur chieftain who uses it as his own personal body armor.

The Blessed Barding of Loecin is said to protect any horse that wears it from all attacks. It has an A.R. of 18, an S.D.C. of 600, but weighs virtually nothing, and does not encumber a horse in any way. In addition, the horse does not tire, horse and rider are

made impervious to fire, the horse cannot be possessed or control by anyone other than the barding's owner, and the armor's S.D.C. completely regenerates every 24 hours.

Caparison (think a surcoat for a horse): This cloth Caparison is white with silver Xs sewn onto it to symbolize two crossed arrows. The Caparison magically adjusts to fit any sized horse, and it keeps the animal warm in cold temperatures and snow, and cool in hot temperatures and sand. In addition it keeps the animal hydrated until it can find water.

Loecin's Arrow of True Flight: According to legend, from time to time Loecin gives a valiant Knight, Long Bowman, Ranger, Horseman or Centaur a single arrow completely made of silver, yet as lightweight as an ordinary arrow. When the arrow is given – it usually appears at a knight's feet or in a Bowman's quiver. This happens only after Loecin appears in person as a ghostly specter upon his horse, or in a dream or vision, saying, "I give you this arrow to vanquish your enemies and destroy evil. Use it only when it is most needed. Your heart will tell you when that moment has arrived." Some recipients are said to have kept that arrow for decades before using it, while others let it fly later the same day.

Though the arrow has tremendous combat capabilities, Loecin's Arrow of True Flight – never misses when the purpose is true – such a gift has been used to save lives in other ways than slaying an enemy. This has included cutting the noose of the wrongly convicted, severing the chains of a slave, cutting loose an anchor, felling a tree with one shot, and slicing the ties of a rope bridge to prevent an enemy from crossing it. The stories are many and varied.

The Abilities of Loecin's Arrow of True Flight: **Range:** 1,500 feet (457 m). **Damage:** 1D6x10+30 damage. 2D6x10+30 against vampires and most supernatural evil and wicked creatures of magic. 2D6x10+90 on the roll of a Natural Twenty! 1D6x100+90 against a Master Vampire or Vampire Intelligence. **Bonus to Strike with Arrow:** Never misses a target that is true, otherwise +4 to strike in ordinary combat; +8 to strike when it is to save a life. **Note:** Only one arrow is ever given in a person's lifetime, a great honor. After it is fired it returns to the shooter for *one* more use. On the rare occasion Loecin appears a second time to bestow a second arrow, it is said the *Twice Blessed* will not survive the conflict in which the arrow is used. That fight will be the hero's last grand battle. There have only been a few times that Loecin's Arrow of True Flight has been passed down from a parent to one of his offsprings or a friend.

Blessings: Archer's Arm: The Blessed individual feels new confidence using a bow, almost as if it were a part of him.

Bonuses: +1 attack per melee round and +1 to strike with any bow weapon. In addition, and the Blessed shooter can hit a target 50% farther than the usual range for that weapon, and neither the bow nor its string will break in his hands.

Skills/Abilities: W.P. Archery (if the character already has the Archery skill he gets an additional +1 attack when using a bow weapon for the entire melee round ONLY), Recognize Weapon Quality 90% but only as it applies to bow weapons, arrows, and crossbow bolts, including the ability to instantly recognize magic arrows.

Horse Caller: The Blessed individual is able to sense the presence of *wild horses, Pegasus, and Unicorns* within five miles (8 km) of him. When the animals come within sight, he can approach them as if he were one of them, and call the animal over

to him. It will let him touch it, feed it, groom it, and tend to any wounds the animal may have. The animal and even a herd will let the Horse Caller travel with them and may (50% chance) protect and defend him for 1D4 melee rounds before running away.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize a horse, mule, or donkey in distress and in need of rest, mending, or help, and +1 to dodge any animal. If in the way of a herd of horses, cattle, or buffalo, the animals will run around the Blessed individual as long as he stands still in one spot. Anyone in his arms and/or standing directly in front and behind him are also protected.

Skills/Abilities: Animal Husbandry 90%, but only as it applies to horses, and similar animals such as the Pegasus, and Horsemanship: General 60%. The ability to heal horses, restoring 4D6 Hit Points and 10 S.D.C. and mending a pulled or strained muscle and minor fracture of the bone. This healing can be performed at will as often as four times per 24 hours at no P.P.E. cost to the Horse Caller.

Horse Whisperer: The Blessed individual feels comfortable around horses, mules, donkeys, Pegasus, and similar animals, and they feel relaxed and comfortable around him. This allows the character to approach, tame, and ride them with ease.

Bonuses: +10% to all Horsemanship skills and does an extra +2 damage when striking from horseback.

Skills/Abilities: If the Blessed individual did not have a Horsemanship skill he gets Horsemanship: Knight 80% and Horsemanship: Exotic Animals (Any animal) 60%; plus the ability to tame any horse and similar animals in one tenth the usual amount of time, and is able to recognize the quality of such beasts at 95%. Blessing only works on one horse at a time. However, the Horse Whisperer has too much respect and appreciation for the Kilin and the Unicorn to try to tame or capture one.

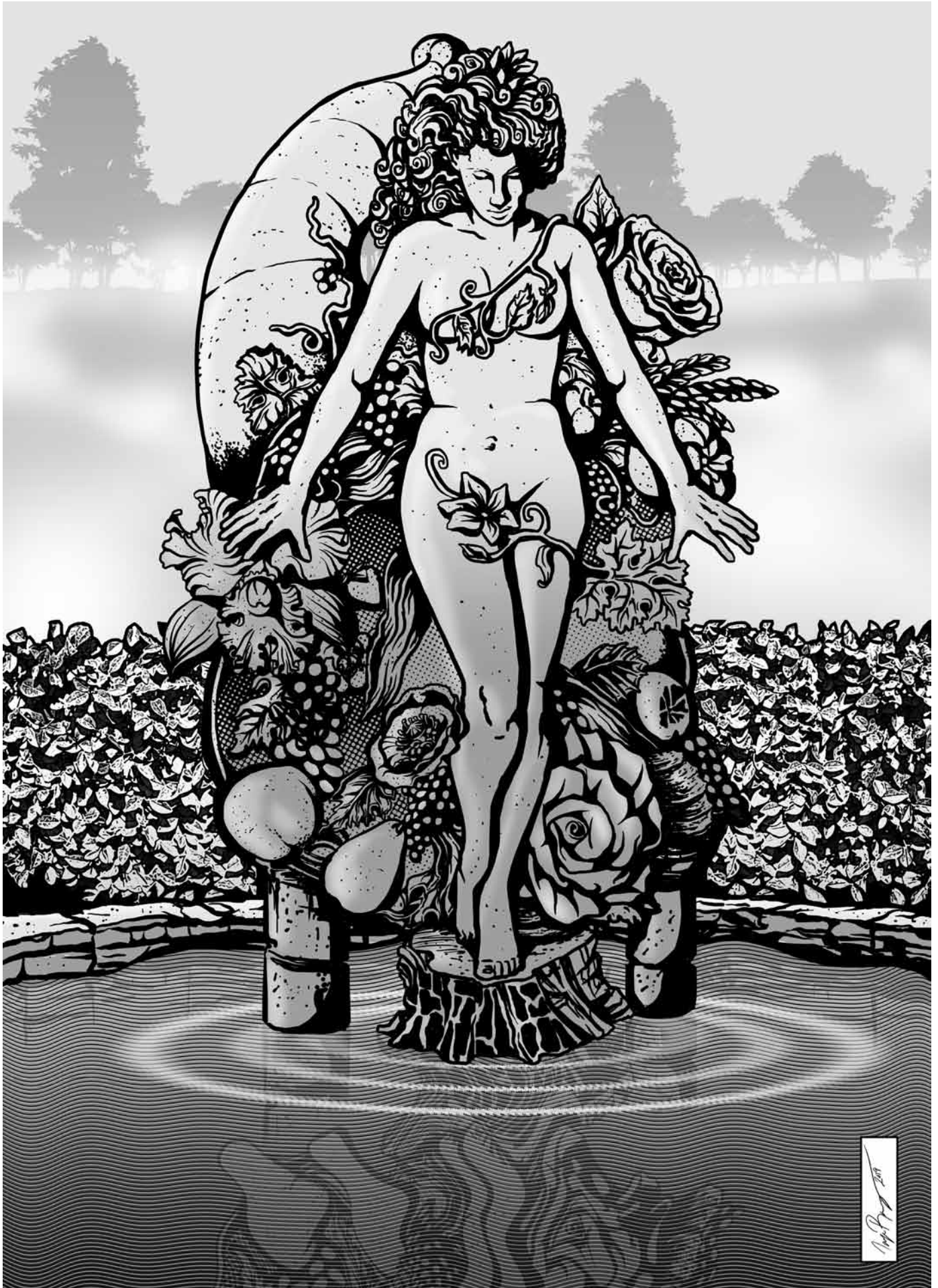
Restoration of Horses: This Blessing applies only to animals, and though the animal's owner usually prays for the Blessing, it is the animal Loecin may elect to restore. This may be any animal from horse or mule to squirrel to dog. This Blessing is most often bestowed upon animals brought to the Garden, but may also be considered as a miracle in response to a prayer (rare). Instantly the animal is restored and feels replenished. If lame or sick the beast is healed and feels completely nourished and rested as if it had just been fed, watered, and groomed, leaving it frisky and ready for action. If there was a fractured bone or a wound, 4D6 Hit Points are instantly restored and the rest mends completely within 2D6+12 hours. If the steed is a Gryphon, Pegasus or Peryton with a broken wing, the wing is instantly healed enabling the animal to fly.

Astunia

Maiden of the East

Long ago, Astunia was a love goddess worshiped by humans living along the eastern coast of the *Great Inland Sea*. She is the patron goddess of young lovers and couples as well as spring and flowering plants. Belief in her name spread from one village to the next, until countless tribes throughout the land that would some day become the *Eastern Territory*, counted her among the gods of their pantheons. But that was long ago, and Astunia is nearly forgotten by all.

Innocent and carefree, Astunia was undone by the jealousy of other gods. According to myth, envious of her beauty and adora-



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tion of so many followers, the *Warrior Sea Goddess Lista* tricked Astunia into leaving her homeland behind, and trapped her with foul magic, far away on the island of **Phi**, shrouding it forever in thick fog so Astunia could not escape. There, legend has it, she shed tears for her lost lovers, her followers, and her home. And where her tears fell, they became diamonds embedded within the ground.

With Astunia missing and unable to defend herself, Lista and her followers tore down her statues, temples, and shrines, and slandered the good name of the gentle goddess. They have convinced people that she is not the god of true love, young lovers, togetherness, and spring beauty, but rather a vengeful hag who really symbolizes love turned ugly, envy, and jealous rage. The type of jealous rage that leads to terrible acts of retribution, scorn, and murder.

Falsely vilified and scandalized, Astunia was quickly shunned by those who once worshiped and turned to her regarding matters of the heart. Within a few centuries she was rejected and forgotten by the young and lovelorn. Millennia later, Astunia is one of the Fading deities within the Garden of the Gods. No longer able to walk among the world of mortals as she once did. She would like to hate Lista for what she has done, but hatred is not in her nature. Instead, she pities and forgives the spiteful and vindictive warrior goddess, and seeks no revenge. Astunia desires only to return to life as a celebrated patron of love.

It is ironic, but Lista has completely forgotten about Astunia and the rivalry she once felt toward her. The traditionally cold and uncaring goddess could care less if Astunia should return to the world as a goddess of love – as long as her foolish believers do not grow to outnumber her own. The warrior goddess considers Astunia to be weak and too compassionate and merciful. A fool who believes that true love conquers all and is more powerful than war and combat. That makes them ideological polar opposites and rivals, if not natural enemies.

Lista feels no guilt for her past actions, but will do it again if Astunia should being to reach the level of popularity she once had. However, earning such a large number of worshipers again will be a difficult task. Lista's followers have done a great job of demolishing Astunia's reputation and leaving her with the black mark of being a jealous, cruel goddess who symbolizes the jilted lover that seeks terrible revenge. This false reputation is entrenched in most people's minds, and Lista's many followers continue to profess such vitriol and lies, making it difficult to overcome.

Astunia was able to escape her magical prison on Phi only because she was so forgotten and diminished as a goddess of love, that the magical enchantment no longer recognized her as she faded toward oblivion. Now that she has escaped, if she can recruit enough followers to be reborn among mortals, she'll be able to leave the Garden of the Gods, too. That is all she really wants: To again function as a celebrated and worshiped deity who is a symbol of love, couples, and flowering beauty. Away from Phi, she is free of the imprisoning magic still in place on the island. However, if Astunia should physically return to Phi, the magic that imprisoned her will reactivate and hold her prisoner once more.

Note: Any diamond found on Phi is said to be one of the tears of Astunia, but they are ordinary diamonds that have no magical properties. Or are they? Diamonds found on Phi are of uncommon quality, exceptionally clear and bright when cut, especially

in a tear shape. Typical value of a Phi raw diamond is 1D6x1,000 for the smallest, and 2D6x1,000 gold each for medium-sized; large diamonds are uncommon on Phi.

Sometimes the diamond found is already superbly cut and shaped. Myth has it that long before the Elf-Dwarf War, when Astunia was powerful, pirates captured a king's ransom of diamonds from an Elven mine. The gems had been unearthed on Phi and cut by skilled jewelers on site, a common practice of Elves long ago. The treasure hoard was meant for Astunia's church on the mainland of what is now known as the Old Kingdom. It is said she was so enraged by the pirates' theft, she called up a powerful gale out of nowhere and the storm sank only the pirate ship carrying the diamonds. All crew members survived, but the treasure was lost. To this day, it is said from time to time one or two of those diamonds wash ashore after a late winter or spring storm, and find their way into the hands of young lovers, young married couples, a family in dire need, or an adventurer on a noble quest.

Alignment: Principled.

Statue Description: A nude maiden carved from white marble emerging from a cornucopia of flowers and fruits. The statue stands in the middle of a small pond that is surrounded by flowering hedges and vines. Astunia is stepping down as if she is about to go for a swim.

Caretakers: There is an order of mothers and daughters that have maintained her statue in the Garden. They have also kept the worship of the True Astunia, Goddess of Love, alive for thousands of years, handing down their traditions from one generation to the next, but it is not enough to restore her. There are usually only a few worshipers at any given time, so only one Caretaker is present at the Garden most of the time. These dedicated followers know every detail of Astunia's past and are willing to share the *Legend of the Tears* and curse the name of Lista. They would love to find Champions who could help their beloved goddess be restored.

Artifacts of Note: All of Astunia's artifacts only work for characters of good alignment; sometimes Unprincipled but only if the person has potential to be better, or to become a hero, or a savior of the innocent, particularly children and women. Characters of Anarchist and evil alignments get nothing.

Tears of the Love Goddess: As she faded away from reality, Astunia was supposed to have shed tears that turned into glittering diamonds as they fell to the earth. Somewhere on Phi is a cliff overlooking the ocean, facing east, where the eyes of virtuous, young maidens in love (of good alignment and noble intentions) are said to be able to see 1D6 of the Tears sparkling under the light of the moon, though they are invisible to all others. As soon as one of the Tears of the Goddess is retrieved by such a maiden, the others vanish from sight (for the moment). A Tear of the Love Goddess is also sometimes bequeathed to heroes and Champions of the Gods.

The magical Tears of the Love Goddess are large, cut diamonds each worth 2D6x10,000 gold and function as a magic talisman or charm. When given to a young maiden or young lovers of Principled or Scrupulous alignment and high ideals, the Tear brings them true and lasting love as well as good fortune. Not vast wealth necessarily, but good health, strong, healthy children, and a long, loving relationship with powerful family bonds.

When a Tear of the Goddess is given to a Principled or Scrupulous Champion of the Gods, female or male, it grants the individual the following, provided the recipient NEVER sells or

trades the Tear for personal gain, or only does so to save a life. +5 on Perception Rolls and the wisdom to recognize looming danger to them and their loved ones, including liars and deceivers who mean them harm or looking to take advantage of them or the people in their community. Also impervious to the Love Charm spell and love potions, +1 to save vs other charm spells, illusions, and dark magic, +5 to save vs disease, +2 to save vs poison, and +10% to save vs coma and death.

Such a Holy Artifact is usually a rare gift given to a potential hero, Champion, or noble by Astunia at the Garden of the Gods, but sometimes to an ordinary person who does good work in their community. When this happens, the recipient has a dream or vision (sometimes an actual visitation!), and when the Goddess vanishes, the Tear is visible, sparkling like a star inside the pond near the foot of her statue. The chosen recipient immediately notices it and knows what it is and that is meant for them (it sparkles only for her or him). The visit by the goddess explains this is a special gift to help the recipient do good. She selects only good people she can tell are empathetic to others, loving, caring, just, and merciful, or have great potential to be a kind and compassionate leader or hero. **Note:** If a good alignment drops to Anarchist or evil, all bonuses and abilities are lost, and the diamond's value drops by 50%.

Beauty Shroud: This holy garment is said to have been worn by Astunia when she was trapped on Phi. It is a single piece of white linen, and when worn by a mortal it increases the individual's *M.A. and P.B. attributes* +8. The Shroud becomes invisible when worn, and does not get in the way of a character's movements nor restrict their vision. Rumor has it that the Shroud is in the possession of the daughter of *Empress Jeslynn*, a young woman renowned for her beauty and kindness, slated to marry an influential grandson of the *Duke of Llorn*. If she were to be deprived of her enchanted garment there is no telling what might happen to the potential marriage, or the important political ties that go with it.

Wreath of Flowers: This wreath of simple flowers worn on the head is a sign to Faerie Folk, good and evil, that the wearer is under the protection of the goddess and is to be left alone – no pranks, no trouble. Once every 24 hours the wearer can cast the Chameleon spell, equal to an 8th level Wizard in strength and duration; triple duration if protecting/hiding/shielding the innocent. It is also said that if a woman is seeking to become pregnant while wearing the Wreath, she will succeed. Wearing the Wreath while giving birth guarantees an easy, trouble free birth for both the child and the mother. The Wreath of Flowers stay fresh and alive indefinitely, turning brown only when Anarchist or evil beings acquire it.

Blessings: Diamond Eyes: This blessing makes the recipient's eyes light up and sparkle as if they were diamonds. While the blessing is in effect, the recipient can automatically See Auras and See the Invisible same as the psychic abilities of the same name. No expenditure of I.S.P. or P.P.E. necessary.

The blessing lasts for 48 hours as a short-term blessing. When given to a Champion, the hero may call upon the ability at will for as long as she or he remains in the good graces of the goddess. Range: 500 feet (152 m), line of sight required.

Faithful and True: The Blessed individual is unshakeably loyal and true to those who matter most.

Bonuses: Impervious to all forms of seduction, +3 to Perception Rolls to recognize looming danger to her, loved ones and

teammates, as well as to recognize liars and deceivers who mean her and her teammates harm or looking to take advantage of them or the people in their care. Cannot be forced to talk under torture and will die before being unfaithful or betray a loved one. +1 melee attack when fighting to protect a loved one, a woman with child, or young lovers (+2 attacks if the child is their own or the person in danger is their spouse or lover). Bonuses are available only to characters of a good alignment.

Skills/Abilities: First Aid 70% and the Blessed individual cannot be tricked, manipulated, or forced to hurt or betray the people loved and who matter most, not even when under the influence of magic, mind control, Hypnotic Suggestion, illusions, or possession!

Good Health: The Blessed individual's lover or spouse, and their children are strong of body and mind (+1D6 to their S.D.C., +2 to save vs disease and poison, and +20% to save vs coma and death).

Bonuses: The Blessed individual, specifically, receives +1D6+6 Hit Points, +3 to save vs disease and poison, and +20% to save vs coma.

Skills/Abilities: The penalties/effects/symptoms and duration of illness and negative/debilitating magic and psionics *is half*, and the Blessed recovers Hit Points and S.D.C. at twice the rate as normal.

Love: The recipient of this Blessing is not afraid to show his or her feelings of love, friendship, empathy, and compassion to others, especially those who are most important to the character. Merciful in combat, generous to friends, loyal and true to his/her lover or spouse.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to recognize insincerity and manipulation, +1 to save vs charm magic, and if in love, is impervious to all types of seduction.

Skills/Abilities: The psionic power of Empathy, at will without I.S.P. cost, and the Blessed individual knows, just knows, when someone is pretending to love him/her for their own gain or agenda such as to get something from them like money, information/secrets, revenge, a relic like the diamond, access to someone they know, etc. In addition, the Blessed individual will know when he or she has found true love; a partner who is loving, honest, caring, and true.

Love's Bonds: A supernatural bond that links the Blessed Individual to their lover, spouse, children and beloved family members.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to notice when a loved one is feeling sad, worried, or something is wrong.

Skills/Abilities: The recipient of this Blessing shares a sort of telepathic link with whom he/she shares a deep bond of love, such as a spouse, child, beloved parent or sibling, or romantic partner. Does NOT include friends and comrades, nor more distant family members or ex-lovers.

The Blessed individual instantly knows when those loved ones are sick and ailing, in serious trouble, hurt and the severity of the injury, dying, or killed, and where they are at that moment! If they are being victimized or under attack, the Blessed sees the face or image of the perpetrator and their present location. The Blessed individual can transmit this information to his lover, spouse, parent, or sibling, and is able to convey the need for them to go to the person in trouble or in need of help if it is the appropriate action; i.e. they can help. If that knowledge will put them in danger, the character can withhold sending this info. The Blessed individual

can also send feelings to his loved ones when he is thinking of them in a positive and loving manner.

Range: 2,000 miles (3,200 km). When given to a Champion, the hero may call upon the ability at will for as long as she or he remains in the good graces of the goddess. Range: 6,000 miles (9,600 km).

Negate Charm: This Blessing negates any enchantment that has the person under its power.

Bonuses: Instantly free from the clutches of magical and psionic Charm, Love Charm, Domination, Charismatic Aura, Befuddle, Empathic Transmission, and similar magic or psionics that *addle the mind* and enables another to influence or control a person against his or her knowledge or will, as well as seduction. However, it has no effect on illusions or possession. Moreover, the freed individual is +3 to save vs similar magic and psionic attacks for the next 1D6 days.

Skills/Abilities: When freed, the Blessed individual instantly snaps out of it and recognizes what's real and true, including realizing who put them under their influence.



Nar-Rabium

Nar-Rabium is a deity that dates back to before the battle of the gods against the Great Old Ones. He has been worshiped by ancient Titans, Rahu-Men, Elves and people and civilizations that have risen and disappeared tens of thousands of years ago. His popularity was fading by the Time of a Thousand Magicks and had waned long before Elf and Dwarf civilizations had reached their zenith. By the time humans rose to dominate the world, Nar-Rabium was long forgotten.

Nar-Rabium is a force of light and goodness who stood against the Old Ones and helped push through the plan to remove the

monstrous beings from the world, rather than destroy them outright, and participated in the scheme to put them into the *Sleep of Ages* and end the time of chaos. A symbol of compassion, mercy, and understanding, Nar-Rabium is a god of peace and learning, but is not afraid to stand against the forces of tyranny and wickedness. This has led to a number of clashes against the forces of hell with both the demons of Hades and the Deevils of Dyval. However, it is the denizen of Hades with whom Nar-Rabium has a long-standing enmity and lasting feud.

The warrior scholar deity is well versed in the ways of magic and dimensional travel, and is the kind of being who encourages people to walk a mile in another person's shoes before judging or condemning them. He tries to understand the position of everyone in a conflict to find common ground through words and reason rather than by the sword. However, though Nar-Rabium tries to find a peaceful resolve, he is a capable and courageous fighter with an excellent head for strategy and tactics. Among the gods, he is a diplomat and a voice of reason, but he also accepts there are times when one must take up arms, stand strong and fight. Nar-Rabium hates oppression and cruelty, injustice and wickedness, and has often stood to protect those who cannot stand up for themselves, and he expects the same from his Champions and followers.

Nar-Rabium's battles against the Lords and minions of Hades are legendary. In fact, it was the Defilers leading the charge against the forces of evil and Nar-Rabium's direct intervention that famously liberated an entire town from evil and slew the reigning Lord of Hades. This catapulted the deity back into the public consciousness in dramatic fashion, and the fabled Defilers would go on to Champion Nar-Rabium for the next 200 years. Together they built a strong following among the people living along the eastern edge of Ophid's Grasslands and throughout the North – Wolfen, Bearmen, humans, Elves, Dwarves, and Gnomes of the Great Northern Wilderness among them. In addition, most people living in the Kingdom of Bizantium and the Shadow Colonies know the many stories about the Defilers and Nar-Rabium, and one third worship the deity. A good number of people on both sides of the conflict in the *Disputed Lands* between the Eastern Territory and the Wolfen Empire in the Great Northern Wilderness also know of him and pray for Nar-Rabium to grant them some of his famed wisdom and diplomacy to find a solution to the rising tensions in that region before it erupts into all-out war.

It has been a long time since a new Champion of the Gods has walked the forests of the North with the Blessing of Nar-Rabium. With a Wolfen War brewing in the Disputed Land, and Nar-Rabium's flame of wisdom growing in the Garden of the Gods, the time has come for a new group of heroes to take up the mantle of the Defilers and carry on their good work. That means Nar-Rabium has returned to this mortal realm to find such Champions to not only help the downtrodden and the poor, but to prevent humans and Wolfen from following the same tragic path of destruction that befell Elves and Dwarves. The deity hopes to show them there is plenty of room for both humans and the canines to coexist. That is Nar-Rabium's new goal.

What only a tiny handful of the Defilers suspected was that Nar-Rabium perished that day in the mortal realm fighting the Lord of Hades. The two striking each other with simultaneous death blows and vanishing in a cloud of mist and sulfur. *Kenyon Bartol*, aka Nameless, insisted Nar-Rabium had simply gone

back to the Deific Realm to rest and heal. However, neither he or anyone ever heard from Nar-Rabium from that day forward. Nameless feared his god may have, indeed, died in the battle. And while Nar-Rabium's sacrifice turned the tide that won the day, he believed the deity was dead and gone forever. As a tribute to the noble god, Nameless and the Defilers went on to destroy evil wherever it was found, and helped countless people from princesses and kings to the lowliest of peasants, all in the name of *Nar-Rabium*. They accumulated worshipers for their deity, had hundreds of statues, shrines, and temples built, won over tens of thousands of worshipers for their deity and established an entire religion that thrive to this day. They never lost faith that their deity would, some day, return to the mortal realm. A wise plan, because the death of a god is not the same as it is for mere mortals. When a god dies in the mortal realm, he is not extinguished from existence, only from that mortal plane, and over time, he can return to it.

Nar-Rabium is back, and he is looking for new Champions to fight the forces of evil and defend the innocent.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Statue Description: The embodiment of the warrior-poet or philosopher king, the deity is always portrayed wearing the armor of the fighting classes, the robes or coat of a scholar or mage, sword hanging from his belt, and a shield in one hand, a stack of books in the other hand or piled at his feet.

Ancients text depicts Nar-Rabium as a tall slender figure with features that could be male or female, though "he" seems to have always been associated with the male gender. Over the last several hundred years, largely due to the influence of the Defilers, Nar-Rabium's image has become decidedly more masculine and human. And that is reflected in the statue found in the Garden, even though it must have existed there for tens of thousands of years. This suggests the statue has morphed or changed in recent centuries either via magic or may have something to do with the deity's rebirth into the physical realm of mortals. It is said that when Nar-Rabium appears to a group of people, each sees him in the form they expect him to be. Since his Champions among the Defilers were predominantly human, most people, including the canine races, think of the deity as being human or human-like.

The statue of Nar-Rabium in the Garden shows a man with wavy hair clad in a long coat that suggests the robes of a scholar, mage or priest, but under the coat is the armored chest plate of a warrior. A large shield is held in one hand, a blue flame rises up from the other, signifying the god's return. A sword hangs from a belt on one hip and a dagger and a mace on the other. Laying at the god's feet, carved from marble, is a stack of books, a few scrolls, and the warrior's helmet. Carved into the base is Nar-Rabium's name in all the known languages.

Caretakers: There is no designated caretaker or group living on Lopan designated to care for the statue or its surrounding garden, yet it is fairly well kept. From time to time, Bards and minstrels, scholars and mages, knights and mercenary warriors, Titans and Wolfen warriors can be seen tending to the garden surroundings.

Artifacts of Note: Shield of Mercy: When used to protect the innocent the wielder of this indestructible shield is +2 to parry, +3 to lunge and position himself with it in time to shield others, and is able to cast the following spells twice per 24 hours at no P.P.E. cost: Energy Field, Circle of Concealment, Circle of Flame, and Wink-Out. All equal in strength and duration to an 8th level Wizard.

Note: As a blunt weapon, the shield inflicts 1D6+1 damage and is able to magically grow and shrink to accommodate the size of its current owner.

Sword of Truth: An indestructible broadsword made of silver. The blade inflicts 2D6+2 damage to most mortal opponents, 4D6+4 against Witches, vampires, and werebeasts, and 1D6x10 damage to demons and Deevils, as well as casts the following spells twice per 24 hours at no P.P.E. cost: Heal Wounds, Sense Evil, Tongues, and Words of Truth. All equal in strength and duration to an 8th level Wizard.

Trident of Justice: An indestructible three-pronged trident made of iron. The trident inflicts 3D6+2 damage to most mortal opponents, 6D6+4 against Witches, and 1D6x10+8 to demons and Deevils. The blunt end of the weapon does 2D6 damage. The Trident of Justice is able to cast the following spells twice per 24 hours at no P.P.E. cost: Energy Disruption, Escape, Magic Net, and Size of the Behemoth (and the Trident grows with its wielder giving it an additional bonus of +10 to damage). All equal in strength and duration to an 8th level Wizard.

Blessings: Art: The Blessed individual has a keen eye for visual artwork in its many forms, drawings, paintings, etching, sculpture, etc., and is able to assess their value and draw inspiration and clues from them.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize fine artistry as well as clues that may be hidden in art, and is +2 to save vs magic circles.

Skills: Art 80%, Forgery 75%, Sculpting & Whittling 70%, and Archeology 65%, and once per 24 hours is able to cast the spell See the Invisible at no P.P.E. cost. Equal to an 8th level Wizard.

Art of Dimensions: The Blessed individual is given the ability to understand a little about dimensional travel and wield a bit of dimensional magic.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize when dimensional magic is at work or the likely presence of the demonic; also +1 to save vs possession and curses.

Skills/Abilities: Mathematics: Basic 80%, Astronomy & Navigation 75%, and is able to cast each of the following spells twice per 24 hours: Energy Bolt, Sense Dimensional Anomaly, and Time Slip at no P.P.E. cost. Equal to an 8th level Wizard.

Art of Diplomacy: The Blessed individual is better equipped to stay calm under fire and keep his cool when being baited or manipulated.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize when a person is open to negotiation or just playing along and has no intention of living up to the terms and conditions being discussed. Also +1 to save vs magical and psionic charms, .

Skills/Abilities: Intelligence 80%, Public speaking 75%, History 70%, and Lore: Demons & Monsters, as well as able to cast each of the following spells once per 24 hours: Charismatic Aura and Tongues at no P.P.E. cost. Equal to an 8th level Wizard.

Art of War: The Blessed individual is granted the wisdom of the warrior.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to recognize enemy weaknesses and vulnerabilities, morale, and identify leaders, +1D6+12 to S.D.C., +1 to disarm, +1 to pull punch, and +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

Skills/Abilities: Detect Concealment and Traps 65%, Detect Ambush 70%, Intelligence 75%, and Surveillance 80% and once

per 24 hours is able to cast the spell Armor of Ithan upon himself or one other at no P.P.E. cost. Equal to an 8th level Wizard.

Art of Words: The Blessed individual has a gift for words, spoken and written.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize styles of writing, quality of writing and clues that may be hidden in writing, riddles, and the spoken word, as well as +2 to save vs Wards.

Skills/Abilities: Literacy 75% even if the character had been illiterate, he can now read Elven and the human languages, as well as read Runes 65%, Cryptography 70%, Writing 75%, and is able to cast each of the following spells twice per 24 hours: Decipher Magic and Tongues at no P.P.E. cost. Equal to an 8th level Wizard.

Lost Gods of the Church of Light & Dark

The Church of Light & Dark is one of the oldest and most esteemed gods and religions of the Palladium World. Primarily associated with humans, it has followers of many races, especially in the southern half of the world, below the Eastern Territory, where the Northern Pantheons holds less sway. The church is ancient, and many of its gods older still. Few deities in the Pantheon of Light and Dark have been obscured by the sands of time. They remain as vibrant and relevant as ever.

Ma'ip, the realm of the gods of Light and Dark, is home to several empty monuments and abandoned godly domiciles. The Demiurge P'tah, who wrote of the formation of the cosmos and the Megaverse itself, once studied the Garden many ages hence, and the scholars of the church are one of the few bodies of learned men that know more about the Garden than simple myth and superstition.

There is immense pressure from factions within the church to repress and disparage the deities of other pantheons, especially those who have been lost and forgotten. The deities that remain jealously hoard their power and demand the attention of their followers. This is particularly true of **Set** and **Anubis**. **Osiris** lives the same existence as the many Fading gods, consigned to a kind of non-life, waiting to be reassembled and resurrected.

Statues of all the known gods in the Pantheon of Light and Dark are in perfect condition and have immaculate gardens and hedges that see regular care and attention in the Garden of the Gods. What follows are the deities that have faded from the people's hearts and minds, or have small groups of devotees and/or cults within the larger, popular church. Many are ancient deities who have been pushed aside by the flashier and dynamic deities in the Pantheon.

Book of Thoth

The Book of Thoth is not a statue of a god, but an artifact so powerful that after it was lost sometime after the end of the Time of a Thousand Magicks, it reappeared a few millennia later nestled and forgotten within the untamed and undiscovered Garden of the Gods where it remained undiscovered for more than fifty thousand years. It is uncertain if Thoth is ever coming back for it, or if the forgetful god long ago crafted a new book in its place.

The statue is a stone book that rests open upon a stone pedestal. The entire piece is carved from a single block of limestone, yet the pages of the book are as thin as parchment and turn easily. Every one is inscribed with symbols nobody, neither mage nor clergy (or Fossar-Warden), can identify or read other than the inside covers which both bear the symbol for Thoth in a large glowing Rune.

Those able to sense magic detect powerful energy emanating from the Book of Thoth, and even those unskilled in the magic arts are able to see soft light radiating from it during the day and feel a certain buzzing in the air. At night the entire book radiates as if the sun were held inside its pages, each of the indecipherable glyphs and symbols glowing orange, red, or blue depending on the page. No magic spell or arcane Blessing from a god is able to reveal what is written. Many speculate the language is of Thoth's own invention, protected by magic, and known only to Thoth.

Alignment: Not applicable. Thoth is Unprincipled.

Statue Description: Its appearance is described above. An indestructible stone book filled with mystic symbols set upon a stone pedestal. Though the indestructible pages can be turned and examined by visitors, they cannot be torn or cut from the book, nor defaced with paint or any other substance (they run right off) and the perpetrator of such a deed is likely to be attacked and run off by Faeries or Sprites. Nor can the book be lifted from the pedestal and the pedestal seems to be rooted to the very ground. No creature or magic has been able to lift or harm the book or its pedestal.

Caretakers: Priests, acolytes, and followers of the Church of Light and Dark, including a team that lives on Lopan near the Garden.

Historians, scholars, and, most of all, Wizards, enjoy coming to study the Book of Thoth. Many copy its pages with great care and accuracy even if they cannot read or understand the symbols inscribed upon them. As a result, there are times in which so many people want access to the Book, just to see it or touch or



kiss it, and study and copy pages, there is often one or more caretakers, priests, or acolytes present to encourage people to move along so everyone can have a moment with the sacred, magical tome. Sorcerers, artists, and other learned people who wish to copy pages are asked to do so quickly and only copy one page per visit. If they want to come back repeatedly to wait in line to see a new page, or huddle in a crowd around the Book, that's okay. If there is no line of people, the visitor can spend as much time studying or sketching and copying as many pages as he or she would like. The hours between midnight and sunrise have the fewest visitors. Access to the Book of Thoth is most difficult and limited whenever the Lopanic Games are held and during festivals and holy days involving the Pantheon of the Gods of Light and Dark.

Despite the number of people who would like to spend a lot of time with the Book, there is seldom pushing or fighting over it. Most people are happy to give other visitors time with the tome. Of course, the average visitor simply wants to gaze upon it, touch a few pages, or kiss the Book and say a little prayer before moving on. There is also space in the garden area for people to mill around and pray to Thoth and other deities in the pantheon.

Artifacts of Note: The Book of Thoth *is* the artifact, and in addition to the many indecipherable pages of text, there are some pages at the back of the tome that can be read, but only by visitors using the *Eyes of Thoth* spell. Inscribed on the last pages of the book are thirteen fundamental spells used in several different ancient rites of mummification no longer remembered. Some believe this includes the ritual to create the creature known as the **Mummy Immortalis**.

Magic users able to cast the spell *Eyes of Thoth* are drawn to one of the 13 Spells in particular each visit. Which spell page differs with every person's experience and with each return visit. Whoever can read the page is able to learn that spell, and speaks of returning to learn the remainder of the 13 spells. Reading the spell embeds mental images that show each step of how to cast the invocation. When done reading, the spell is permanently known to the mage. If the spell is already known, reading the page in the Book of Thoth makes it all the more understandable and easy to cast, which means it now costs the spell caster *half the usual P.P.E.!* Only one spell may be learned per visit to the book over a period of years (see below).

The *Create Mummy spell ritual* is one of these spells, but it is often the 13th revealed. Each of the spells are indeed, a necessary component in the secret Necromantic ritual to create a **Mummy Immortalis**. However, the ritual itself explaining how to use the 13 spells in conjunction with other components to create the monster is either deliberately left out, missing, or written in the indecipherable language elsewhere in the Book of Thoth.

Multiple trips to the Book of Thoth 1D4 years apart reveals a new one of the 13 spells. Since most sorcerers do not return 13 times over as many as five decades, few ever discover that upon reading and learning the 13th spell invocation (all 13 must have been read and learned from the Book), Thoth appears to the person in a vision to permanently bestow upon him 1D6x10+30 P.P.E. to be added to the character's personal P.P.E. reserve, and raises Spell Strength +1 regardless of the mage's experience level! Furthermore, Thoth offers the mage a quest to unearth a forgotten secret. This could be anything, perhaps a clue to the location of one of Osiris' missing body parts, or a lost artifact, or ancient ruin, or magic artifact, an important person, or special

place to learn the *Mummy Immortalis ritual*, and so on. The secret may have historical, magical, religious, god/pantheon related significance, or other relevance to the mage, his team, a kingdom, or the world at large.

Blessings: The Thirteen Spells in the Book of Thoth (for Wizards, Other Mages, and Priests ONLY). Roll on the following table to determine which of the 13 spells presents itself within the mage's mind. The character will retain full knowledge of that spell forever, with no ill side effects. Somehow, he knows if he returns many times 1D4 years apart, a new one of the 13 spells will be revealed to him. If a spell already read and learned or relearned from the book is rolled, re-roll or pick a different one. *Create Mummy* is usually the last spell revealed, but it does not have to be. There could be a reason Thoth reveals the spell sooner – perhaps so the mage recognizes it when he sees it being performed, or to use it to help others. **Note:** Only characters capable of learning magic, such as a Wizard, Necromancer, etc., and to a much lesser degree, Priests who possess the *Eyes of Thoth spell* are able to read and attain this mystic knowledge.

01-08% Breathe Without Air

09-16% Trance

17-23% Impervious to Fire

24-31% Impervious to Poison

32-39% Mend Cloth

40-47% Mystic Alarm

48-55% Negate Poison/Toxin

56-63% Seal

64-70% Sense Magic

71-77% See Aura

78-85% Transferral

86-92% Sleep

93-00% Create Mummy

Other Blessings: Prayers to Thoth made at this location (Thoth's statue is with the pantheon of Light and Dark elsewhere in the Garden) may be heard and answered, however, Thoth and other popular deities seldom find the need to interact much with mortals.

Heka the Medicine Man

Heka was once the most powerful wielder of magic in the entire Pantheon of Light and Dark. Known as a Healer, in ancient times, the offices of Wizard and doctor were one and the same. As part of his studies of the human condition, Heka developed strong magic, and could perform all kinds of miracles and wonders, in addition to his ability to heal the sick – gods and mortals alike.

Though he was a gifted Healer and spell caster, Heka could not compete with the relentless intellect and spectacle of **Thoth, God of Wisdom**, or the other more flamboyant gods in the Pantheon. Heka may have explored much of the realm of magic, but when Thoth's curiosity turned in that direction he was left far behind. Thoth not only learned every spell and secret that Heka had developed and uncovered over thousands of years, he created his own spells and entire forms of magic. Heka found himself left out, pushed aside, and obsolete. His fate is partly his own doing. Heka is a quiet god, not flashy like most members of the Pantheon. He is more concerned with observing, learning and healing than wealth or glory or armies of worshipers. He gets lost in his studies and vanishes from sight for centuries at a time. Not wise



when trying to keep the attention and worship of fickle and short-lived mortals. As a result, Heka's name was spoken less and less every generation, until all but forgotten except by the most scholarly and religious. Today, as it has been for millennia now, Thoth has become the renowned Master Sorcerer and Scholar Supreme of most magic users, scholars, healers, nobility, merchants and many others who have turned to the clever and powerful Thoth.

Heka is not forgotten, but is little known except among studious like-minded mortals, explorers, doctors, Shamans, Healers and some mages, particularly Diabolists, who continue to worship and call upon the deity. This is the only thing that has kept the God of Medicine and Curiosity from vanishing. Thus, though Heka is knowledgeable and powerful in the ways of magic and healing, he is largely lost to the realm he had helped create. A secondary figure lost to the shadows in a pantheon of greater gods.

Heka, the Medicine Man

Also Known As: Heka the Healer and Heka the Searcher.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Statue Description: A statue of a man with a ceremonial pharaoh's beard wearing the robes of an ancient Priest of Light. In his hands is a staff made of two intertwined serpents.

Caretakers: There are a pair of young Priests of Light who find peace and purpose tending to the statue of Heka. They hope to pick up secrets from the old medicine man that cannot be learned from the study of Thoth's teachings. However, Heka's magic is old and often primitive compared to that which the world knows today.

Artifacts of Note: Heka's Caduceus: A scepter of two snakes winding around a winged scepter. An artifact of great healing power, the Caduceus enables its wielder to cast the spells *Globe of Daylight*, *Purification*, *Negate Poison/Toxin*, *Heal Wounds* (*Superior: 3D6+12 Hit Points and 2D6 S.D.C.*), *Cure Minor Disorder*, *Cure Illness* and *Remove Curse*. Each spell can be used up to three times per 24 hours and are equal to a 10th level Wizard. Moreover, whoever wields the Caduceus is impervious to disease and all types of Paralysis spells.

The Caduceus was last heard of in the *Timiro Kingdom*, where it was in possession of a local lord's courtly physician. That said, some insist there are actually four Caduceus, but nobody knows where these ancient relics may be found. One was in the hands of a Dwarven leader but both he and the artifact were lost during the Elf-Dwarf War. Another is believed to be held by a cult or a band of pirates somewhere in the *Land of the South Winds*, and the third is said to have been lost in an expedition to the *Great Northern Wilderness*, possibly in the *Disputed Land*.

Heka's Ankh of Resurrection: A gold medallion eight inches (20.3 cm) tall, that can be handheld or worn as a piece of jewelry around the neck, as part of a helmet or headdress, or on a belt, or attached to a scepter or staff. The Ankh is a powerful tool of resurrection created ages ago for a Titan warrior who opposed the Old Ones and their minions. The ancient magic embodied within it has greater reach than the fabled *Resurrection spell*. The Ankh can be used to attempt to resurrect individuals who have been dead for up to ten years! The chance of success depends on how long the person has been dead. In all cases, whether the resurrection succeeds or the magic fails, it cannot be used again on any individual until a period of time has passed. Nor can the Ankh be tried on the same person more than once. When the magic is successful, the deceased returns to life

feeling strong and refreshed as if he had just awakened from a restful sleep. All Hit Points and S.D.C. restored, and there is no trauma, no insanity for having died. In fact there is no memory of the moment of death or the exact cause. (“I remember, being charged by the Black Knight, but ... then nothing.” Or, “I remember, falling ...” “There was this burst of light and ... I don’t remember.”)

Chance of a Successful Resurrection:

99% chance of success when deceased for up to five weeks, but the Ankh is drained of much energy and cannot be used again to try to resurrect anyone for two months.

95% chance of success when deceased for up to six months, but whether successful or a failure, the Ankh cannot be used again to resurrect anyone for six months.

90% chance of success when deceased for up to one year, but whether successful or a failure, the Ankh cannot be used again to resurrect anyone for one year.

85% chance of success when deceased for up to three years, but the Ankh cannot be used again to resurrect anyone for five years.

75% chance of success chance of success when deceased for up to six years, but whether successful or a failure, the Ankh cannot be used again to resurrect anyone for a decade!

65% chance of success chance of success when deceased for up to ten years, but whether successful or a failure, the Ankh cannot be used again to resurrect anyone for 20 years!

Note: When in the hands of one of Heka’s Champion of the Gods or a devotee/priest with the purest intentions, add +5% to the rate of success.

The wielder of the Ankh is also able to magically heal himself or one other person of his choosing in an instant. This can be performed only twice a year, and instantly and completely restores him: ALL Hit Points and S.D.C., no fatigue, no hunger, and works no matter how severe the injury, provided it was performed while he still had at least one Hit Point. This includes restoring a lost limb, an eye or tongue, and heals internal injuries. The wielder is also impervious to disease so he may tend to the sick, +2 to save vs poison, and +30% to save vs coma. As a weapon, it does 1D6 to most opponents, but 1D6x10 damage to animated dead, mummies, zombies, vampires, and supernatural beings that represent death or the dead.

Heka’s Ankh of Resurrection is one of the greatest and most sought after of Holy Artifacts in the known world. One is rumored to be hidden in one of the vaults at the **Temple City of Sekti-Abtu**, the center of the Church of Light & Dark. The High Priests of the church use the Ankh’s power for themselves and to garner favor from the rich and powerful. When asked about it, they vehemently deny having it, and there are no official records or correspondence to support the rumor.

Prism of Heka’s Insight: It is said that he who looks through the Prism can See Aura of the person before him and perform a Psychic Diagnosis, both the same as the psionic abilities of the same names. The Prism also reveals to its wielder whether a magic Rune, ward, or circle is active and charged with magic, and provide him with the basic understanding of what it does (protect, sound an alarm, inflict pain, etc.). Likewise, it will reveal an aura that identifies whether or not an item, weapon, scroll, potion, is enchanted and magical though it does not reveal what magic it may be. (“Yep, it’s a magic potion, but I don’t know what it does.”)

Blessings: Miraculous Healing in the Garden of the Gods:

The Caduceus held by the statue of Heka in the Garden of the Gods is able to channel healing energy to anyone Heka chooses to bless with healing, provided the person(s) comes before the god at his statue and makes a plea to be healed. Heka is more impressed if the prayer is for someone else. That someone else can be present or not. If not present, one of the lilies that abound in the area around Heka’s statue all year long, must be taken to the person to be cured and placed upon his forehead. It is said that if the god was touched by the plea to help someone else, the healing magic is conveyed to the person in need. Of course, big miracles such as healing the lame, restoring and awakening someone in a coma, giving sight to the blind, and healing incurable or severe disease overnight, are especially rare occurrences, but they can happen. Moreover, they are seldom instant, but rather the person begins to recuperate within 24 hours of receiving the blessing/or being touched by one of the lilies that grow near the statue, and makes a full recovery in one tenth the usual time.

However, Heka often helps good and noble adventurers and warriors recover 2D6+6 Hit Points/S.D.C., and/or receive the same results as the spell *Cure Minor Disorder* or *Cure Illness* spells an hour after the plea was made. Double the healing for practitioners of magic, Psi-Healers, doctors, and shamans of good or selfish alignment, all occupations Heka favors.

In addition, though the recipient may not realize it at first, those going on a noble quest to rescue people and save lives may be given the following bonuses: +3 to save vs disease, +1 to save vs poison, +10% to save vs coma and death, and heal more quickly (+3 Hit Points/S.D.C. per period of healing, or per a magical or psionic healing touch). Duration of these bonuses are for the duration of the rescue mission or until the quest is completed or mostly fulfilled.

Seeds of Healing: A rare physical manifestation in which the Blessed individual receives a gift in the form of a packet of small seeds. When planted, even in the poorest of soil, and watered daily, an herb garden grows to full maturity within three days! The herbs include some of the rarest healing plants and roots.

Skills/Abilities: The Blessed individual temporarily possesses the knowledge of how to use and prepare herbs and plants for medicinal purposes: Holistic Medicine 85%, Brewing 80%, Biology 75% and Identify Plants and Fruits 70% for seven day, double during an outbreak or crisis. More miraculous, there is always just enough herbs to treat everyone in need of them during that period.

Traveling Doctor: In the legends, Heka was known for traveling from village to village, curing the sick and healing injuries.

Bonuses: Impervious to disease, +2 to save vs poison, and +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

Skills/Abilities: Surgeon/Medical Doctor 80% and the recipient of this blessing can correctly diagnose (100%) any disease and sickness, and is able to tend to any wound, injury or illness with perfect care and no adverse complications (no infection, minimal blood loss, minimal scarring, etc.). In addition, penalties and side effects for his patients from illness or injury are half, and recovery happens in one third the usual time. This applies only to treating others. Duration is for the duration of a particular job, quest, or humanitarian mission, or for one month, whichever ends first.



Mandulis, the Fallen Hawk

An early cousin of Horus, Mandulis was one of the Pantheon's minor gods during the aeons of its foundation. He was once a figure of justice, serenity, and self-respect, but fell victim to murder and intrigue at the deific level.

Following the death of Osiris, Horus stepped in to a position of primacy within the Pantheon, alongside Ra and Isis. Mandulis was preparing to accept a greater role within the celestial arrangement as well, in an effort to counter the dark power of Set and Anubis. One day, however, as Mandulis was flying over the deserts of Ma'ip in the form of a hawk, he heard the voice of Horus calling to him from within an oasis of cool, clear water. Mandulis descended to investigate, and saw a reflection of Horus in the water, entreating him to come closer. Never suspecting it was a trap, fearful that his cousin had fallen victim to some evil magic, Mandulis reached out to Horus – and was pulled under the waters by the snapping jaws of *Apepi the Immortal*, an evil dragon-beast that had just been made immortal by the power of Set, further tipping the balance between Light and Dark. Apepi proved his loyalty by killing and consuming Mandulis before he could mature into a true God of the Light, and it would take millennia before Light and Darkness could be brought into harmony once again.

Since his death in the mortal realm, Mandulis has been obsessed with the destruction of Apepi the Immortal. He knows

that Apepi cannot be permanently killed, and has been slowly exploring the necessary magic that would be required to trap and imprison the evil dragon of Set forever.

Where once he was a promising champion of good, now Mandulis burns with the need for revenge and seeks one or more Champions of the Gods and other heroes and adventurers to a) harass and if possible, imprison or destroy Apepi, and b) to thwart and undermine the Gods of Dark within the pantheon of Taut, particularly Set, Anubis, Bes the Depraved, and Apepi the Immortal. In fact, Mandulis would take great delight to have Apepi killed a thousand times over. Mandulis wants this more than being restored to the world of mortals with worshipers and churches, but if that will help him exact his revenge, he will do it. (**Note:** See **Dragons and Gods** for details about Apepi, the Pantheon of Taut, and many other deities.)

As a deity that was once good and represented justice, Mandulis still likes to use Paladins, knights, and heroic fighters and adventurers as its Champions, heroes, and minions. The deity has become skilled in making sure their quests sound noble and just, not acts of hatred and revenge. And he has become very good at this. Mandulis retains a code of honor, and his word is his bond. In addition, the god retains a soft-spot for humans, so the inspirational visions, quests, and guidance really do usually help the innocent and downtrodden, and destroy evil, they just also happen to foil the plans or directly hurt the deities in the Pantheon of Taut

that Mandulis loathes. The deity has no love for the Demons of Hades nor the Deevils of Dyval.

Alignment: Aberrant evil (was Principled). Mandulis is obsessed with revenge and is always scheming to undermine the gods of Taut, their church, and their Priests. Sometimes this includes the Church of Light and Dark, and even the Gods of Light within the Pantheon because they tolerate the likes of Set, Anubis, Apepi, Bes, and the Tautons. Moreover, Mandulis does not seem to care that he sends scores of Paladins and heroes to their doom on missions against Set, Apepi and the other dark gods. He is too consumed by hate and revenge to care. For him, these warriors are just the casualties of war – his private and quite personal war.

Statue Description: A statue of a perched hawk with the head of a man.

Caretakers: None, though Priests and worshipers who come to tend to the Gods of Light and Dark (Mandulis' statue rests near the Gods of Light), also clean and trim the small garden area around Mandulis.

Artifacts of Note: Mandulis' Feathers: The feathers of Mandulis are enchanted items from before his death and fall into darkness. Originally given as a boon to knights and heroes, the feathers may be used for good or ill.

Mandulis' feathers are the essence of lightness; any heavy object, armor, or cargo that a feather is pinned, glued, or tied to feels like it weighs no more than 20 lbs (9 kg) regardless of its actual weight and size. Moreover, when worn in the hair, in a hat, or as part of a headdress the person wearing the feather can lift and carry (but not throw, nor pull) 1,000 pounds (450 kg) per each P.S. attribute point. Thus, a person with a P.S. of 9 can lift and carry up to 9,000 pounds (4,050 kg); a P.S. of 20 is able to lift 20,000 pounds (9,000 kg), and so on. Burning the feather and breathing in the smoke and fumes turns the ordinary P.S. of one person into Supernatural P.S. for the rest of his life.

Of more than one hundred feathers given away in the distant past, it is rumored 11 remain, scattered across the south from the Baalgor Wastelands to the Yin-Sloth Jungles and Land of the South Winds. The rest lost or burned over many millennia. One is rumored to be in the hands of a Tezcat Shaman or Chieftain. Another belongs to an unnamed pirate who plunders ships in the south seas and is said to have a secret refuge on one of the Floenry Islands.

Headdress of the Hawk: An elaborate headpiece with a pair of ram's horns, two cobras wrapped around each other and a sun disc in the middle. The Headdress allows the wearer to see with the eyes of the hawk, providing a 180 degree, bird's-eye viewing perspective as if hovering 200 feet (61 m) above the ground. Using the Headdress, an individual can see up to a distance of 9 miles (14.4 km), weather conditions permitting, in all directions, right over the tops of trees and small hills. Weather (fog, rain, snow, etc.), plant-life and changes in elevation and terrain may block or reduce line of sight, and the perspective is fixed above the character. There is no limitation on amount of use; activated and deactivated at will. **Note:** The wearer can also see the invisible and has Nightvision up to 600 feet (183 m).

There are rumors that the Headdress is the prize possession of a Troll chieftain leading a clan of Ogres and Orcs in the western part of the Old Kingdom. He uses it to spot enemies coming before they can sneak up on his war camp, enabling them to set deadly traps and ambush points and lay in wait, and to successfully evade forces too large or powerful for them to handle easily.

Blessings: Blind Justice: The angry deity preys upon this Blessed individual's feelings about injustice, cruelty, and inequity and encourages the recipient to give in to his righteous anger to destroy such callous slavers, tyrants, and overlords and liberate those kept under their heel.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to recognize the leader of a group as well as harsh, unfair conditions and the downtrodden; +1 to strike when fighting for justice or to liberate people from tyranny, slavery, and evil, and when fueled by righteous anger and/or indignation, the Blessed individual fatigues at half the usual rate, +1 attack per melee round, and inflicts +4 damage in combat. Against Witches and supernatural beings, including Spirits of Light and gods of any alignment, the character inflicts double damage. **Note:** On the downside, the Blessed individual is ruthless and merciless in combat, and is willing to incur a considerable amount of collateral damage to destroy the greater evil.

Skills/Abilities: Heraldry 75%, Military Etiquette 70%, and History 65%.

Serpent Slayer: The angry deity preys upon this Blessed individual's hard feelings about evil and monstrous beings such as dragons, sea serpents, Lizard Mages, and other reptilian monsters and deities such as Apepi, Sebek, and serpent gods as well as Tautons and Gargoyles, and destroys them before they hurt more people.

Bonuses: Impervious to dragon fire and other dragon breath weapons, +3 to save vs magical Petrification, +1 to roll with punch/fall/impact, and +1 to save vs magic.

Skills/Abilities: Language: Dragonese/Elven 80%, Lore: Demons and Monsters 75%, and inflicts 6D6 damage with a bare fist punch or kick or weapon damage +6D6 but only when fighting dragons, and reptilian creatures. **Note:** On the downside, the Blessed individual dislikes and distrusts all reptilian beings and those who worship them, especially dragons. The character tends to be ruthless and merciless in combat, and is willing to incur a considerable amount of collateral damage to destroy the reptilian menace.

Trick the Wicked: This Blessed individual is often a rogue or trickster willing to bend the rules and deceive others.

Bonuses: +1 to save vs mind control and possession, and is able to perform Death Trance (self) at will at no P.P.E. cost; equal to a 5th level Wizard.

Skills/Abilities: Imitate Voices & Impersonations 80%, Ventriloquism 75%, and Disguise 65%. In addition, just as Set used the voice of Horus to trick and lure Mandulis to his death, this blessing allows the recipient to perfectly imitate the voice of Set! This ability can be used to trick and intimidate Tautons and other minions of the Lord of Darkness, including Apepi the Immortal, and can give pause to the gods themselves. Intimidating as is the presence of Set, his imitated voice has a Horror Factor of 12 when the voice is recognized as Set's.

Lost Northern Gods

Despite being shared between humans and Wolfen, two of the most populous groups of peoples upon the Palladium World, the Northern Religion's high-water mark is years in the past. The people of Bizantium, many of whose ancestors followed the Northern Pantheon of Od, now primarily worship Algor, a god who broke away from the pantheon and now exists apart from its

other deities, rarely interacting with them. Other churches have prominence within Timiro, Land of the South Winds, the Eastern Territory, the Western Empire, and the ever changing Old Kingdom. Ragnarok never came, and with its passing, much of the apocalyptic preaching of the Northern Church lost its life-or-death immediacy. Odguard is a fierce realm of warriors and frozen fields, and the mortals of the Palladium World would rather pray for bountiful harvests and safe voyages upon the sea than a heroic death amidst fire and steel. Thus, even the Northern Gods are likely to be abandoned and forgotten over the next millennium or two. Some already are, and even their rediscovering in the Garden is likely to have little significance.

Blekyimr & Rilkyemb, The Lupine Twins

Once infamous troublemakers, a shame upon Odguard, Blekyimr and Rilkyemb are a set of twins, son and daughter of Od, but born of a human woman. When Epim discovered that Od had secretly brought them to Odguard to be raised as demigods, she cursed the children, and they were cast aside to the icy wilderness to be raised by wolves.

The boy and girl grew up as savages, stealing and raiding, and causing mischief among the other gods and inhabitants of the realm. They became known for stealing newborn babes both in Odguard and the mortal realm, raising and turning them into thieves and pickpockets before sending them back into the world

tattooed with strange symbols and weakened to the suggestions of evil beings.

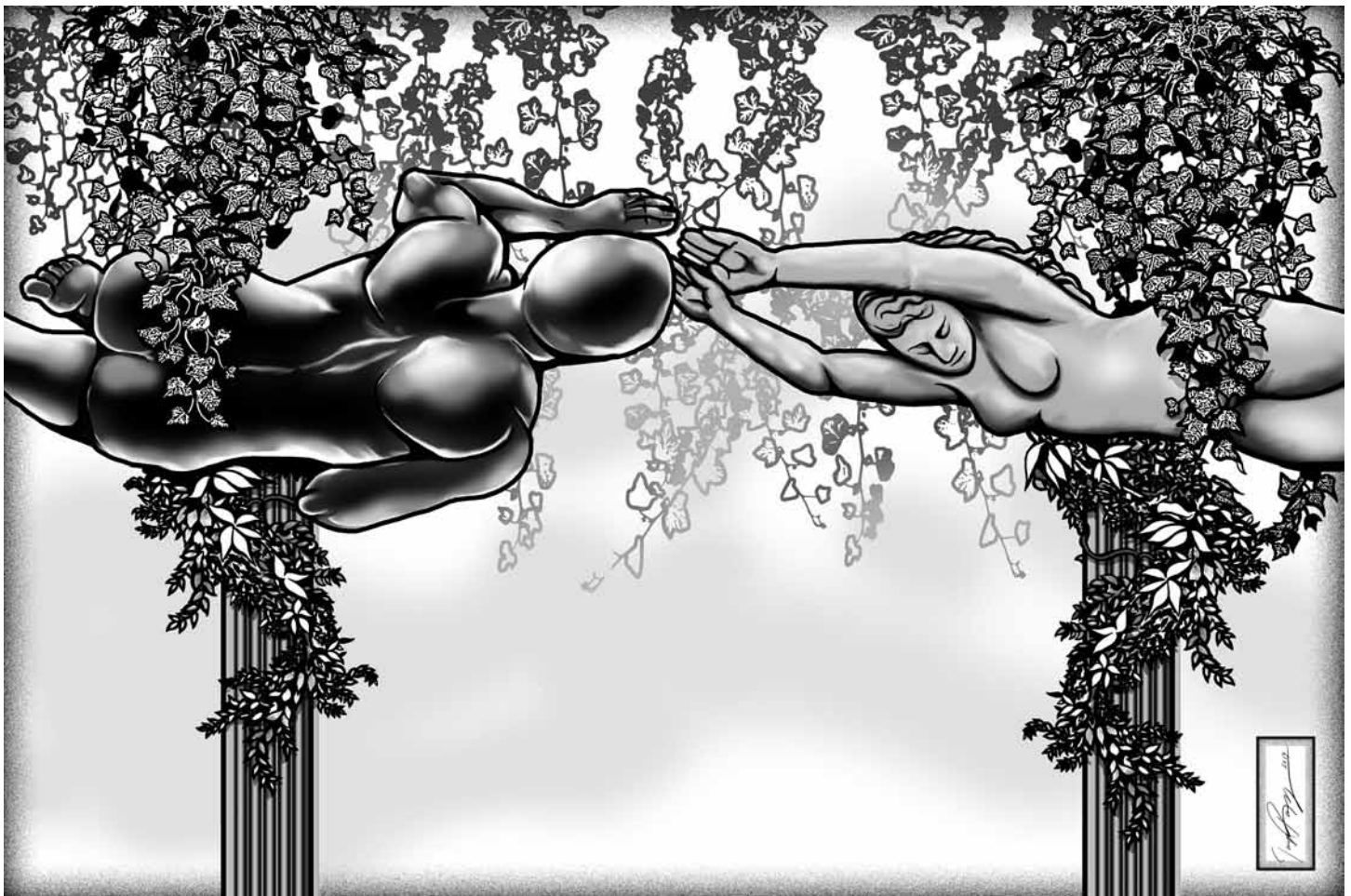
The two wolf-children became so troublesome their own father was forced to hunt them down. Od's lightning struck twice from the sky, and the errant demigods were scorched from the realm of Odguard. They were able to manifest again within the mortal realm for a time, and caused much mayhem among the early Wolfen. Finally, their names were wiped from the records of the Northern Pantheon, their meager worshipers dwindled to virtually none, and their days were numbered. Soon the twins slipped away from the physical realm and were forgotten, until the last remaining visages of them were recently unearthed in the Garden of the Gods.

Alignment: Miscreant (Blekyimr) and Diabolic (Rilkyemb). Both are creatures of cruelty and chaos, and have no honor.

Statue Description: A pair of apparently-floating statues that appear to be swimming or flying in a circle, one following after the other. There are pedestals beneath them that support the statues, but they are of dark rock and difficult to see at first. Blekyimr is a young man with a face of blank, expressionless obsidian, Rilkyemb a young woman with a simple face of blank alabaster. Their bodies are nude and formless.

Caretakers: None, though sometimes hooded figures are seen in the night offering up prayer or sacrifice to the dark twins. Coyles may also find the savage and cruel twins to be worthy of their worship, but few Coyles ever venture to Lopan.

Artifacts of Note: Blekyimr's Pendant: A sign of divine birth, this pendant has an image of Od on one side and the image of



a human woman on the other. It is cast from black metal, and enables the bearer to become invisible during the night for up to thirty minutes at a time. It can be used twice per night, and does not work during the day. The pendant is supposedly somewhere in the Wolfen Empire, near the Disputed Lands.

Rilkyemb's Pendant: A mirror of Blekyimr's Pendant, only cast from gleaming white metal. The bearer can turn invisible twice per day, for up to thirty minutes at a time. Does not work during the night. This pendant was said to be in the possession of a Wizard on the Island of Phi who was studying it to try to learn its magic secrets, though this rumor is from years ago.

Blessings: Evil Tidings: The Blessed individual is usually a trickster, con artist/thief, assassin, slaver, or someone who has foul intentions. It is said that anyone consumed with jealousy, anger, hate or vengeance and stops to linger or pray in the garden of the statues of the twins will be inspired with a way to exact revenge, often by striking at the target of their ire by stealing or hurting their children, spouse, friends, or reputation, or through murder and wickedness.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls involving revenge and inflicting suffering, +1D4 to M.A. attribute, and double damage from an attack from behind or surprise.

Skills/Abilities: Escape Artist 65%, Track Humanoids 70%, and Use & Recognize Poison 75%.

Wolf's Call: The Blessed individual is encouraged to give vent to the savagery he has tried to keep locked up inside. Not even loyal to his "wolf pack," i.e. teammates or people, he or she is ruthless and without mercy in combat, and believes in the law of the jungle, the strong takes what they want and do as they please. They are the Alpha dog or the wolf in sheep's clothing hiding among the flock (other adventurers or heroes).

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to recognize team leaders and subservient henchmen and minions, +1D4 to P.S. and +1D6 to Spd attributes.

Skills/Abilities: Animal Husbandry 65%, Breed Dogs and Wilderness Survival 80%. Raised by wolves, the twins are fluent in the language of animal howls and calls, including wolves, coyotes, Perytons, Gryphons, the canine races, and other wild animals of the North, and are able to imitate them to evoke fear or to call such beasts to them. The Blessed individual is also able to communicate with wolves and dogs with a proficiency of 65%, and understand and speak Wolfen at a proficiency of 85%.

Colni Axetree

The feller of trees, Colni is the patron god of woodcutters and axemen. Despite the necessity of his craft, he was always a secondary god compared to warriors and smiths, huntresses and deific royalty. As part of his worship, churches, shrines and monuments to Colni were only ever constructed of wood, and as a result, did not stand the test of time compared to the idols and places of worship of the other gods. Generation after generation, his followers stopped rebuilding the shrines of Colni, and gradually he was forgotten.

In his time, he walked through the forests of Odguard and fought many mythic beasts in his travels. His greatest exploit was the defeat of a legendary Will-o-the-Wisp known for grabbing travelers off a path and devouring them whole. Colni won the battle and chopped the tree into logs and boards, building a living cabin for himself that serves as his home in Odguard. The



cabin is still there, and still alive, but Colni's whereabouts are unknown. Presumed to be off exploring or on a grand adventure. Since his statue was uncovered in the Garden of the Gods, it has attracted a great many visitors because it is the only one made of petrified wood. Druids, Rangers, hunters, woodsmen and certain forest people like the Kankoran and Bearmen, but not the warlike Coyles or Wolfen, are attracted to the statue and his garden area, surrounded by tall trees.

Alignment: Unprincipled with leanings toward Scrupulous.

Statue Description: A stern, bearded, bald human figure holding a large woodcutter's axe before him, seemingly carved out of a single standing tree. The wood has clearly been chipped and whittled away, with rough-hewn edges, yet is hard as stone and never ages or molds.

Caretakers: A woodsman named Helig, formerly of Bizantium's Shadow Coast, watches over Colni's statue and visits almost every evening. He converses with the god frequently, but as a simple woodcutter, there is little he can do to spread Colni's name back to the outside world.

Artifacts of Note: The Druid's Axe: This enchanted, single blade axe can coax the forest into giving up its lumber without ever harming a single tree. Two times per 24 hours the axe can magically create three cords of firewood (enough for a cold night) or magically conjure a log cabin that lasts for 12 hours, enough to weather most storms. Three times per 24 hours, the spell Extinguish Fire may be cast equal to a 10th level Wizard, and the wielder, like the indestructible artifact, is impervious to fire.

As a weapon, the magic axe inflicts 2D6 damage to most opponents, but 1D6x10 damage to Earth Elementals and beings made of wood. In addition, one time per 24 hours, the axe can fell 24 saplings the thickness of a human's leg in a single cut, or 12 full grown trees four times as thick as a typical human with three chops of the Druid's Axe. Any tree cut down by the magical axe gives birth to a new tree that regrows to the size it was when it was cut down in one quarter the normal time and onward at its normal pace. It can also cut through any chain forged by mortals in a single chop (chain mail armor suffers double damage against this blade).

The axe was last known to be somewhere on one of Bizantium's lesser islands, but has since disappeared. According to popular rumor it was taken by a sect of Druids to someplace in the Great Northern Wilderness where it and Colni Axetree are worshiped.

The Woodsman's Ally: This enchanted axe is made entirely of wood, yet its blade is as strong and sharp as any made of steel. Three times per 24 hours, the Woodsman's Ally can fell a tree with a single blow, no matter the strength or skill of the person who holds it, or the size of the tree. **Note:** The magic only works on normal trees, nothing magic, enchanted, or supernatural, but can cut right through a sapling or an ancient oak with the same amount of ease.

As a weapon, the magic artifact inflicts 2D6 damage and can be thrown up to 100 feet (30.5 m), and return to its owner. It also makes its wielder impervious to fire, find water (Dowsing 75%), and able to float on the surface of water as long as he has the axe in his possession; the magical wooden axe floats.

The Woodsman's Ally is supposedly in the hands of a Kankoran (some say a Bearman) somewhere near the Disputed Lands.

Blessings: Forestwalker: Colni was known for his ability to move through woodlands without disturbing the plants or wildlife and grants the recipient the ability to do the same.

Bonuses: +2 to Perception Rolls involving the forest and travel through it to find game animals, follow trails and avoid its pitfalls, +1 to roll with punch/fall/impact, and +10% to survive coma and death.

Skills/Abilities: Land Navigation 80%, Track and Trap Animals 75%, Wilderness Survival 70%, and the ability to move silently through wooded terrain (equivalent of Prowl 75% in woodland environments only, zero indoors, in cities, and underground; those that already have Prowl receive a bonus of +20% in woodlands). Moreover, animals will not run at the sight or scent of the character, allowing him to move through herds, flocks, or other groups without causing them to flee unless he attacks one of them; making hunting extremely simple as well.

Woodworker: The Blessed individual discovers he or she has an affinity for working with wood and can do so in half the time as trained professionals!

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to recognize distressed and rotting wood, and flimsy construction.

Skills/Abilities: Boat Building 75%, Carpentry 80%, Sculpting & Whittling 70%, all performed in half the usual time, and is able to tell the quality of wooden materials and finished products 65%.

Varde the Mason

Long ago, Varde was one of the Northern Pantheon's most illustrious gods, a warrior defender of the Realm and builder of walls and castles. His fortified edifices dotted Odguard, towers and redoubts, long curtain walls and endless aqueducts that stretched off over the horizon. Determined to prove the full magnitude of his power and wisdom to defend against any assault, Varde found a mountain at the center of Odguard populated by hordes of hostile, barbarian Dwarven tribes and flocks of furious dragons, and there laid down the cornerstone of what would be his ultimate fortress. It took centuries to build, but Varde managed to complete his vision, despite the enemies he had to drive away as he laid every single brick. For what seemed like eternity, the Stronghold of Varde held against the attackers that crashed against it like waves, part of the land, a natural feature of the defense.

Varde's followers poured arrows and catapult stones down in all directions, in defense of the walls and towers supposed to be unassailable. His determined enemies proved too much for even the god of castles, however, and the "ultimate fortress" he constructed, built of pride as much as anything else, eventually succumbed to the endless siege of tunneling Dwarves and dragons raining fire and magic from the sky. Varde's castle tumbled down around him, his followers slaughtered, and with it all, his pride and power. Humiliated and ashamed of his own hubris, Varde became a broken vagabond doomed to wander Odguard forever and alone, away from anyone who might count on him for protection.

Never to build a fortress again, and finding himself to be unworthy of followers, Varde has slowly faded from the hearts and minds of mortals. Existing as a hermit and beggar only in Odguard. The ancient fortresses in the Palladium World that bear his name upon their cornerstones and foundations are all very



old, and stonemasons no longer say prayers to Varde as they lay down castle walls.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Statue Description: Varde's statue is a mystery. At first glance, it appears to be a warrior in full plate armor, standing with his arms crossed, a large, two-handed hammer in hand. One blinks, however, and the warrior is suddenly replaced by a miniature castle's tower. Blink again and the warrior is back. No one is certain which form is a more honest representation of Varde.

Caretakers: There are four Lopani stonemasons who know the deity's past and regularly visit his statue in the Garden of the Gods as a source of inspiration for their own work. None of them near the Garden, however, but at least one makes a pilgrimage from southern Lopan on a monthly basis to tend to the place. These masons know the secrets of Varde, have learned his history, and their own projects have benefitted greatly from the advice of the master. At least one castle in southern Lopan is built atop blocks inscribed with the name of Varde.

Artifacts of Note: The Iron Cloak: This garment looks like any normal hooded cloak, though it is fine material and has the name of Varde stitched along its borders. It weighs next to nothing, and grows or shrinks to accommodate the size and proportion of its wearer. The magical cloak offers the same protection as solid plate armor: A.R. 17 and an S.D.C. of 200, except the Iron Cloak magically regenerates in 24 hours after losing S.D.C. or being completely destroyed! The cloak was stolen from one of Varde's champions years ago by Goblins and is said to adorn the shoulders of a Goblin king in the Old Kingdom. Another story agrees the Cloak was stolen by Goblins, but now protects a cruel Ogre warlord in the Old Kingdom. Neither possibility sits well with Varde.

Varde's Hammer: A large, two-handed sledgehammer, its head inlaid with silver Runes and mystic symbols. The hammer is of considerable weight and heft, so only a person with a P.S. of 20 or greater can handle it as tool or weapon (all others can barely lift it and are -3 to strike, parry, and disarm when trying to use it). Though always a large two-handed weapon, it magically shrinks or grows to be the proportional size for its wielder.

As a weapon, Varde's Hammer inflicts 3D6 damage to most mortal opponents, 6D6 to creatures of magic such as dragons and stone walls, and 1D6x10 damage to Earth Elementals, Golems, and other magical or supernatural stone or earth beings.

Twice per 24 hours the wielder of Varde's Hammer can also cast the following Elemental spells: Crumble Stone, Mend Stone, and Travel Through Stone, without P.P.E. cost. Equal in duration and strength to a 10th level Warlock.

Blessings: Humility: Varde often recognizes the arrogance and blinding pride that once existed in himself, in others, especially among Paladins, Knights and bold adventurers. From time to time, he reaches out and tries to warn mortals not to follow in his footsteps with visions of his greatest failure and clues about danger or challenges they may face in the near future. The deity encourages them to always do their best, but to never believe they are infallible. To accept that as brave and capable and well-intended as they may be, there is always an enemy that is better or more cunning, or more determined than they. That someday, they will face defeat and innocent people shall pay the price for it. That there are things worse than death.

Though he cannot yet find it in his own heart to forgive himself, Varde encourages others to try to be prepared for failure and

loss, and to forgive themselves for when it befalls them, and to get back up and stand for what's right and to help those in need. But to so with humility and empathy toward those they battle as well as those they protect, and that the protection of the innocent is more important than their reputation or the acquisition of power.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize when the Blessed individual or his choices or actions are putting others in danger or jeopardizing a greater good/cause, as well as when others are putting their ego or politics before the welfare of others. This awareness enables the Blessed individual to stop himself and right the course, or to try to intervene when someone else in a position of authority is making that mistake. With a little luck, he can prevent the person from making a terrible mistake that costs lives. In addition, the Blessed individual is +1 on initiative, +1 to disarm and entangle, +1 to pull punch, and +1 to roll with punch/fall/impact.

A blessing and a curse, the Blessed individual is also given the gift of the psychic ability *Empathy*. Empathy may be performed at will at no I.S.P. cost to the Blessed, however, it often engages on its own whenever the Blessed is around frightened or suffering people regardless of their race or which side they are aligned. Empathy is intended to help the Blessed individual relate to people and learn to be compassionate and wise, and most of all, to prevent the hero from making the same mistakes of pride and overconfidence he did.

Skills/Abilities: General Repair 80% and Masonry 75%.

Varde's Protection: As a warrior god of defense, Varde still likes to champion warriors, adventurers, and those going up against impossible odds.

Bonuses: +2 to P.S. attribute, +1 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with punch/impact, and +1 attack/action per melee round when battling evil or protecting the innocent or downtrodden.

Skills/Abilities: Camouflage 75%, Field Armorer 70%, Recognize Weapon Quality 65%, and W.P. Shield.

The Mason's Patron: The deity still represents masons and stone workers, including artisans who work in stone, and from time to time bestows inspiration and/or his blessing upon them.

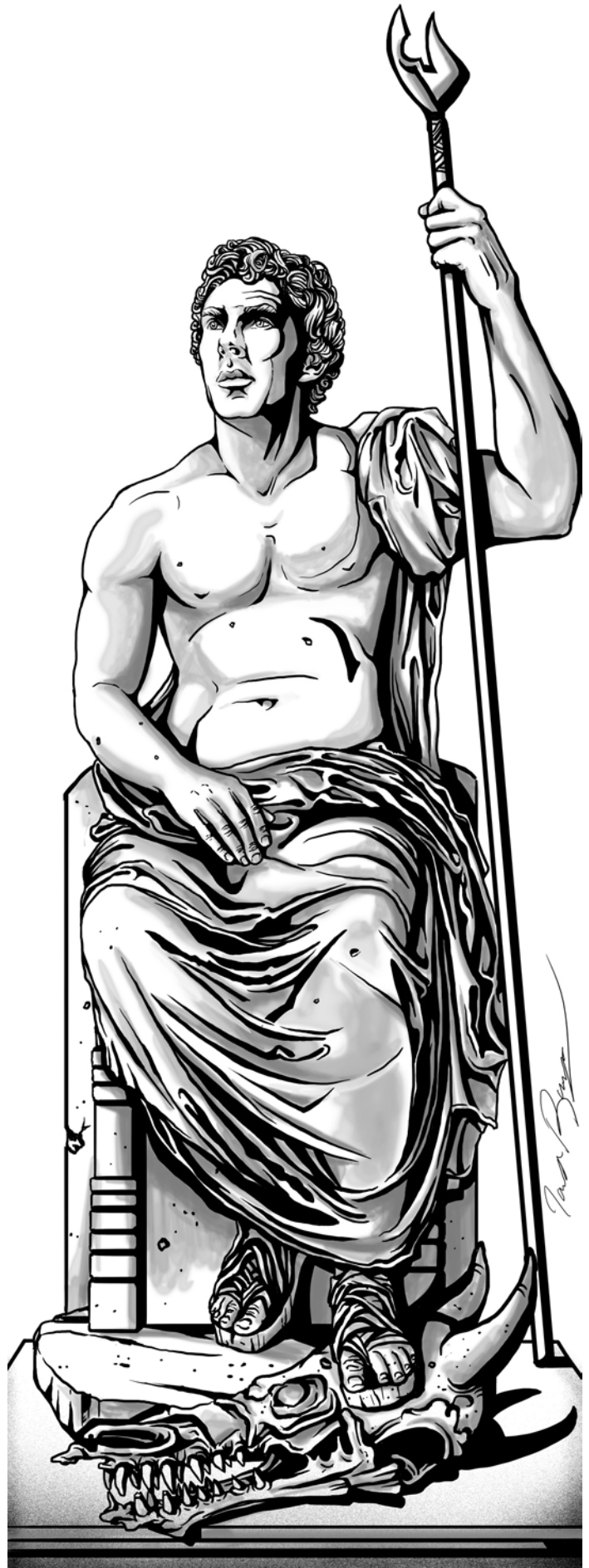
Bonuses: +15% bonus to the skills Art, Masonry, and Sculpting & Whittling, and +10% to related building skills such as Ropeworks, Mathematics: Basic, General Repair, Carpentry, and Boat Building to launch or finish their current project.

Skills/Abilities (special): The extra abilities to recognize flawed stone and weaknesses in existing walls and foundations of any stone structure and fortifications 75%; and the ability to recognize the best quality stone 80%.

Ordogir of the Long-Lance

Ordogir, the Warrior of the Long-Lance, was a patron god of pikemen and the master of the lance and pole arms. He was known in legend as a slayer of dragons and giants, and many warriors would offer up prayers to him before facing down a cavalry charge or standing their own in a phalanx or shield wall. In many battles, Ordogir fought alongside Od and Hoknar, Heim and Wolvenar. He ate at the table of the gods and atop his banner were the skulls of three infamous dragons. These trophies would be his downfall, however.

Legend has it that while Ordogir slept, the three dragon skulls awoke, bewitched by the magic from an unknown as-



sailant whose identity was never determined. Some believe an envious Loknar was behind the attack. Others a vengeful Styphon the Black of Dragonwright. Whoever was behind the dark magic, the dragon skulls came to life and bit the fabled warrior into dozens of pieces from the ankles up in a grisly spectacle. Upon discovery of the crime scene, the skulls covered in blood and gore, Hoknar smashed the three skulls into a thousand pieces, but it was too late to save mighty Ordogir. He gathered the remain in a sack and took them the All Mother Epim to try to resurrect the fallen deity slain in such a treacherous and unfair manner. However, the resurrection of a god in the Deific Realm is never an easy matter, not even for a deity as powerful as Epim. The grieving All Mother consulted with Locknar (an unfortunate turn of Fate if he was the one responsible for the unsolved murder), and together worked magic that is said to have kept a spark of Ordogir alive. Nestled in a garden within a forest in the mortal realm, away from civilization. A land that would one day become known as Lopan.

Supposedly, the magic worked that day fused the fate of Ordogir with the dragon skulls that destroyed him, and yes, that was Locknar's doing. The day each skull is reassembled, they will transform into Ordogir and he will immediately manifest once again within Odguard, whole and fully restored. Putting the puzzle pieces of the skulls back together is the most expeditious means to restore the deity. One problem, the remains of the smashed skulls disappeared before Epim or Hoknar could retrieve them. Presumably, gathered and taken away by the perpetrator or an accomplice, so there would be no evidence. Until the skulls can be found and put together, Ordogir is slowly regenerating, like a person healing while in an induced coma, but it will take many eons for him to be fully restored. Recovering the shattered skull fragments is the only way to bring the deity back quickly.

Alignment: Unprincipled leaning toward Scrupulous.

Statue Description: The statue of Ordogir is seated in a place of prominence atop a pedestal, both rendered from white limestone. He holds a pole arm with an unusual spear head in his left hand and his foot rests atop the skull of a dragon he has slain.

Caretakers: None dedicated to him alone. Sometimes warriors or devotees to the Pantheon of Northern Gods visit Ordogir and tend to the upkeep of his garden when stopping by to pay their respects and see the imposing statue.

Artifacts of Note: The Sacred Speartip: A lost speartip, cast from a single piece of iron ore, was once part of one of Ordogir's weapons that broke in combat. The loose Sacred Speartip is small enough (the size of a man's hand) to fit inside most large pockets, pouches, purses, medium sacks, or backpacks.

When placed at the end of any length of wood, whether it be a club, stick, tree branch, broom or axe handle or well-crafted spear shaft, the Sacred Speartip instantly adheres to it and the shaft transforms in length to a full-sized, 16 foot (4.9 m) long pike.

Damage: 3D6+2 damage to mortal enemies, 6D6+4 damage direct to the Hit Points of dragons, sea serpents, and giants, and 1D6x10+6 damage direct to the Hit Points of *supernatural giants, serpents* and worms, including Worms of Taut, Serpent Lion, Sand Worm, Naga Deevil, and the Serpent Greater Deevil, as well as serpent deities!

Bonuses: In addition, the wielder is +1 to strike, +2 to parry and +2 to disarm with the weapon, and once every 24 hours, the wielder is bestowed with an additional 50 Hit Points when he needs them most. This is an automatic defense mechanism that engages whether the character calls for them or not before he is slain. 150 Hit Points when battling a dragon or giant, 450 Hit points when fighting a Greater supernatural serpent or god of dragons and/or giants.

When such a lengthy weapon is not needed or gets in the way due to its length/size, the owner may remove the Sacred Speartip as if it pops right off and on (it does), but only he can do so. Likewise, if the weapon should break, the Sacred Speartip separates from the broken shaft and can be recovered to be used again. As a result, most canny warriors carry a wooden staff or cane and when a larger, more deadly weapon is needed, places the blade on it to activate the transformation.

Note: When the Sacred Speartip is used by a Gladiator, Paladin, Knight, Cavalryman, or any horseman with a war steed, the weapon becomes a lance (same damage as above). If the Gladiator, Knight, horseman is on foot, the Sacred Speartip may turn into one of the following pole arms, a Lucerne Hammer, Glaive, Halberd, Saber Halberd or the pike as described above, whichever the skilled warrior prefers, but damage is always the same. For any other O.C.C., including Mercenary Fighter and Ranger to Thief or peasant, the weapon is always a pike.

It is rumored there are at least three such ancient and magical Sacred Speartips. One of which is said to be in the capable hands of the Western Empire's greatest gladiator champion, *Shahhall*, who steps into the arena armed with only a dagger and a wooden staff. He surprises his enemies and thrills the audience by turning the staff into a pike or pole arm to slay his opponents.

Blessings: Ordogir still reaches out to knights, paladins and cavalry men as well as slayers of giants and dragons, from his dream state and into their dreams to inspire, encourage and sometimes to bless.

Confounding Reach: When pitted against a much larger enemy, the Blessed individual is able to dart and weave in and out to get in close to strike with conventional weapons, fists or kicks without penalty due to his own small stature

Bonuses: +2 to strike with handheld or thrown weapon, +1 to dodge without loss of a melee attack and +1 to save vs magic and dragon breath weapons whenever fighting giants and dragons. Unafraid of giants and dragons, no Horror Factor applicable.

Skills/Abilities: W.P. Staff, W.P. Pole Arm, and once every 24 hours is able to cast the spell Size of the Behemoth without P.P.E. cost, equal to an 8th level Wizard.

Inspiration to Fight: Ordogir also visits warriors and would-be heroes and Champions in their dreams to inspire them to join a noble cause or take up arms against evil in all its forms, but especially to slay wicked giants, dragons, and larger than human-sized monsters. Sadly, this would include Wolfen, Bearmen, and other beings eight feet (2.4 m) or taller.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls regarding giants and dragons, +10% to Track Humanoids when they are giants or dragons (or a base skill of 50%), and +1 to roll with punch/fall/impact.

Skills/Abilities: Horsemanship: General 75%, Lore: Demons & Monsters 70%, and W.P. Pole Arm or Spear.

Lost Elf Gods

The Elves are one of the eldest races on the Palladium World, and the gods they worship have changed and evolved over the ages. There are many deities who were once sacred to millions of Elves, but whose followers have dwindled away throughout time and who no longer enjoy the power or presence they once had. Elves were the first mortals to discover the Garden of the Gods, oh so long ago, and there are many Elven myths and tales from ancient times that reference it. While some human kingdoms and religions may try to suppress knowledge of the Garden and the gods within it, most Elves know of the Garden from childhood stories, and there are many Elven pilgrims who brave the Great Inland Sea to visit the Garden and commune with deities both known and thought forgotten. Boats bearing Elves on their way to Lopan are common between the shores of the Old Kingdom and the island itself. (**Note:** All Elves have the equivalent of *Lore: Garden of the Gods*, but at a skill rate of only 10%, to reflect the amount of rumor, misinformation and interpretation that has been added to the truth over the passage of time.)

Ylandris of the Crescent Moon

For ancient Elves, Ylandris was one half of the pair of lovers Ylandris and Ryael, both skilled warriors and explorers. Ylandris was the crescent moon and Ryael the full moon, and together their love lit up the night sky. They played their part in the celestial order of the New Kingdom for thousands of years, until the tumultuous events of the Elf-Dwarf War tore them apart.

Though Ryael was a peaceful god, his name was invoked many times during the war as warriors waited for the full moon and prayed for him to guide their night attacks. The full moon had once been a symbol of tranquility, a way to enjoy the night, but during the bloody heights of the war it became a portent of fear. Dwarves and Elves closed their windows and barred their doors on nights of a full moon, not for fear of werebeasts, but of the raiding parties and ambushers who would, guided by the light of the moon, slip into the night to strike at each other's forts and slaughter their enemy, starting with the slashing of the sentries' throats.

Though Ylandris did everything she could to prevent it, Ryael gradually became twisted by this change in worship. Once a deity of love and peace, fighting only to defend the realm, he transformed into a brutal and vengeful warrior god, cold, silent, and foreign to mercy. Where once he was half of a pair of carefree lovers, now he shunned Ylandris and sought only to murder and battle the hated Dwarven enemy and their allies.

Ylandris never recovered from her lover becoming consumed by hate and driven by boiling fury. For the last thousand years of the Elf-Dwarf War, the crescent moon hung blood red in the sky, painted by her divine sorrow. A capable and heroic warrior, herself, she began to try to inspire both sides to find a way back to peaceful coexistence. However, the bloodshed was so relentless and terrible that Ylandris often worked in secret to foil raids and save innocent civilians, women, and children from the insanity unleashed by both sides in the conflict. So much senseless killing and destruction, it made Ylandris want to fade away and leave it all behind. When the Elf-Dwarf War finally came to an end, she did just that. Unable to look at Elf or Dwarf without heartbreak



and sorrow, Ylandris went silent and disappeared, abandoning her followers and her deific duties. In short order, she was forgotten, most of her shrines and temples already destroyed in the war or torn down in shame due to her close association with the bloodthirsty and reviled Ryael.

Alignment: Principled.

Statue Description: An Elf maiden looking sadly down at the ground, with a disc behind her inscribed with a large crescent moon.

Caretakers: None. Sometimes visiting Elves help look after her resting place, but the aura of sadness around Ylandris drives most people away. In most cases it is the deity who inspires mortals, but in this case, it is the god who needs to find inspiration and hope from mortals. Until then, she tearfully watches from the shadows, still too crestfallen to resume her place as a deity to be respected and worshiped.

Artifacts of Note: Crescent Axe: A weapon that Ylandris took from Ryael in a futile attempt to dissuade him from becoming a god of blood and vengeance. The blade is a red crescent moon with otherworldly sharpness. The indestructible Holy Weapon inflicts 5D6 damage, is +3 to strike and parry *at night*, gives the wielder perfect nightvision, and can cast the spells Sense Traps and Invisibility: Simple up to three times per night, but only at night. One legend suggests the Crescent Axe is someplace within the Garden where Ylandris hid it long ago within the dense forest, never imagining it would be turned into the Garden of the Gods.

Blessings: Heart of the Hero: The Blessed individual finds the courage to do what is right and remain true to himself and his cause, no matter how scared and tempted he may be to do otherwise. Nor does the character become bitter or hardened by war and cruelty. Somehow, he is able to maintain his sense of right and wrong, compassion, and commitment to the people counting on him.

Bonuses: +1D4 to M.A. and +1 to M.E., and people find the character to be dashing and heroic for the duration of the Blessing. +2 to damage, +1 to disarm, +1 to pull punch, +2 to save vs disease and poison, +1 to save vs possession and Horror Factor, and +20% to save vs coma and death.

Skill/Ability (special): Heraldry 80%, Lore: Demons & Monsters 75%, Rope Works 70%, Dance 65%, and people find the Blessed individual to be trustworthy and admirable.

Lonely Heart: This Blessing is usually given to someone who has experienced a great loss, usually the loss of a lover or the death of a loved one such as a dear friend, spouse, parent, close family member, teammate, mentor, etc., but it may be the loss of a kingdom/homeland/village, people who had counted on his protection, or a reputation and position important to the individual. The Blessing is intended to help the person, a) to find some measure of acceptance and peace so he or she can move forward, and with that peace, a sense of hope to continue onward, b) to find a shared commonality and empathy for others who have endured similar loss, and c) to be kind to others and practice compassion and mercy when it is deserved.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize when another person(s) is suffering from a broken heart and loss, and the ability to empathize and reach that person in words and deeds, and +1 to parry and entangle.

Skills/Abilities: First Aid 65%, Intelligence 70%, Public Speaking 75%, and the ability to understand and relate to others who are suffering from a broken heart or the loss of a person,

people or place precious to them. This connection enables the Blessed individual to be heard and for him to be seen as a kindred spirit who understands their sorrow and state of mind. As such, the Blessed individual is regarded as someone they can trust, and whose advice or request should be considered, as well as being someone they can confide in. The latter may lead the disenfranchised, sorrowful, and mournful to share information and help the Blessed individual.

The openness and sincerity of the Blessed individual may even be enough to talk someone out of hurting or killing another person in anger or revenge, or from committing suicide or committing a crime. The Blessed individual and the other character both roll a D20. The high roll wins. So if the Blessed individual's roll is higher than the other person, he has managed to convince the suicidal, hate-filled, vengeful, or desperate character to give up his plans and go home to grieve or to lay down his sword and leave. +2 bonus to the Blessed individual if he promises to personally see to it justice is served via proper the channels, or that he shall deliver the just revenge.

If the other character's roll is higher, he wins, and ignores the Blessed individual's plea and moves forward with his revenge scheme, murder, or crime.

Win or lose, this persuasion roll can be performed only one time per 24 hours and only on one specific person at a time.

If the person's lust for revenge and bloodletting is fueled by the *Bloody Vengeance Blessing* (see Ryael, below), the vengeful character is +3 to save. If the hate-filled or vengeful character fails to save, he stays his hand for the moment while he considers the appeal made by the lonely heart. Roll against that number again 24 hours later. If the character consumed by Bloody Vengeance fails to save a second time, he gives up his plan for retribution and either seeks a more just and fair punishment via the proper authorities or lets go of his hate entirely and moves on without further incident.

Power of Love: The Blessing provides additional commitment to fight and sacrifice for those you love without losing the capability to be merciful and kind. A renewed energy and commitment when fighting to save a loved one or dear friend, or a cause the Blessed individual strongly believes in.

Bonuses (conditional): +2 to P.S., +20 S.D.C., +1 attack per melee round, +1 to strike and disarm, +2 to damage, fatigues at half the usual rate, and is impervious to Horror Factor, *but ONLY when fighting to save or protect a loved one, dear friend, or someone or a cause the Blessed individual cares about deeply*, and cannot be mind controlled, charmed, possessed, and forced to harm that person or people.

Skills and Abilities: Escape Artist 75%, Surveillance 70%, and Swimming (or Acrobatics, whichever is needed) 65%, and can tell when a loved one or friend is in trouble even if the person tries to deny it, 95%.

Sacred Pairing (special): This blessing creates a mystic bond between two lovers or non-romantic best friends. As a result, each can read the other's thoughts and emotions like an open book, and each understands the other in a profound way. The Sacred Pair support each other and give each other strength and courage to persevere and survive anything *together*.

Bonuses (conditional): Each is +1 on Perception Rolls (all), +3 on Perception Rolls that involve trying to tip off or leave a clue or warning for the other that only they will recognize as such, +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, parry and dodge, +1 to pull

punch and roll with punch/fall/impact, +1 on all saving throws, +2 to save vs Horror Factor, +5% skill bonus, and increase Spd by 20% to reach each other when in need, *but ONLY when they fight at each other's side or back to back as a team/pair, or when trying to get to/rescue/help the other!* The two work together like a well oiled machine.

Skills and Abilities: The strength of two: When one beseeches the other to resist or fight disease, magic, mind control, illusion, possession, or Horror Factor/fear, the other is motivated and inspired to try again and try harder to do so. This results in a re-roll to save with a +3 bonus. They can even fight death (+40% to save vs coma and death and recover in half the time!), and when locked in combat and fighting side by side or back to back against a common enemy or fighting to protect the other, they get the bonuses noted above.

One cannot be forced to betray or harm the other. Not through lies, manipulation, illusion, possession, nor via magic or psionics of any kind. If one of the pair seems to have done so, the other knows it is not genuine and should play along, knowing it is a trick or ploy of some kind, or that an accusation of betrayal or harm by an outsider is false. Each always knows when the other is scared, happy, worried, lying, truthful, injured, sick, or when something is wrong, 95%. They are almost certain to pick up on clues and hints spoken by the other.

Moonshade – A Miraculous Blessing: Ylandris may impart her ability to control the light of the moon upon her Champion or those she is blessing and bestowing the miracle upon; may be an individual or a group. The Blessed individual can control the amount of ambient light around him/them at night, increasing or decreasing the amount of light to either cloak themselves in darkness even as they move forward to attack or away to escape (+10% to Prowl skill or base Prowl of 50%, whichever is greater), or to illuminate an area or enemy in the light of the full moon.

Area of Effect and Range: The recipient himself or him and a group of people, or an area as large as a 100 foot (30.5 m) radius up to 800 feet (244 m) away. **Note:** Those who are cloaked by Moonshade also possess the equivalent of Nightvision 200 feet (61 m) while cloaked by its magical darkness. **Note:** Effective only at nighttime. Duration may be a single night or as much as seven days. When granted as a permanent Blessing to a Champion of the Gods, the character can use Nightshade as often as three times in a single night. Each activation lasting as long as 2 hours at a time.

Ryael of the Full Moon

God of Blood and Vengeance

For ages, Ryael was the god of the full moon and its comforting glow, bringing an enchanting light into the world of darkness a few days a month. There was a time when Ryael may have jested he was a lover not a fighter, but the Elf-Dwarf War changed that. Being besieged by prayers born in sorrow and hate turned his heart as cold and hard as the moon. Century upon century of prayers from millions of followers on the side of the Elves begging him for help against their sworn Dwarven enemy and to avenge acts of brutality, wholesale slaughter, and atrocity by the murderous enemy, tore at his heart. Over time, he, like his followers, lost sight of justice and became consumed by hatred and bloodlust, changing his deific energies forever.

The god of love and compassion, transformed into the god of vengeance and death. Assassination and ambush his new hallmark. A fierce and angry god who lit up the night sky so that his followers could find their enemies in the darkness and strike them down from the shadows.

Soon Ryael cared nothing about love or peacemaking. He was lost to vengeance and lived for bloody retribution. He answered his followers' prayers by fueling the depths of their hatred and lust for revenge. Encouraging that every atrocity by the hands of the Dwarves and their allies be met in kind with greater atrocity and more bloodshed. An eye for an eye until the Dwarves were punished and made to bow down on bended knee to their Elven superiors.

When the war came to a tragic and sorrowful end, Ryael was shocked and confused. How could the war be over when Dwarves still drew breath? It didn't matter that both of their civilizations lay in ruin. The hate-driven god was not done until the Elves were the clear winner and Dwarves crushed under heel. He was even more confused by the prevailing sorrow and regret that rose up from both sides, and dumbfounded when Elf and Dwarf laid down their swords, embraced, and forgave each other (as best they could). Vowing to never engage in a war driven by unreasoning hate and vengeance ever again. The Dwarves, destroyers of the gleaming Elven city of Baalgor, dismantled their Rune Forges and swore to forsake the use of magic in all its forms forevermore. Elves, too, destroyed their Rune Weapon factories, disbanded their armies and gave up many forms of magic deemed to be the dark arts and a corrupting influence. The next generation would spearhead the *Age of Purification* so that magic might never be used in such a destructive manner ever again.

And with it all, they forsook *Ryael, God of Blood and Vengeance*. What statues of his and those of his divine consort Ylandris, still stood, were torn down and destroyed in shame and regret. His followers abandoned him. No, not abandoned, rejected him outright and worked hard to forget him, for they never wanted to have anything to do with the bloodthirsty deity who had reflected and fueled their madness ever again. So it was that Ryael was pushed from the memory of his followers and enemies alike, both of whom wanted to forget what they had done with his blessing. Never again would they allow themselves to go down the path of blind vengeance, and never would they be able to recover from the devastation unleashed by their own hands.

Suddenly, Ryael was alone. His place in the celestial order erased. It was only then that he realized the love of his life was not at his side, and had not been for more than a thousand years. Worse, she hid from him and was nowhere to be found. With only his hate and rage and lonely thoughts to keep him company, Ryael's heart, already as cold and dead as the surface of the moon, festered and putrefied.

Today, the God of Blood and Vengeance is worshiped by only a few secret cults and orders of assassins and nefarious criminals who cling to his name as a god of wrath and murder. Perhaps if he could have laid down his sword and put aside the hatred, he could have transformed again to become merciful and wise, but he could not. Ryael feels robbed of his revenge and deserted by everyone he once loved and supported. To his twisted way of thinking, he sacrificed Ylandris and everything, only to suffer betrayal and condemnation by the very people he loved and whose prayers he had answered. His only crime was giving them what



they had asked of him. And for it, he is reviled and shunned and willfully forgotten.

Ryael accepts his place as an outcast god of darkness, and embraces the foul villains who now worship and call upon him. Cutthroats and criminals who pray to him seeking inspiration and

blessings to murder and commit crimes in the name of revenge and bloody justice, or in the name of greed and cruelty. He no longer champions the Elves or any of their causes. They rejected him, so he rejects them, and sends doom to punish them for it.

To that end, the God of Blood and Vengeance has become a patron and source of inspiration for the so-called monster races of the Old Kingdom. Encouraging them to pillage and slaughter Elves and Dwarves alike, and to tear down the last vestiges of their crumbling civilizations. Such inhuman marauders and bloodthirsty savages are his chosen people now. Selfish, greedy villains out only for themselves or serving as agents of chaos and destruction.

As you might imagine, Ryael loathes Dwarves above all others, and sees noble heroes and clergy of any species as suckers and fools who put their lives on the line for impossible ideals and an empty promise of a better world. A world where goodness and peace shall prevail. He feels the same disdain for the Gods of Light and anyone who strives to be good, compassionate, and merciful. To Ryael, they are the cruel and merciless ones for torturing people with lies of hope and charity in an ugly world of hopelessness and wickedness.

It is no wonder Ylandris weeps and hides from the mad god of death and vengeance. Within the Garden, their statues face in opposite directions, so close to each other, and yet separated entirely and forever.

Alignment: Miscreant (was Scrupulous).

Statue Description: An Elven warrior, his armor and true nature hidden under a hooded cape and the long shadows cast by the full moon behind him. The moon glows like a lamp and Ryael's cape is wrapped around his body and held in front of his face with his other hand to shelter him from the light and conceal his dangerous identity.

Caretakers: None, and most locals and caretakers feel a sense of dread in his area of the Garden and shun it. Priests and learned people who know or suspect the identity of Ryael pretend not to know him, and have nothing to do with the deity. Only Elves blinded by hate, and those who hunger for revenge still find their way to him, as do thieves, assassins, and the occasional misguided warrior or adventurer. Such worshipers pray for his favor in battle or to avenge a grievous wrong. Little do they realize they ask guidance from a deity whose light and wisdom only leads to hate, murder, and unquenchable bloodlust.

Artifacts of Note: Moonedge Dagger: This foul magic weapon is a tool of murder and assassination. It gives its wielder the ability to see in darkness 1,000 feet (305 m, double when the moon is full), +10% to Prowl and hide, and once per 24 hours is able to cast the Shadow Meld spell at no P.P.E. cost; equal to an 8th level Wizard.

Damage: 1D6 damage from Moonedge during the daytime. 2D6 damage at night, double damage to creatures of darkness such as Ghouls, Shadow Beasts, vampires, werebeasts, and others. *Additional Damage:* When Moonedge pierces the flesh and tastes its victim's blood, the magic blade releases a slow acting poison. The poisoned victim recovers lost Hit Points and S.D.C. at half the usual amount, including healing magic, spells, and psychic healing, and Negate Poison has no effect! The victim feels tired and under the weather, reduce Spd by 10% and -1 to initiative, strike, parry and dodge, and -10% to save vs coma/death. Worse, the victim loses 1D6 Hit Points every 24 hours, twice as much during a full moon, and any Banshee in the area

may circle, wail, and follow him like a hungry vulture longing for his death. This daily loss of Hit Points is bad, especially under combat conditions. Those with the *Lore: Magic* or *Lore: Religion* skill have only a 25% chance of realizing what's going on and how to cure the victim(s). A Healer or psychic with the ability of *Psychic Diagnosis* as well as most *Alchemists* can discern the cause and reveal the easy remedy: The only cure to negate the poison of Moonedge is to lay down in an open field under the light of a crescent moon for two full hours.

The Avenger: An indestructible silver bastard sword that glows faintly in the dark, thrice as brightly under a *full moon*, during which the sword inflicts double damage!

The Avenger inflicts 2D6 damage to Elves and most mortal opponents, 4D6 damage to Dwarves, 1D6x10 damage to Spirits of Light and deities of any alignment (he hates them all), and 2D6x10 damage to Elven and Dwarven deities, except Ylandris whom Ryael still loves, though he hates himself for it. The Avenger only does 2D6 damage to her.

Blessings: Ryael may choose to bless anyone of any race, including Elves and Dwarves who are filled with hate and seek revenge. His Blessings often lead to murder, bloodletting, and destruction, sometimes including the destruction of the one who is Blessed. Ryael also favors assassins, thieves, pirates, slavers, criminals, and the cruel and wicked, but his most favored are those tortured by hate and sorrow, and who lust for terrible vengeance.

Bloody Vengeance: This Blessing stokes the fires of the recipient's dark emotions and desire for blood soaked revenge. The individual becomes consumed with revenge that he and Ryael may call justice. A revenge that is likely to be unfair and more severe than the wrong deserves. Of course, the Blessed individual is so blinded by his sorrow, pain, or hate, he or she does not see it that way, and only wants the person responsible to suffer and pay for his crimes. It is only after the Blessed individual has exacted his revenge that emotions cool and he realizes the punishment did not fit the crime, and that it is he who has caused the greater injustice.

Bonuses: Blind determination provides +3 on Perception Rolls to figure out clues, follow trails, and find the target of his revenge; +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, +1 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +1 to save vs mind control, +20% to save vs coma/death. Ryael likes to encourage quests for revenge, the bloodier the better, and those who receive this Blessing are usually ruthless and relentless in their quest for revenge, and merciless in its execution. The only way for the individual to be stopped before carrying out his mission of death is if someone or something is able to intervene, touch his heart, and cool the hot emotions long enough for him to see reason and administer true justice, not torture and bloodshed.

Skills: Prowl 65%, Surveillance 70%, Track Humanoids 75% (+10% when it is the target of his revenge he is tracking), and Use & Recognize Poison 60%.

An unintended consequence is that the Blessed individual learns the hard way that revenge is not sweet, but bitter, and does nothing to take away his own sorrow and pain. Moreover, his act of bloody revenge or cruel and merciless punishment may, in turn, cause a loved one, family member, or teammate of his victim (or of those who may have gotten hurt or killed when they got in the way of the Blessed individual's quest for vengeance) to seek revenge upon him and/or those associated with the vengeful Blessed individual.

Moonshade – A Miraculous Blessing: Same as Ylandris, described previously.

Moonsight: The Blessed individual is gifted with an extension of Ryael's godly powers of perception.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to notice Elves, +4 to notice Dwarves and creatures of the night, +1 to strike, +3 to damage at night (not in darkness, but at nighttime), double those bonuses when the moon is full or nearly full.

Skills/Abilities: Astronomy and Navigation 80%, Literacy: Dwarven 80%, Literacy: Elven 95%, Locate Secret Compartments & Doors 75%, Nightvision 600 feet (183 m), and the ability to recognize weapons, tools, armor, symbols/heraldry, and architecture made by Elves 75% and Dwarves 60%, and is able to estimate the age of the construct and its value or significance at 60% proficiency.

Shadow Soldier: Every Blessing like this makes him more a god of darkness. Ryael can still convey the powers that Elven warriors called upon him for during the Elf-Dwarf War in order to slay their hated Dwarven adversaries.

Bonuses: +20% to Prowl (or a base skill of 60% for those without the skill), +1 to strike and dodge in darkness, and inflicts double damage with attacks from behind and on a Natural (unmodified by bonuses) roll to strike of 17-20, *but only at night or from the shadows*.

Skills/Abilities: This blessing makes the recipient blend with the shadows of the night. When completely concealed in a shadow or dark place, and standing still, the Shadow Soldier cannot be seen unless a light is shined directly on his position. Anyone looking for the Blessed individual while he is cloaked in shadow is -3 on Perception Rolls to notice him and -2 on initiative when they do. In addition, once every 24 hours the Blessed individual can cast the spells *See the Invisible* and *Shadow Meld* at no P.P.E. cost to himself; equal to an 8th level Wizard, double the spells' duration when the moon is full or nearly full.

Lost Dwarf Gods

Just like their taller cousins, the Elves, Dwarves are a race whose high-water mark has come and gone. There was a time when the Old Kingdom Mountains sheltered cities of countless millions of Dwarves, and where it seemed like every mountain or mineral vein throughout the world had come to know the ringing blows of their picks and hammers. After the devastation of the Elf-Dwarf War, however, the Dwarves were scattered and separated, and are now far fewer in number than they once were. Though there are a few underground and mountain cities remaining, many Dwarves are members of human communities around the world.

With so many of their cathedrals, churches, and holy shrines buried deep underground, it is easy for gods beloved of the Dwarves to be forgotten by surface dwellers. In some ruins and buried cities, there are churches and temples filled with the skeletons of Dwarves who died at their place of worship, praying to gods who could not or would not help them. Over the ages, dust, dirt and desecration by Goblins and Orcs have destroyed many of the holy places of the Dwarves. Though many of the ancient Dwarven deities have been adopted by humans, there remain some who are forgotten until unearthed from the Primeva within the Garden of the Gods.

Aefyrl, the Bronzsmith

An old deity from the early ages of Dwarven civilization, Aefyrl was once one of the most powerful and widely-worshipped gods. The Dwarven god of bronze, he was the keeper of the knowledge required to mix copper and tin into the ancient alloy, and his wisdom allowed the Dwarves to make tools and weapons far superior to those of stone. The march of progress continued, however, and while bronze is still in use throughout the world by cultures of all kinds, including Dwarves, when the iron age came in, Aefyrl was on his way out. Where warriors once prayed to him that their bronze shields would hold, or that their hammers would strike true, the tools, trinkets, fasteners and other items still made from bronze don't garner the same level of appreciation or acclaim. Aefyrl slipped from being a mighty god of war, to a toolmaker, to a minor deity displaced by gods of iron and steel.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Statue Description: A regal Dwarven smith holding up an ingot of copper and an ingot of tin.

Caretakers: There is an order of Dwarven bronzsmiths from the Old Kingdom who remember the name and face of Aefyrl and have handed down the last remaining religious texts that reference him from one generation to the next. They always have at least one of their members serving as caretaker within the Garden, sometimes two.

Artifacts of Note: Aefyrl's Golden Sword: An indestructible, bronze short sword that has outstanding balance and does remarkable damage for its size. It inflicts 3D6 damage to most opponents, 6D6 to sea serpents/sea monsters, and is +1 to strike and parry. In the hands of a Dwarf, the bonus to strike and parry is +2 and there is an additional damage bonus of +4.

Tower Shield: This large, bronze shield has an A.R. 13, an S.D.C. of 130, and regenerates within 24 hours from its handgrip whenever damaged or destroyed. It has the magical ability to deflect missile attacks; any arrow, crossbow bolt, sling stone, even a cannonball or catapult stone, that impacts within 10 feet (3 m) of the shield is harmlessly cast aside and never touches the shield nor those shielded behind it.

Blessings: Brazen Courage: The first Dwarven phalanxes fought with bronze shields and spears, and learned that faith in their weapons and each other could hold the line against fearsome enemies. Aefyrl reflects this bravery upon the recipient of the Blessing.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to recognize precious metals and ores, +1 to strike and parry with spears and pole arms, +2 to damage with spears and pole arms, and +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

Skills/Abilities: Military Etiquette 80%, Gemology 75%, Recognize Weapon Quality 70%, W.P. Shield equal to an 8th level warrior, and can throw a spear or javelin 20% farther than is typical.

Skin of Bronze (Miraculous Blessing): The skin of the Blessed individual turns into enchanted bronze as if he were a living bronze statue or some sort of Golem.

Bonuses: A Natural A.R. of 13, +70 S.D.C., +3 to damage from punches and kicks, resistant to fire (half damage) and can parry weapons with his bare hands, including flaming weapons! When the bonus 70 S.D.C. is reduced to zero, the person returns to normal flesh and blood. If the Blessing is intended for several days, it will reappear once every 24 hours under combat



conditions and remain until the S.D.C. is reduced to zero again, but bio-regenerate at a rate of 1D6+6 S.D.C. per hour. Increase weight by 30% and reduce speed by 10%.

Duration is typically one battle or 24 hours, sometimes as long as seven days. When granted to a Champion of the Gods, the character is able to activate the Skin of Bronze at will, three times per 24 hour period for up to two hours at a time. The Skin of Bronze vanishes when its S.D.C. is reduced to zero or below, but may also be canceled at will by the Blessed individual.

Skills and Abilities: Field Armorer 75%, Recognize Weapon Quality 70%, and the power to turn to bronze as per above.

Spirit of the Dwarf: The Blessed individual has some of the abilities and tendencies of Dwarves for the duration of the Blessing. This includes a taste for beer and mead, and a preference for Dwarves. Has a mild distrust of non-Dwarves, especially Elves. Identifies with and trusts Dwarves above all others.

Bonuses: +1D6 to P.S. attribute, +2 to P.E. attribute, +10 S.D.C., and Nightvision 90 feet (27.4 m), but -10% to Spd.

Skills and Abilities: Detect Concealment and Traps 70% (+10% underground or when made of stone or bronze), Land Navigation 60% (+15% underground), and the ability to recognize weapons, tools, armor, symbols/heraldry, and architecture made by Dwarves 75%, and is able to estimate the age of the construct and its value or significance at 70% proficiency. Feels comfortable underground and in tight spaces, and when among Dwarves.

Ilonec, the Steambearer

The goddess Ilonec was known long ago as the Steambearer. In old Dwarven myth, she brought icy water to the gods of the Dwarven forge that they used to cool their weapons, throwing out great clouds of steam. Geysers that erupted from the land were supposed to be evidence of her work, and smiths and water bearers alike offered prayers and sacrifice to her name.

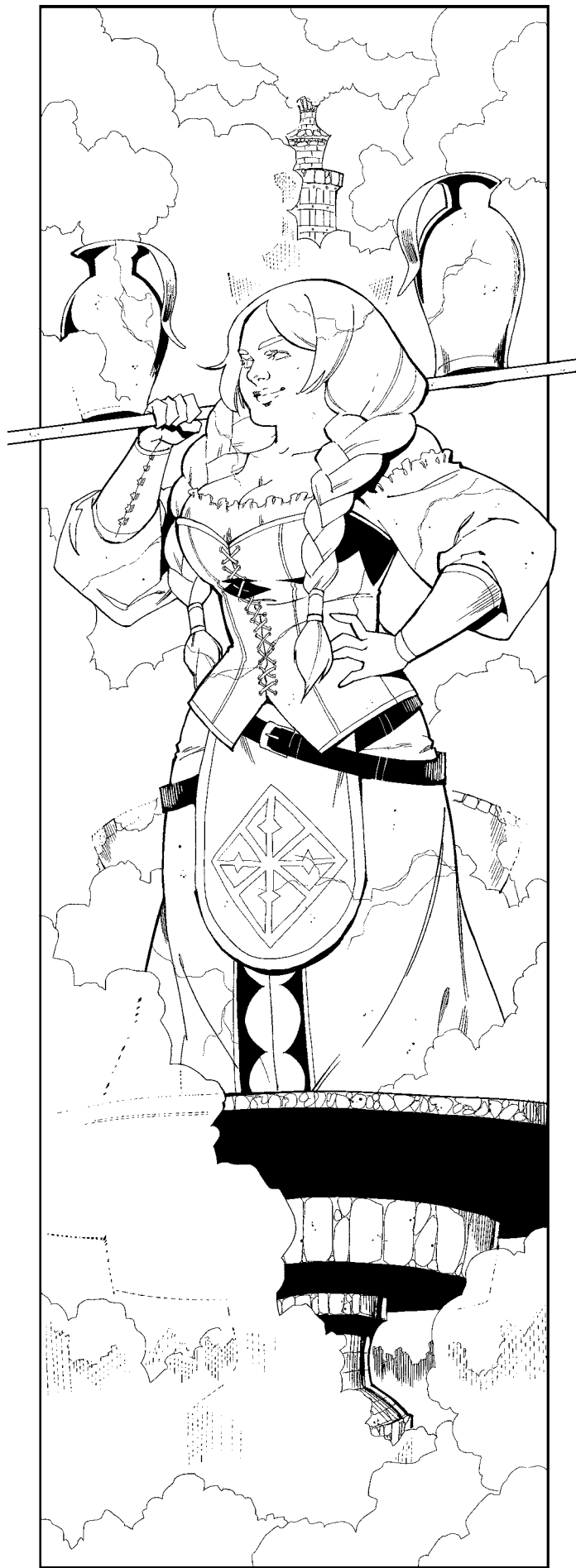
According to Dwarven legend, Ilonec went down to the shore of an ancient lake to draw cold water for her daily task. Shrouded in the cloud of steam that garbed her day and night, she floated down to the water's edge, and fog began to cover the entire lake. There was a sound of rippling in the water, and the cry for "help" in Dwarven – and Ilonec was gone, never to be seen outside the Garden of the Gods again.

It was a great serpent that caught and took her away, one of the many legendary beasts that ply the depths of deep lakes and seas of the world. According to myth, the creature (perhaps, a deity itself) still lives and holds Ilonec as its prisoner, where she is forced through dark magic to serve as its water bearer and slave, making the serpent hot baths and cooking and brewing for it. While under the monster's thrall, Ilonec can do little to help herself, so she waits to be freed and allowed to walk among the gods and mortals once again. The sea monster is said to live somewhere in the Great Inland Sea or the Sea of Despair.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Statue Description: Ilonec is a statue of a Dwarf maiden within a fountain, where endless steam rises in clouds. She has two water vessels balanced on a pole held over one shoulder.

Caretakers: There is a Dwarf Priestess named **Hinnea** who tends to the fountain and the statue within. She escaped war in the Old Kingdom and made her way to the peace and safety of



Lopan, before discovering the Garden of the Gods and naturally gravitating towards the Dwarven deities.

Artifacts of Note: Steam Source: An enchanted water vessel, when the Runes upon this artifact are activated by the user's will, a huge cloud of steam is produced, obscuring the vision of everyone within or nearby. The steam cloud is approximately 120 feet (36.6 m) in diameter and inflicts no damage, though it does douse any fires within its reach and melts snow and ice.

Blessings: Of Fire and Water: Ilonec's magic is in the mixing of elemental forces. Fire does half damage, and those under this Blessing will also find themselves unable to drown, same as the Breathe Without Air spell.

Bonuses: Recipients of this Blessing take half damage from magic attacks involving fire, water, and ice, cannot drown, are impervious to steam and heat, resistant to fire (half damage), and swimming speed is 3x the Spd attribute.

Skills/Abilities: Brewing 75%, Fishing 70%, Swimming 65%, Cooking 60%, can breathe underwater as long as necessary, and survives any depth for as long as the Blessing is in place. The Blessed individual is also able to cast the following spells as often as three times per 24 hours: Ignite Fire, Fuel Flame, and Extinguish Fire at no P.P.E. cost, equal to a 7th level Wizard.

Water-Seeker: As Ilonec is a goddess of steam and bearer of water, the Blessed individual receives a range of water and fire abilities.

Bonuses: +3 to Perception Rolls involving water and noticing poison and impurities in water and other liquids, impervious to cold and steam, and can carry 10 times the normal weight for the character's P.S. when lifting, carrying and transporting water.

Skills/Abilities: Dowsing 80%, Swimming 75%, and three times per 24 hours can cast the spells Cloud of Steam (Water Elemental Spell) and Purification (water and liquids only) at no P.P.E. cost, equal to a 7th level Wizard.

Lost Canine Gods

The ascendant Wolfen are believers in Algor and the Northern Pantheon, but also have traditional Wolfen gods that they still worship, a bit less every year, perhaps, but worshiped nonetheless. While it is known as an Empire, the Wolfen state has many different remote tribes, isolated villages and snow-covered secrets, and there is no telling what beliefs an individual Wolfen might subscribe to. Coyles and Kankoran, on the other hand, though being absorbed into the Wolfen Empire, have not lost touch with their age-old forms of worship, and most still remember and count the elder Wolfen and nature deities among their gods. It is the so-called civilized world of humans, Elves, Dwarves and other non-canine people who know nothing of these deities.

Despite their long tribal past, the Wolfen are a species and culture that has evolved swiftly and risen to heights of sophistication that took humanity far longer to reach, and may have never been accomplished without inheriting so much from the Elves. Wolfen have also adopted Bizantium's religious practices, human ship designs, and even certain legal and cultural institutions. Most gods are happy to accept worship from any source, and there are even a few who have restyled themselves to appeal to the canine races, going about in a more suitable lupine form.



Ertwin, Warden of the Den

Ertwin is a classical goddess who was once worshiped by all the various canine races. She was a patron of mothers, fathers and pups, and more specifically, of the dens that primitive Wolfen would dig to shelter their young from the elements. As the Wolfen evolved from intelligent animals into civilized creatures, however, they increasingly abandoned their instinctual, den-building lifestyle for one of huts and tents and wooden lodges. Ertwin, an essential deity to stone-age Wolfen, is now seen by many as a primitive throwback to a different era. Generally only mentioned in old scrolls and written accounts of Wolfen oratories, Ertwin is still remembered and worshiped by many Wolfen, especially tribes and villages on the very edge of their civilization and in the Disputed Lands. Among the more primitive and savage Coyles as well as the nature oriented Kankoran, she is as vibrant and important as ever. They see her as a nurturing Earth Mother and a symbol of the land, the seasons, wildlife, and birth.

Alignment: Principled.

Statue Description: A stout Wolfen matron in early Wolfen tribal attire. The ground behind her has been sculpted to resemble the early stages of digging a den.

Caretakers: There are a pair of Wolfen mothers who lost their children during a conflict in the Disputed Territory and have taken it upon themselves to watch over Ertwin's resting place and preserve her memory in their honor.

Artifacts of Note: Ertwin's Claws: These enchanted clawed gauntlets can be used to swiftly excavate a den into the earth, no matter how dry, rocky, sandy or frozen it may be. The wielder can create a small, underground cavern roughly 10x10x15 feet

(3x3x4.6 m) in 1D4 melee rounds, providing protection from the elements or a secret hiding/resting place.

As a weapon, the claws inflict 2D6 damage to most opponents, 5D6 damage to Earth Elementals and Golems made from the earth.

The wearer can cast each of the following spells once per 24 hours at no P.P.E. cost, equal to an 8th level Wizard: Seal, Eyes of the Wolf, and Repel Animals.

There are said to be at least two sets of Ertwin's Claws, one somewhere in the eastern portion of the Disputed Lands, the other in the southern section of the Great Northern Wilderness north of Lopan.

Earth Mother's Hunting Bow: An enchanted wooden bow that when used for hunting game animals only, is +4 to strike and inflicts 2D6+4 damage, double damage on a roll of 18, 19, or 20 to make a quick, easy kill. -1 to strike and only 2D6 damage when used as a weapon against sentient beings.

Earth Mother's Spear: An enchanted wooden spear with a stone spearhead that when used for hunting *game animals only* (NOT hunting people or combat) or defending oneself or others against an animal attack (including animalistic monsters like a Devil Scorpion or Peryton), is +2 to strike, can be thrown 300 feet (91.4 m), magically returns to its owner in an instant, and inflicts 2D6+10 damage, double damage on a roll of a Natural (unmodified) 18, 19, or 20 to make a quick, easy kill. The spear inflicts 1D6+5 damage without bonuses, and has normal range (100 feet/30.5 m), when used against sentient beings.

Blessings: Defend the Young: This Blessing is usually bestowed upon those who protect infants, the young, and pregnant women and mothers.

Bonuses: Anyone fighting to protect a baby, child, youth, woman with child, or mother of any race receives a bonus of +2 on Perception Rolls to recognize when a mother or child is in danger or distress, +2 to strike and parry, +1 attack per melee round, and +1 to save vs Horror Factor. Only works when protecting a child or mother.

Skills/Abilities: Cook 80%, First Aid 75%, Skin and Prepare Animal Hides 70%, and Ventriloquism 65%.

Good Hunting: The Blessed individual is keenly aware of his surroundings outdoors, and hunting and tracking abilities are heightened.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to notice animal tracks, trails, and other signs of animal life, +2 to strike using ranged weapons such as spears, javelins, bows and arrows, even slings to strike and kill game animals only, +1 to dodge an animal attack, and +1 to save vs poison.

Skills and Abilities: Land Navigation 65%, Track and Trap Animals 75%, and Wilderness Survival 70%.

Amyar, the Iron Wolf

There are gods who have been killed by other deities, or whose followers have dwindled away over long millennia. There are gods who have been displaced by newer deities or been made victims of fate beyond their control. *Amyar, the Iron Wolf*, however, was deliberately buried and covered up by the Wolfen, hidden from future generations in order to wipe him from the world forever.

Known for his invincible iron skin, Amyar was an unstoppable force of evil and chaos. He would come to demand sacrificial

victims and kill on a whim or for pleasure during the full light of day, knowing no mortal challenger could harm him, and even deities took pause before confronting the monster-wolf. The symbol of savagery and cruelty, ancient Wolfen and Coyles would pray for his blessings before they went into battle or would ask that their enemies be cursed with a pox or misfortune. Early Wolfen learned to appease Amyar with gifts of slain animals and sacrificial offerings of captured enemies, but still the Iron Wolf would claim the lives of the innocent, particularly pups and children, to slake his divine bloodlust.

With the other gods unwilling to stop the ravages of the Iron Wolf, the Wolfen took it upon themselves to erase him from history. Wolfen Priests forbade the worship of the monster even against enemies and monsters, and warriors burned down temples and shrines, smashed statues, and scratched out his inscriptions. Amyar was cleansed from art and poetry, and the few Wolfen twisted enough to personally follow his cult were hunted down and slain! Even speaking his name was prohibited out of fear the monster might return.

Amyar retaliated for a few years, lashing out at the canine people who tried to undermine him by undermining them, and via curses and Dark Champions, but without followers and divine recognition, the vicious wolf-god quickly weakened before finally disappearing completely. Slipping into the realm of forgotten myth, defeated by a strategy all of his rage and strength and wickedness could not withstand.

Alignment: Diabolic.

Statue Description: A simple, stylized wooden carving of a wolf. Upon close examination, it becomes clear the wolf's skin is made up of iron plates held together by pins.

Caretakers: None are known, and the area of the garden around the statue is usually a bit overgrown and wild. Fitting for this savage deity. It is rumored that werebeasts worship the Iron Wolf and that anyone seen tending to the garden of Amyar should be assumed to be a Werewolf or other were-creature in human guise, or a dangerous cultist, all of whom are best to be avoided.

Artifacts of Note: Amyar's Tooth: A wooden war club lined with the teeth of Amyar's own divine young, slain by him so that none could grow up and challenge him. The weapon inflicts 3D6 damage to most mortal opponents, but does 1D6x10 to werebeasts, dragons, and all creatures of magic.

Once per 24 hours, the wielder of Amyar's Tooth can metamorph into a wolf. Duration is limited to a maximum of six hours. In canine form, the transformed individual has the speed and abilities of the wolf, while retaining his own intelligence, skill knowledge, and ability to speak. In the alternative, the Tooth's owner can transform into a Wolfen, but not a specific person, and only for a maximum of three hours. As a Wolfen, only the character's size and appearance changes, all other abilities remain the same, except increase Spd by 20% and P.S. by 10% while in the large Wolfen form.

Hide of Metal: Said to be the pelt of one of the Iron Wolf's own children, the full suit of scale mail is made up of hundreds of metal plates that ripple and move without great weight or encumbrance, allowing the wearer to move about as if he were not wearing armor at all. The Hide of Metal magically grows, shrinks and conforms to the shape of the wearer regardless of race, and does not clink and clunk or make noise, so the wearer can still Prowl and deploy stealth.



The armored Hide has an A.R. of 16, S.D.C. of 300, and completely regenerates with the morning sunrise. However, if the Hide suffers double its damage capacity (600 points), it is destroyed, crumbling into dust.

If the few remaining myths are true, Amyar has killed hundreds, perhaps thousands, of his young, turning each into a Hide of Metal, suggesting there may have once been hundreds of these suits of armor. Both Elves and Dwarves deployed a few dozen during the Elf-Dwarf War, and it is rumored that a few might still be found in the ruins of the Old Kingdom or buried at the sites of terrible battles. Another is rumored to be hidden at a frozen temple in the Algor Mountains, and that the Library of Bletherad has at least one secured away from the public within one of its archival vaults.

Metal Needle of the Iron Wolf: This eight inch (20 cm), metal needle is a tool for torture and interrogation. Damage is only one point (1D6 to werebeasts), but the needle stabbing into its victim is agony and has a number of magical capabilities.

Twice per 24 hours, the following spells may be inflicted upon anyone impaled by the Metal Needle: *Agony*, *Blind*, *Domination*, *Heal Wounds* (to keep victims from dying before they reveal the desired information), *Paralysis: Lesser*, *Trance*, and *Death Trance*. In the latter case, as long as the needle is impaled inside the victim, the person appears to be dead, but really is not. Which can be a horrifying experience for the victim, who is awake and

can hear and feel what is happening to him (people removing his gear, talking about performing an autopsy, burying him alive, etc.). Whichever spell is invoked, the victim must roll a 17 or higher to save vs magic, or suffer the consequences of that spell, but the needle must be stabbed into the victim's body and left there for the spell to remain in effect.

Against werebeasts, the needle inflicts 1D6 damage with each stab. If the needle is left inside the creature's body, it prevents metamorphosis from humanoid to beast and vice versa. It also prevents healing/Bio-Regeneration. As long as the needle is impaled in its werebeast victim, the creature cannot transform for up to 12 hours. After which the enchantment is broken. Of course, removing the needle from a prisoner and reinserting it reactivates the magic. The enchantment is also broken as soon as the needle is removed, so one must make certain it is placed where a prisoner/victim cannot reach it himself, of the prisoner should be placed in manacles or otherwise restrained.

Duration: The torturous magic remains in place for as long as the needle is inside the body, up to one hour maximum. Remove it and the spell is instantly broken.

Blessings: Dark Wolf: The recipient of this Blessing is the enemy of goodness, law and order.

Bonuses: +1 attack per melee round, +2 to strike, dodge, and parry, +3 to damage, and +1 to roll with punch/fall/impact, *but only when fighting against opponents of good and Unprincipled*

alignments; double the bonuses when fighting Gods of Light or their avatars.

Skills and Abilities: Land Navigation 75%, Track Humanoids 70%, and has the psionic abilities (or equivalent) of Commune with Animals, Commune with Spirits, See the Invisible, Sense Good (fundamentally the same as Sense Evil), and Sixth Sense, equal to an 8th level Mind Mage, at no I.S.P. cost. Each ability may be used as often as three times per 24 hour period.

Fear the Beast: This Blessing conveys a portion of Amyar's ferocious aura of fear and terror upon the Blessed individual and makes him fearless.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to recognize fear in others, +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, and impervious to Horror Factor, which also makes the Blessed individual overconfident and reckless.

Skills and Abilities: Supernatural Horror Factor of 14 in combat and when angry, and all opponents are -1 on initiative and Perception Rolls. Moreover, for good or ill, Amyar's aura obscures the Blessed individual's own, so that anyone who can see his aura sees evil, supernatural association but not possession, and cannot tell anything else about the individual other than that he should be feared.

Lone Hunter: This Dark Blessing is usually given to proverbial lone wolves who are solitary and predatory, such as assassins, spies, thieves, and other cutthroats who usually work alone and are ultimately self-serving.

Bonuses: Apply only when the Blessed individual is *alone*: +10% to Espionage, Military and Rogue Skills, +1 on Perception Rolls, +1 to strike and dodge, and +2 to save vs Horror Factor.

Skills/Abilities: Intelligence 65%, Surveillance 70%, and Track Humanoids 75%.

Curse (special): **Curse of the Werewolf:** Amyar has the ability to curse an individual by turning him into a Werewolf. To do so, the cruel god must possess a werebeast (any type) and attack and bite the person to be cursed. When a bite draws blood and Amyar, through the werebeast, speaks the words of the curse, it is delivered upon the intended victim. From that day forward, he or she turns into a savage Werewolf during each full moon for the next 3D6+6 years. Most cursed victims don't survive more than a few years, because unlike the magical creatures/people who are shape-changing werebeasts, the curse turns its victim into a savage monster that craves killing and the consumption of flesh and blood. The flesh and blood of humans, Elves, and other humanoids. The transformed person loses all sense of himself as a Werewolf and behaves like a mad dog. The beast is compelled to hunt and kill 1D4 people that night, eating only a small portion of each, typically the soft parts (stomach, throat, face, etc.). If people cannot be found, the Werewolf will hunt deer, elk, or slaughter twice as many sheep, hogs, or cattle. Though they are canine, Wolfen and Coyles are not exempt from the Werewolf's hunting.

The victim of the curse has no recollection of his animal identity or the killing spree, thus he will be shocked and disturbed when he awakens in a nearby woods or back alley, naked and covered in blood and gore. From time to time, the cursed individual may dream he is a large wolf hunting people or animals, and sometimes the wolf in his dreams may hunt him. The cursed individual may live in denial, or eventually come to realize he is the monster. However, he has no idea how to break the curse that comes to him at night, once every month.

Unlike the magical werebeasts who are vulnerable to silver, the victim of the Curse of the Werewolf can be harmed by any weapon. However, in addition to the cursed individual's own S.D.C. and Hit Points, he gets an additional 100 S.D.C. and Bio-Regenerates 2D6 Hit Points or S.D.C. per melee round when transformed into a Werewolf. In addition, P.S. becomes Supernatural and Spd is doubled in wolf form.

All humanity is erased while in the form of the beast. The victim becomes a hulking, animalistic monster, 50% larger than a typical timber wolf, driven by instinct and bloodlust, but is cunning and wicked, and smart enough to hide, lay in ambush, use surprise attacks, hit and run tactics, and flee when outnumbered or seriously injured. The beast is also able to avoid traps and is not lured by hunks of meat or a dead carcass, because it hunts and feeds only upon live humanoid prey. When it kills animals, it does so out of frustration and only slays them, never eats them. The Werewolf is also impervious to poison and drugs.

Removing the Curse of the Werewolf requires either getting Amyar to remove the curse (that will cost dearly, and involve murder and bloodshed in the malevolent deity's name, be it an act of revenge or just wickedness), or getting another deity to remove the curse, which will also require some great service or the fulfillment of several quests. Some gods may refuse to get involved, fearful of inviting Amyar's wrath upon themselves, or because they don't believe they should get involved with the handiwork of another deity, whether that god is insane and savage like Amyar, or not.

Lost Orc Gods

Orc society is fragmented at this point in history, with countless Orcs living as slaves in places like the Western Empire, Timiro, and the Land of the South Winds, or as second-class citizens and indentured servants. Free Orcs, Ogres, and Goblins live in a thousand tiny communities that have been uprooted and resettled dozens of times over the centuries. These are found in places like the Baalgor Wastelands, the Old Kingdom, parts of the Eastern Territory and Great Northern Wilderness, and other unsettled jungles and wilderness areas not yet dominated by "civilized" people.

Long ago, however, Orcs once lived a life more akin to that of any other tribal people, with nomadic groups throughout the Yin-Sloth Jungles and Land of the South Winds, and the beginnings of a society forming in and around what is now the Old Kingdom. There are many old gods from this time of Orcish history that have been lost to the ages even to the Orcs themselves. However, a few have been rediscovered in the Garden of the Gods and their whispered stories are beginning to resurface outside the Garden. Many Orcs in the rest of the world have turned to the gods of their neighbors, their masters, or those native to new lands where they settle down. Many others worship more tangible beings as deities, such as dragons, giants, demons, and other powerful beings.

Reaching the Garden of the Gods through the ports of Lopan for Orcs, Ogres, and other subhuman races can be a bit challenging, as many ship's captains, innkeepers, and city guards are suspicious and unaccustomed to the sight of these *monster races*. Living so close to the Old Kingdom and being the home of the Lopanic Games, every inhabitant of Lopan has heard their share of war stories and frightening tales about Orcs and the monster

ances they associate with. Arriving by boat at a busy port is advisable, as a visitor of almost any race is unlikely to draw too much attention in the bustling crowds. The wilds of the Lopani interior are a bit more accepting of Orcs, especially the town of *Northpoint* and the other areas in and around the Garden, and unlike the humans, Dwarves, and Elves who come to visit as pilgrims, Orcs might also be accepted among the handful of Goblin communities hidden throughout Lopan's forests, hills, and caves.

Skur – Orc God of Drink

Skur and his counterpart, Echla, the Orc gods of drink and love, respectively, are a mythical husband and wife duo who once brought laughter and warmth into the lives of Orcs the world over. Many theologians believe their loss has left the Orc race dour and downtrodden, and the behavior of many Orcs leaves this difficult to deny. Most gods worshiped by Orcs in the modern era are gods of war, pain or power, but Skur is known in legend for bringing diverse groups together, transforming the infighting Orcish warriors into comrades and defenders of their people and hunting grounds.

In distant times, he was the patron of hunters, brewers, strong drink, campfires, and storytelling, and his followers and prayers were critical in holding the society of the Orcs together in a time when they were less culturally fragmented. Many were the myths of epic parties and celebrations hosted by the jovial Skur, who liked to party hardy and break bread with potential allies and enemies alike. The deity was known to win over many a rival in this fashion, but was also known to be a defender of the people when necessary.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Statue Description: A jolly Orc with a round belly, numerous piercings and dreadlocked-hair, drinking from a clay jug.

Caretakers: Occasionally, Orcs visit in search of their people's lost history and culture, and help clear the Orc statues and tend to the area, sometimes crafting simple wooden structures. On moonlit nights, the friendly glow of campfires can often be seen, accompanied by the sound of singing in Orcish and the clinking of mugs. Sometimes these are real Orc pilgrims, sometimes apparitions of the past. If one sees firelight and hears voices around the statue of Skur at night, a dozen drunken Orcs are likely the culprits. Goblins and the occasional Ogre are also attracted to this deity.

Artifacts of Note: The Jug of Merriment: Skur's most powerful artifact was the *Jug of Merriment*, an indestructible clay vessel that has been missing for many thousands of years. With the magic ability to turn water into strong beer (Orcs usually prefer it over wine), the Jug is perfect for any social event. It also creates an aura that gives off a bonus of +20% to any skill used to entertain, such as Play Musical Instrument, Dance, Sing, Juggling, Writing/Storytelling, and Ventriloquism within 500 feet (152 m). Legend has it that the Jug is somewhere in the Old Kingdom, buried along with the ruins of a once-great Orc city from a distant era.

Blessings: Brew Master: Anyone granted this Blessing possesses superior skills and abilities involving the making and consumption of alcohol. If one is ever going to challenge an Ogre, Troll, or Dwarf to a drinking contest or engage an innkeep in a test of wits after several rounds of white lightning, it should be the recipient of this Blessing.



Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize drunks, alcoholics, and when someone has imbibed too much libation, giving them loose lips (i.e. they say too much and share secrets with a drinking buddy), or booze has made them dull-witted and susceptible to trickery and deception; +2 to save vs poison, +10% to his own skills, and +1 on initiative when competing with other drinkers.

Skills and Abilities: Brewing 80%, Holistic Medicine 75%, Dance 70%, Sing 65% (the latter seems like 90% to fellow drinkers having a good time), and can drink twice as much as the average Dwarf or Troll, which is saying something, before becoming truly inebriated himself. In addition, the Blessed individual can recognize the quality of any alcoholic beverage and accurately judge its strength/potency 80%.

Storyteller: No matter how good (or bad) the Blessed individual was at telling entertaining and captivating stories before, he is outstanding when Blessed as a storyteller by Skur.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to recognize clues hidden in stories as well as recognizing when someone is working a con game, +4 to M.A. attribute, and +1 to save vs mind control (any).

Skills and Abilities: Public Speaking 80%, History 70%, and the Blessed individual speaks with captivating words and mannerism, loudly and clearly, making every story an entrancing tale. So entrancing that everyone listening is unlikely to notice anything secretive or subtle going on around them (-3 on Perception Rolls) and giving the associates of the Blessed individual a +10% bonus to skills such as Intelligence, Locate Secret Compartments and Doors, Pick Locks, Pick Pockets, and Prowl against those enthralled by the story. They just don't notice what they are up to when captivated by the Storyteller. Applicable only to those within range of the Storyteller; a 200 foot (61 m) radius.

In the Mood: Usually bestowed upon an entire group for 1D4+1 weeks. The recipients of this Blessing carry with them the positive and merry spirit of Skur, keeping morale high even in the face of adversity.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to locate booze or a tavern or party, and +1 to save vs negative magic (Agony, Domination, dark illusions, etc.) and mind control.

Skills and Abilities: Dance 75%, Sing 70%, and the contagious ability to make those around them feel just as festive and friendly as they. Any inn, tavern, saloon, campfire, feast, dance, party, or gathering attended by this merry group only fuels their festive spirit and spreads their sense of fun and camaraderie to everyone present. Enmity will be forgotten, new friendships and romances kindled, and everyone involved will have the time of their lives. If used properly at a gathering of adversaries or a lord's feast, these positive, fun-loving vibes can help settle tensions, or put an entire tavern or castle at ease and invite open discussion and reasonable resolve to disputes and settlements. Deals will be fair, even generous, and people walk away feeling happy and satisfied.

Echla, Orc Goddess of Love

Echla was once the Orc goddess of love and beauty, the aspiration of every Orc maiden, the dream of every lonely warrior. The eternal consort of Skur, the god of drink and merriment, their magic was a potent combination that brought light and warmth and reckless revelry to the lives of their people. Just as images of Skur were carved into clay drinking vessels and painted on barrels, images of Echla once adorned tent-flaps and bedrolls, and



there was an Orc tradition based on placing a figurine of Echla under the pillow or the bed of new couples as a blessing of fertility and good fortune for the family.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Statue Description: A marble female Orc standing on a square base with remarkable realness, radiating beauty and serenity that one would think impossible for an Orc, stone or not.

Caretakers: Orc maidens are sometimes mysteriously drawn to the Garden after the loss of a loved one or in search of their true love. They leave flowers at the site of the statue, and sometimes linger for a few days to tend the grounds and maybe catch the eye of a handsome Orc or Ogre warrior visiting the Garden.

Artifacts of Note: The Lovers' Garland: A crude bouquet of wildflowers and sweet-smelling grasses, the Garland is said to be lost somewhere in the Land of the South Winds, supposedly within the tomb of a pair of tragic Orcish lovers who took their own lives when they could not be together. Immune to the effects of time, the Garland appears as a bouquet of fresh and vivid flowers amongst the dust and deterioration all around it.

Anyone wearing the Garland around her neck, on her head, or wrapped around her arm or waist, heals at twice her normal rate, is +2 to save vs charms and deceptions/illusions intended to deceive or hurt her, and enjoys a bonus of +3 to the P.B. attribute as part of Echla's aura of romance. Those attracted to the Garland wearer regard the person (male or female) as trustworthy and desirable, but are not charmed or compelled to do anything they would not ordinarily consider.

Echla's Love Charm: A gold charm of two flowers entwined together with a small diamond in the center of each flower. It can be put on the chain of a necklace or bracelet, or worn as an earring or brooch, etc. When given to a person as a gift of affection, the recipient falls madly and devotedly in love with the gift giver, same as the powerful and dangerous *Love Charm spell*. One of the wicked aspects of this artifact is that the Love Charm can be given on behalf of someone else. ("That handsome knight in the corner asked me to deliver this to you on his behalf." Or, "That beautiful maiden wants you to have this for good luck.") The Love Charm magic lasts for as long as the Charm is worn, and the recipient never wants to take it off. When the Love Charm is removed, the effects of the magic linger for another 48 hours before the enchantment is broken.

Over time, the recipient of the Love Charm may come to feel genuine emotions and desire for the gift giver, however, the artifact is usually used for more nefarious purposes that lead to trouble for one or both of the people unwittingly involved, and may even lead to violence and murder.

Blessings: In the Mood, Too: The Blessed individual's better qualities are elevated, making him or her a better, more caring, honest, and noble person. With any luck, the experience will make the Blessed individual aspire to be a better, more compassionate and noble person, permanently. The Blessing makes the recipient a dashing figure that people find attractive and trustworthy, which may lead to romance and love. Since the Blessing truly makes the recipient better and is only given to people with a good heart, it is seldom used to deliberately manipulate or use others.

Bonuses: People looking for a romantic partner are +2 on their Perception Rolls to notice the Blessed individual and see him or her in a positive and romantic light. The Blessed is +1D6 to the M.A. attribute as Echla charges the individual with charisma, vitality, and romantic energy.

Skills and Abilities: Dance 75%, Sing 70%, and magically understands all Languages at 60% (+10% to Orcish/Gobblely).

Orc-Crossed Lovers: A Blessing to find a mate who will be compatible and the two will compliment each other. The match-making powers of Echla are conveyed upon the recipient of this Blessing. This individual is inspired by romance and love, and will want to try to help star-crossed lovers.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize romantic settings and when the love on a person's face is true, versus those who are pretenders or simply lust for another person. The Blessed individual is also +1 to save vs magical and psionic charms and mind control.

Skills and Abilities (special): The Blessing enables the Blessed individual to see both halves of a potential romantic pairing, one highlighted by a bluish-white aura, the other by a warm yellow aura, visible only to the Blessed individual whose role is that of the matchmaker, usually with a specific person in mind. In some cases, the Blessed is a protector of true love. ("These two are meant for each other and belong together, we can't let the king, or their parents, or whoever, tear them apart." Or, "Not only are these two good for each other, their pairing will benefit the kingdom, or the town, or their family, etc.")

The aura indicates two compatible individuals when they are within sight of the Blessed individual. Whether the Blessed individual decides to share this information or try to introduce the pair to each other, or encourage an already blossoming romance, or discourage a blossoming romance that is a bad one, is up to him. There is no guarantee the pairing will lead to a wonderful life or a blissful marriage, however, just that these two people are potentially ideal for each other. Moreover, when a pairing is wrong, a red or black aura appears around the one who is the problem/wrong/dangerous. Red aura indicates jealousy and anger and likely abusive nature. Black indicates a selfish or evil person who is using the other person for his or her own purpose, and there is no genuine feelings of love at all.

Eskelohrc, Orc Warrior Demigod

Eskelohrc was a warrior who, in ages past, proved himself as such a great leader and Champion of the Gods that he was elevated to a position amongst the Orc divinity. His legend tells the tale of an ancient Orc kingdom that existed along the edge of the Yin-Sloth Jungle. When a mighty army of Elves descended from the New Kingdom to invade and conquer the comparatively primitive Orcs, they banded together to create an army to stop them. When the two forces met on the field of battle, however, the Orcs could not decide upon a single general. With the Elves charging at their disorganized enemy, there was no time to settle the matter, and the Orcs were in danger of losing the battle before it had even begun. Everyone was looking for a leader to follow, but no single warrior was willing to take the responsibility upon himself.

Breaking the deadlock, Eskel emerged from the battle-line and rushed at the Elves with a fearsome war cry. The other warriors followed his lead and surged forward as one, accidentally striking with a totally unexpected level of cohesion and discipline. The Elves assumed Eskel, the foolish warrior at the front of the attack, was a hero or tribal warlord, but in reality, this rank-and-



file Orc was a nobody fighting his first battle. Despite their best attempts to isolate the Orcish “general,” the Elves could not bring Eskel down, and before long, an improvised honor guard of veterans had formed around him, also assuming he was someone of importance. This concentration of elite soldiers finally broke the momentum of the invading army, and the tide of battle turned, with the Orcs carrying the day – and carrying a victorious Eskel away on their shoulders. He had been a common soldier when the fight began, but now he was a general, born on the field. A position of leadership that suited him well.

The myth of *Eskelohrc* grew with every telling, and before long the story told of the Prince of the Orcs, a warrior and commander with all the intellect and prowess of an Elven lord, who had boldly ridden forth to lead his people in their time of need. Indeed, Eskel had a good head for strategies and tactics, especially for an Orc, and proved to be a natural leader who brought peace and prosperity to his kingdom. Beloved by all, their new leader grew old and wealthy, though he was fortunate enough to never fight against such long odds again. By the time of his death, the stories had built up so much that Eskel was worshiped as a living god and regarded as the patron saint of the Orcs. As a result, the other Orc deities decide to impart some of their divine energy upon him and made Eskel an immortal demigod known as *Eskelohrc*. For the next thousand years, his spirit walked among the Orcs, guiding and blessing many of their champions. However, without new leaders such as *Eskelohrc*, the fledgling Orc civilization collapsed and they fell back to their barbaric ways and again splintered into many small, disorganized tribes. *Eskelohrc* was forgotten.

Modern Orc warriors no longer pray to the long forgotten *Eskelohrc* before battle as they used to, and now he exists only in the Garden of the Gods and in the notes of some scholars. From common man, to hero of aspiring warriors, to demigod, *Eskelohrc*’s journey has been long and unpredictable and full of unexpected honors. Now that his statue has been rediscovered, might he again surface as a deity and become a true god?

Alignment: Principled.

Statue Description: A stoic warrior holding his hand aloft as if he were bearing a sword or spear. The weapon itself is gone, however; whether it was once a stone part of the statue or a real blade, nobody knows.

Caretakers: An Orc warrior known as **Grunnelohrc** watches over the statue and its surroundings. He is a 6th level Orc Mercenary Warrior who claims to be a descendant of *Eskelohrc* himself. He is extremely protective over the statue and respectful to all visitors, including humans and Elves, but if anyone gets him talking they will find out he has never heard the voice of the god, and is beginning to wonder why his deific ancestor will not answer his prayers or stir from his divine sleep.

Artifacts of Note: Blade of *Eskelohrc*: This legendary bronze sword is a Holy Weapon whose full power can only be wielded by an Orc. To all others, it feels heavy and awkward, with the weight of a sledgehammer, and inflicts a meager 2D4 damage and offers no special powers or bonuses. In the hand of an Orc, however, the ancient Holy Sword inflicts 5D6 damage, is +1 to strike and parry, and gives its wielder the following bonuses: +1 one to save vs magic of all types, +2 to save vs poison and disease, and +2 to save vs Horror Factor. When possessed by the same Orc for 13 months, it also provides a +2 bonus to his I.Q.

Moreover, all Orcs in a group or army led by an Orc wielding the Blade of Eskelohrc are +1 to strike, +1 to save vs poison and disease, +1 to save vs Horror Factor, and feel loyal to, and confident in, the sword bearer as their leader. They trust his decisions, obey his orders, and will fight to protect him.

In addition, each of the following spells can be cast once every 24 hours at no P.P.E. cost to its wielder: Armor of Ithan, Cloud of Smoke, Healing Touch, Impervious to Fire, and See the Invisible, equal to a 5th level Wizard.

Blessings: Spirit of Bold Recklessness: The Blessed individual feels wildly confident and bold and is willing to take chances.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to recognize an opportunity or danger, +1 on initiative, +1 to pull punch, +2 to roll with punch/fall/impact, and +2 to save vs Horror Factor.

Skills and Abilities (special): Military Etiquette 75%, Recognize Weapon Quality 70%, and the special ability to re-roll a failed saving throw or roll to parry or dodge, two times per new battle/fight.

Commanding Presence: Others, especially Orcs, look up to the Blessed individual, who radiates confidence and courage.

Bonuses: Increase M.A. to 24 (80% chance to evoke trust or intimidation, high for anyone, but especially an Orc), +20 to S.D.C., and +2 to save vs Horror Factor and illusions.

Skills and Abilities (special): Horsemanship: General 75%, Military Etiquette 70%, and he is a true inspiration and leader to his troops, who will follow him anywhere and do not question his orders. However, they scatter like frightened children should he be slain before their eyes!

Lost Goblin Gods

Goblins are known as cutthroats and opportunists, bandits and thieves, but they were once a proud, if simplistic subterranean race not too different from Trogloodytes. As they move more and more up into the surface world and leave their traditional lifestyles behind, Goblins have lost touch with many of their old gods and entire systems of religion. Considering their underground origins, temples and monuments from these ancient deities are generally buried, hidden from the sight of surface dwellers.

Modern Goblins worship a wide variety of gods, including many from the Yin-Sloth Pantheon. They also follow dragons and other powerful beings, and are often swept up by the allure of established religions without really believing in their gods' principles. Goblins are generally selfish and unconcerned with the afterlife, and typically do not make for the most faithful of worshippers.

There are Goblins living in the cities and towns across Lopan, but they are generally regarded as second-class citizens. There are also a number of small clans and tribes of Goblins throughout the interior of Lopan living in caves, ruins, and dark forests, who generally only emerge at night and live in fear of the humans and Elves who ride past on mighty horses. These Goblins, especially those hailing from the infamous Dessimer Farmstead, pose a minor threat to pilgrims and travelers, and are a constant nuisance for the Knights-Fossar, as they are con artists and thieves, happy to rob and trick people out of their belongings, and sometimes engage in kidnaping and ransoming off the people or livestock ("Hey, where's my horse?") for 1D6x10 gold or for booze, food, and other treats.

What most people forget is that Goblins are descended from Faerie Folk, most of whom have, over the ages, lost their Faerie powers. Only the *Cobbler Goblin* retains any of the Goblin's mystical abilities. However, most Goblins do maintain the Faerie Folk's playful and mischievous nature. The problem is their idea of fun and games are cruel pranks and practical jokes, and tricking and cheating, mugging and robbing other people. Their targets? Almost everyone, especially humans, Elves, Dwarves, Gnomes, Faerie Folk and their fellow Goblins, but everyone, from Ogres to dragons and even deities, is a potential mark. As a result, a friendly and cheerful Goblin is just as dangerous as a threatening one, because behind that smile and good cheer is a Goblin sizing up his next mark or victim. Trying to figure out how gullible the person is and how much he can con out of them or pick their pockets before they catch on. Small and wiry, the wily Goblin's favorite moves involve snatch and grab and other hit and run tactics, with the little buggers sliding under tables, darting through crowds and between the legs of large people, and making a run for it. Most have already plotted out a dark place in an alley, under a porch, or in a hole for them to hide from angry pursuers. And don't think Goblins can't be deadly. Some are just as vicious and bloodthirsty as any Orc or Ogre, and gather in small bands. Many Goblin bandits use numbers, the element of surprise, and ambushes (another favorite tactic) to get the upper hand on larger, stronger enemies and victims. They also associate with other villains, criminals, and monster races, particularly Orcs, Ogres, and Trolls.

Goblins routinely visit the Garden of the Gods to pray at the feet of Goblin deities and other gods just like anyone else. More importantly, they come to pick the pockets and backpacks of a few unsuspecting visitors, especially in the neighboring towns and on the road. However, Goblins are most dangerous in the wilds of the undeveloped woodlands, where they may live and work with other nefarious Faerie Folk such as Bogies, Pucks, and Toadstools to waylay travelers and explorers.

Gnirbin the Golden One

Gnirbin is a long-lost Goblin god of mining and riches. He was infamous in Goblin mythology for having golden skin and a single, gleaming eye with the ability to see veins of gold right through mountainsides, and for stealing mining secrets from the Dwarves and bringing them back for the Goblin people to exploit. Many of the wealthiest Goblins in ancient history were Priests of Gnirbin, as his rituals and blessings were known to lead the faithful to untold mineral wealth. Gnirbin's disciples wore robes trimmed in gold and silver, and many an archaic Goblin lord or chieftain ruled with a witch doctor at one side and a Priest of Gnirbin at the other, lest their people go impoverished.

Legend says that during a war under the ground between Dwarves and Goblins, Belimar the Dwarf, god of the Northern Pantheon, once did battle with the golden-skinned Gnirbin. Belimar was armed with a platinum shield and sword, Gnirbin a gold and silver sword and shield studded with diamonds. Slashed by each other's dazzling weapons, bleeding rubies and sapphires from their wounds, they fought from tunnel to tunnel, collapsing caverns and carving new ones as they went. During the fight, Belimar dropped his shield, and Gnirbin, entranced by its polished, platinum facade, had his head struck from his shoulders, with the silvery gleam of riches still reflecting in his eyes. The de-



ity's body is said to have turned into a puddle of molten gold that seeped into the ground like water and vanished from sight. The Dwarves went on to win the war, crushing an entire kingdom of

Gnirbin's followers and several others who sought vengeance in the name of their slain deity.

Known for their statues and treasures of gold, silver, and gems, zealous and greedy Dwarven Priests and soldiers launched a campaign to track down and pillage all temples and shrines of Gnirbin the Golden One, looting them of their valuables, destroying his statues and temples, and slaughtering anyone who stood in their way. In a short time, Goblins became too afraid to worship the deity for fear of being slaughtered by Dwarves and treasure hunters searching for Gnirbin's temples of gold. So it was that the Golden One and his ancient religion were soon forgotten to time and Goblin civilization was reduced to barbarism.

Today, the only statue of Gnirbin known to exist is found within the Garden of the Gods. There the deity waits to be rediscovered and restored among the Goblins so he may exact revenge against the Dwarven people and the hated god Belimar. Gnirbin has no love for any of the Northern Gods, but it is Belimar who slew him and inspired the Dwarves to persecute his people and destroy his religion, so Belimar is the most despised of all gods.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Statue Description: Gnirbin's statue is a giant, stylized eye being held aloft by a headless Goblin. The eye's pupil is a massive gold coin bearing the likeness of Gnirbin. Of course, it is made of gold and built into the statue, but is impossible to remove or scratch.

Caretakers: Two Goblin prospectors and their families have adopted Gnirbin and live nearby in a shack in Godsmire. Known as **Hutzeldorf** and **Kennigin**, they are obsessed with the pursuit of gold and riches and listen to the oft-incoherent musings of Gnirbin for clues as to where to send their adult children to begin their next dig. They are "civilized" Goblins who have spent years living on Lopan near the Garden as well as frequenting various port cities, especially during the Lopanic Games to place wagers on the outcome of the many games and contests, and to pick the pockets of countless visitors. In an attempt to better fit in and to sound fancy and important, they have adopted human names, and go about in silks and fine clothes whenever they are not up to their necks in dirt digging for gold and silver.

Artifacts of Note: The Eye of Gold: Gnirbin's Gleamin Eye was famous for its ability to see through solid rock to find veins of silver and gold. The Eye of Gold is said to be a real, sacred artifact: a ball of solid gold, with a pupil of platinum. It is indestructible, and cannot be hammered apart or melted down, even by an Alchemist. The Eye is supposedly still at the site where Gnirbin fell, deep underground somewhere in the Old Kingdom, sitting in a circle of rubies amidst the ruins of a lost Dwarven city. Below it, where the Golden One's blood was spilled, is said to be the richest vein of gold in all the land.

In the possession of a mortal, legend contends that the Eye will turn towards the nearest and largest source of gold, whether it be a mineral deposit or a chest of coins. It can sense gold within a mile (1.6 km) radius, and automatically orients itself with no need for further activation or invocation on the part of whomever possesses it. It is simply a matter of the person in possession of the eye noticing when it looks in the direction where gold can be found.

Legend also contends that when the Eye replaces one of the eyes of a Champion, it will turn his skin tough and golden (+50 Hit Points and +500 S.D.C., Natural A.R. 14), and turn him into a **God-Slayer**. If the God-Slayer is willing to sacrifice his eye and

hunt down and try to slay Belimar, he is rewarded with gold and fortune beyond his wildest dreams. Against mortal opponents, the God-Slayer's attacks inflict an additional +1D6 damage with a weapon or bare hands. Against supernatural beings, the damage bonus is +1D6x10, and against gods, damage is a staggering 1D4x100 points. The God-Slayer is also said to be able to see the invisible, sense the divine, and Bio-Regenerate all lost Hit Points and S.D.C. at every sunrise, is impervious to mind control and possession, and Entities fear and flee from him as long as the Eye of Gold remains in his head, where it functions as his magical eye. Destroy Belimar and restore Gnirbin and reap incredible reward.

The Coincaster: An enchanted hammer, lost at a gold mine in the Yin-Sloth Jungle, the Coincaster is a small smith's hammer, not suitable for combat, but is indestructible, and has the unique ability to turn raw ore into beautiful, finished coins. A single tap of the hammer transforms an amount of copper, silver, gold, or platinum into shiny, polished coins of equivalent weight and purity, with a tiny image of Gnirbin smiling upon one side and the word "prosperity" in Gobbely upon the other. Value per coin (varying in size depending on the metal) is 20 gold each.

Blessings: The Gleaming: The Blessed individual receives a portion of the infamous Eye of Gold's discerning abilities.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize precious metals, gems and other valuables, and +1 on initiative to snatch up gold and gems before anyone else.

Skills/Abilities (special): Gemology 80%, Recognize Weapon Quality 75%, Palming 65%, and the ability to see precious metals and gems. Nuggets and veins of gold, as well as rubies, sapphires, and diamonds within sight, will glow like mirrors in the sun, even underground, making them instantly identifiable and visible and almost impossible to conceal, even within treasure chests, pouches, purses or the pockets of clothing. Beware, the Blessed individual's focus is on gold and wealth, even if he has good intentions for its acquisition and use, which may lead to him becoming obsessed with the acquisition of treasure and make him greedy and selfish, or cocky and arrogant.

Blade-Maiden Ihdeza

A warrior-maiden deity from long ago, Ihdeza was known in Goblin myth for killing her lovers and using their swords and knives to create her Dress of Blades. It is said that a hundred Goblin princes and warriors were captured by her beauty, and that each one paid for his love with his head. Ihdeza was renowned as a ruthless and vicious fighter, and an inspiration for any lady Goblin who decided to take up arms or kill a lover who had done her wrong. The Blade-Maiden Ihdeza is more than a war god, she is also known as a selfish seductress who is willing to take what she wants via seduction or by force, and the embodiment of cruel vengeance when she is denied what she wants or is rejected or betrayed.

Ihdeza met her end after other deities turned on her and she was cast out of her own deific realm. Savage and untrustworthy, she had few allies, and despite the actions of her dark priestesses, witches and devoted assassins, her worshipers and cults slowly waned away over the centuries as she was forced to wander the mortal realm. What became of her, nobody knows. Ihdeza had been completely forgotten until her statue was recently revealed in the Garden.



Many are now beginning to realize that blade-glyphs found across ancient Goblin, and sometimes Kobold and Dwarven ruins, once represented the Blade Maiden Ihdeza, illustrating that her worship once included other subterranean people. Scholars and historians wonder if worshipping Ihdeza is a corrupting influence, because her glyphs are almost always scratched out and defaced by the people who once worshiped her, all clearly rejecting her at some point and deliberately pushing her away. Some question if this deity of vengeance and war might have had a hand in the mad inception of the Elf-Dwarf War, perhaps working from the shadows to punish the descendants of those who had rejected her as a deity so many millennia earlier. It is certainly within her character to do something like that.

Alignment: Miscreant.

Statue Description: A marble statue of a surprisingly beautiful Goblin maiden sitting cross-legged upon the surface of a giant stone dagger. From afar, it seems that she is dressed in scale-mail, but upon closer examination, each scale is a blade, linked together into an armored dress.

Caretakers: There are three mysterious Goblin maidens who watch over Ihdeza's resting place. Granted eternal youth by their goddess, these three are actually Witches in compact with Ihdeza, and in addition to keeping the statue's garden area orderly, they also fly off to various Goblin tribes across Lopan, the Old Kingdom, and the Great Northern Wilderness, looking for handsome young Goblins to sacrifice to their lady. They believe that if they can sacrifice five hundred Goblins to Ihdeza and collect their blades, their goddess will be restored.

Artifacts of Note: The Chest of Blades: Carefully stockpiled by the Witches of Ihdeza over the years, this chest contains more than 150 daggers and short swords, most of them in excellent condition, along with vials of blood drawn from their sacrificial victims. The Witches intend to bring their goddess back via multiple magical rituals, for even they have not heard directly or clearly from their patron goddess, and do not know the whereabouts of Ihdeza. They know not whether she sleeps upon a mountain, rests in a forgotten subterranean chamber, wanders the world of mortals in disguise, or whether she is the victim of memory loss or is held captive by some fiend. Whatever the case, they believe sacrificing 500 Goblin blade wielders will magically bring the Blade-Maiden to them so they may start to rebuild her name and her base of followers.

If the chest is destroyed or its contents stolen and sold, the Witches must start again, a process that could take a decade or more as they try to be secretive and discreet. (**Note:** On the other hand, if a player group wishes to bring Ihdeza back to life, they can join the Witches in finding new Goblin victims to sacrifice, but each must be handy with a knife or sword, and the Witches need to perform the ritual and the actual bloodletting.)

Ihdeza's Daggers: There are supposedly five magical, silver-plated daggers scattered throughout the Palladium World that were created for Ihdeza. Each was once one of her personal weapons used for assassination and murder, taken away from the goddess by the gods, and thrown to the wind when they cast her out of the Deific Realm. These weapons have a mind of their own, and can be used by anyone with or without the W.P. Knife skill.

The daggers are *Lesser Rune Weapons* that can only be used by those of an evil or selfish alignments and are +2 to strike, +1 to parry and disarm, and inflict 4D6 damage in combat, in addition to the other abilities common to Lesser Rune Weapons.

Blessings: Angry Armor (special): Ihdeza's dress of blades was known for slicing attackers who dared to challenge her in combat to pieces. This Blessing makes the sharp edges of the Blessed individual's own metal armor (must be metal) cut like blades, but only when he or she is attacked or engages in combat. A slash of the fingertips does 2D4 damage, a punch or Karate-style chop with the side of the hand does 2D6 damage, so does a elbow or knee jab, or kick. Anyone who tries to entangle or wrestle with Blessed individual suffers 2D6 damage per each attempt. Same damage to anyone who tries to body block or tackle the Blessed individual with Angry Armor.

Nefarious Seducer: The Blessed individual is granted the powers of seduction for a selfish or evil end. This may be sexual, but it may also involve other forms of seduction such as seducing others with the promise of wealth, power, or revenge. And revenge is always bloody.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize envy, jealousy, lust, desire, hatred, vengeance, etc., that can be an opening to seduce and manipulate others; increase M.A. to 22 (70% chance to evoke trust or intimidate), +1 to strike and disarm, +1 to pull punch, +2 to save vs poison and disease, and impervious to all types of charm magic and psionics.

Skills/Abilities (special): Concealment 75%, Palming 70%, Use & Recognize Poison 65%, and the ability to seduce and manipulate others to acquire information, gain access to a place or person (usually to rob, threaten, or kill them), get ill-gotten gains or something of value or importance, etc., or to seduce another person(s) into doing something terrible such as an act of betrayal, murder, or treachery (blackmail, frame, torture, kidnaping, etc.).

Razor-Sharpness: According to legend, Ihdeza could sharpen blades with her forked, snake's tongue. This Blessing puts a fresh edge on all the recipient's bladed weapons, including knives, swords, spears and axes that do not dull for as long as the Blessing is in place.

Bonuses: +1 on all Perception Rolls, +1 on initiative, and +2 to damage with blade weapons.

Skills: Military Etiquette 70%, W.P. Knife and W.P. Sword. Substitute W.P. Throwing Weapons if one or both of these W.P.s are already known to the Blessed individual.

The Forgotten Dragons of Dragonwright

The four major dragons of Dragonwright, Kym-Nark-Mar, Zandragal, Kormath and Styphon the Black, are the primary deities of the religion, but the church is also known for absorbing lesser gods into the ranks of their pantheon. These secondary deities are not placed on the same mythical level as the four god-dragons, but they are worshiped and acknowledged, and ancient dragons of legendary age sometimes aspire to godhood as part of the Dragonwright Pantheon, though they are rarely accepted into it.

Dragons without the ageless popularity of the four main god-dragons have been forgotten by many of the church's worshipers or find themselves worshiped by smaller factions and cults within Dragonwright. Thus, their deific powers dwindle until they can find new worshipers and Champions of the Gods to represent them and revitalize their fading image. Three of these lesser

Dragonwright deities have gotten a bit of a boost when their statues were rediscovered in the Garden. However, humans, Wolfen, and most humanoids have moved away from the worship of dragons, so their fate still hangs in the balance.

The Church of Dragonwright is a devoted and militant organization, and its four gods and the three newly revealed god-dragons in the Garden all have well-kept garden areas tended to by Priests and temple guards sent to guarantee their preservation and safety by the Church. There are Priests, scholars and spell casters of Dragonwright who spend their entire lives investigating the lost god-dragons and suggesting ways to increase their recognition as official and known gods of the fabled pantheon. Holy warriors from Dragonwright often visit the Garden of the Gods to receive Blessings from these and the more famous god-dragons before a quest or crusade, though the top leaders of the Church, itself, all claim the Garden to be an illusion, a myth, and that only the clergy can speak to the gods and represent their voices and will.

The fact that there are only a few new dragon statues in the Garden is a testament to the faith and diligence of Dragonwright's followers, as their gods are seldom forgotten or rejected.

Lezari

Little is known of Lezari, a dragon who was once worshiped by a sprawling, ancient civilization within the Yin-Sloth Jungles for thousands of years before it collapsed long ago. His followers became isolated from the rest of Dragonwright as they drifted into barbarism, however, and gradually began to turn to other Jungle gods. Forgotten in the rest of the world, Lezari's reliance on the people of a single region was his undoing. With his pool of worshipers gone, except for a few cults, he found it more and more difficult to assume physical form and leave the dragon realm. After his last temples were forgotten or repurposed, he found himself a mostly forgotten god. The last of his known statues found only in the Garden.

Lezari symbolizes flight, freedom, and the heavens, and is said to have brought rain to fill the rivers and to water the rainforests so his people could thrive. Though known to the followers of Dragonwright, few worship him today. Still he clings to the belief he will be rediscovered and reinstated somehow, so one day his majestic form will, once again, become known and praised by many. Few Priests of Dragonwright speak of him, however, his name purged from the holy records, not out of malice, but out of a desire to not confuse the simple mortal worshipers or dilute the flow of prayers to the four primary god-dragons. Rivalry between dragons is legendary, and that sense of competition transcends even to the gods. It was the other four famous deities who encouraged their to remove the names of the "lesser god-dragons" and to stop telling their stories and myths. For Lezari to become an openly acknowledged part of the Dragonwright pantheon again, he'll have to do much of the legwork himself via new Champions of the Gods and the recruitment of new followers devoted to him first, and then the rest of the pantheon. A difficult task.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Statue Description: A long, serpentine dragon curled around a pedestal with bright, flaming eyes.

Caretakers: Apart from the general maintenance of the Dragonwright cultists, there is a single Priest named **Namse Virdan** who has devoted many years to the study of Lezari. He believes the rebirth of Lezari would help extend the Church of Dragon-

wright into the Baalgor Wastelands and Yin-Sloth Jungles where many potential converts await. He is a fanatic whose dreams are mostly delusions, but there are a few tribes of various species in the Jungles who remember the name of Lezari through myths passed down via the spoken word for generations.

Artifacts of Note: Cloud of Lezari: According to Legend, the Cloud of Lezari was kept in a bronze box decorated with jade clouds and silver filagree. Inside the box is a piece of magically preserved cloud said to resemble a puff of white, spun sugar (think fresh cotton candy) that can be picked up and held in hand. Actually, the hand can be slipped under the cloud and whoever holds it, commands it!

The cloud can grow to fill a room or an area 50 feet (15.2 m) in diameter. For everyone except the owner of the Cloud (he who possesses the box that contains it), it is as if they were suddenly plunged into a pea soup fog. However, the possessor of the box can see perfectly, as if the cloud were but a light mist, and move around inside of it without penalty, and get close to others in the Cloud (he is unseen until within 3 feet/0.9 m), and attack. The Cloud can be left in one place (an entrance hall, a courtyard, over a sea vessel, etc.) or it can follow its owner; maximum speed is 20 mph (32 km).

In the alternative, the cloud can flatten and be used as a floating platform upon which its owner can stand upon to hover and fly (maximum speed 20 mph/32 km, maximum altitude is 10,000 feet/3,048 m). The cloud can be as small as a flying carpet big enough to hold its owner and/or him and a few people, or as large as 50 feet (15.2 m) in diameter to carry 3-4 dozen soldiers, livestock, or crates of supplies or treasure, weighing up to 60 tons.

The owner of the Cloud may also inhale it! As long as the Cloud is inside of his body, he can breathe without air, is impervious to smoke inhalation, poisonous/toxic clouds and magical fumes, impervious to disease, impervious to lightning, impervious to falling (floats to the ground and stops, hovering above it), can levitate, hover and fly (10,000 feet/3,048 m, 20 mph/32 mph speed), and can fire 3D6 damage electrical bolts from his fingertips up to 300 feet (91.4 m) away; each blast counts as one melee attack. Duration is indefinite and ends when he so desires and exhales the Cloud back into the box. **Note:** Whoever has possession of the bronze and jade box – the size of a child's lunch box – controls the Cloud of Lezari, and if it falls into the hands of another, can be forcibly removed from inside the previous owner.

It should be noted that many believe the Cloud of Lezari is pure myth and was never real because there is no record of it in the annals of history. Only a story in the *Tristine Chronicles* in which Lezari himself wielded the Cloud in battle against the Old Ones. Others contend that if it is spoken of in the sacred *Tristine Chronicles* it must be real, except the Cloud of Lezari has never been found by any mortal. Even that claim is in doubt, as one of the earliest kings of the Western Empire was said to possess a magic that could cloak his ship in a cloud upon the water and he fired lightning from his hands. Could this have been the Cloud of Lezari? (**Note:** In the possession of Lezari or any deity, the cloud is four times larger and more powerful.)

Serpent Staff: Also known as the *Jade Staff*, this holy artifact is said to have once belonged to the head of Lezari's church, once a popular faction within the larger Dragonwright that rivaled the followers of the four primary deities ages ago. The Staff is made of jade and has a long serpentine dragon curled around the top half. It is said to have surfaced hundreds of times over the last



80,000 years, but has not been seen in at least two centuries. It was last rumored to be in the possession of a Land of the South Winds pirate who disappeared, fate unknown, somewhere in or around the coast of the Yin-Sloth Jungles.

As a weapon, the Serpent Staff inflicts 2D6 damage to most opponents, 4D6 damage to the animated dead and undead, and

5D6+10 damage to demons and their host, such as Gargoyles and the Fallen.

Its main power, however, was influence over the weather. The wielder of the Serpent Staff is impervious to electricity/lightning, and is able to cast the following spells two times per 24 hour period at no P.P.E. cost and equal to a 10th level Wizard: Float

in Air, Levitation, Call Lightning, Calm Storms, Summon and Control Storm, and Summon Fog.

Note: The Serpent Staff has 300 S.D.C. that regenerates 1D6x10 S.D.C. per hour. However, if destroyed, it unleashes a hurricane force storm over a 200 square mile (518 square km) area that lasts for 1D6+1 days, causing severe flooding and immense damage.

Winged Talisman: A holy talisman inscribed with an image of Lezari, this artifact was lost by a Dragonwright Priest somewhere in the Eastern Territory city of Llorn. The talisman grants the wearer the magic power to understand and speak all languages 75% (+15% for Dragonese/Elven) as long as the Talisman is worn, and can cast the spells Fly as the Eagle and Swim as a Fish upon himself three times per 24 hours at no P.P.E. cost equal to a 10th level Wizard.

Blessings: Fly: A Miraculous Blessing, the Blessed individual has no fear of heights and can call upon his deity through prayer to be granted the power to fly.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to notice changing and threatening weather conditions and wind direction, +3 to roll with punch/fall/impact, and the Blessed individual survives falls from any height! As he fall his descent slows and he seems to glide down to the ground landing on his feet as light as a feather.

Skills/Abilities: Acrobatics 80%, Climb 75%, and can fly, four times per 24 hours, able to hover and fly up to a maximum speed of 50 mph (80 km) for as long as one hour per activation. Maximum altitude is 15,000 feet (4572 m).

Lightness of Foot: The Blessed individual is said to move about as light and carefree as the wind.

Bonuses: +2 to roll with punch/fall/impact, and the recipient of this blessing does not feel the weight of his belongings, including armor, weapons and gear, and can move about as if unencumbered; removes all movement penalties from weight or mobility restrictions of armor.

Skills/Abilities (special): Acrobatics 75%, Climb/Scale Walls 70%, Prowl 65%, and when his prayers are granted, leaves no tracks or scent to follow because he actually walks a few inches above the surface of the ground, mud, snow, or ice.

Rain Dance: Another Miraculous Blessing, the Blessed individual is given the power to bring an end to a drought and bring life-giving rain to save crops and provide drinking water.

Bonuses: +3 to Perception Rolls to recognize good, clean drinking water, and +5% to Wilderness skills.

Skills/Abilities (special): Dowsing 75%, Brewing 70%, Swimming 65%, and the ability to bring life-giving rain via a two hour ritual involving song and dance that must not be interrupted, and which drains the Blessed individual physically and magically: reduce P.P.E. to zero, and reduce P.S., P.E., P.P., Spd attributes and all combat bonuses *by half* for 1D4 days. The rain that comes immediately, and sporadically over the next month is the perfect amount to restore and nurture the land, crops, and water reserves without causing flooding or storm damage.

Nyislad

Nyislad is a tragedy within Dragonwright, a dragon of impeccable character and quality who was mortally wounded in battle against *Styphon the Black*. In a distant era 15,000 or 20,000 years ago, Dragonwright was united for a time, and the combined worship had made Styphon more powerful and arrogant than ever

before. With his attempts to undermine the other gods and their Church becoming more frequent, Nyislad, a minor god-dragon associated with the Floenry Isles, took it upon herself to humble the mischievous and destructive deity.

With an army of loyal followers at her side, Nyislad used her knowledge of Dragonwright's rituals and secrets to summon Styphon right into an ambush. The giant, evil god-dragon only laughed at the army of pitiful mortals and mages who hoped to strike him down with arrows and the simple spells of humans. He opened a massive Rift that sent the entire force spinning away into a different dimension. Nyislad, alone, was no match for Styphon, who crushed his enemy in a battle that gave birth to many myths and legends of its own among the primitive people who were witness to it. With her near "death," Styphon drank the blood of his defeated opponent, and cast her remains into the closing Rift to tumble into dimensional oblivion.

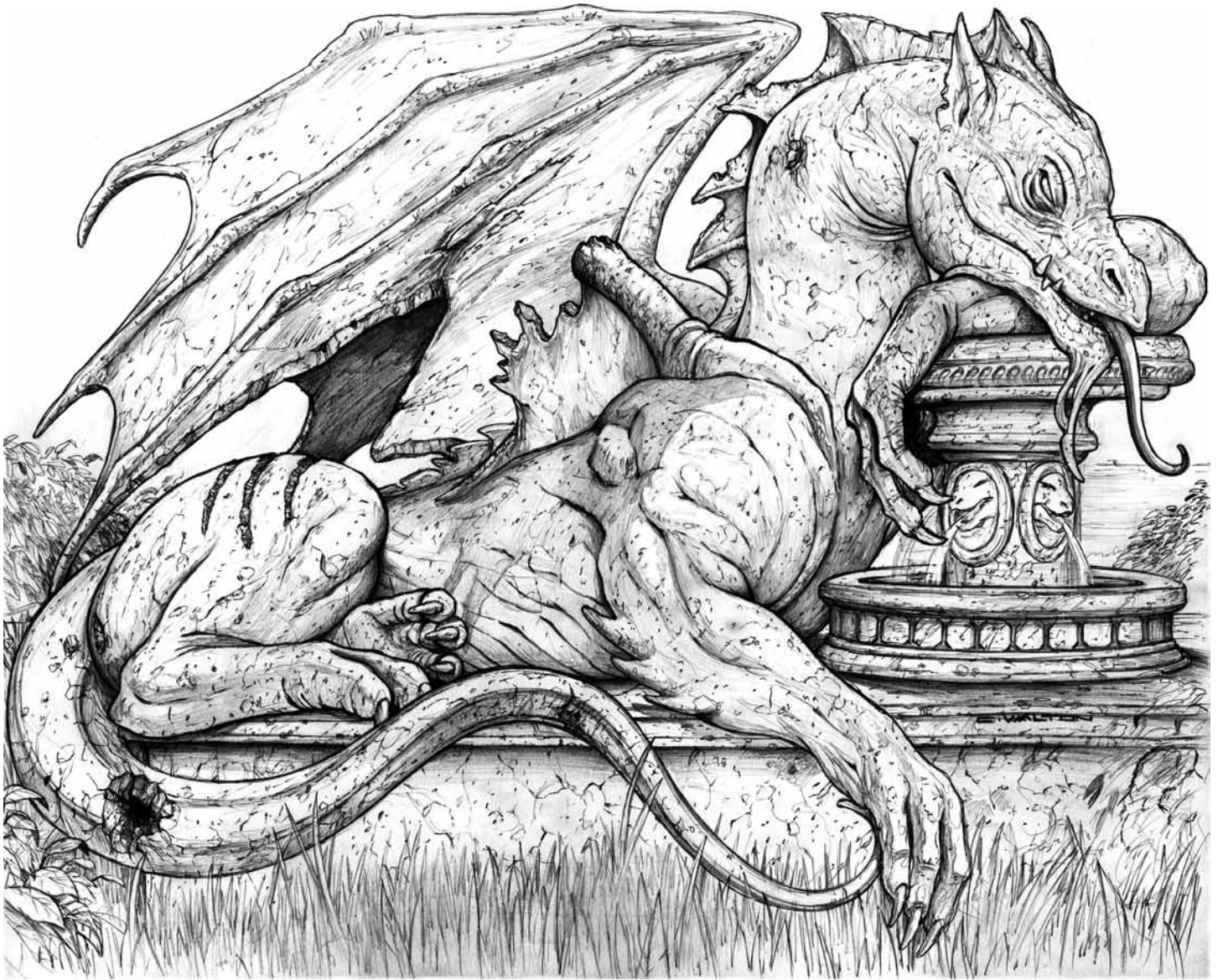
Though Styphon the Black has pronounced Nyislad dead, he doesn't know that. Her consciousness, warped and twisted under the effects of space and time as magical energy drained out of her ravaged body, but she still lives. It has just taken her a number of millennia to recover and find the way back to the Palladium World, as the recent rediscovery of her statue in the Garden of the Gods seems to symbolize. She now reaches out to visitors in the Garden and at her ancient statues and shrines in the Floenry Islands where she still has a small, but loyal following, including the primitive Grimbor and Hytril, among others, healing the sick and the wounded, and encouraging heroes and do-gooders. She is looking for a few people to become her Champions of the Gods and rebuild her followers in order to regain her rightful place in the Pantheon of Dragonwright. Something that the spiteful, power-monger Styphon will try to prevent. This means Nyislad also encourages mortals to oppose and undo Styphon's evil schemes and undermine his position within the Church and among his followers.

Alignment: Unprincipled. She was Principled, but her experience has made her vengeful and disillusioned. That can change for the better, becoming Scrupulous if she finds the right Champions and heroes and followers with good and noble hearts.

Statue Description: A statue of a battered and wounded dragon, perched with its head low and missing one wing.

Caretakers: The Priests and acolytes of Dragonwright keep her resting place clean and well-maintained. There are several Priests who have become affiliated with the goddess, but not enough to reestablish her widespread worship within the religion, yet.

Artifacts of Note: Crown of Snakes: A gold-plated crown of seven entwined snakes with emeralds for eyes. This artifact enables the wearer to see like a snake, seeing infrared light (Night-vision 500 feet/152 m) and the heat given off by living creatures, making hiding from her very difficult, and is excellent for finding people and animals at night and in cold environments, tracking still-warm footprints (no more than 15 minutes old); +20% to all Tracking skills. In addition, the wearer can see the invisible, see Shadow Beasts even in darkness, is impervious to all dragon breath weapons and the petrification beams of the Cockatrice, and can read and speak Dragonese/Elven 95%. This artifact is rumored to have been lost somewhere in the Great Northern Wilderness, near the coast of the Inland Sea, when it fell into the possession of a Wolfen Knight who was bringing the relic to the leader of his tribe.



Snake Sword: A magical, silver-bladed broadsword that does 3D6 damage, is +2 to strike, +1 to parry and disarm, and which can turn into a large serpent (A.R. 15, 80 S.D.C.) that can fight and attack its owner's opponents! Three attacks per melee round, +2 to strike, parry and dodge, and each bite inflicts 3D6 damage. When the "snake" suffers 80 points of damage or more, it turns back into a sword and flies into the hand of its owner where it can be used as a blade weapon, but cannot turn back into a fighting serpent for 48 hours.

Blessings: Healing Presence and Recruitment at Her Statues (special): Anyone upon whom she takes pity or seeks to win over, and who prays to her for help or guidance and comes within 15 feet (4.6 m) of her statue in the Garden of the Gods or one of her few remaining shrines on the Floenry Islands, is automatically healed 2D6 Hit Points/S.D.C. or is cured of minor disorders/illnesses with all symptoms and side-effects instantly removed. She also has a 33% chance to remove a lesser curse, and provides a +20% bonus to perform a successful exorcism. Those she helps dream of Nyislad the next time they fall asleep. In the dream she encourages them to strive to be good and kind to others, and to be wary of Styphon the Black and his conniving and wicked Priests and followers. To those she believes can be of greater service, the goddess may offer inspiration, a vision, an additional Bless-

ing, or an invitation to become a Champion of the Gods in her name to recruit new followers dedicated to her specifically, and the Dragonwright pantheon in general. Her quests are missions to help others and destroy evil, many of which do things to hurt and undermine Styphon and his Priests and followers.

Reptilian Brain: The Blessed individual is inspired to be a cold, ruthless combatant, who is quick and decisive in his actions to take down his enemies and defend those under his charge. His idea of mercy is a swift death to those who don't deserve it. This isn't evil, but is callous and merciless.

Bonuses: +3 to Perception Rolls to recognize the Priests and servants of Styphon the Black and other evildoing scum who need to be put down like a mad dog; +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, +3 to damage (double against the Priests and minions of Styphon), +1 to save vs magic and possession, +15% to save vs coma and death, and +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

Skills/Abilities: Detect Ambush 75%, Surveillance 70%, and Track Humanoids 65%.

Reptilian Bravery: The Blessed individual is inspired to be bold and brave. The same boldness that Nyislad needed to challenge Styphon the Black.

Bonuses: +3 to Perception Rolls to recognize the Priests and servants of Styphon the Black and their evil schemes, as well as

to recognize people in need of help and suffering under tyranny; +2 on initiative, +1 to strike, parry and dodge, +2 to pull punch, +1 to save vs magic and possession, +10% to save vs coma and death, +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

Skills/Abilities: Escape Artist 75%, Intelligence 70%, and Recognize Weapon Quality 65%.

Serenity: Though her hatred of Styphon, and wicked beings like him, borders on the obsessive (a trait she recognizes in others), she realizes she must find balance and is still able to meditate and find peace, mercy, and focus. She tries to help other vengeful or tormented souls to likewise find peace and balance even as she struggles with her own. The Blessed individual is given moments of clarity, peace, and calm as Nyislad quiets the restless heart and mind.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to recognize when he is over-reacting or lost to hot emotions and rein himself in, +1 to disarm, +2 to pull punch, +10% bonus to Science and Scholar, Noble and Technical skills when they are needed most.

Skills/Abilities: Fishing 75%, Play Musical Instrument 70%, and the psionic abilities: Meditation (0) and Mind Block (4), and 1D6+7 I.S.P., but is not considered to be a psychic.



Ometrua the Failed Usurper

Only whispered of in the modern age, Ometrua has been lost and hidden within the Garden for tens of thousands of years, longer than any of the other forgotten Dragonwright gods. Cast aside after a failed rebellion against the other gods, Ometrua was once a champion of the innocent, with a good heart and noble intentions. A divine warrior and beast of legend, he thought himself powerful enough to challenge even Kym-Nark-Mar. Unfortunately, he overestimated both his own strength and his support among the rest of the pantheon, and after he was bested in a mighty battle

that left scars across the very landscape of the world, he slipped away to recover his energy. After the battle with his fellow dragons, his name was cursed within the early cults of Dragonwright, and, denied the acclaim of his worshippers, Ometrua could only recover a fraction of his former power.

He tried to expand his personal cult into different dimensions and domains, but the Church of Dragonwright's excommunication reached far and wide, and gradually the name Ometrua went forgotten in the outside world, and the dragon-deity found himself weak and condemned to the shadows, forgotten and miserable. Ometrua has burned with desire for vengeance ever since, but none are willing to challenge the might of Dragonwright in his name, not even Styphon the Black, who sees Ometrua as a dangerous rival best kept under their heel. Anyone who tries to revive Ometrua risks inviting the wrath of the other Dragonwright deities and their followers. Should Ometrua ever manage to again rise to power, it would ignite a civil war amongst the heavens and put the lives of Dragonwright's mortal followers in danger, as they would be the first to suffer under Ometrua's wrath.

Alignment: Miscreant (was Scrupulous).

Statue Description: A wingless Thunder Lizard carved from gray granite, poised to strike, with its poisonous, green fire breath and lashing tail.

Caretakers: None. The Dragonwright Priests and cultists who watch over the other statues leave Ometrua deliberately unattended.

Artifacts of Note: None, or so it is said. The teachings of Dragonwright would have you believe every physical object connected to Ometrua – fallen from one of the greatest of the dragon gods to one of the worst due to his insatiable lust for power and, now, vengeance – has been sought out, found, and destroyed by the other god-dragons. Mention of his name are few even in the holy scriptures of Dragonwright. Still, such a force of boiling rage and vengeance is not without its resources.

Dark Star: A morning star made of a mysterious black metal said to enable its wielder to summon and control 1D4 Shadow Beasts once per 24 hours, and grows or shrinks to accommodate the size of its wielder. As a weapon, it inflicts 2D6 damage to most opponents, but 4D6 damage to reptilian beings, vampires, zombies, and creatures of darkness, and 4D6+6 to dragons.

Shield of Retribution: A V-shaped shield whose surface is polished and reflective like a mirror. It once represented truth and justice, but now protects the wicked and vengeful. The shield is indestructible, +2 to parry, does 2D6 damage as a weapon, and shields its bearer from the breath attacks of dragons, making him impervious to them all, as well as resistant to fire (half damage), and able to parry fire balls and fire blasts and energy beams (no damage to him or the shield). The latter includes deflecting the Petrification beam of the Cockatrice, Gorgon/Medusa, and Maggot demon.

Blessings: **Death from the Shadows:** The Blessed individual is given the ability to be stealthy and hidden in darkness where he may strike at his enemies like a panther in the darkness.

Bonuses: Double damage from behind and surprise attacks.

Skills/Abilities: Prowl 50% (+20% in darkness), Track Humanoids 70%, and is able to cast the spells Darkness (an Air Elemental spell) and Shadow Meld twice per 24 hours without P.P.E. cost equal to a 10th level Wizard.

Dragon Slayer: Same as the Miraculous Blessing.

Emerald Fire: A Miraculous Blessing, typically granted for one hour or one particular battle up to 48 hours. Those who earn this Blessing are able to breathe the infamous Green Fire of the Thunder Lizard.

Bonuses: Impervious to fire and poison, +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

Skills/Abilities (special): Green Fire Dragon Breath: A poisonous vapor that looks like green flame. Range: 50 feet (15.2 m), and inflicts 1D6 damage and paralysis that lasts 1D6 melee rounds unless the target saves vs magic of 14 or higher to humans and other mortals; 3D6 damage to supernatural beings, dragons and other creatures of magic like the Sphinx and Faerie Folk; and 6D6 damage against Elementals. The fire breath can only be used against a single target at a time, and can be employed once per melee round.

To Stir the Embers: The simmering hatred that keeps Ometrua tethered to the mortal plane, strongest within the Garden of the Gods and a few shrines of secret cults in the Land of the South Winds, can be transmitted to a willing recipient of this Blessing.

Bonuses: +3 to Perception Rolls to recognize people burning with dark emotions that can be easily manipulated into acts of violence and bad things; +2 to save vs mind control and possession, +10% to all Espionage, Military and Rogue/Thief skills as the individual's mind is focused on dark purposes.

Skills/Abilities: Imitate Voices and Impersonation, Public Speaking 70%, and magically understands and speaks all languages at 75%.

Gods of Other Races

There are deities of many races and cultures, present and long past, known to exist in statue form within the Garden. Almost every intelligent race, even those with limited intellect compared to humans, Elves or Dwarves, engages in spiritual practices and beliefs. Many may pray to the powerful and established gods that have worshipers of all types, but there are also more private and personal gods that are tied to small groups and individual races.

Centaurs have a small number of Centaur gods, but have lost many of their tribal beliefs as their people have been depleted over the years.

Eandroth are most often associated with Dwarven gods and the Northern Pantheon, though they may worship any deity. There are a few Gnome deities, as well as Dragonwright and other human-dominated religions.

Faerie Folk are often affiliated with nature gods of all types, but just as often scoff at religion and belief, seeing such activities as strange preoccupations of humans and the like.

Giants, Titans, and Rahu-Men have gods of their own, old and powerful deities, but often worship the same gods as Elves and humans, and frequently revere their own kings and chieftains as living gods, seeing themselves as halfway between god and mortals already.

Goblins, Hob-Goblins, and Orcs generally worship a mix of Goblin, Orc, and regional deities, in addition to those of large religions, but will worship any deity with whom they feel a connection. This includes selfish and trickster gods, and those deities who speak to the disenfranchised and monster

races. Kirgi the Rat God and other gods of thieves, assassins, and tricksters as well as various Demon and Deevil Lords of Hell are all worshiped by these beings and many of the monster races.

Kobolds and Troglodytes generally worship a mix of Goblin and Dwarven deities, in addition to their own, obscure gods, and the deities of the large religions, such as the gods of Light & Dark or Northern Pantheon depending on the region where they were born and raised.

Ogres and Trolls are primitive species, but Trolls are an old race and may worship Yin-Sloth gods or other ancient deities. Ogres are a much more recent people/mutation, however, and those who follow religious practices often take to well-known modern gods like those of the Northern Pantheon or the Church of Light & Dark.

Other Monster Races: Adram, Bug Bears, Dwarvings, Feathered Death, Gromek, Lizard Men, Lizard Mages, Loogaroo, Minotaurs, Ratlings, Syvan, Tezcat, and others relegated to the category of **monster races**, seem to mostly follow the deities of the Pantheon of Light & Dark and the ancient Yin-Sloth gods as well as worship Demon and Deevil Lords as their deities. Sometimes they worship dragons and other powerful creatures as gods whether they are truly deific or not. There is a Harpy goddess prominently featured in many Yin-Sloth religious inscriptions, though there is no corresponding statue in the Garden, so there must be at least one cult of her worshipers somewhere in the Yin-Sloth Jungles and the Harpy statue yet to be revealed in the Primeva.

People of the North. As a people of the north, **Bearmen, Emerin, Gnomes, Kankoran, and Northern Barbarians** tend to look toward Algor, the Northern Pantheon, Wolfen gods, and nature gods, in addition to their own obscure tribal deities. However, depending on where these beings grew up, can include any god or pantheon.

Note: Demon Worship. When speaking about gods, people often forget about the Lords of Hades and Dyval, each one a deific being, and represented in the Garden of the Gods. The members of any race, from human and Elf to Goblin and Orc may worship, or turn to, any of these dark gods, especially in times of trouble and need, and when emotions run hot. As noted above, many of the monster races choose to worship demonic Lords of Hades or Dyval. Such deities are perfect for those looking for revenge or bloodshed against the dominant species or those who persecute them.

As one might expect, the statues and garden areas featuring the **Lords of Hell** are not as heavily visited by their followers as other Garden areas of predominantly popular and good deities. One reason is Priests of Darkness, Witches, and followers of foul and wicked deities do not want to expose themselves as servants of evil to those who may be watching. However, as a wonder of the world, all portions of the Garden attract throngs of visitors who marvel at the artistry and antiquity of *all* the statues. Moreover, many uneducated peasants and farmers are likely to have no idea the statue they are looking at is a Demon Lord or dark god. As a result, most servants of evil slip in with crowds of sightseers and casual visitors to avoid being recognized, and caretakers come at night or at the crack of dawn before the Garden becomes crowded with visiting pilgrims and sightseers.



Elder & Primordial Jungle Gods

See *Dragons & Gods*, pages 178-191, for complete information about the *Church of the Seven Waters*, and the most terrifying and ancient of the **Southern Gods**. Monstrous beings that include the likes of Yin-Sloth the Terrible, Pith the Snake God, Tark the Spider God, and Lopnel the Warrior, among others.

All six of these savage and primordial deities were, over time, replaced by the gentler *Yin-Sloth Jungle deities* known today and described in the pages that follow. Most of the elder gods, except for *Tark* and *Lopnel*, are nearly forgotten even in the south, and completely unknown to people beyond the Yin-Sloth Jungles and the Land of the South Winds. Even in these places, the terrible deities are worshiped only by ancient cults and dark, forbidden religions.

In the distant past, these monstrous and demonic, bloodthirsty gods were worshiped out of fear and nihilism, or out of hate and the desire to annihilate one's enemies. Wholesale slaughter of one's enemies and human sacrifice were both endorsed and encouraged by these deities. The fearsome visage of each is found in the Garden of the Gods, where most visitors find them to be disturbing and frightening even in this place of beauty and tolerance. Few linger among them for long, and seem to gravitate to the more modern Jungle deities.

Considering the selfish and wicked disposition of most of these primordial beings, it is surprising that they do not see the Jungle gods who evolved after them as rivals but as little brothers and sisters. While the agendas of these two jungle pantheons

sometimes cross paths and clash, they do not oppose or fight each other or their respective followers. This may be a result of the nihilistic pragmatism of the primal gods.

Modern Yin-Sloth Jungle Gods

Often referred to as the **Jungle Pantheon** and Animal Pantheon (and not to be confused with the **Southern Gods**, above), even these so-called "modern" deities of the Yin-Sloth Jungles are some of the most ancient in the world. The knowledge and worship of some have faded over the ages, like the more savage deities who came before them, but most remain popular in the southern lands. As popular as ever among the tribal people and nonhumans of the jungle as well as to many inhabitants of the Land of the South Winds. Located not far from the primal Elder Jungle deities, the Garden presents vine-covered statues of noble jungle animals and strange animal-human hybrids: the Modern Jungle Gods.

Many of the deities in the Jungle Pantheon were once worshiped widely by ancient civilizations that have risen, fallen, and been forgotten, as well as by primitive humans and nonhuman people in many lands. As these cultures grew in sophistication, however, they began to follow new deities, including many that had already grown into worldwide figures through Dragonwright and other major pantheons such as the gods of Light and Dark, Aco and others. Gods that were worshiped throughout the world long ago, but are only known in the south today. And now because of the Garden of the Gods, they are beginning to be rediscovered.

Eliinak the True Crocodile God

As a Jungle god, few civilized people have ever heard his name, but the ancient deity, Eliinak, is known and feared by the people of the jungle and Land of the South Winds, and revered by Lizard Men and some cults. A symbol of power, fear, treachery, and danger lurking quietly and patiently below the surface, he is the patron deity of pirates, assassins, murderous thieves, slaver traders, practitioners of forbidden magic, and certain cults.

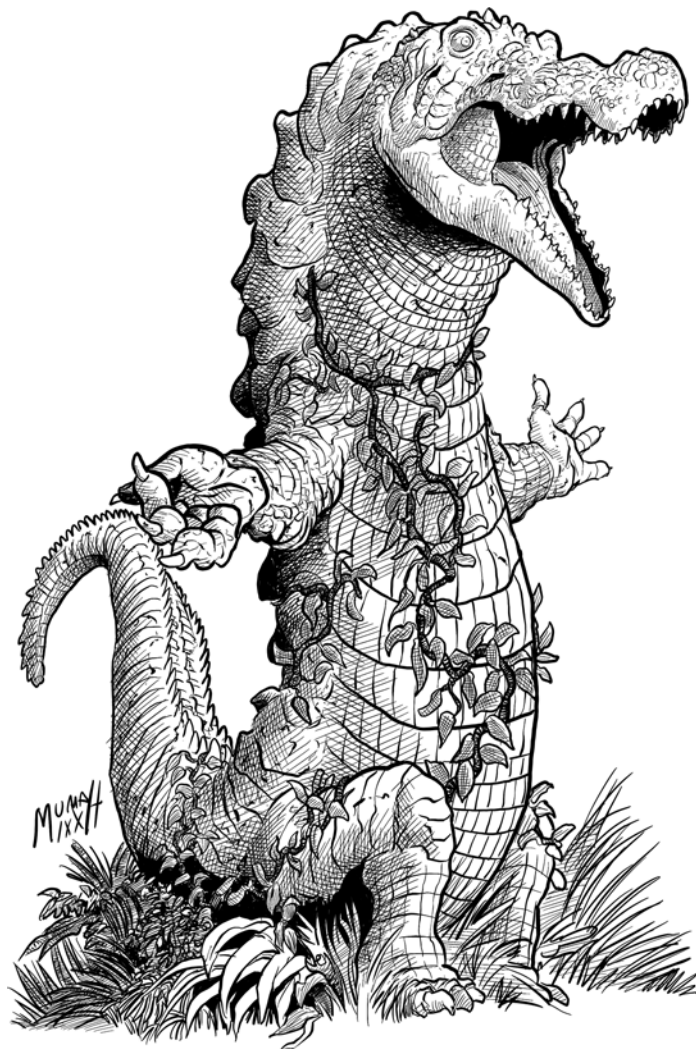
Eliinak is not a member of the pantheon of Light & Dark, but there is a connection. A few ancient myths suggest *Sebek*, the Crocodile of that Pantheon, is the treacherous little brother of Eliinak. *Sebek*, jealous of his brother's renown and fearful reputation among the Jungle gods, is said to have betrayed the jungle deities by abandoning them to join the Pantheon of Taut, the dark half of the Church of Light and Dark, taking Eliinak's **Tauton** minions with him. *Sebek* tricked the demonic crocodile beings to come with him on a mission for his brother. The Tautons were originally the supernatural minions of Eliinak and served as his elite shock-troopers and enforcers. *Sebek* believed his betrayal and bringing the Tautons to serve the rival pantheon would earn him a high place within the great and powerful pantheon of Light & Dark, putting him on par with Anubis or Anhur. While it earned him a place in the Pantheon, Set had other thoughts on the matter. The Lord of Darkness commandeered the army of Tautons for himself, and relegated *Sebek* to the roster of Lesser deities within

the Pantheon of Taut. Though Sebek wields more power than he ever did among the Jungle gods, he is disappointed with his comparatively minor position within the church and among the other gods of the pantheon.

Eliinak understands Sebek's betrayal in the name of power and position, but can never forgive him for it. This was not a betrayal against just him, but the entire pantheon of Yin-Sloth Jungle gods and made them look weak and foolish. This has earned Sebek the lasting enmity of all the jungle deities, branding him a traitor and their mortal enemy. Given the chance, Eliinak will gladly kill and devour little brother, wiping him out of existence forever, so Sebek must be careful.

What irks Eliinak most is the loss of his army of Tautons to rival, Set. When the Crocodile deity approached Set to broker a deal for the return of his minions, Set would not consider returning even a fraction of them. Nor would Isis, Osiris, or Thoth intervene on his behalf. This power-play announced to every pantheon that the gods of Light & Dark were making their move to take the spotlight among all mortals and any bond of friendship and allegiance that may have existed with other pantheons had come to an abrupt end.

In ancient times, the deities of the Yin-Sloth Jungle were every bit as powerful and popular as the gods of Light & Dark, so all of this has created a bitter animosity and lasting rivalry between the deities of these two pantheons. However, only Eliinak burns with hatred for them, Sebek and Set most of all. For their



part, the Tautons are nothing but pawns in a bigger game. They have only ever served Eliinak out of fear, but they fear Set even more than the mighty Crocodile god. Thus, for tens of thousands of years they have considered themselves the minions of Set and part of the Pantheon of Taut. Mocking and laughing at Eliinak who likes to send mortals to hunt and destroy his old minions at every opportunity.

Eliinak, the self-proclaimed "True" Crocodile God, happily uses mortals to undermine the Church of Light & Dark and its deities at every turn. It is ironic, but the evil Eliinak is willing to Bless heroes and adventurers of good alignment, and creates Champions of the Gods of any alignment if he believes he can manipulate or corrupt them to battling his hated enemies and little brother. Minimal manipulation and lies are required because most mortal adventurers and heroes (as well as assassins and evil-doers) believe their empowerment by the dark god Eliinak will have good results. Most convince themselves they are fighting fire with fire, and because they have good and just intentions, it is they who are using the Crocodile god to do good, not the other way around. They see wicked Eliinak's Blessings as an unlikely means to a good end, though some fret he may revoke them on a whim or when their usefulness has come to an end. Eliinak finds it all quite amusing. He is less concerned about helping the forces of good than he is about exacting revenge upon the deities who stole from him and laugh in his face about it. Besides, he subtly works to corrupt the heroes and Champions of Light who foolishly turn to him and accept his Blessings. Quietly and patiently encouraging them to give in to their dark emotions and to revel in revenge and bloodletting, and rewards their darkness with heady power, fame, and fortune.

Though the rest of the Yin-Sloth animal deities have no love for the rival deities in the Church of Light & Dark, it is only Eliinak who obsessively seeks revenge, and longs to destroy Set and Sebek. He takes great delight in sending out duped heroes to be a constant source of consternation for his hated rival gods and delights in every small victory.

It bears noting that the Crocodile god gets along well with the Monkey god. Eliinak actually enjoys the Monkey god's sense of humanity and shenanigans, and appreciates that Lucenki actively harasses and undermines the deities, Priests, and followers of the Church of Light and Dark. The Monkey god feels Eliinak was deeply wronged and, in addition, has a deep disdain for arrogant, humorless power-mongers, which fits the deities of that pantheon to a T. Thus, the Monkey enjoys humiliating and taking those deities goes down a peg or two whenever he can. It has become something of a fun and challenging game for Lucenki, which puts him in a favorable light with Eliinak. So favorable that, should it ever become necessary, the Crocodile deity will come to the Monkey god's aid (and sometimes the mortals Lucenki favors) to protect him from the wrath of the gods of Light and Dark. So far, Lucenki is too smart to get himself in hot water.

Alignment: Miscreant.

Statue Description: A stone crocodile, seated like a man, with arms spread open and deceptively inviting.

Caretakers: None, that are known of, however, like many of the Jungle gods, their garden areas and statues are tended to by various visitor as well as Faerie Folk. In this case, mainly by Bogies and Toadstools.

Artifacts of Note: Eliinak's Tooth: This holy relic is a large crystal crocodile tooth the size of a dagger mounted into the pearl

handle of a knife. It may be used as a deadly weapon to stab and slice and also impart magic upon its wielder. Eliinak's Tooth is said to currently be in the possession of a war chief in a tribe of Lizard Men along the border of the Yin-Sloth Jungles and the Land of the South Winds. Prior to that, it had belonged to a Tezcat chieftain before he and his warriors were vanquished by the Lizard Men.

As a magical, Holy Weapon the crystal tooth inflicts 1D6+3 damage to most mortal opponents, but 1D6x10 damage to Tautons, demons, and Deevils, and 2D6x10 against Sebek and any of the gods of the Church of Light and Dark. Some believe it was originally created by Eliinak and given to a Champion of the Gods to slay Sebek. Since his brother still lives, it is apparent any such attempts have thus far failed.

No crocodile or similar animal will attack whoever possesses Eliinak's Tooth and Tautons fear it to such a degree they are hesitant and fight its wielder at half their usual bonuses and number of melee attack, but only after making a roll to save vs Horror Factor. (A roll of 14 or higher is required for Tautons and Lesser Demons to save against the enchanted object.) Twice per 24 hours the wielder of Eliinak's Tooth may also cast the spells Breathe Without Air, Call Lightning, Control the Beasts, and Swim Like a Fish at no P.P.E. cost equal to a 9th level Wizard.

Blessings: Crocodile Smile: The Blessed individual's ability to be intimidating and respected *out of fear* is bolstered by this Blessing. Over time, the individual may see threats, blackmail, and torture as an acceptable and valuable means to an end, which could effect an alignment change, sliding into the selfish or evil spectrum.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to recognize shady characters who are snitches, smugglers and traders of information or who can be recruited for such dirty work.

Skills/Abilities: Intelligence 70%, Interrogation 75%, and when the Blessed individual wants to be intimidating, he smiles in such a menacing way he has an 85% likelihood of being intimidating whenever he wants to be. Moreover, criminals and dangerous people accept the Blessed individual as one of their own and are willing to do business with him, hiring him for his services or offering him theirs. Just remember, there is no honor among thieves and treachery is inevitable.

Power of the Crocodile: The Blessed individual possesses aspects of the crocodile.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize the weakest/most vulnerable in a group and opportunities for attack, +20% to S.D.C., +1 to strike, +2 to damage regardless of P.S., +1 to entangle, +1 to save vs poison and disease, has no fear of water, and double the bonuses listed here when in the water and increase swimming speed by 50%.

Skills/Abilities (special): Prowl 50% (+25% in water), Swimming 80% (or a 20% bonus if the character already has the skill), plus the special abilities of Nightvision 200 feet (61 m) and hold breath for 1D6+12 minutes, as well, letting the Blessed individual move through water without commotion or strong ripples at slow speeds to strike from the water with the element of surprise, like a crocodile.

Smell Fear: The Blessed individual begins to understand how to use the power of fear to be respected and attain power over others, and can practically smell it in others.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize people who are frightened and fearful, and who or what it is they fear most.

He also notices opportunities and potential victims vulnerable to threats, blackmail, and extortion.

Skills/Abilities (special): Prowl 60% (+10% in water), Use and Recognize Poison 70%, plus whenever the Blessed individual is trying to intimidate some or engages in combat radiates a *Horror Factor of 15*, and also has the psionic ability of Empathy (4) and 2D6+12 I.S.P.; uses it to target and manipulate people and gauge an opponent (does his adversary hate him, fear him, etc., as their emotions may indicate the ferocity and commitment in which they fight).

Enkclu the Tiger

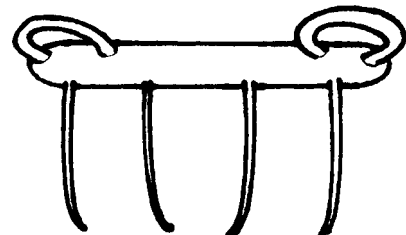
Enkclu the Tiger is the symbol of power, courage and personal strength, and is the Jungle god of war. Warriors often pray to him for courage and strength, and in the days of old, painted themselves in tiger stripes before they went into battle, which some jungle tribes still do. He is a formidable warrior skilled in combat, but also merciful and fair. Though a jungle deity, Enkclu is the patron of all trained warriors and athletes as well as those who have the heart of a warrior and great personal courage. Though sometimes referred to as the Jungle King in myths and legends, Enkclu and Meleki the All-Father are friends and allies who never challenge or betray the other, and though Enkclu regards himself as the greater warrior, he acknowledges Meleki as the head of the Jungle pantheon.

Of all the deities of the Yin-Sloth Jungle Pantheon, *Enkclu the Tiger* and *Lucenki the Monkey God* are the two most popular among "civilized" people. They are worshiped throughout the Land of the South Winds and Floenry Islands, even reaching into parts of the Western Empire and Timiro. Both are popular among warriors, Gladiators, adventurers, athletes, pirates, smugglers, and daring thieves.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Statue Description: Half of the Enkclu statue is a fierce, wide-eyed tiger with a single golden fang showing. The other half seems weathered and worn or unfinished, to represent that Enkclu respects and endorses *all* warriors and courageous people of any species, including humans.

Caretakers: A number of retired human warriors living on Lopan regularly care for the statue and its garden area. Each is a member of the Tiger Club, an elite group of warriors, knights, and adventurers with tavern-like lodges. The largest Tiger Club Lodge is in the Champions' Village, but there is a satellite lodge in Krigan Heights and elsewhere, including a couple on the shores of the Old Kingdom and the Eastern Territory. Men-at-arms, especially if renowned for bravery or a great deed, are always welcome at a Tiger Club Lodge and get a 30% discount on food and drink, but not lodgings.



Artifacts of Note: The Tiger God's Claws: A matched pair of Bagh Nakh style weapons. Each is a set of small, steel claw-like blades that fit between the fingers. (**Note:** Ordinary Tiger Claws



are popular among the assassins and some pirates in the Land of the South Winds and inflict 2D4+1 damage). These magic artifacts is considered be a Holy Weapon that provides its wielder a bonus of +1 to strike and inflicts 4D6 damage to all opponents.

When both pair of the Tiger God's Claws are used in combat, one for each hand, the wielder enjoys *one extra melee attack*. Moreover the A.R. of body armor and even the Natural armor of

opponents, is one point less against the Claws. So an A.R. of 16 is 15 against the Tiger God's Claws.

In addition, twice per 24 hours the Claws can inflict double damage (1D4x10+6) and once per 24 hours it can restore 4D6+6 Hit Points and S.D.C. to the body of its wielder.

Tiger Jaw: A wooden war club studded in what looks like the fangs of two dozen tigers. The indestructible weapon inflicts 3D6 damage to most opponents, 6D6 damage to serpents, including dragons, Lizard Men, all reptilian creatures, and Worms of Taut. The wielder is able to cast the following spells once each per 24 hours, Armor of Ithan, Invisibility: Superior, Nightvision, and See the Invisible at no P.P.E. cost equal to a 10th level Wizard.

Blessings: Silent Hunter: The Blessed individual becomes calm, steady, quiet and stealthy.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to identify escape routes and ways in and out in which one is least likely to be seen; +1D6 to Spd attribute, +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, +1 to roll with punch/fall/impact, and impervious to Horror Factor.

Skills: Prowl 75% (+10% in darkness and jungle/rain forest environments), Surveillance 70% (10% under the cover of darkness and jungle/rain forest environments), Track Humanoids 60% (+10% in darkness and jungle/rain forest environments), and the ability to leap 10 feet (3 m) high or across, increase distance by 30% with a running start.

Strength of the Tiger: The Blessed individual is imbued with the aspects of the tiger.

Bonuses: +25 to S.D.C., +6 to damage with all physical attacks be it from punch or kick or handheld weapon in addition to normal damage regardless of the character's P.S., +1 on initiative, +2 to strike and parry, +1 to entangle, +2 to pull punch, +1 to save vs poison and disease, +1 to save vs magic, +10% to save vs coma and death, and +4 to save vs Horror Factor.

Skills/Abilities (special): Wilderness Survival 75%, Track & Trap Animals 65%, Land Navigation 70%, and is able to carry twice the usual weight for the character's P.S. attribute.

Tiger Strike (special): The recipient of this blessing becomes deadly in hand to hand combat.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize opponents who have superior martial skills such as Paladins, Knights, Assassins, Gladiators, boxers, etc., +1 attack per melee round, +6 to damage with punches and Karate-style open hand chops or with a handheld weapon in addition to normal damage regardless of the character's P.S., +1 to disarm, +1 to pull punch, and +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

Skills/Abilities: Climb/Scale Walls 60% (or a +20% bonus if the skill is already known), W.P. Paired Weapons, and the ability to leap and pounce on an opponent without injury to oneself and knocking him down. 01-66% likelihood of knocking a victim down. Victim of knockdown loses initiative and one melee attack, giving the pounce the initiative and the next attack!

Gwon the Frog God

Myths and legends seem to agree this benevolent Jungle deity was driven mad by his enemies and cast into an unknown dimension never to be seen again. However, Gwon is not dead, only missing. Ironic since he is the patron of lost children and lost causes, as well as friend to children, Faerie Folk, and other small beings. This includes Goblins, particularly the rare and magical Cobblers, Faeries, Sprites, Pixies, Brownies, Toadstools, and Bo-



gies, but also Gnomes, Hytril, Kankoran, Wing Tips (a dozen of which are found in this part of the Garden), the cubs of the feline Emerin, and children of any species.

Legend has it that anyone searching for a missing child and prays to the Frog God for help shall be assisted in finding the little one. To further support this claim, many searchers speak of having dreamt the location of a lost child and soon after found him or her at that exact place. Moreover, many a local child who has gone missing in the wilderness of Lopan – and some say, occasionally those from Phi, the Eastern Territory, and even the southern edge of the Great Northern Wilderness – have been found sleeping within the garden of the Frog God, unharmed and uncertain how it is they came to be there.

Children who appear in the Garden report being lost and scared until nightfall when the Song of Frogs brought them comfort and moonbeams illuminated a path to a safe place. Sometimes that safe place is near their home or an area free of danger until rescuers arrive, and other times it is miles away and across the Inland See, in the Garden of the Gods. Others report chasing an iridescent dragonfly or frog until they were too tired and had to lay down to rest or sleep someplace safe or near home. Still others have told stories of being visited and cared for by a pretty pixie maiden clad from foot to chin in a flowing green dress of silk and riding a large, green and blue frog or dragonfly by standing on its back. She would regale them with tales of the Frog God, the details of which can never quite be remembered, and helped them find food to eat, fresh water to drink, and avoid predators until they found their way into the arms of rescuers or safety at the foot of the Frog God fountain on Lopan.

Alignment: Principled.

Statue Description: The Frog God is a working fountain in surprisingly good repair. Water pours from under the frog like a miniature waterfall into a lily pad-filled pond of water that is refreshing and good to drink. The fountain is located within a meadow overgrown with wild flowers and flowering vines. Its shallow pond is abuzz with dragonflies and butterflies and abounds with all manner of frogs that play and frolic during the day while bullfrogs sing through the night. Adult visitors often overlook this fountain, a statue of a playful, forgotten deity, but children, especially young children under the age of twelve, seem to find their way to this part of the Garden and enjoy chasing butterflies (and playful Faeries) and trying to catch frogs.

Caretakers: The primary Caretaker is **Henry** — Uncle Hank to children. Most kids take an immediate liking to the man and are quick to help him with his chores. Henry is an enigmatic figure who seems to appear only when he desires to do so. Some claim he is actually an avatar of the Frog God, but Henry denies it and calls such stories foolishness.

Hank, as he is known to those he takes a liking to or who become his friend, is a handsome, older human male with thinning white hair and appears to be in his early sixties. He has absolutely no tolerance for bullies of any age, nor anyone who thinks they are better than anyone else. Hank despises slavers, dislikes the rich and aristocracy (at least until they have proven themselves not to be arrogant and self-entitled), and has little regard for clergy. Henry prefers honest, hardworking common people, noble warriors, artists, and entertainers, and he loves children.

The caretaker can be gruff toward strangers and children who misbehave, but comes around to them when they settle down. He is friendly and playful with polite and respectful children and always seems to have a piece of candy in his pockets for every child he encounters. He is never preachy nor does he pretend to be anything other than an ordinary guy. Yet, he often has good insight and wisdom to share for those willing to listen and is always sticks up for others. Unlike some of the other caretakers, Uncle Hank has no formal education, cannot read or write, was born and raised on Lopan, and has no special ability to bring about visions or visitation from the Frog god or any of the deities. Nor has he ever had a vision himself. He knows every path and shortcut in the Garden, so when he wants to do so, he can lead visitors to wherever they want to go inside the Garden or to the Verdant Gates in half the time it would take anyone else.

Artifacts of Note: Jade Frog: A small, smooth frog statue made from jade and feels cool to the touch. It is small enough to fit in the palm of an adult's closed hand, a pocket or small pouch, and may be worn as a charm, talisman, or on a necklace.

Mosquitoes and biting insects never bite or bother the owner of the Jade Frog and he or she is impervious to disease and +3 to save vs poison. In addition the little statue's owner is able to cast the spells Breathe without Air, Faerie Speak, Negate Poison, and Swim as a Fish twice per day at no P.P.E. cost equal to an 8th level Wizard.

Gwon's Tear: An oval shaped, blue sapphire the size of a Robin's egg. Whoever possesses it can see the invisible, see through murky water, Nightvision 200 feet (61 m), and breathe underwater indefinitely.

Frog God's Crown: A wreath made of leafy vines that gives its wearer a Natural A.R. 12, an extra 50 S.D.C. and the ability to cast each of the following spells (many Water Elemental spells), Calling, Color Water, Create Fog, Create Water, Float on Water, Heal Burns, Locate, Salt Water to Fresh, Water Seal, and Water to Wine, once per 24 hours at no P.P.E. cost equal to an 8th level Warlock.

Blessings: Find Lost Child: The recipient of this selfless Blessing is given divine assistance in finding a lost or abducted child.

Bonuses: +3% to notice clues concerning the missing child's whereabouts as well as to notice slave traders and likely kidnapers and smugglers; +10% to Tracking, Land Navigation, and any other skills necessary to find the lost or abducted child. If the Blessed individual must fight the abductor(s) he receives a +1 to all combat bonuses and saving throws while fighting the bad guys to rescue the kids.

Skills/Abilities (special): The Blessed individual may receive a vision or dream indicating the location of the lost child/children, and possibly see the abductor and his intention for the child (human sacrifice, to be sold into slavery, to be eaten, and so on). Similarly, the individual may have a dream(s) that warns of an impending danger that may threaten the welfare of children, and be given clues or hints about what the danger is and when it may strike. (A dream about a man in silver plate armor rounding up children in cages and placing their parents in chains, or the hilt of a particular sword or a tattoo, etc., that reveals the one responsible or bringing the danger, and so on.)

Kindred Spirit Blessing: The Blessed individual is almost always someone who is compassionate and kind and who retains a sense of childlike playfulness and appreciation for life's little wonders like a beautiful garden, sunset, or rainbow.

Bonus: +3 on Perception Rolls to notice cute, sweet, and touching moments and natural beauty, +1 to pull punch, +1 to save vs disease and poison, and Faerie Folk do not target him for harassment or pranks, and any food and drink offered by the Faeries will not be enchanted or poisonous.

Skills/Abilities (special): Baby animals and their mothers as well as children (all races) and Faerie Folk, including Goblins, take an immediate liking to the Blessed individual, as if they somehow know he or she is no danger to them and can be trusted. In fact, they are completely trusting until the Blessed individual proves otherwise, at which point they are horrified, become completely uncooperative, and flee.

When the Blessed individual responds to them in a friendly, patient, and kind manner, mother animals will let him play with their babies and protect him as well as the babies, should danger appear. As for children of Faerie Folk and Goblins, they know more than many adults give them credit for, and cheerfully help the Blessed individual even if the adults and parents will not. This may include clues and information, a secret place to hide known only to the child or Faerie, sneaking the individual (and his friends if he vouches for them and they are not ornery or scary) food, medicine, clothes, disguises, a horse, and so on. The little people's cost for their help? If the person and his big friends should stand up for and/or protect the little people, he/they will earn the little people's lasting affection and help. They will even come to his aid and defense, even if it jeopardizes their own lives!

Power of the Frog: The Blessed individual is endowed with aspects of the frog.

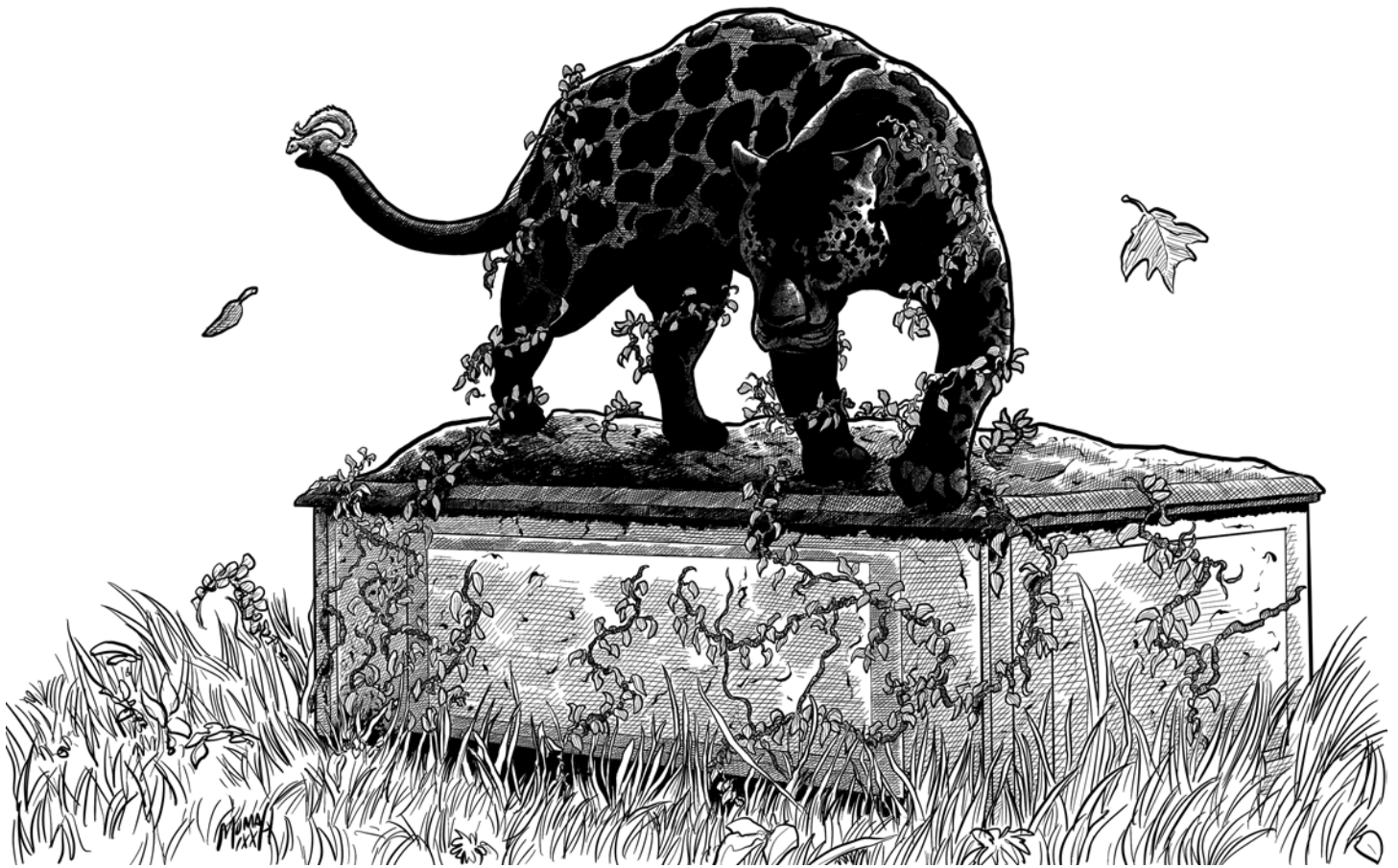
Bonuses: +1 on all Perception Rolls, +4 on Perception Rolls to recognize dangerous and poisonous insects and snakes, and water not fit for drinking or swimming in; +2 to dodge, +1 to roll with punch, fall, impact, and can hold breath for 1D6+12 minutes.

Skills/Abilities: Camouflage 70%, Dowsing 75%, Swimming 80%, Nightvision 200 feet (61 m), and can leap 12 feet (3.6 m) across and 6 feet (1.8 high).

Reward for a Rescuer of Lost Children: It is said that sometimes an adult who comforts and helps one or more lost children to find their way home safely *may* earn that individual or group the favor of the Frog God, especially if peril and great effort was involved.

Bonuses: The Blessed individual(s) is said to find personal triumph and good fortune soon afterward, or for those who have lost their own way, to find direction and purpose, or balance in their lives.

Skills/Abilities: Not applicable. Instead the rescuer(s) of children enjoys a bit of good fortune as noted under Bonuses. Game Master discretion as to what that is. **Note:** While fame, fortune, and the acquisition of magic are likely to be the first things to come to the minds of most players, good fortune can be many things: finding an escape route from certain death or peril, not being seen by an enemy, not catching a debilitating disease, an opportune/miraculous saving throw (any, and even if the player's actual roll to save, dodge, etc., was a failure), someone willing to heal them or hide them from their pursuers at little or no cost, discovering important information or clues, and so on. And good fortune that comes as money or magic does not have to be a king's ransom or a rare and powerful magic item, just an unexpected and helpful amount of cash or beneficial magic item, perhaps even something that is beneficial at a later date rather than in the present.



Incol the Panther

Incol the Panther was once part of a trio of cat gods, alongside Enkclu the Tiger and a Cheetah god whose name and likeness have been completely forgotten even within the Garden of the Gods. Incol symbolizes, agility, stealth, and silence to Enkclu's strength and courage. She is a patron of hunters, man-hunters, assassins, thieves, and pirates, as well as those who are secretive and hide, such as Changelings.

Like most of the modern Yin-Sloth deities, she is completely unknown to civilized people and northerners, but remains popular throughout the jungles, the Land of the South Winds and Floenry Islands, and even among a few cults in the Western Empire.

Alignment: Miscreant.

Statue Description: A sleek, stalking panther carved from a single piece of obsidian. Like many of the Jungle god statues, the black panther is draped in vines and is so realistic it seems almost as if it were alive.

Caretakers: None. At least none who are official, and yet the garden around Incol, though a bit overgrown with tall grass (the way panthers like it) and near a grove of trees (where panthers like to perch themselves), the garden is not in a state of neglect. Visitors often clean up the most obvious areas that need tending to, and several Brownies and Faeries take care of the rest.

Artifacts of Note: Panther Claws: A pair of panther claws attached to a length of wood to create a sort of mystical war club to slash and tear at an opponent. As a weapon the claws inflict 3D6 damage to most opponents, +6 against serpents, including reptilian beings and dragons, and may be used to climb, providing a +10% bonus to the Climb skill.

Panther Cloak: This artifact is an ancient, indestructible and magical hide of a black panther worn as a hooded cloak. When the hood is pulled over the head and the wearer desires to hide or remain unseen in any jungle or forest environment, he is concealed the same as the *Chameleon spell* (see page 190 of the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition** for complete details). In the *urban jungle* of towns and cities, the Panther Skin Cloak enables its wearer to blend into large crowds of people, his or her face and garb unrecognizable amid the multitude even if his pursuers know him well. In both cases, the wearer must have the hood up, be trying to remain unseen, and be motionless or moving very slowly and inconspicuously.

More than that, the skin itself can change color and pattern to that of tawny and black-spotted leopard skin, solid black, or a medium mottled brown. It also offers armor protection: A.R. of 14, 110 S.D.C., and makes its wearer resistant to fire and heat (half damage). HOWEVER, if the S.D.C. of the Panther Cloak is reduced to zero or less, it falls away in tatters and vanishes. It will reappear, completely restored and whole within 24 hours, but not to the person who let it be destroyed. Incol keeps it hidden until the god finds a new, more worthy person to gift it to.

Blessings: Hunter in the Dark: The Blessed individual becomes more deadly in the dark.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to recognizes an opponent's weakness, an easy target to attack or fight as well as I.D. those who represent the greatest danger. The following bonuses apply only in darkness whether indoors, outdoors, or underground: +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, +3 to damage – double damage from surprise attacks in darkness, and on a Natural Roll (unmodified) of 18, 19, or 20, and +5% on all Espionage skills.

Skills/Abilities: Prowl 55% (+20 in the dark), Surveillance 75%, Track Humanoids 60%, Track & Trap Animals 70%, and Nightvision 200 feet (61 m).

Power of the Panther: The Blessed individual is granted aspects of the panther/leopard.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +1 to strike and dodge, +3 to damage, +1 to pull punch, +3 to roll with punch/fall/impact, and +5% to all Wilderness skills.

Skills/Abilities: Acrobatics 70%, Climb/Scale Walls 75% (or a +20% bonus if the skill is already known), Prowl 50% (+20 % in darkness), Track and Trap Animals 70% (or a +20% bonus if the skill is already known), and the following special abilities when this part of the Blessing is activated: Climb trees and scale walls at the same speed the Blessed individual can walk and run; is able to leap up to 20 feet (6.1 m) high and 10 feet (3 m) across; and takes no damage from falls less than 40 feet (12.2 m) high, and half damage from falls at greater heights.

Lucenki the Monkey God

A playful but cunning and wily trickster god worshiped in the Yin-Sloth Jungles and throughout the Land of the South Winds. The Monkey God is the symbol of good fortune, playfulness and imagination. It is that imagination which make the Monkey God so clever and resourceful, and a little bit dangerous. The deity loves knowledge and magic, and though he can be helpful and fun, he is often an instigator and troublemaker who likes to stir the pot and challenge the authorities and the status quo. He is revered and honored by scholars, storytellers, entertainers, and practitioners of magic, as well as tricksters, thieves and the nomadic Wayfarers (traveling thieves and entertainers; see **The Rifter® #80** for more details).

Like all of the Jungle gods, Lucenki has no love for the deities of the Church of Light & Dark and likes to make its Priests, acolytes, and followers look foolish and get them into trouble. Often Lucenki's vision quests get heroes to do something that either helps his pantheon or hurts or undermines the Church of Light & Dark. This means the trickster deity is happy to send his Champions, heroes and adventurers (who probably have no idea what he's up to), against the rival Church and its deities. The Monkey god delights in embarrassing, robbing, and hurting the Church of Light and Dark. His favorite ploy is to deprive the Church of relics and artifacts, and to hurt the Church and its gods' reputation with lost truths and forgotten history that shows the deities in a bad light (even if he knows those "truths" are false or incorrect).

Alignment: Anarchist.

Statue Description: A large-eyed, monkey with a silly grin on its face, whose staring gaze seems to encompass all who come near. The statue's arms and tail are raised upwards towards the sky.

Caretakers: None. At least none who are official, and yet the garden around Lucenki is bright, cheerful, and delightful. Filled with a wide variety of flowers and visited by butterflies, dragonflies, and an array of Faerie Folk who can relate to his playful and mischievous nature, such as Pixies, Sprites, and Faeries, including the Protectors and Walking Stick Faeries. Some suspect it is they who tend to the garden area of the Monkey God.

Artifacts of Note: Lucenki's Feather Fan: As a clever and playful trickster god, this brightly colored, folding fan provides its wielder with a handful of spells, chief among them: *Metamo-*

phosis: Human and *Metamorphosis: Monkey (special)*. To perform one of the Metamorphoses, the wielder covers his or her face with the fan and wishes to transform. Both can be performed as often as once per 24 hours at no P.P.E. cost to the wielder. Duration, however, is limited to 90 minutes maximum, but may be cancelled at will.

Metamorphosis is usually performed for the purpose of climbing, breaking and entry, spying, tailing, and infiltration. As a monkey (not a chimp or any ape), the transformed individual has a prehensile tail and all the abilities of a monkey. *Metamorphosis: Human* is most useful in the hands of a nonhuman, but someone who is human to begin with can alter his appearance as to not be recognized, but cannot be used to make himself look like a specific person. Gender is always the same as the person, him or herself.

The wielder of the fan may also cast each of the following spells once per 24 hours: Blinding Flash, Death Trance, Faerie Speak, Multiple Image, and Repel Animals at no P.P.E. cost, equal to an 8th level Wizard.

Ever the trickster, the delicate-looking feather fan may be used as a blunt weapon. Folded, the fan does 1D6+1 damage and can be used to parry swords and other weapons. When the fan is open, it can be used like a small shield to parry attacks, including arrows and thrown javelins and spears (as well as bullets and en-



ergy blasts), but without benefit of bonuses, unmodified die rolls only. Any roll to parry projectiles must match or exceed the attacker's roll to strike. A Natural Twenty is always a successful parry even if the attacker's roll was higher with bonuses.

Jungle Vine Rope: The artifact appears to be a simple 10 foot (3 m) length of rope made of jungle vines. However, anyone bound by it cannot untie or cut the indestructible vines to get loose. When used to lower oneself down from a great height, the Jungle Vine is tied to something on one end and let to hang down, magically extending as long as 500 feet (152 m). When the owner of the Jungle Vine wants the rope to untie, all he has to do is wish it to be undone and it is. If the rope was tied to someplace high up, it unties and drops down to where he is. If the Vine Rope's owner is rendered unconscious, it automatically unties and returns to a 10 foot length of vine rope.

Pretty Marbles: A matched pair of multi-colored marbles, each the size of a walnut. They are attractive and interesting as playthings to children and Faerie Folk, but transform into weapons upon command. One is a sickle, the other a Tomahawk. Both inflict 2D6 damage to most opponents, 5D6 damage to giants, and instantly returns to their wielder when thrown; maximum throwing range: 120 feet (36 m), +2 to strike and parry. 1D4 damage as a marble that is thrown at somebody and returns to its owner after it hits.

Blessings: Imagination: The Blessed individual is more imaginative, inventive and resourceful than ever. Everything and everyone seems interesting and sparks thoughts and ideas.

Bonuses: +2 to I.Q., M.E., and M.A. attributes (apply any applicable bonuses), +3 on Perception Rolls to notice clues and details others may miss, including holes in stories and flaws in logic; thinks in and outside the box and may take risks; +5% to all Communications, Science and Technical skills.

Skills/Abilities: Art 70%, Public Speaking 75%, Rope Works 65% and twice per 24 hours is able to cast the following spells, Decipher Magic and Tongues at no P.P.E. cost and equal to a 7th level Wizard.

Power of the Monkey: The Blessed individual possesses aspects of the monkey.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize opportunities for fun and profit (the latter may include valuables to steal), as well as places to explore, +1 to dodge, +3 to roll with punch/fall/impact, and has no fear of heights or of falling.

Skills/Abilities (special): Acrobatics 75%, Climb/Scale Walls 70%, Palming 65%, and Concealment 60%, and climbs like a monkey (quick and steady), able to leap 9 feet (2.7 m) across/lengthwise and 4 feet (1.2 m) high!

Spirit of Fun: The Blessed individual likes to play and goof around and enjoys silly fun, which can make him entertaining to children and people with a similar disposition, but annoying to serious-minded people and authority figures.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to recognize other fun-loving people as well as fuddy-duddies and stuffed shirts to make the brunt of jokes and pranks; +1 to dodge and pull punch, and +2 to roll with punch/fall/impact.

Skills/Abilities: Climb/Scale Walls 70%, Dance 75%, Imitate Voices and Impersonation 65%, and Sing 60% or Juggling (pick one).

Spirit of Trickery: The Blessed individual is able to avoid being found responsible for committing petty crimes, pranks, and mischief.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize the authorities and to realize when it is time to call it quits and quietly slip away; increase M.A. to 22 (75% chance to evoke trust, but only 60% to intimidate), +1 to dodge, +1 to roll with punch/fall/impact, and +5% bonus to all Espionage or Rogue/Thief skills, pick one set.

Skills/Abilities (special): Disguise 75%, Palming 70%, Pick Pockets 65%, Ventriloquism 60%, and the special ability to look convincingly sincere and innocent, making him or her the last person to be suspected of a crime or mischief, if suspected at all. ("Okay, you can go," the policeman says to the Blessed individual, "but the rest of you stay right where you are. I've got questions. Fess up, who did this?")



Meleki the God-Ape Father of the Grimbor

Once revered as the father of the entire Grimbor species and revered as the Lord of Jungle deities, Meleki was one of the most powerful of the old Yin-Sloth gods. Primitive humans worshiped him alongside Tezcat, Lizard People, Cat People, Dragonmen, Krog, Hytril, and the mighty Grimbor themselves. Even Elves and Dwarves once associated Meleki and his pantheon of Jungle gods with the vast jungles of the south and revered his name. Most of his followers were Grimbor, Tezcat, Lizard People, and other denizens of the jungle, however, and for a time, those people abandoned the God-Ape and the Jungle gods. This took places ages ago, when the nascent civilizations of Elves and Dwarves were growing and expanding into the unclaimed wilderness around them. A time when the Elves and Titans claimed the Baalgor jungles and many of the mountain valleys and northern expanse of the rainforest, driving the tribal people from the jungle paradise that had been their home since any could remember. When they fought back, they were slaughtered by the tens of thousands. Their simple weapons and primitive ways no match for the iron weapons and magic of the ancient Elves and Dwarves.

Those who survived and looked on from the edge of the jungle to watch their beloved forest razed and great cities of wood and stone rise up in their place. The Elven and Titan Kingdom of Baalgor remained a garden paradise and the pride of the Elven New Kingdom, but it had no place for the primitive jungle tribes whose people suffered mightily in the process of the other's rise to civilization. As their native homelands were taken from them and the jungle cultivated to become farmland or replaced by cities to make way for more "civilized" people, the jungle tribes lost faith in the God-Ape and his empty protection. The Grimbor, Tezcat, and other jungle people's prayers turned toward outside deities and war gods in the hope of connecting with a greater power that could help preserve their hunting grounds and their people from the advancing Elves, Dwarves, Ogres, and humans. Alas, their efforts were in vain, for no god they turned to made the slightest different, and none were ever as vigilant and caring of them as was Meleki the All-Father.

Fortunately, Meleki, in his divine mercy and wisdom, convinced the other Jungle gods to accept the people when they came back to worship them, and resumed their position as the primary pantheon of most jungle people. The Grimbor and Tezcat the most devoted of them all. Even the Dogres who came later worship the Jungle pantheon, while the Tezcat people worship both the modern Jungle gods and the more savage Elder Jungle gods of the Southern pantheon.

Much like the Canine deities in the North, the Jungle gods are largely unknown to the civilized world. To the people of the **Yin-Sloth Jungles** and to many in the **Land of the South Winds**, however, Meleki and the rest of the Jungle gods remain important and vital deities who have been worshiped for ages. Considering the history recounted above, most jungle people will not consider worshipping any god of the invading humans, Elves, Dwarves, and monster races, and know nothing of the Northern gods. In addition to the tribal people of the Yin-Sloth Jungles, the gods of the Jungle pantheon are worshiped by many in the Land of the South Winds, human and non-human alike. And though they herald from many different lands, the Jungle deities are worshiped by many of the pirates and freebooters who sail its warm southern waters. Likewise, there are many secret cults throughout the Land of the South Winds, especially among the farmers and poor, which are many, who follow one or more of the Jungles gods, if not the entire pantheon. This, despite the infiltration of popular religions like Aco & the Juggernaut, the Church of Light & Dark, and Dragonwright.

Meleki the God-Ape is the symbol of raw power, fertility, leadership, dignity, and loyalty. He is the All-Father of the Yin-Sloth Jungle pantheon of animal deities and his wrath is to be feared. Among the pantheon are gods who are more clever and cunning, stealthy and strong, but none are as noble and trustworthy, and all respect and accept him as their leader. He is also a god of peace and communication, unafraid to use his strength and power to maintain peace and to protect his people. However, in the case of the advance of civilization, first by the early Titans, Elves, and Dwarves, later by humans, Ogres, Orcs, and others, was too much for any deity or pantheon to halt – the Land of the South Winds, for example, was once all part of the Yin-Sloth Jungles, and much of it is jungle still, though it was the more tamed eastern half of the Yin-Sloth. The God-Ape peacemaker is willing to accept any people of any species who worships him and his pantheon of fellow Jungle deities, and may impart his Blessings

upon those who share his values and live to right wrongs, defend the weak and innocent, or bring about peace though it may first require combat. As one might expect, Meleki most favors people who protect and preserve the forest and the tribal people still living in its interior, and never Blesses those who follow tyrants or who persecute the Grimbor, Tezcat, Lizard Men, and other jungle dwellers, or wantonly lay waste to the jungle.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Statue Description: A gold-plated Grimbor seated with all four limbs on the ground. Crude pictograms are etched and scratched into the surface of his golden skin, and a triangle of silver covers half the statue's back.

Caretakers: A stalwart Grimbor by the name of **Yyrtuk** guards over Meleki's statue and garden area as if watching over his own family group. He was freed from the hold of a cargo ship that docked at Lopan, and chose to remain at the Garden of the Gods after discovering the statue of Meleki. He is a friend to travelers, and can generally speak for both the Grimbor and the Tezcat concerning religious matters.

Artifacts of Note: Meleki's Yumbuto Zezu: This powerful Grimbor war club is charged with lightning energy, and can also summon rain to foil one's enemies or restore the lushness to a landscape. The Zezu is supposedly placed in a position of prominence atop a ziggurat within the Yin-Sloth Jungles, but the tribe of Grimbor that protects the old ruins view the object as their most prized possession and will defend it with their lives.

As a blunt weapon it inflicts 5D6 damage to most opponents, +6 against supernatural evil, demons, Deevils, etc., and when the war club is thrown (it inflicts 5D6 damage, maximum range: 300 feet/91.4 m), it crackles with energy and magically returns to its owner in an instant.

The war club can also fire an electric blast once per melee round that *counts as an extra melee attack* and inflicts 5D6 damage; 100 foot (30.5 m) range. It also makes its wielder impervious to electricity/lightning.

Magic: The wielder of the Yumbuto Zezu can also cast the following magic spells once per 24 hours, Call Lightning, Thunder Clap, Summon Fog, and Calm Storms without P.P.E. cost and equal to a 8th level Wizard. Even more impressive, as often as once every 24 hours, the Yumbuto Zezu can create a front of rain clouds up to three miles (4.8 km) in diameter with a duration of one hour, or until cancelled by the wielder, whichever is shorter. The rain is used to wash away scent, tracks, and trails, obscure sound (i.e. the escape of the tribe/group, or their approach as they sneak up on an enemy, +10% to Prowl), and to reduce visibility and slow the travel of enemies.

Blessings: Pathfinder: One of the responsibilities of a Grimbor tribal leader is to keep his people safe and find them safe passage through the jungle, find food and a safe haven to camp and live. The Blessed individual gains a greater sense of responsibility to others and has a keen eye for danger.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize safe places to camp and live as well as to recognize potential danger, including people who are likely to be untrustworthy or cutthroats and predatory monsters and animals lurking in the shadows or waiting to pounce; +1 to disarm and entangle, +1 to save vs poison and disease and +5% to all Wilderness skills.

Skills/Abilities: Detect Ambush 75%, Identify Plants and Fruits 70%, and the psionic abilities of Sense Evil (2), Sense

Magic (3) and Sixth Sense (2) and 2D6+10 I.S.P. with which to use them.

Strength of the Grimbor: The Blessed individual is imbued with the physical aspects of the Grimbor.

Bonuses: +30 to S.D.C., +6 to damage with all physical attacks be it from punch or kick or handheld weapon regardless of the character's P.S., +1 to pull punch, +2 to save vs poison and disease, +1 to save vs magic, and +5% to save vs coma and death.

Skills/Abilities (special): Wilderness Survival 75%, Track & Trap Animals 65%, Land Navigation 70%, and is able to carry twice the usual weight for the character's P.S. attribute.

Strength of a Grimbor Leader: The Bless individual has an enhanced sense of duty, right and wrong, fair play, justice, and responsibility to his teammates and anyone who counts on him or to whom he has given his word.

Bonuses: +2 to recognize potential trouble and avoid it, or to recognize increasing hot emotion and poor morale to calm things down or to raise spirits before they escalate into a serious problem, as well as recognizing people in need of help or guidance. Along those lines, +1 to M.E. and P.S. attribute, and increase M.A. attribute to 25 (85% to evoke trust or intimidation; both used to get people to calm down, back off and listen to reason, or to trust him and his team, as well as to get people to work as a team). Other bonuses: +5% to all communication skills, +4 to damage, +1 to disarm, +2 to pull punch, +1 to save vs magic, poison and disease, and cannot be forced to betray an ally, his tribe, friends or family (he or she would rather die first), +10% to save vs insanity, and +20% to save vs coma and death.

Skills/Abilities: Public Speaking 75%, Intelligence 70%, Escape 65%, and can magically speak all languages 75%.

Nytfol the Bat God

Nytfol is the guardian of the night and spirits, and symbol of birth/fertility, rebirth, and death because bats seems to disappear during the day and come out at night, often from caves in the ground and trees, and because small bat species spread pollen and all bats spread seeds in their droppings. Nytfol is also considered to be wise and sees all as she watches over the people and the animals of the jungle. As such, many Shamans and Priests pray to her for guidance in finding game animals to hunt, food of the vine, healing herbs and roots, drinking water, and warning signs of approaching enemies.

She is also the patron of defenders of the land and protectors of the people such as Knights, Paladins, tribal warriors, and heroes whom she may Bless, as well as her favored people: Shamans, Druids, and Rangers. She chooses to have the ghosts of two ancient Champions of the Gods who served her well to represent her and speak on her behalf. One or both knights appear in dreams, visions, and sometimes in person as ghostly, but helpful specters to offer adventurers, heroes, and knights or a newly appointed Champion of the Gods quests, encouragement, and advice based on their decades of experience. Both ghosts are of Scrupulous alignment and date back 6,000 years; one is human, the taller one is an Elf. In her wisdom, Nytfol has chosen them to speak for her because, a) they are more relatable to the dominant species – humans, Elves, and Dwarves as well as warriors in general – than a bat which is often associated with darkness and evil by many cultures, b) they do not look like a primitive jungle animal who may be perceived as not knowing anything about the world be-



yond the jungle, and c) because she cares about the entire world not just the Yin-Sloth Jungles, though the jungle is her first priority. As she sees it, bats exist in most environments worldwide, making all lands, but the frozen wastes beyond Bizantium, part of her domain. That said, Nytfol is only widely known to the people of the jungles, the Land of the South Winds, and the Baalgor Wastelands.

When Nytfol makes an appearance in a dream, vision or in person, it is a rare privilege and likely to mean she has come to speak about a matter of grave importance. Though a bat-winged, fur-covered humanoid, she is quite beautiful and exotic, and at the same time a bit eerie and unnerving.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Statue Description: An eight foot (2.4 m) tall stone monolith of a stylized bat, her wings folded and her lower body entwined with thick vines and seed pods that some people mistake for tentacles.

All around the statue is nature's bounty of fruit bearing trees and vines – mulberries, blueberries, raspberries, grapes, strawberries and others that seem to bloom at intervals year round despite the season. Fruit trees rather than the usual hedgerows mark the boundaries of the garden of Nytfol and all the fruit is for the taking by hungry visitors and pilgrims.

Caretakers: A number of local Druids and farmers come and tend to the statue and garden area on a regular basis. It is also visited by Protector Faeries and Walking Stick Faeries.

Artifacts of Note: **Nytfol's Eye:** A rare, blue sapphire that is set into a ring. It gives the wearer perfect vision and the ability to cast each of the following spells as often as twice per 24 hour period: Climb, Commune with Spirits, Eyes of the Wolf, and See the Invisible, at no P.P.E. cost, equal to an 8th level Wizard.

Nytfol's Beating Heart: A green sapphire that seems to pulsate in beat with the human heart. When buried in the ground, whether

it is in a forest or at a farm or orchard, it blesses and nurtures 1D6x10+40 acres of land and make all the plants grow strong and bountiful, staving off blight, insect and rodent infestation, and even drought. The yield of crops and fruits will be triple what is normal and even when the gem is removed, it leaves the ground restored of nutrients and ready for the next season's crops. Likewise, the water of any stream or well within the area of enchantment is kept pure and clean, restored if it had been contaminated. When on the person who owns it, the individual is impervious to poison and disease.

Into the Night: A rare, black sapphire that is set into a pendant that can be worn as part of a necklace, talisman, or brooch. It gives its wearer Nightvision 100 feet (30.5 m) and the ability to cast each of the following spells as often as twice per 24 hour period: Extinguish Fire, Float in Air, Metamorphosis: Animal (double duration when a bat), and Shadow Meld, at no P.P.E. cost, equal to an 8th level Wizard.

Blessings: Any of the usual Blessings, especially those involving Wisdom and learning, and the following specific to her.

Nature's Bounty: The Blessed individual – often someone who is already appreciative of and/or knowledgeable in nature, such as Druids, Rangers, Shamans, and Farmers – feels a strong connection to nature, the outdoors, and wildlife.

Bonuses: +5% on all Science skills, +2 to save vs disease and poison.

Skills/Abilities: Brewing 70%, Cooking 65% (+10% for dishes that are predominantly fruit or plant based), Holistic Medicine 75%, and Use & Recognize Poison 60% (+20% to recognize and avoid poison). Of any skills that may be already known to the Blessed individual, apply a +15% skill bonus.

Nightflyer: The Blessed individual develops an affinity for the night and is most active, awake, and alert at night, provided he gets a minimum of 5-6 hours sleep during the day.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls at night and to recognize and identify the sounds of night insects and animals, as well as people and things that seem to be out of place; keen hearing, +1 on initiative, +1 to dodge, +1 to roll with punch/fall/impact, and impervious to diseases carried by insects.

Skills/Abilities: Astronomy and Navigation 75%, Mathematics: Basic 70% and is able to cast the spells Climb, Fear, Float in Air, and Fly as the Eagle, once each per 24 hour period at no P.P.E. cost, equal to an 8th level Wizard, but double each spell's duration at night.

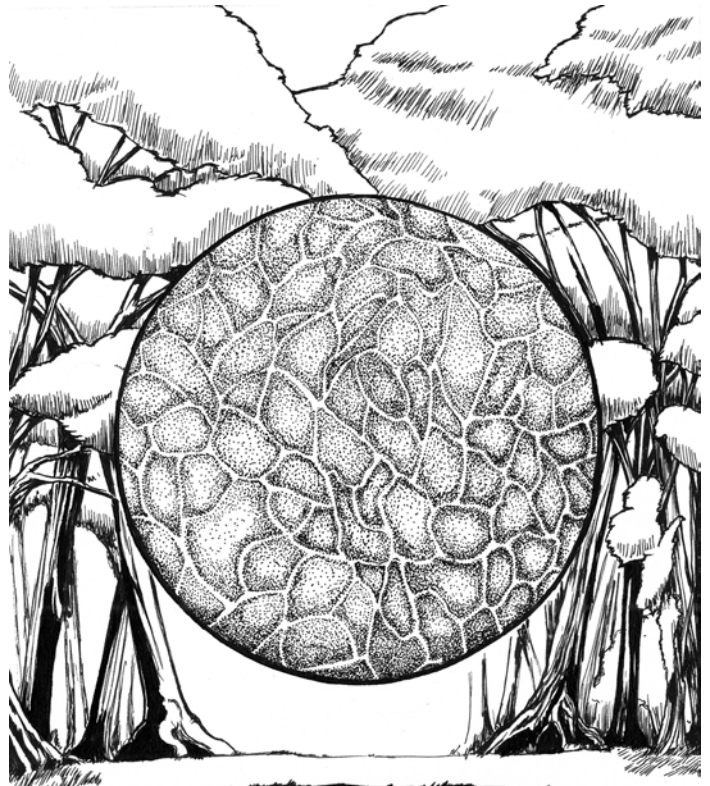
Tracall

This strange, faceless god is a powerful and erratic deity, regarded as a secondary god within the Modern Jungle pantheon, primarily worshiped by the Tezcat. His full description is located among the Gods of Mystery.

Gods of Mystery

To mortals, all deities are mysterious supernatural beings, but some are stranger and more enigmatic than others. The gods that follow are little known or long forgotten deities, and may have been servants or sworn enemies of the dreaded Old Ones, hailing from an age impossible for humans to even imagine. Many of these deities were lost to the outside world eons ago, but are still

worshiped within the Land of the Damned or deep underground in hidden sanctuaries, and by secret cults.



Bayus,

Changeling God of Essence

Bayus was once the most important of the Changeling gods, representing their mercurial essence, and a symbol of joy and exploration. Changelings of old would pray to him (it?) to insure they would not forget who they really were while assuming the form of other people, and that they would always stay true to their own people no matter what face they wore. Bayus is represented by a massive sphere with veins or lines throughout.

When Changelings were discovered by other races, their shape-changing abilities made them feared and persecuted beyond reason. How could you ever trust a being who could steal your identity and become anyone? How could ordinary people ever feel safe? In order to prevent Changelings from creeping into positions of power, they, their religion, and their deity, it was decided, had to be erased from the face of the world and history itself. A sentiment that is shared by almost all civilization, from humans and Elves to Orcs and Wolfen.

Since the age of the Prestida Kings, Bayus has become a whisper, a mystery. Forgotten even by most Changelings for a thousand years. Only a few followers exist in some tiny cults hidden within human civilizations, and these keepers of Changeling history, religion, and culture see their numbers reduced every year as the endless persecution continues.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Statue Description: A silvery metal sphere with white veins running through it floating stationary, a few feet above the ground. It is warm to the touch and oddly comforting.

Caretakers: None are known, for to take care of the Changeling's sphere brings suspicion and fear upon them. If Bayus has any caretakers, they are Changelings in the form of humans and other species hidden among the visiting pilgrims.

Artifacts of Note: *Silver Mirror of Truth:* A hand mirror about the size of a tennis racket. It is magical, and indestructible, and reveals the *true identity and nature* of the face reflected upon its surface. Vampires are shown to be fanged monsters, Changelings as their true self, people in disguise as who they really are, with nobles shown in silks and rich garb or a crown upon their brow, a knight in disguise may appear in the mirror clad in full armor, and so on. A powerful tool in the right hands, a dangerous one in the wrong.

Blessings: In addition to the usual fare, Bayus offers a few unique ones. Third Eye: The Blessed individual has his psychic "Third Eye" opened, giving him certain psychic abilities combined with an awareness that we are all part of the greater universe and need to learn compassion and to appreciate each other for our differences.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to recognize people with an axe to grind against those who are different or feared, as well as to recognize people who feel out of place; +1 to dodge, +1 to pull punch, and +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

Skills/Abilities (special): When prayed for, the Blessed individual has the following psionic abilities for a period of seven days: Empathy (4), Healing Touch (6), Meditation (0), See the Invisible (4), Sense Evil (2), Sense Magic (3), and has 3D6+16 I.S.P. available to use them. Recovers I.S.P. the same as a Major Psychic.

Truth without Fear: The Blessed individual becomes more open to new ideas and willing to explore a wider range of possibilities and take risks on others who he feels are trustworthy.

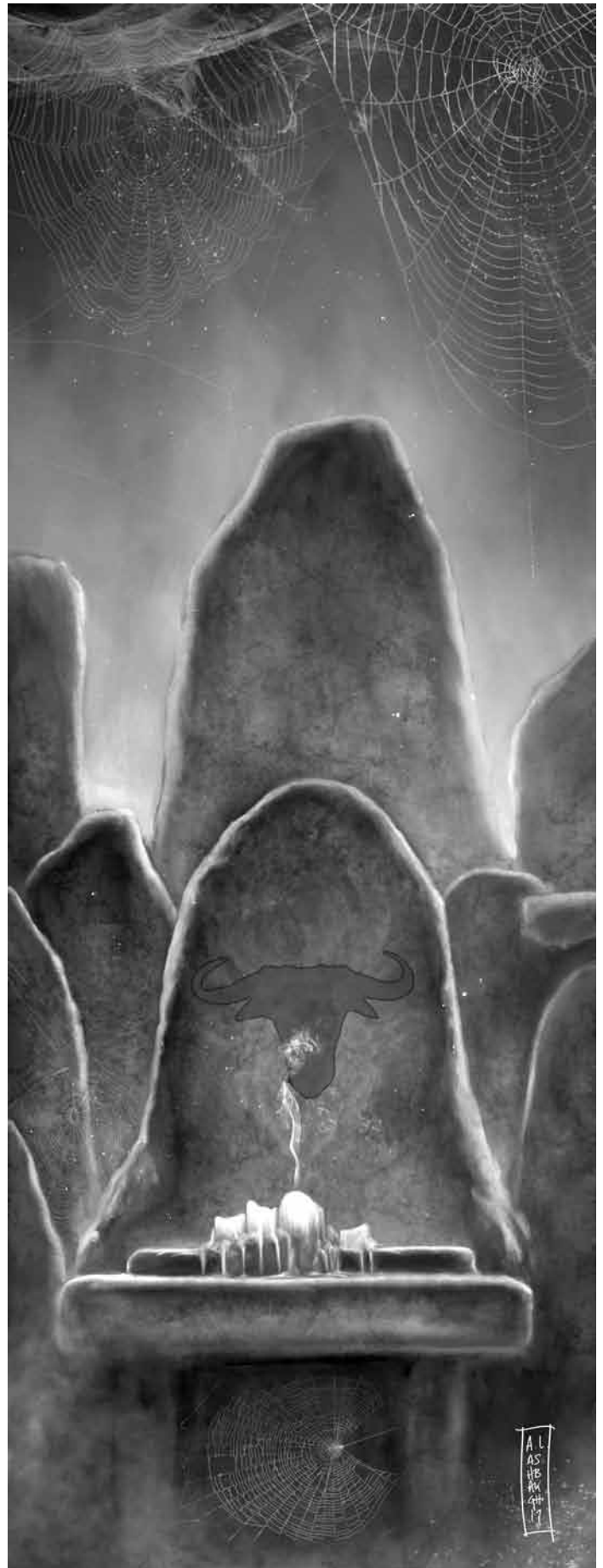
Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to recognize trustworthy people and when someone is telling the truth; +1 on initiative to protect others or fight, +1 to dodge and roll with punch/fall/impact, +2 to save vs psionic and magic attacks that evoke fear or hate, and +2 to save vs Horror Factor.

Skills/Abilities (special): When prayed for, the Blessed individual has the following psionic abilities for a period of seven days: Meditation (0), Object Read (6), Resist Fear (8), Sense Dimensional Anomaly (6), and Telepathy (4), and 3D6+16 I.S.P. to use them.

Imwail the Minotaur

Long ago, the Minotaur race was one of the most powerful and numerous in the world, beholden to dark gods now lost. Imwail's standing stone in the Garden was one of the first discovered and is located among the many popular deities. This leads many scholars to believe many Minotaurs must exist in the world. Not just as hidden cults, but large tribes, most likely within labyrinths deep below the surface of the Old Kingdom and in the Land of the Damned.

Minotaurs are the largest of the subterranean races, but prefer to live on the surface. Some ancient legends suggest they were surface dwellers either cursed by the gods or otherwise driven to live underground.



Imwail is the Minotaur All-Father and symbol of strength, unity, and survival. He is represented in the Garden not by a life-like statue, but by a simple stone monolith surrounded by additional large standing stones believed to possibly represent lesser Minotaur deities. Little is known about Imwail because few people know much about the Minotaur race or culture. What is known paints them as brutal, warring beasts to be feared and destroyed. That sentiment has everything to do with the Minotaurs' dark history when they were minions and shock-troops for the Old Ones. When war was brought against the Old Ones, legions of Minotaurs battled the forces of Light. And when the Lords of Chaos were defeated, Minotaurs were among the eldritch races spared and imprisoned in the notorious Land of the Damned. Placed there in the hope they would someday learn virtue and goodness and earn their freedom.

Not all Minotaurs were evil warmongers or henchmen of the Old Ones, however, and they were allowed to live among the rest of the people of the world. Sadly, the Minotaurs' allegiance to the Old Ones perpetuates the misconception that they are all evil monsters, causing them to be feared and slaughtered. To avoid this grim fate, many returned to a life underground in the Old Kingdom and Baalgor Wastelands, untrusting and hateful of humans, Elves, and most surface dwellers.

Alignment: Imwail is Unprincipled, and the patron god of nonhuman warriors and the wrongly persecuted, not just Minotaurs.

Statue Description: A five foot (1.5 m) tall flat stone with the image of a bull/Minotaur's head etched into its surface. In front of the marker is a simple stone altar where visitors often burn candles and pray. Behind it are eight other standing stones, some larger than Imwail's. Whether the entire unit of stones represent the god or the Minotaur people or additional Minotaur deities, is a mystery.

Caretakers: None that are known. Other local caretakers and pilgrims sometimes claim to see Minotaurs leaving offerings for Imwail, but such visitors seldom linger and usually avoid contact with others, wary of a confrontation or mistreatment. Minotaur warriors sometime stay as Northpoint, most arriving from the Old Kingdom to visit the Garden or to compete in the Lopanic Games.

Artifacts of Note: Axe of Stone: A large battle axe whose blade is made of stone and magically grows or shrinks to a manageable size based on the wielder. It does 4D6 damage to most opponents, 1D4x10 damage to Elementals (any), and twice per 24 hour period, is able to bestow Armor of Ithan equal to a 10th level Wizard.

Rod of Power: A stone staff that inflicts 3D6 damage as a weapon and can unleash bolts of fire (3D6 damage each, 200 foot/61 m range), but each blast counts as a melee attack. The wielder is also impervious to fire, heat, smoke, sulfur, and lava, and is able to cast the following spells, Cloud of Ash, Earth Rumble, Travel through Earth, and River of Lava, once each per 24 hour period equal to a 10th level Wizard.

Blessings: One with the Earth: The Blessed individual feels an affinity with the earth and nature.

Bonuses: +5% to all Wilderness Skills and +1 to save vs disease and poison.

Skills/Abilities (special): Botany 75%, Mathematics: Basic 70%, Track & Trap Animals 65%, and is able to cast the spells Animate Plants, Chameleon, Dig, and Rot Wood, once each every 24 hours at no P.P.E. cost, equal to an 8th level Earth Warlock.

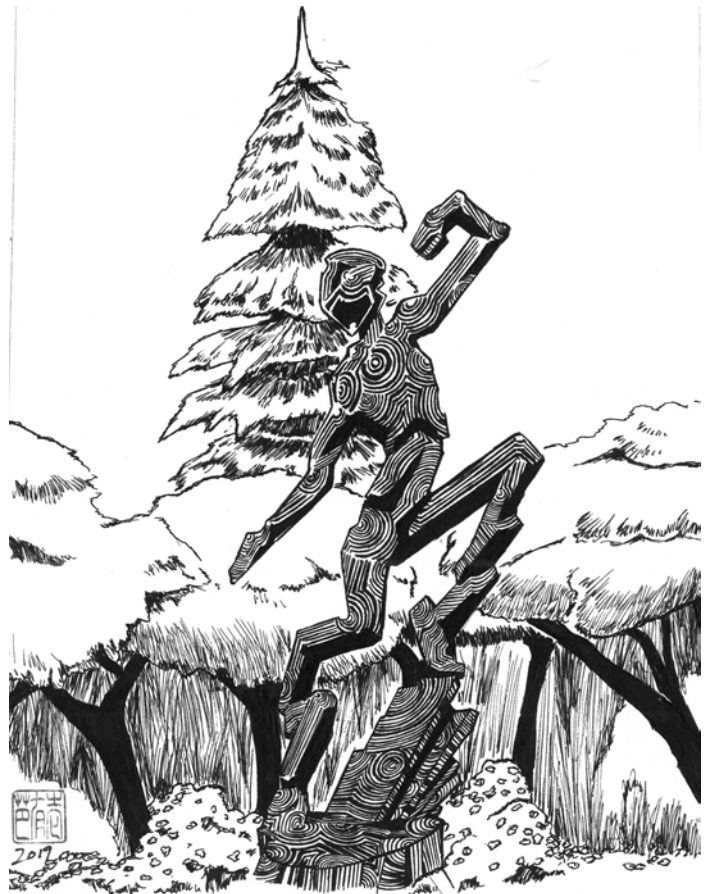
Power of the Minotaur: The Blessed individual feels an affinity toward Minotaurs and the earth.

Bonuses: +30 S.D.C., +6 to damage, +2 to strike and parry, +1 to save vs magic, +3 to save vs disease and poison, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, is not claustrophobic, and has a keen sense of direction underground.

Skills/Abilities (special): Archaeology 60%, Land Navigation 65% (+15% underground), Lore: Geomancy and Ley Lines 70%, Track & Trap Animals 75%, and has Nightvision (60 feet/18.3 m).

The Lost Titan

See the **Knights-Fossar** for details about the Titan's Feet, the Titan god Fossar and the Knights who are his Champions. Fossar may also provide inspiration, visions, quests, and the full range of usual Blessings to other warriors and adventurers he finds worthy, and whose intentions are noble and good. His Champions of the Gods, however, are the Knights-Fossar and the Fossarian Wardens. His greatest Blessing, the Glass Keep. His greatest artifact, Compass Point, both given to the Knights-Fossar.



Shadow of Lictalon

This is a statue of mystery. An enigma even to the Fossarians who have studied it for centuries. Priests, psychics and mystics who have attempted to commune with the deity report nothing or that they sense only a faint echo of power. Most claim the statue is silent and dismissive of mortals, but others insist they have heard a single word, just a whisper, that could well be their imaginations if it did not repeat the same word every time: "Zaglore."

What that may mean is anyone's guess, but it gives Wizards and gods reason for concern.

The legends of Lictalon are many and diverse, so nobody knows anything for certain. Most believe he was the immensely powerful, first Elven Arch-Mage, Lictalon, who ascended to deific status via means unknown.

Alignment: Unknown, but probably Anarchist.

Statue Description: A statue that is barely a humanoid shape carved from black obsidian. White swirls and lines believed to represent magic energy are etched across the entire statue. One hand is a fist, the other is open. The figure seems to be walking upward or ascending into the heavens, though some have wondered if he is shaking his fist at the heavens or gods. Known to always be in search of new ideas, knowledge, and magic, the movement of the figure may represent Lictalon's endless quest.

Caretakers: None, that are known, yet its area is clear and clean. Faerie Folk perhaps?

Artifacts of Note: Unknown, as the deity seems no longer interested in the mortal realm.

Blessings: Unknown, as the deity is not known to have ever reached out to mortals.



Tracall

Tezcat God of Mystery

Tracall is a difficult god for scholars to study, as there have never been any written records about this strange deity. The Tezcat people who are the main worshipers of the deity pass on information about the deity and religion only through oral tradition and are not keen on sharing it with outsiders. Tracall is said to symbolize order, magic, secrecy, isolation, and madness. To the Tezcat, the faceless, shapeless deity is a primordial force whose role in myth is to devour the chaos and uncertainty of the world so that what remains can have order and structure. However, by

doing so, the benevolent god is, himself, driven mad and known for wildness and uncontrolled energy. Events like volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, sudden storms, an unexpected attack, inexplicable events and mysteries are all attributed to Tracall.

Tracall is as much a concept as a god, and that is one of the reasons his worshipers are few, and why he is, in effect, a secondary deity in the larger Jungle pantheon. An important but unrelatable god to be respected and feared (as insanity often is), but just one of many in the Pantheon of Jungle gods barely thought about by most people. There are, however, cults in the jungle and the Land of the South Winds where Tracall is the only deity worshiped. His followers in these cults are often educated scholars and Wizards and people in pursuit of ancient and forbidden knowledge, dark secrets, and paths to power. However, it all ultimately results in madness. Almost every member of the **Cult of Tracall** is quite insane. Each suffering from several forms of insanity, most commonly obsessions, phobias, and paranoia, but also other (1D6+3) insanities. Only the youngest and newest members of the cult are usually not yet touched by madness or their afflictions are comparatively few.

Most of these cultists are nihilistic in their beliefs and unpredictable and contradictory in their words and actions. The most deranged sometimes unleashing monsters and dark magic upon the world, and becoming a source of chaos and danger that must be stopped or destroyed along with whatever it is they have unleashed into the world. What secret knowledge, rites, and rituals drive these men and women mad is unknown, and best left that way. Some believe the members of the Cult of Tracall possess some of the ancient and forbidden knowledge and magic that was destroyed during the Age of Purification, and which may date back to the Time of a Thousand Magicks and older. The truth is, each Cult of Tracall is different from the others, sometimes greatly different, and what secrets and magic they may know is often impossible to get, because they speak in riddles and gibberish and outright nonsense. Still, it is from the Cults of Tracall that the *Ghost Knights* hope their agents will find a way to free Muareota from her prison under the Garden.

Alignment: Aberrant.

Statue Description: A nine foot (2.7 m) tall stone megalith that resembles the Tezcat's territory markers when glimpsed from afar, and recognizable to anyone who has traveled in the Yin-Sloth Jungles. Up close, however, the swirling, etched patterns are clearly something else. What that is, no one can agree. Some see a stylized face, others the swirling cosmos, others just patterns and designs that may represent an ancient and forgotten language.

Caretakers: None, other than the local Faerie Folk who also tend to some of the other members of the Jungle pantheon, and the occasional visiting scholar or mage.

Artifacts of Note: The Orb of Mystery: This curious artifact is a sphere the size of a grapefruit made of glass. It is said to contain a spark of mystery at the very center; a glimmer of electricity and swirling gas. Unlike other objects that are lost to the world, the Orb is at the very center of the strange statue of Tracall, and can be picked up and held by those Tracall wants to help or enlighten. Its magic immediately activates and besieges the mind of whoever holds it, and any friends, family, teammates or innocent bystanders within a 10 foot (3 m) radius of the Orb. Their heads bombarded with swirling images and sounds and snippets of scenes and words as if fast forwarding through a movie or

more like clicking through TV channels. None of it makes sense in the present, but will in the future. Instinct compels the holder of the Orb to put it back. The moment he does, the swirl of images and sounds stop, and the crystal goes dark.

The Orb of Mystery has just revealed things about the future, only they don't make sense until later, in that moment in time. When that happens, the person experiences a moment of *deja vu* and with it, has a sudden flash of insight. For example, the character may suddenly know the man or woman before him is the person he seeks, or can help, or is the enemy, or will become one soon. Or he may suddenly know there is a back room, or backdoor exit, or where a secret room is located and how to open the door, or that a person is lying or telling the truth, can be trusted or not, or that by going down this road or alley they'll get ambushed by the king's guard or bandits and should be avoided, and so on, but not until they meet that person or step into that room or alley. Such insight happens out of the blue, without warning, at random times, and at the Game Master's discretion, but are usually helpful glimpses of knowledge moments before something is about to happen.

Blessings: The Blessings from this mysterious deity are rare and powerful, and all may result in lasting mental trauma and insanity.

Face of Mystery: The Blessed individual is granted magical anonymity.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to recognize vampires and people in disguise, is +3 to damage vampires and other undead regardless of the weapon held in his hands or with his bare fists, and is impervious to the bite and powers of the vampire. The strangest thing is he can change the appearance of his own face to that of any humanoid species, but only his face, not the rest of his body. Moreover, most adversaries and eyewitnesses to his actions cannot remember him enough to identify him. Each unable to remember what he looked like, each with a different, non-descript recollection.

Skills/Abilities (special): Disguise 75%, Imitate Voices and Impersonation 70%, Ventriloquism 65%, and the ability to understand and speak all languages 60%.

Insanity: 50% chance of becoming forgetful and losing his own sense of identity and history, resulting in him confusing the deeds and stories of other people with his own, and forgetting many of his own accomplishments and deeds; making him seem to be a compulsive liar or terribly confused.

Cosmic Power: The Blessed individual is imbued with mystical power that may lead to him coveting power when the Blessing ends.

Bonuses: +2D6+6 to Hit Points, Natural A.R. 12, impervious to electricity and energy but not fire, and +5% to Scholar/Technical skills.

Skills/Abilities (special): The ability to cast each of the following spells, Armor of Ithan, Dispel Magic Barriers, Energy Bolt, Energy Disruption, Fire Bolt, Mystic Portal, and Negate Magic, once every 24 hour period at no P.P.E. cost, equal to a 10th level Wizard.

Insanity: 65% chance of becoming obsessed with attaining power and/or magic/magic items, the more powerful the better, 50% chance of developing 1D4+1 other obsessions or phobias, or a few of each, and one random insanity.

Entropy: The Blessed individual becomes interested in changing energy and the idea that order moves into disorder.

Bonuses: Stops aging for the duration of the Blessing, impervious to disease, +2 to save vs poison, and becomes fascinated with death and spirits.

Skills/Abilities (special): The Blessed individual is able to cast the spells Age, Commune with Spirits, Constrain Being, Fuel Flame, Life Drain, Speed of the Snail, and Swords to Snakes, once each per 24 hour period at no P.P.E. cost, equal to a 10th level Wizard.

Insanity: 55% chance of becoming obsessed with death and/or immortality, 45% chance of developing 1D4+1 phobias.

Fear of the Unknown: The Blessed individual's fear of the unknown and mysterious are ramped up, and as with most people, his knee-jerk reaction is to destroy that which he fears, including Changelings and other shape-changers, the practitioners of unknown or forbidden magic, Witches, and objects and symbols from the past which seem contrary to history or frightening in some way. Has trouble trusting others, especially if they keep secrets or whisper among themselves, and is generally suspicious of everyone.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls to recognize conspiracies and people plotting against him and his teammates, +1D6 to Spd attribute, +1 on initiative to flee or attack, +1 to strike, +3 to save vs mind control (all) and illusions, and impervious to possession.

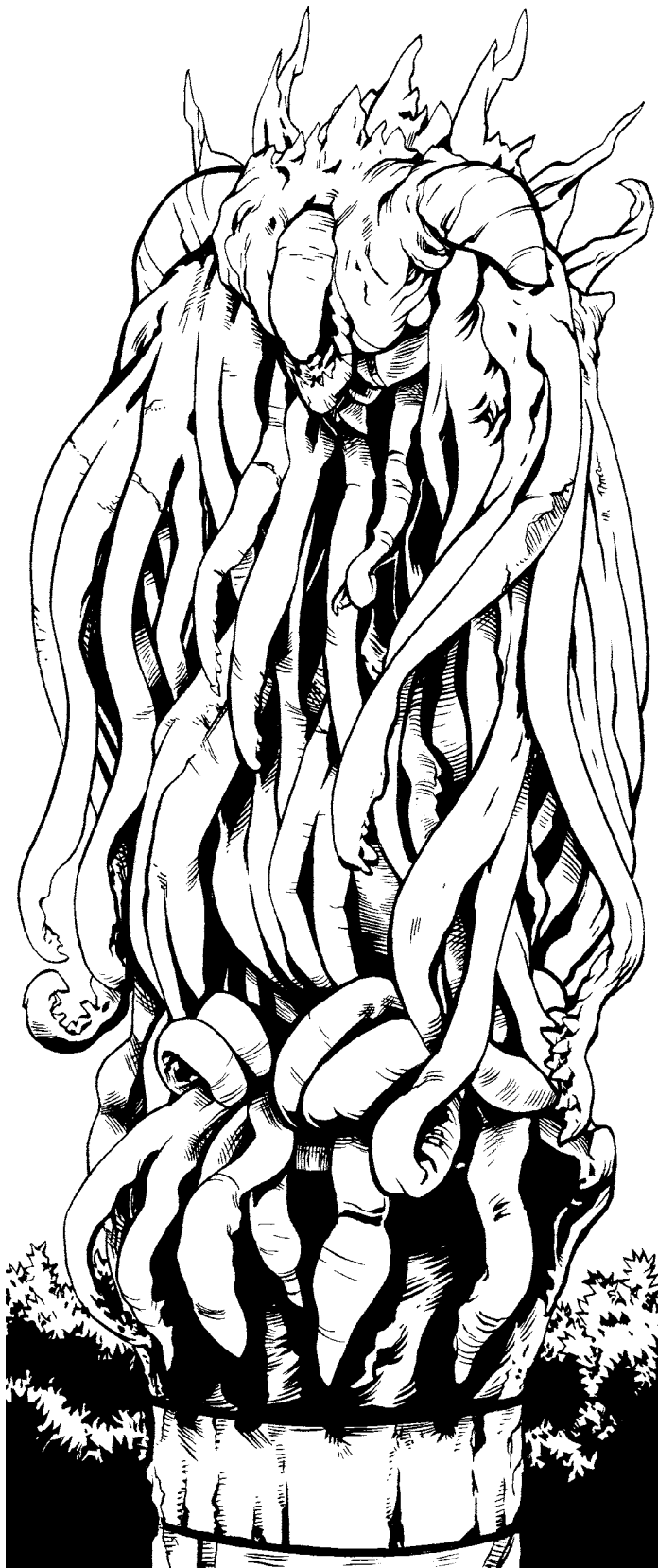
Skills/Abilities (special): Cryptography 75% (to uncover secrets and conspiracies), Surveillance 70% (for the same reasons and to tail and spy upon those he doesn't trust), Escape 65%, and the special ability to recognize Witches, people who are possessed, spies, and people in disguise, 60% (+10% if they are plotting against him, his teammates or community).

Insanity: 60% chance of lasting paranoia and distrust of strangers, outsiders, shape-changers, practitioners of magic, and the supernatural, including deities and the Garden of the Gods, and a 50% chance of 1D4+1 phobias.

Vyl the Reaching Darkness

The Reaching Darkness is one of oldest deities known to the Palladium World. Though sometimes associated with the Jungle pantheon, he is actually much older and not of the jungle. Also known as the *Tentacled God*, he is a long forgotten deity once worshiped by beings just as forgotten who lived along the coast of the Scarlet Waters. It is rumored that Vyl was once worshiped by early humans of what would become the Western Empire and is still worshiped by secret cults among the aristocracy within the Empire of Sin. Some believe, it is the influence of the Reaching Darkness that has helped promote Western Empire aggression and war after war throughout its sinister history. Those who know of the dark god believe Vyl was the source responsible for giving the Empire the knowledge to build *Demon Black Ships* and was the bringer of vampires to the region. Both intended as a source of power to vanquish the Western Empire's enemies (and to promote the chaos and depravity Vyl loves to wallow in).

A creature of chaos, Vyl the Reaching Darkness likes to tease and tempt mortals and encourage their darkest nature and give vent to greed, envy, lust, hatred, vengeance, cruelty, depravity, etc. According to little known legends, the horrid god was worshiped by many of the eldritch races now locked away in the forbidding Land of the Damned. Though nowhere near as powerful as the Old Ones, Vyl was just as sinister and corrupt, a close and trusted associate of the terrible Old Ones. A being who would



have certainly been destroyed by the gods and heroes taking a stand against the Old Ones had he not brokered a deal with them for his own survival. Vyl saw the glorious Age of Chaos drawing to a close and did not want his own demise to come with it. So he came to the gods with a way to end the standoff, saving untold lives of both gods and mortals via his betrayal of the Old Ones, but on the condition they would spare him from any punishment.

Crawling forth from the depths of despair came the Reaching Darkness. His tangle of sins and wickedness trailing behind him like a mass of slithering serpents.

And lo did the Reaching Darkness ooze into the light promising the only means by which the divine united could bring forth their plan to lay low the Great Old Ones in eternal slumber, before they learned of it and found a way to escape their deserved fate. For only the Tentacled God was trusted enough to sit amongst the Lords of Chaos and, unbeknownst to them, let loose the magic to bring an end to their terrible reign.

The price for his betrayal and bringing the bloodbath of the war to an end, a small, but terrible choice.

And he said unto them, thou must be in agreement to every last one, that I shall live free and unshackled amongst the mortals and an equal among the divine, unharmed and left to my own device, ever after.

And so it was, with much trepidation, agreed upon by all. For lo, the Reaching Darkness be the lesser of evils, and a necessary means to end the Age of Chaos.

And the Darkness smiled.

– A passage from the Tristine Chronicles

Over time this dark deity has been largely forgotten by most mortals, but it is impossible to know if that was fate or by his own design. After all, the Reaching Darkness lives and flourishes in darkness and anonymity. He needs no shrines and temples, because in a way, everyone knows him through his handiwork: the many dark and wicked acts at the hands of mortals and gods alike. A corrupting force whose many tendrils slither out from the vile darkness into the world, whispering luscious temptation and encouraging selfishness, depravity, cruelty, hate, revenge and dark satisfaction at the expense of others.

For a very long time, the Reaching Darkness' main place of influence came from the darkest corners and secret cults within the West. Nicknamed the *Empire of Sin* for good reason. With his statue unveiled in the Garden of the Gods, Vyl wonders if a new Age of Chaos, where he sits as king, might be at hand. With access to throngs of visitors from around the world coming to the Garden seeking inspiration and purpose, he now has greater access to potential worshipers than he has known in 100,000 years.

For the moment, the Reaching Darkness tries to contain his own lust for power and worship. He is driven by the same self-destructive darkness he so loves to inspire in others. He is the embodiment of Chaos, and for too long has he held himself in check. Satisfied with thousands of small triumphs of people sliding into his dark embrace. But now ... the possibilities of greater chaos, war, and destruction beckon him.

Alignment: Miscreant, with a wicked sense of humor. He likes it when mortals suffer, especially when he's pulling the strings and pitting brother against brother.

Statue Description: A grinning thing with dozens of tentacles hanging at his side but ready to reach out. Vyl's garden area is the most unkempt, with many gnarled and looming trees, bramble, and dark corners. At night, it is the most ominous location in the Garden, dark and foreboding.

Caretakers: None, other than some of the evil Faerie Folk.

Artifacts of Note: **Dark Armor:** A suit of magical black armor trimmed in silver, that is lightweight, makes little noise, A.R. 17, S.D.C. 200 and regenerates 1D6x10 S.D.C. for every human

sacrifice made to it. The armor can be restored even when it has been reduced to tatters with no S.D.C. remaining. It is rumored that several suits of Dark Armor existed in the early days of the Western Empire and that a few still exist.

The Adjudicator: A bastard sword made of dark grey metal with Runes that glow red. The weapon does 5D6 damage to most opponents, +10 against Paladins, Knights, Champions of the Gods and heroes of good alignment, and 1D6x10 to Spirits of Light and deities. It also has all the usual powers of a Lesser Rune Weapon.

Blessings: Fueled by Hunger: The hunger may be hate, vengeance, wealth, power, or any dark emotion that becomes a motivating obsession. The Blessed individual is powered by relentless determination to sate his hunger, becoming a cruel and murderous monster in the process. His idea of justice is unreasonable and cruel and comes at the end of a sword or noose.

Bonuses: Driven by hate provides +3 on Perception Rolls to figure out clues, follow trails, and find the target of his wrath or means to satisfy his hunger, only it is never enough or is replaced by a new hunger. +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, +1 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +1 to save vs poison and Mind Control, impervious to possession, +30% to save vs coma/death, and is ruthless and relentless in his quest.

Skills: Prowl 75%, Surveillance 70%, Track Humanoids 65% (+10% when it is the target of revenge), and Concealment 60%.

Hero Slayer: This dark Blessing fuels the recipient's disdain and revulsion of heroes. It is more than brute strength and endurance, it includes being ruthless and without mercy, and encourages torture and other acts of cruelty.

Bonuses: +2 to Perception Rolls to recognize heroes of good alignment, fatigues at half the usual rate and recovers twice as fast, also recovers Hit Points, S.D.C., P.P.E. and I.S.P. twice as quickly, +1 one melee attack, +1D6 to damage the forces of good and light with all attacks be it by fist or weapon and whether the opponent is mortal, a creature of magic, or supernatural being. **Note:** *If a mage*, the damage bonus applies to spells as well as physical attacks, and the magic user enjoys a +10 P.P.E. bonus for the duration of the Blessing. *Same for psychics*, but they get +10 I.S.P. *The same for Clergy*, but they get +6 P.P.E., and a +10% bonuses that their god hears and answers their prayers.

Skills/Abilities: Lore: Religion 80%, Lore: Demons & Monsters 75%, and Lore: Magic 70%.



Perception Rolls

The Perception Roll first appeared in the **Nightbane® RPG** as a means to simulate the five senses – sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch – and situations requiring a character to *notice something*. It is a fun tool the G.M. can use to determine whether a character's "Spidey-Sense" is tingling to notice danger, trouble approaching, clues and hints, people in need of help, hear something important, and similar. It has since become a staple in most of our games.

Here are the quick nuts and bolts rules:

Roll 1D20 same as a saving throw, and you must match or roll above the number listed below.

4 Easy: Roll 4 or better to notice or hear something that is easy to spot out in the open or should stand out on its own, or is a loud sound or moderate in a quiet environment. There is a small chance of not noticing something because it does happen. ("Geez, it's right under my nose. How could I have missed it?")

8 Moderate: Roll 8 or better to notice or hear something that is not out in the open or somewhat blends in with its surroundings, or the lighting may be dim or too bright and glaring, or there may be flashing lights or areas of deep shadow, and/or the ambient noise level makes it difficult to hear or pinpoint sounds and words. This Perception probably requires a bit of focus and some looking around.

14 Challenging: Roll 14 or better to notice or hear something that is hidden or out of plain sight, disguised, muffled, or lost in its environment, or lighting may be poor, the surroundings cluttered or crowded, etc., all of it requiring focus and a deliberate effort to search or listen carefully.

Visual and spoken clues and hints, noticing things out of place and markings, seeing through a disguise, recognizing a face or symbol or tattoo in a large crowd, or for a chance encounter or glimpse to be recognized for who or what it is, also fall into the Challenging category, 14 or better.

17 Difficult: Roll 17 or better to notice or hear something that has been carefully and deliberately hidden or obscured, or someone who is actively trying to hide, Prowling and avoiding being seen, actively hiding or keeping a secret, or trying to perceive anything or anyone in a very difficult environment – very loud and noisy, total darkness/blind, fog/mist/snow or other bad weather or environmental conditions, being in a large, noisy, moving crowd, traffic, people talking and/or pulling at you in a noisy and dimly lit environment, and so on. An intense focus and effort are required to notice anything under difficult circumstances or conditions.





The Black Pit

The mysterious *Black Pit of Lopan* is a legendary abyss that scholars believe has existed for as long as the Garden of the Gods or longer. It is a unique absence of anything, a gap in the very nature of reality that may stand as a counterbalance to the Garden. The dark yin to the Garden's yang, which is why it is mentioned here, after the Garden of the Gods. It is rumored that a hidden portal in the darkest heart of the Primeva leads to the mysterious Pit in the northwestern part of the island – a half-mile (0.8 km) wide expanse that drops away into what appears to be infinity.

Though much less storied, the Black Pit is every bit as enigmatic as the Garden of the Gods, and much more ominous. It is seldom spoken of by Garden Caretakers, the Knights Fossar, or most inhabitants of Lopan, and when it is, it is usually in hushed whispers. The simple solution would seem to be to fill it in, cover it up and pretend it never existed, but that has proven to be impossible. Any and every attempt to fill in the Black Pit has ended in disaster. First, Elemental Magic does not work on the Black Pit nor within a one mile (1.6 km) radius around it. Even more frightening, Elemental beings, even Greater Elementals, refuse to come within one mile (1.6 km) of the infamous Pit. Curious adventurers and work teams dispatched to the location often meet with tragedy and disaster. Accidental deaths, bad luck, strange disappearances, thefts, murder, menacing ghosts, and monsters from the shadows are all mishaps known to beset those who dare to try to cover up the Black Pit.

The Order of the Fossarians has considered fencing it off, posting guards or somehow making the Pit off-limits. However, reaching the other side of the island is daunting enough in itself, and too many Knights and heroes have vanished trying to explore the Black Pit or work within its reaches. Besides, despite the many disturbing myths, legends and rumors about the Black Pit, in the thousands of years that it has existed, whatever darkness or evil rumored to lurk within has always remained contained. No monsters or demons have been reported emerging from the Black Pit, and the only people known to become victims of its power are those who dare to go inside or try to excavate its stone.

Of those who have ventured down into the Black Pit, most either return with stories about tragic accidents, curses, and ghost stories, or disappear, never to be seen or heard from again. Almost everyone agrees the Black Pit is cursed ground that radiates evil and brings misfortune to those who step into its dark embrace.

Most visitors never get closer to the Black Pit than is necessary to look over its edge, and even they report a sense of evil and dread that hangs over the site like a heavy fog. Wolfen and others with heightened senses claim the Black Pit actually smells of evil and death. The hackles of fur running down the back of their necks stand up on end even before they take their first step down into the abyss. Minor Psychics, mages and clergy say they can all feel the presence of a foreboding darkness. Mind Mages and Greater Psychics report having felt the touch of pure evil, unadulterated by any concepts of virtue, goodness or morality. Even completely average and ordinary people who look down

from the edge of the Black Pit know it is unnatural and a place to be avoided. Small children and babies are known to start wailing as soon as they get within a half mile (0.8 km) of the Black Pit and won't stop until they are taken at least a mile (1.6 km) away.

Dogs, horses, mules, donkeys, and livestock get jumpy and try to turn away from the direction of the Black Pit as soon as they get within a mile (1.6 km) of it. Within a half mile (0.8 km), many stop dead in their tracks and refuse to take another step closer, even when beaten within an inch of their life. Animals that can be led to the Black Pit are obviously frightened and quick to bolt at unexpected loud noises and sudden movement. Most take off at the first opportunity, running home or a safe distance at least a mile (1.6 m) from the Black Pit.

Any animals that actually make it to the edge or go inside the Black Pit become agitated and aggressive, with dogs and other hunting and guard animals behaving in a feral manner. Sometimes attacking each other, and always growling or whining the entire time. The alignment of the visitors makes no difference to the overall experience. Good or evil, everyone has the same reaction to this place. People of evil and Anarchist alignments feel a strong sense of self-preservation, making them much less willing to risk their own necks to explore a mysterious, cursed cave. Who cares what secrets it may contain, their knee-jerk reaction is to avoid the Black Pit in favor of more promising opportunities with less uncertainty and risk. People of good alignments feel nervous and afraid. Of course, anyone can fight these feelings and venture inside anyway. Most turn away and leave. A wise decision.

Legends of the Black Pit

According to popular legend, the “stench of evil” is so strong around the Black Pit because it is not made of stone and dirt, but is actually an exposed portion of a slumbering *Old One*. A giant tentacle or limb, perhaps. Legend claims going down into the labyrinth of caves is actually traveling down into the physical body of a (petrified?) Old One. Though there is no evidence to support this theory, the explanation would seem to explain many things, especially why Elemental Magic has no effect on the stone of the Black Pit.

The opening to the Black Pit is a gaping, open wound in the earth that refuses to heal. Its sides resemble a quarry, with nineteen step-like levels made up of a type of jet black stone that looks as if it has, at some point, been excavated. Where the black stone is uncovered, the lush plant life ends. No vegetation grows, not even moss. The step-layers lead down further and further, ever deeper into the endless Pit below.

The black stone is incredibly hard and resistant to damage, making it very difficult to cut or mine. Though black as night, it is unlike obsidian or any other mineral in the known world. Moreover, Elemental Magic cannot influence the black stone or even approach to within a mile (1.6 km) of the Pit. To many, this is further evidence that the stone is not rock at all, but the hide of an Old One and the cave an exposed artery or windpipe that leads

inside the sleeping behemoth. These same, superstitious people insist that the *Red Rock* found running throughout the caves are the veins of the monster and the glowing energy within the Red Rock the blood of an Old One turned to stone.

Like the Garden of the Gods, rumors and myths abound regarding the Black Pit. The stories of a slumbering Old One are just one tale of many — though they are the tales that have taken hold of the imaginations of scholars and inhabitants of Lopan who study the geological aberration. Other myths and legends claim the Black Pit is an exit point for another evil god or a group of isolated, archaic people who have managed to burrow their way out from the Land of the Damned, beneath the Great Northern Mountains, and out into the world of mortal men. **Three such tunnels** are said to exist, and wherever the tunnel exits, there is a Black Pit just like the Pit on Lopan. The locations of the other two are unknown, but rumors place them in the Western Empire and the Yin-Sloth Jungle. Actually, there are stories that place them just about everywhere, except none but this one on Lopan have ever been located. As a result, most learned people reject this myth as pure fantasy.

Some say the Black Pit (and two others?) was dug out by three dragon gods of Dragonwright who were wrongly imprisoned in the Land of the Damned, but even its magic could not hold them. Only Kym-nark-mar was spared imprisonment, and according to at least one myth, he is the reason the other three were cast into the Land of the Damned. Other myths claim the Black Pit was made by a cadre of *Lizard Mages* or *Mummies Immortalis* that dug the tunnel to claw their way out of the Land of the Damned and back into the world. Still other legends suggest the Black Pit contains a portal to the *Great Rift* or fabled *Citadel* in the Land of the Damned, or to the very pits of Hades or Dyval. However, all of these seem unlikely as there have never been reports of demons or Deevils, or anything monstrous emerging from the Black Pit. And if the tunnel leads to the Land of the Damned, why isn't there a constant parade of monsters coming through it?

Another myth popular in Lopan and the Eastern Territory is probably born of prejudice and hatred rather than fact. According to this myth, the Black Pit is the dark progenitor responsible for the creation of the Wolfen, Coyles and Kankoran, species that crawled up out of the Black Pit and found their way to the Great Northern Wilderness to give birth to all canine people. Another legend suggests it is the birthplace of the Iceborn, but neither assertion holds any water.

If there is a common thread to many of the myths and legends, it is that the Black Pit is somehow connected to the Land of the Damned. If that is true, it goes to reason that if one could find the correct tunnel system, they could sneak in and out of the cursed Land of the Damned without having to brave the Great Northern Mountains! Many scholars argue this is pure fantasy and that there is no evidence to support this theory; no creature that has emerged from the Black Pit originating from the Land of the Damned. Then again, how would anyone ever really know? The Pit is not monitored.

As noted, misfortune and disaster seem to befall those who enter the Black Pit. This has led to a persistent rumor that the Black Pit is cursed and that anyone who sets foot on the Black Stone becomes subject to whatever dark forces and foul magic may be afoot. Indeed, for the entire time they remain in the tunnels, all who enter the caves suffer the same penalties that result from taking possession of Red Rock (described below). Further-

more, there are dark forces and strange magicks active within the tunnels of the Black Pit, all of which wield powers that can have deadly consequences. In many cases, however, those who travel deep into the labyrinth of caves become lost and simply die from dehydration or starvation, a cruel but mundane end in this place that abounds with magic. Others flee in terror, and rather than face ridicule for their cowardice, slip off the island never to speak of their time within the Black Pit.

A small percentage of people claim to have entered the Pit without incident. Claiming to have found nothing out of the ordinary. They return with stories of nothing unusual except for the oddity of the stone itself and the disquieting silence of the pitch black tunnels. Tunnels that seem to stretch off endlessly into the darkness.

Red Rock

Red Rock is another strange anomaly unique to the Black Pit. As one goes deeper into the Pit, veins of Red Rock begin to appear. Red Rock glows like lava, but is smooth to the touch like volcanic glass after it has cooled. Though the Red Rock does give off low levels of light and is warm to the touch, it does not burn nor provide enough heat to keep a person warm; it only raises the ambient air temperature a few degrees. Like the Black Stone of the Pit, Red Rock is especially hard and dense, and chipping a piece loose from a wall or ceiling requires considerable strength, effort, and strong tools. Most ordinary picks, tools and weapons break in the attempt.

To dislodge a small piece of Red Rock a character must engage in the following: Roll 1D20 to strike as usual. A roll of 9 or less causes the tool or weapon to break in half without damage to the vein of Red Rock. A roll of 11-19 weakens the Red Rock, but requires 1D4+2 additional successful rolls to strike within the same 11-19 range of results to eventually chop out a chunk of Red Rock the size of a chicken egg. Rolls that are 20 or higher with modifiers have the same results as rolls of 11-19, and several well placed strikes should dislodge a small piece of stone. A Natural 20, however, chops out a piece of Red Rock the size of an apple. Of course, a failed roll (1-10) that causes the weapon or tool to break, requires a different one to be used in order to continue trying to chop a piece of rock from the vein. **Note:** Holy Weapons and Rune Weapons of good or selfish alignment seem no more effective than ordinary weapons, except they don't break on a failed roll, they just scratch the rock. Magic weapons with an evil alignment can dislodge an egg-sized chunk of Red Rock in two successful tries.

The rare magic weapon made of Black Stone that came from the Pit can cut out a chunk of Red Rock with one successful strike (10 or higher and does not break when the roll is 10 or less). Such weapons and tools (rare) can also be used to mine, cut, and shape slabs of Black Stone. It is rumored that a secret trade guild or cult in the Western Empire — the same one that builds the illegal Demon Black Ships — is able to create these kinds of stone weapons and tools, mainly for the creation of the Demon Ships. However, these magical stone-cutting blades are not Rune Weapons. The distinction of such a creation goes to one of the long forgotten archaic races.

According to some legends in the Great Northern Wilderness, a forgotten insect-like people condemned to imprisonment in the Land of the Damned created Rune Magic and crafted the first

Rune Weapons for the Old Ones from stone. In fact, these legends suggest that the same, subterranean beings are responsible for the Black Pit. That it is the exit from a tunnel system that took untold generations of them to dig in order to escape from the confines of the Land of the Damned. They hate everyone, so they made the tunnel system a deliberate maze to prevent others less clever and tenacious than they, from using *their tunnels* to also escape. Such was the malicious nature of these hateful beings. The legend says they may have burrowed through the earth for all eternity if a chorus of voices had not sung out to them, beckoning them to Lopan. There they dug out and stepped into the light of day for the first time in generations, leaving a black scar that cannot be sealed: The Black Pit.

This same legend says that it was one of the Old Ones who taught this favored minion race the early secrets of Rune Magic. Secrets that were later traded to, or more likely stolen by, Dwarves long before the advent of the Elf-Dwarf War. Dwarves would quickly abandon heavy stone weapons for those made of steel. Rune Weapons would help Dwarves forge one of the great civilizations of the Old Kingdom.

Though most scholars reject this account as pure fiction, every few centuries, Stone Rune Weapons manage to find their way out of the Land of the Damned in the hands of triumphant heroes and warriors. This fact gives credence to the possible origin of the Black Pit, and that there may be a long, winding secret way in and out of the Land of the Damned. It also suggests the lost art of Rune Magic might still be practiced there in some form, by somebody.

The Value and Dangers of Red Rock

Red Rock continues to glow when removed from the vein of rock in the Black Pit. The light it sheds is dim and sometimes seems to pulse slightly. The light is so dim that not even a dozen stones are enough to read by (less than one candle). However, inside the Black Pit, veins of the stone function as emergency exit lights to mark passageways and provide visitors just enough light to find their way in the darkness.

Red Rock is sometimes used by Alchemists to create various types of jewelry, amulets and ornamentation on the hilts of weapons. Red Rock polishes nicely and as an amulet or talisman, holds 50% more P.P.E. than ordinary gemstones. That said, Red Rock is almost always used to contain curses that inflict their foul magic upon the wearer/user/owner of the item. Rumor has it that Red Rock may have other magical properties and uses, all of them harmful, but its Alchemical secrets are closely guarded. Its use in magic makes Red Rock valuable, 1D6x1,000 gold per egg-sized portion, sometimes double or triple that amount, depending on the buyer (who is usually up to no good).

Red Rock, also known as the **Spirit Stone** and **Bad Luck Stone**, because anyone who keeps Red Rock of any size, even as small as a pea, on his person, in any form – a part of jewelry or an oddity kept in a pouch or pocket as a paperweight or memento – becomes a magnet for dark forces and misfortune until it is returned to the ground.

In game terms, any character who has Red Rock on his person is likely to be targeted first in an attack, robbery, kidnaping, prank, or confidence game. Trouble in all its forms just seems to find its way to this person, including false accusations, suspicions of wrongdoing, a case of mistaken identity, bar brawls,

bad luck at gambling, misplacing or losing valuables, accidents, etc. Moreover, ghosts, spirits, Entities, the more malicious Faerie Folk, Witches, demons and evil supernatural beings are attracted to it, or take notice of the person in possession of Red Rock. If an evil individual, the dark forces may consider him to be a potential ally or henchman. Selfish individuals are regarded as someone who can be corrupted or manipulated. While people of good alignment are seen as marks, inviting tricks, torment and victimization, often just for the fun of it. Meanwhile, ghosts/Entities may haunt the good character or seek his help, all of which leads to trouble and mayhem.

In addition to the misfortune and cloud of negativity described above, characters in possession of Red Rock suffer the following penalties:

1. -2 on Perception Rolls that involve dark magic, Witches, Entities, demons and evil supernatural forces.
2. -1 on initiative against dark magic, Entities, demons and evil supernatural forces.
3. Reduce bonuses to evoke trust by half, and people tend not to believe the cursed individual even when he's telling the truth.
4. Mistaken identity. Frequently mistaken for a troublemaker, criminal or fugitive. In a brawl, he is likely to be blamed for starting it or for causing the most trouble or damage.
5. -20% on skills that involve stealth, gambling and luck.

To rid oneself of this trouble and misfortune, the Red Rock must be returned to the earth or someone else must take possession of it; this means the rock must be stolen, taken, or sold to have the curse lifted and follow the *new owner*. Red Rock cannot just be given away or left on the side of the road. The ideal method of disposal is to toss it back into the Black Pit. However, casting it into a tar pit, bog, swamp, an active volcano, lava, or just digging a hole and burying it, will do the trick. Simply leaving it in a drawer at home or throwing it away is not sufficient and the curse remains in place. Selling it for at least 10 gold passes the bad luck on to the buyer. When ridding themselves of Red Rock, characters of good alignment will want to dispose of it in such a way that it is not likely to come in the possession of an innocent person who will suffer for it.

A Boon to Witches

There is one group that benefits from Red Rock more than Alchemists: Witches. They already embrace chaos and are in league with the forces of evil, deal with wicked intentions and dangerous forces, and inflict suffering upon others in the name of supernatural evil. As such, the Red Rock is of benefit to a Witch. Any spirit or evil being the Red Rock may attract can be of benefit to the Witch, and is likely to see a potential ally, partner or henchman, not a victim. Which, in turn, may bring the Witch good fortune through evil deeds and nasty allies.

Possession of a single Red Rock bestows upon the Witch the following special bonuses:

1. +2 on Perception Rolls involving Entities, demons, dark magic and evil supernatural forces.
2. +1 on initiative against Champions of Light and good supernatural forces.
3. +20% to bonuses to evoke trust or sympathy, and the Witch lies convincingly to most people.
4. Keeping the Red Rock on the Witch's person – a gem in a ring or pendant or other piece of jewelry, imbedded into a wand,

staff, weapon, talisman, amulet, or just kept on her person in a pouch or pocket – increases the Witch’s P.P.E. base by 20%. The bonus applies only as long as she has the Red Rock on her person or in hand.

5. S.D.C. damage heals at a rate of 4D6 per 24 hours, but not Hit Points.

6. Spent P.P.E. recovers twice as quickly when the Red Rock is held in the Witch’s hand and caressed, or otherwise embraced.

Note: Somehow, all Witches know about the benefit of Red Rock and are willing to buy it, though seldom for what an Alchemist will pay. Instead, they tell those suffering misfortune from Red Rock they can remove the curse through a simple ritual (all a sham) and giving the person 1D6x10 gold for the cursed stone. Buying it, to transfer ownership from him to the Witch, is the necessary component in this transaction. The pretense of the ritual is to make it seem like the Witch is performing a service so that the individual may trust her later, or fall for some other scam.

The Black Pit Labyrinth

Travel inside the caves and tunnels of the Black Pit is difficult and dangerous. There is only one way in – and presumably one way out through the labyrinth of tunnels, but nobody has ever reported finding the exit. Depending on what legend you believe, that other opening/exit is someplace in the **Land of the Damned** or may be through the mouth of an Old One.

The Pit seems infinite when looking down from the opening, but climb down far enough and the opening becomes narrower until it ends at a sloping cavern. There is a steep decline before leveling out, but you can still tell you are advancing at a slight slope downward.

Very quickly, travelers lose their sense of direction and time. This is true even of beings accustomed to subterranean life, such as Dwarves, Kobolds and Troglydites, who suffer a penalty of -20% to their sense of direction. Everyone else is -40%. Leaving behind a trail of rope, twine, chalk markings, chisel marks, etc., cannot be recommended enough.

The tunnels are all crude. They might be considered natural if not for their consistent shape and size, the black and red rock, and the way the tunnels twist and turn, rise and drop. There are no rooms or signs of chambers. The surface is rough and mottled, more like poured concrete than chiseled stone. There are no signs of bricks or blocks, nor markings from tools or wooden supports. These are not tunnels made by Dwarves or men, nor Elementals. All the tunnels are uniform and look the same. They are round, like a tube, making walking a bit awkward at times, and surrounded by black stone with threads of Red Rock that dimly lights the way. *There is no natural rock or dirt.* A fact that gives subterranean people like Dwarves and Kobolds the creeps. These tunnels were either created by an unknown magical process or they really *are* traveling through the arteries inside the body of a petrified Old One as some legends claim! The latter is quite a leap, but such is the strangeness and level of paranoia within the Black Pit.

Most tunnels are barely tall enough to accommodate the full height of a human (roughly 7 feet/2.1 m in diameter), requiring Wolfen and other tall creatures to travel bent forward or crawling on all fours, adding to their discomfort and uneasiness. However, there are, at irregular intervals, smaller tunnels that branch out from the main arteries. These are half the diameter of the main corridors, requiring humans and large folk to crawl along

on their hands and knees to pass through them. Many of these small branches continue to narrow until they reach a dead end or intersect with another tunnel. Remember, some theorize that this is a deliberate labyrinth. A maze that would seem to have been created by an army of madmen, as there are many dead ends and go-arounds that lead back to a central tunnel.

Unlike natural caves and tunnel systems, there is no flora growing inside, nor animals, not even the spiders and bats common to natural caves. There is also an absence of water. The caves are dry and barren, and the only water available to travelers is in the casks or waterskins they bring with them. Another reason to not travel too deep or get lost. Indeed, the skeletal remains of various intrepid souls can be found as you travel deeper. (**Note:** Game Masters can offer a bit of treasure, such as a dagger and other weapon, a few gold or silver pieces, maybe even a magic scroll preserved by the dry conditions, but any water or potions are likely to have evaporated long ago. See the Random Table, under *Looting the Dead*, below.)

The deeper one goes, the staler the air becomes. It is breathable, but musty and dry. Every few hours there is an unexpected and unnatural breeze that lasts for about a minute. The superstitious believe that this is the Old One at the bottom of the tunnels breathing in and out as it sleeps. It also gets warmer. The average temperature inside these caves is 80 degrees Fahrenheit (27 C) with portions becoming even warmer in the deeper reaches, possibly the source of stories suggesting the caves of the Black Pit lead to Hell.

Areas of some tunnels are filled with **miasma** – a choking gas cloud that fills small caverns and passageways. It clings to an area like a fog and never seems to dissipate. The only way to get past a miasma cloud is to hold one’s breath for a lengthy stretch of time or use magic that enables the travelers to *Breathe Without Air*. The length of tunnel filled with miasma varies, but is usually 1D4x100 feet (30.5 to 122 m). Traveling through miasma obscures vision, like traveling through a fog – can only see 1D6 feet (0.3 to 1.8 m) ahead, and the vapors sting the eyes and cause them to water. Finding the remains of dead travelers, perhaps literally tripping over them or their gear, is especially likely in a miasma cloud.

Any living creature that breathes within a miasma cloud feels lightheaded and suffers 1 point of Hit Point/S.D.C. damage per melee round (15 seconds) and the following penalties: -1 on initiative, -2 on Perception Rolls, -2 to strike, parry and dodge, and strangely, the noxious mist has a dampening effect on magic spells: reduce range and area of effect of spells cast from within or into a miasma cloud by 30%.

Looting the Dead

From time to time, travelers may come across the withered or skeletal remains of other travelers who never found their way out of the Black Pit alive. Most appear to have died of thirst or starvation, but some may show signs of combat and mortal wounds. Whether these death blows came from a traveling companion – madness is rumored to occur in the caves of the Black Pit – or something else, is impossible to tell. Another reason to turn back, perhaps.

The dead may offer opportunities and reward for daring to explore the tunnels of the Black Pit. If one is lucky, the dead man may have a container of precious water that has not yet complete-

ly evaporated, but the older the corpse, the less likely that is the case. However, the remains of the dead may offer other supplies such as rope, a bedroll, blanket, sack, tinder box, chalk or charcoal, a comb or brush, a pocket mirror, and similar items common to brave adventurers, including weapons, armor, or a shield.

Finding a corpse can be startling, especially if a person falls over it while traveling through a miasma cloud, or finds several of them, a whole party of explorers perhaps, nestled in a corner, or strewn across a length of tunnel; Horror Factor of 12. Sometimes only an item left behind or dropped along the way is found laying on the floor, waiting for a new owner.

Knowledge that such booty *may* await them in the depths of the Black Pit sometimes attracts brazen or desperate bandits and adventurers to brave the tunnels to plunder the remains of the dead.

Black Pit Random Find Table

Choose or roll percentile on the following table for random determination of what salvageable goods may remain. Remember, some corpses may have already been stripped. There may also be discarded equipment left along the way, like an empty waterskin, cloak or clothing left behind as the wanderers became too weak or too hot to carry them, or felt too claustrophobic, and thought removing layers of clothing, backpacks and sacks would be more comfortable.

Game Masters, you should decide when such a find is made, but it should not be very often. Likewise, please feel free to alter these items and add your own.

- 01%** 6D6 gold.
- 02%** A dagger (1D6 damage).
- 03%** A dusty backpack or satchel, empty.
- 04%** 6D6 feet (1.8 to 11 m) of rope or twine and a wooden short staff (inflicts 1D6 damage).
- 05%** Empty bottle and a cork; reusable and worth 2 gold as glass containers are uncommon and expensive.
- 06%** 1D6 gold coins or 2D6 silver coins scattered on the floor.
- 07%** 1D6 empty waterskins, and a leather satchel bag.
- 08%** 2D6 silver coins and a pair of leather gloves.
- 09%** A small bag or purse containing a pocket mirror, comb, brush and a tinder box.
- 10%** Bedroll and blanket – or a bag of stale but edible bread and cheese. Enough for 1D6+1 people or that many days of food.
- 11%** Holy symbol of one of the known gods on a broken chain. If gold it's worth 300 gold. If silver it is worth 100 gold. If some other common substance (wood, stone, etc.) it is worth 40 gold.
- 12%** Several broken vials, a small bag, and a belt or empty pouch.
- 13%** 1D6 gold coins in a pouch or purse along with a writing quill, two pieces of white chalk, and a small bottle of dried ink.
- 14%** Hooded cloak still in fine condition.
- 15%** Small treasure chest, smashed open and empty. There is blood on the chest, floor and wall. All that remains of value are a cutlass, two small sacks, one large sack, two empty wineskins, and an empty 5 gallon (19 liter) keg. 100 yards/meters away are the skeletons of two Orcs and what looks to be the hand of an Ogre. Any valuables have been looted.
- 16%** A rope ladder, a medium sack containing 3 iron spikes and a mallet, a bedroll, a silk scarf, a leather hat, a hooded cloak, a full suit of Dwarf-sized double chain mail (A.R. 15 and has 59

S.D.C. left), a pair of leather boots, and the corpse of a Dwarf wearing only a shirt and pants. Each item was dropped onto the floor about 30 yards/meters apart. 30 yards/meters further ahead is the corpse of a human male dressed in traveling clothes wearing battered studded leather armor (has 18 S.D.C. left). There is 20 gold in a pouch, a pair of matching daggers, a small sack, bedroll, and an empty waterskin on the human. Both appear to have died of thirst or starvation.

17% A lantern and a tobacco pouch. The chewing tobacco is dried out.

18% Bag containing jerked or smoked meat still fresh enough to eat; an eight day supply for one person.

19% Skin containing lantern oil or a floppy hat and an empty water skin.

20% Two medium sacks. One contains 2 torches and a tinder box.

21% 1D6 candles and a snuff box. The snuff inside is still good.

22% Skin or flask of wine (half gallon/1.9 liters) or a bottle of quality hard liquor such as rum or whiskey.

23% A pair of human-sized sandals and a neatly folded pile of clothing in a stack. This person intended to come back for them.

24% A waterskin with one gallon (3.8 liters) of drinkable water.

25% One medium-size sack, three 6 foot (1.8 m) lengths of chain, two wolf traps, and a bear trap.

26% A short sword and an empty waterskin – or – a piece of jewelry (a ring, bracelet, necklace) worth 5D6x10 gold; pick one.

27% Dead Body: The corpse of a Centaur! There is a spear laying at its side and an empty saddlebag still attached to its back. Inside is what must have been food rations that have dried up and are no good, as well as two empty waterskins.

28% Dead Body: The corpse of a human wearing studded leather armor and a metal helmet, still good enough to wear, but it must be stripped from the dead body and it is permanently stained from blood and fluids from the body as it rotted and decayed. Gross.

29% Dead Body: Corpse of a human or Elf wearing full chain mail armor (A.R. 14 and has 30 S.D.C. left), a belt with pouches containing a tinder box, pocket mirror, two gems worth 100 gold each, and what must have been food of some sort. A wooden staff is on the ground next to him.

30% Dead Body: The remains of 1D4 bodies all stripped clean.

31% Dead Body: The corpse of a Knight or successful warrior and his dog. He appears to have been human or Elf. Clad in plate and chain armor (15 A.R., and still has 93 S.D.C.). There is also a small shield and a knife in his boot. Any other belongings have been already taken or left behind elsewhere as his sword scabbard is empty.

32% A book of prayers to the gods of Light and Dark, a simple holy symbol and a small pouch with three vials of holy water.

33% A short spear (1D6 damage) and a dagger (1D6 damage).

34% Dead Body: It is too decayed to have anything of value left or has already been robbed by scavenging bandits.

35% Dead Body: A human Priest or Wizard, as he is clad in a hooded robe covered in his own blood. A broken lantern lies next to the body. Anything of value has been taken.

36% Dead Body: A human or Elf female. 2D6x10 gold has spilled from a torn or rotting pouch on her belt. There is also a

dagger and a bastard sword, and the remains are still clad in a half-suit of Chain Armor. Anything else of value has rotted away.

37% Dead Body: A Wolfen clad in tattered leather armor, a broken halberd pole arm at his side. A tomahawk/throwing axe (2D4 damage) and one gold piece are under the body, should anyone look.

38% Dead Body: Looks to be a human male. Whatever armor and gear he may have had is gone, but there are still 1D6+4 iron pitons, a mallet, 20 feet (6.1 m) of rope, and climbing equipment, plus one gold piece tucked into his boot.

39% Dead Body: Looks to be a human male. He wore no armor and is garbed in a cape and the tattered remnants of clothing worthy of a nobleman. What's remarkable about this mostly skeletal corpse, is that there is a wooden stake in its chest! There is a gold ring on one finger (worth 500 gold) and what looks to be a scroll. The scroll is tucked under the body and removing it or the ring may jostle the body and cause the stake to tumble out. The scroll is Globe of Daylight. (Or whatever 4th level or lower level spell the G.M. may desire. It is also the G.M.'s discretion as to whether this is the remains of a vampire or not.)

40% Dead Body: Looks to have been a Ranger based on his attire and the long bow at his side. The quiver contains only one arrow. Weapons and anything else of value must have been lost prior to his untimely demise.

41% Armor: A full suit of splint armor left laying on the ground. A.R. 16, and still has 69 S.D.C.

42% Magic Scroll: Breathe Without Air.

43% Dead Body: Appears to be a human male dressed in a robe and cloak. Inside a large pouch is a candle, a tinder box, a book with blank pages, a diary written in Elven, and two scrolls: Tongues and Heal Wounds.

44% Magic Scroll: Create Bread and Milk, just laying on the ground. 6th level potency.

45% Magic Scroll: Armor of Ithan, 5th level.

46% Magic Scroll: Climb, 5th level.

47% Magic Scroll: Detect Concealment, 5th level.

48% Magic Scroll: Sense Traps, 6th level.

49% Magic Scroll: Swim as a Fish, 7th level.

50% Magic Scroll: Shadow Meld, 5th level.

51% Magic Potion: Invisibility: Simple, 5th level.

52% Magic Potion: One Healing.

53% Magic Item: Gem of Direction.

54% Magic Item: Crystal of Light.

55% Map – Ancient: Portrays the Garden of the Gods, but with a layout that is different than the one known today. May be worth 2D4x1,000 gold to the Fossar Knights or other noble, historian or person of learning.

56% Map of the Garden of the Gods. A recent map that shows all the currently excavated statues of the gods. Worth 1D6 gold.

57% Map – World Map. A map of the entire Palladium world with sea routes. Could be thousands of years old, because it is marked with kingdoms and nations around the beginning of the Elf-Dwarf War! If authentic, it is worth as much as 2,000-8,000 gold to the right person, but most local merchants only offer 100-600 gold for it.

58% Map of the Black Pit! A small portion of the Black Pit is mapped. Includes the tunnel(s) the player characters have already traveled plus a little further ahead, showing two dead ends and a tunnel that continues for a while before the map stops. If authentic,

it is worth as much as 20,000-60,000 gold to the right person, but most local merchants think it's a fake or way too dangerous to buy. The group might be offered as much as 100-1,000 gold for it by another adventurer, noble or clergy. The latter two, just to keep it out of the wrong hands. If authentic, the group might have their ticket to fame and fortune, assuming they can get in and out of the Land of Damned *alive*. The myths and legends of this land is full of monsters, demons and curses, but also of forgotten magic and forbidden knowledge that could lead to wealth and power for anyone bold enough to take the risk. **Note:** Or the merchants are correct, it is a fake not worth anything! G.M. choice. May substitute with a few coins or piece of jewelry or equipment worth 2D4x10 gold.

59% A blank scroll, tinder Box, skin of lamp oil, and 1D4 torches.

60% Skulls or Skeletons: 1D4 humans and one battered helmet.

61% Skulls or Skeletons: Mixed group, human, Dwarf, Elf; 1D6+2 remains.

62% Skulls or Skeletons: 2D6 Goblins or Orcs.

63% Skulls or Skeletons: 2D4 Kobolds or Dwarves.

64% Skulls or Skeletons: 2D4 humans or Elves.

65% Skulls or Skeletons: The floor is covered in the bones of at least 1D6+6 people of various species, but they are all broken and scattered making them impossible to identify without spending months to do so.

66% Skulls or Skeletons 1D4 Ogres.

67% Skulls or Skeletons: One or two Minotaurs.

68% Skull and Crossbow: A human or Elf skull next to a dusty crossbow and 1D6 bolts.

69% Tool: Large pick/mattock (3D4 damage) or a maul (2D4 damage).

70% Tool: Lantern with enough oil for 1D4+2 hours of light.

71-72% Tool: Two pickaxes. Damage: 3D4 each. Or a hammer (1D4 damage) and 1D4 metal spikes.

73-74% Tool: 1D4 shovels. Damage: 2D4. Or a frying pan (1D6 damage) and a meat cleaver (1D6 damage).

75-76% Tool: One pickaxe, Kobold Quality. Damage 3D4+4.

77-78% Weapon: Knife. Damage: 1D6.

79-80% Weapon: Kobold quality throwing knife. Damage: 1D6, +2 to strike when thrown.

81-82% Weapon: Small shield and a short sword.

83-84% Weapon: Large shield.

85-86% Weapon: Short sword. Damage: 2D4.

87-88% Weapon: Large sword. Damage: 2D6+2.

89-90% Weapon: Crossbow and 2D6+6 crossbow bolts.

91-92% Weapon: Mace or morning star. Damage: 2D6.

93-94% Weapon: 1D4 spears with a silver blade. Damage: 2D6 each.

95% Weapon: War hammer. Damage: 3D4.

96% Weapon: Battle axe. Damage: 3D6.

97% Weapon: Dwarven quality bastard sword. Damage: 2D6+6, excellent balance. May substitute with a different weapon with the same damage, or a gem or a few gems worth 1D6x1,000 gold.

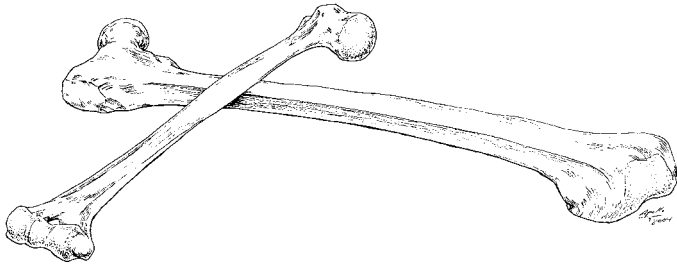
98% Weapon: Battle axe or pole arm. Dwarven quality. Damage: 3D6+6, +1 to strike and parry and glows faintly in the dark. May substitute for a different weapon the same or similar damage and bonus that magically glows or has a unique magical color, making it a simple magic weapon! Or substitute for a gem or a few gems, or jewelry worth 4D4x1,000 gold.

99% Weapon: Longbow with 1D6+2 ordinary arrows (2D6 damage each), and 1D4 Cyclops Lightning Arrows (1D6x10 damage each) in a quiver!

00% An ancient-looking book, filled with page after page of maps of the Black Pit! If the author can be believed, this book shows the trail of tunnels leading from Lopan to the Land of the Damned. The correct path allegedly marked in red and covers more than 1,000 miles.

Game Master Note: Please feel free to adjust to your own style and/or the needs and desires of your players and their characters.

Also see **Encounters** later in this section.



Fangs of the Old Ones

The Truth about the Black Pit?

A much older and nearly forgotten legend told by the Faeries of Lopan is a very different story than the other myths about the Black Pit. According to this tale, there is no slumbering Old One buried deep inside the earth, but rather several magic weapons of incredible power created by the Old Ones. These magic weapons predate Rune Magic and are said to be many times more powerful than the Greatest of Rune Weapons. Each one imbued with the tiniest fraction of a Great Old One's splintered life essence with which to power it, which makes the weapons radiate evil, magic, and power. A fragment of evil that is alive and awake inside the weapon that contains it.

During the Age of Chaos, these weapons were once known as the **Fangs of the Old Ones**. Each is indestructible and said to be able to corrupt anyone who wields it, even the gods themselves. The Old Ones would create such devastating and powerful magic weapons to give to their most loyal, top lieutenants as a mechanism to control and command the lesser beings placed under their oversight. Fangs of the Old Ones gave these tyrants the power and authority to lead armies of minions and rule over armies of slaves. Weapons said to rival the power of the gods, to strike down any man, giant, dragon or god who dared to rise up and oppose the Old Ones. When the Old Ones were cast into slumber, their lieutenants fought to restore them, but fell to the combined might of gods and dragons, mortals and magic. Afterward, the Fangs of the Old Ones were confiscated and said to have been scattered across the world – some say across the cosmos – where they will never be found. Only one unnamed deity said to be incorruptible was entrusted with this task, so that no god could be tempted to use one.

According to the lore of the Lopan Faeries, two or more of those weapons were buried deep in the bowels of the earth. They know this only because a few of their ancient forefathers witnessed it. At the time, a hundred millennia ago, that location was a remote island in the middle of nowhere. A place inhabited only

by Faerie Folk who had no desire or use for such weapons. That island is *Lopan*.

The weapon(s) have remained lost since the day the last of the Old Ones' lieutenants were defeated, once and for all. Though buried deeper than any mortal can dig, the gangrenous evil locked inside the **Fangs of the Old Ones** still burns hot, and seeps into the earth above them. After many centuries, the festering cancer of these Fangs pushed up and outward until it broke open to the surface. This ugly ulcer of tormented earth is the **Black Pit**. Somewhere inside the cursed bowels of the labyrinth, the Faeries of Lopan say, are two or more Fangs of the Old Ones. Waiting, impatiently, hungrily, to be unleashed upon the world once again. Each one at a different location in the Black Pit, waiting for a new, living conduit for its wickedness. Weapons of destruction and chaos that must never surface again.

It is interesting to note that no church, no king, no modern people, not even the inhabitants of Lopan, have ever heard this legend. For it is a well kept secret. If any of the gods know of it (surely Thoth or Aco must know), they do not speak of it. It is a secret held tight-lipped by a few of the Faeries of Lopan. Passed on to chosen leaders among their tribes, so that the Faeries may find and warn a few, select heroes to prevent a Fang from ever being removed from the Black Pit.

In the current day, the only mortal with whom the legend has been shared is the leader of the Knights-Fossar, and he's not sure whether to believe it or not. Neither he nor the Faeries have told another soul. All are fearful that if people learn of this legend, every would-be world conqueror, power-monger, tyrant, and misguided hero, and perhaps even a god, would come from far and wide seeking to unearth a Fang for himself. To know what the power of a god feels like, no matter the danger or what terrible fate might be unleashed upon the world. It is the nature of people to think they can beat the odds. That they are incorruptible, wiser, smarter, stronger, and capable of wielding such a power without terrible consequences. That they can use it to make the world a better place. Others covet such great magic, regardless of consequence, to further their own ends. Whether it be for power and conquest, or to smite an enemy, exact revenge, or to become king or queen.

And so the Black Pit remains a quiet secret — for now.

The Danger of the Fangs of Legend

Without exception, no mortal, dragon, or Demon Lord can take possession of a Fang of the Old Ones and escape its corrupting influence. In time – often a shockingly, short amount of time – the heart of the Fang's owner becomes warped, twisted, evil, and falls to madness. It is said that though it may take centuries, even a god will succumb to such a fate. Thus, no man nor deity should use a Fang of the Old Ones for any reason, not even for a short amount of time. To wield a Fang of the Old Ones in just one battle is enough to be seduced by its power.

Plummeting into the Abyss:

Phase One: This weapon must be mine. The Fang feels good in the person's hand. It seems to have perfect weight and balance as if made special for him. If normally a two-handed weapon the person can handle it just fine with one or both.

Once held, the wielder does not want to let the Fang go. He/she/it becomes convinced he is best suited to wield the weapon. And if there are any concerns, he is confident he is in control and there is nothing to fear in his possession. (“You know me. You trust me. I can do this. I’m in control.”) Sadly, that’s not true. Whoever holds the weapon immediately feels its power coursing through his veins. In an instant, the person feels special, chosen, destined for greatness (or more likely, infamy). He will refuse to relinquish it to any other person, with the possible exception of a god. Nor can he bring himself to cast it someplace where it can never be found. This is the case even if the individual knows what the weapon is and has heard the legend. He speaks with such sincerity and conviction, it’s hard not to believe him and want to trust him with the item. (See the bonus to M.A./Mental Affinity and P.B./Physical Beauty such weapons bestow upon those who possess a Fang.)

If the present owner of the Fang can be convinced that he is falling under its influence and is persuaded to discard it someplace where it should be impossible to find, he escapes a terrible fate. It is ironic, but characters of good and selfish alignments are the ones who have the most difficulty giving up a Fang. They can see the potential for incredible good while gaining favor and glory for themselves in the process. (“I can become the greatest – fill in the blank – the world has ever known.”) Refusing to accept that the fragment of the Old One within it will never let that happen. The best of intentions twisted, emotions overwrought and turned into unreasoning obsession, and madness that destroys any good the person might have accomplished and causes only suffering and sorrow, usually on a horrific scale.

Phase Two: Trust no one. Within a matter of days of possessing a Fang, its owner becomes suspicious of everyone’s motives. They covet his magic weapon. They are envious of the power he holds in his hand. They resent the great deeds he can accomplish with the weapon. They whisper behind his back. This paranoia only grows and isolates him from his true friends and good intentions. He is alone and trusts no one. He can trust only himself. Only his intuition is correct. And of course, they want him to forsake the Fang so they can get it for themselves. He’s not stupid. He sees right through their facade of concern and desire to help him.

As with Phase One, if he can be convinced to get rid of the Fang he can escape a grim fate. However, that becomes increasingly difficult and unlikely.

Phase Three: The Chosen One. The wielder of the Fang is convinced he has been chosen by the gods to wield the weapon and to lead whatever crusade or champion whatever cause he has decided upon. If of a good alignment, this will be a just and noble venture, and he will be heroic and brave, but also driven because he knows it is the right thing to do. Every crusade from this point on is “the right thing to do.” He’s convinced of it, even when it is not, or it costs too many lives, or has terrible consequences. It is his destiny, and nobody can change his mind.

While in this manic frame of mind, the owner of the Fang may accomplish great and good things. But they won’t last. Each triumph makes him more convinced of his own power and infallibility. That the choices he makes are the correct ones. He no longer listens to counsel from others, takes crazy risks, and goes up against impossible odds. Worse, he sends people who trust and believe in him into dangerous and outrageous situations that may cost them everything. Sooner or later, the Chosen One is going to get people slaughtered in droves. He won’t understand

how that can happen – it’s his destiny to triumph, after all – and blames others, or an unforeseen turn of events, for his failures.

As with Phases One and Two, if he can be convinced to get rid of the Fang he can still escape a grim fate, and further tragedy can be averted. Sometimes, if he or his plans result in the deaths of many, or someone special, especially if an innocent person or people who trusted him and did as he had told them to, the shock restores reason. He/she/it recognizes the terrible thing(s) he has done, and that the weapon is bad. Too dangerous for anyone, and needs to be taken where it can never be found. True enough, but it needs to be done immediately, because this clarity only lasts 3D6+24 hours.

The Chosen is correct in thinking only he is the one to dispose of the cursed object, because anyone else who takes possession of it will fall prey to the Fang just as he did. Repeating Phase One and onward. Of course, anyone who takes the Fang won’t see it that way. (“Sir Julius couldn’t handle it, but I’m different. I can use this weapon for good. I can control it. I know I can! Trust me!”)

If the weapon is not disposed of within that window of remorse and sound reason (3D6+24 hours), the owner of the Fang quickly slides back into paranoia, obsession, and utter madness. (“What was I thinking? It’s crazy to hide this treasure. Yes, I made a mistake. That’s all. A tragic mistake. People died, but I’ll make sure that never happens again. I shall avenge them and make those responsible suffer like they cannot imagine. In fact, I know exactly how to do it. Yes, vengeance shall be mine!”) And guess where this resolve and new idea is coming from, the essence of the wicked Old One within the Fang. When this happens, the Chosen will never again consider relinquishing the weapon. Move on to Phase Four.

Note: If the Chosen actually follows through and puts the Fang where it should never be found, like tossing it into a volcano or the deepest ocean, he will feel pain on par of losing a beloved parent or spouse. The ache of loss haunts him to the point that he may (25% chance) consider finding a way to retrieve the weapon he disposed of, or to find a new Fang. This period of loss and mourning lasts 3D6+6 months. During which the character feels inferior, ashamed, and foolish, suffering self-doubt and the following penalties: -1 attack per melee, -2 on initiative, -1 to strike and parry, and -10% on the performance of all skills.

Phase Four: I am infallible. By this stage, the master of a Fang (it is the Fang who is the master of him, but he cannot see that) is a delusional, Miscreant or Diabolic psychopath whose word is law. He can do no wrong. When people die, they are collateral damage worth the cost. When the innocent suffer or perish, it’s not his fault and there are many to blame other than himself, or their suffering is a necessary sacrifice. If the enemy was responsible for a tragedy, they shall be made to suffer for it. If one of his lieutenants was responsible for a mishap or titanic loss, even if he was following orders, that scapegoat is punished or killed for “his” incompetence. The madman gives in to impulse and every dark desire he has. He takes what he wants regardless of consequence, and is likely to engage in all manner of cruelty and depravity. (Think Vlad the Impaler or any number of murderous despot tyrants). His every action ruthless, heartless, and self-serving.

He will never give up the Fang, and cannot be tricked out of it. He is obsessed with keeping it safe at his side, even when he sleeps, and trusts no one. Those he fears or suspects are conspiring against him are eliminated. If the Fang is forcibly taken from

him he seeks to recover it at all costs. Until then, he may seek out other magical weapons and artifacts, though no one of them, or ten thousand of them, can compare to the Fang he has lost. He also seeks to take revenge upon those who took it away from him, and does not stop with them. He'll find, torment and eventually kill every person, and destroy everything they hold dear. The madman is more ruthless and merciless than ever, and when he rises to power again (in his mind an inevitability), he will make the entire world bow down before him. This is a villain whose best outcome is to be put down like a mad dog for the sake of everyone else.

All Fangs of the Old Ones

Have the Following Features:

Also Known As: Chaos Weapons and World Slayers!

Alignment: Miscreant or Diabolic, and, in short order, turns whoever possesses it into the same alignment.

Weapon: A Fang is always a weapon, usually one that draws blood. Each is one of a kind. Even when a sister weapon was created it would be somewhat different. No one knows how many Fangs of the Old Ones were ever made. It is believed there were very few. A sentiment reinforced by the fact that no one has ever found one, yet. Although that assumption is based on shabby and incomplete historical records, and may not be true.

A few passages in the Tristine Chronicles do not come right out and say it, but hint that one or more Fangs of the Old Ones may have surfaced from time to time. Always resulting in horror and death before the powerful weapon vanishes. One such "blade cursed with unholy and forbidden magic never known to man or beast" (beast in this case referring to beings such as dragons) is reported to have been used to forge the Western Empire from ground bathed in blood. Another weapon "born from darkest night," is said to have corrupted the heart of a noble Dwarven Wizard-King who had sworn to put a peaceful end to the Elf-Dwarf War. Instead, he would unleash the dark magic that wiped out millions and left behind the scorched earth known today as the Baalgor Wastelands. An act that would help bring about the end of the war, but would also topple both civilizations, and have Dwarves forsake magic forever more.

Indestructibility: Though not a Rune Weapon or Holy Weapon, a Fang is utterly indestructible. Fused with the essence of a Dreaded Old One, it is said the Fang's power comes directly from those who slumber, and that the deeds of those in possession of a Fang are made known to the sleeping Old One(s) as wonderful dreams.

Damage: Varies with each weapon, but is always considerable.

Perfect Size, Weight and Balance: Whoever takes possession of a Fang finds it to be the perfect size, weight and balance, as if it were made for him. Two-handed weapons can be used in one hand and the weapon magically grows or shrinks proportional to its owner.

Corruption of the Wielder: He who takes possession of a Fang of the Old Ones is corrupted and driven insane as per the four Phases described above. Moreover, the owner may exhibit traits of the specific Old One whose essence is locked inside the particular weapon.

Fortification of the Chosen: He who possesses a Fang (they can never truly be owned) receives a bonus of +100 Hit Points,

+200 S.D.C., Natural A.R. of 13, 1D6x10+40 to his current P.P.E. base (whether he's a spell caster or not), and recovers from damage at a rate of 2D6x10 Hit Points or S.D.C. every 30 minutes! +50% to save vs coma and death, and can recover from being reduced to 100 Hit Points below zero. Impervious to disease.

Attribute Bonuses: +1 to I.Q., +11 to M.A., +10 to P.S., +2 to P.E., +6 to P.B., and +6 to Spd. +4 on Perception Rolls to recognize people conspiring against him or trying to deprive him of his cherished weapon.

Power: Each Fang of the Old Ones was created for a specific purpose and with a specific minion in mind. A lieutenant or enforcer who served as a trusted right hand, and was either a god-like being to begin with, or transformed into one by the Old One in recognition for his service and obedience.

As a consequence, people, even creatures of magic such as the Sphinx, Lizard Mage, Mummy Immortalis, dragons, and similar beings, are able to access only a small percentage of what the Fang is capable of doing. The few Fangs describe, below, are just some the Faeries of Lopan know about.

Never Lost Forever: The power and malevolence locked inside each cursed weapon of the Old Ones is such that it cannot be locked away and contained or hidden forever. If thrown into a boiling volcano, one day the Fang will be expelled in a volcanic eruption or spill floating on top of a lava flow. If dropped into the ocean, one day it will be washed ashore by a storm, or found amongst a shipwreck with sunken treasure, or be discovered inside the belly of a beast. Sooner or later, it will find its way back into the world to cause sorrow and mayhem. It may take centuries or millennia, but it will find a way, just as two or more are forcing themselves up through miles of earth on Lopan, and have created the Black Pit so that some adventurous soul(s) can find his way to them. These weapons of chaos and destruction have been interred there for so long, they have been able to channel the magic of one or more Old Ones to create other evil manifestations and even a portal to the Land of the Damned.

Since the Faeries know about these weapons, two or more of them may exist inside the Black Pit. Others may be located elsewhere.

Note: The Faeries of Lopan believe two or three of these infamous and terrible of Fangs wait to be discovered someplace inside the Black Pit. One other is rumored to have been lost in the Yin-Sloth Jungle or Land of the South Winds, and another someplace in the Great Northern Wilderness or Ophid's Grasslands. But really, nobody knows.

Giant Slayer

This weapon is a large battle axe made of a porous metal not known to mortals. It is forever stained red by the blood of the countless giants it has slain – Titans, Rahu-Men, and others. It was created to pacify the giants who refused to bend their knee to the Old Ones, and to strike down all giants who took arms against their masters.

The Essence: A tiny splinter of Netosa.

Range: 1,000 feet (305 m) when thrown and returns to its owner unless its owner wants the blade to remain inside his opponent to inflict agony.

Damage: 4D6 damage against most mortal opponents, 4D6+10 against taller than human creatures, including Mino-

taurs, Wolfen, Bearmen and Trolls. 1D6x10+10 damage against mortal giants (damage comes off S.D.C. first), and 1D6x10+60 direct to Hit Points against giant-sized demons, Deevils, and gods who typically take a giant form or are worshiped by giants. Each cut from its blade burns as if on fire.

Inflict Obedience through Pain (special): When used against giants only, and the blade bites deep into the giant's flesh, not just his armor, the wielder of the Giant Slayer can leave the axe imbedded in his opponent and not have it return to him. The victim suffers initial damage (1D6x10+10), and is incapacitated by burning agony. The Giant Slayer cannot be removed by its victim or anyone except the owner of the axe. As long as it remains imbedded, its victim is racked with burning pain and can barely function. Any effort to move or fight requires tremendous effort and willpower. **Penalties:** Speed is reduced by 90%, skill performance is -60%, attacks per melee are reduced to only two, -7 to all combat maneuvers (strike, parry, dodge, etc.). If the giant is a psychic or a mage, the use of psionics and spell casting is nearly impossible, focus and concentration scrambled by the searing agony; or a roll of 01-50% the victim is able to get off one psionic power or spell. If he fails to do so, no I.S.P. or P.P.E. is expended, but one of his two melee attacks/actions is used up for that round.

The axe wielder is able to inflict more pain and 1D6 damage direct to Hit Points by simply touching, tapping, or wiggling the axe. The idea is not to kill, but to inflict agony as punishment for disobedience or rebellion, or to publicly humble, humiliate, and break giants forced into his service, or to intimidate, torture and interrogate enemies. When the wielder of the axe is satisfied with the result (submission of his victim, acquires the info he wanted, suitably humbled his victim, or has had enough sadistic fun), he can remove the battle axe in such a way as to inflict 1D6x10 damage, possibly slaying his giant victim, or he can instantly heal all the damage he had already inflicted as he removes the axe. Leaving only an ugly scar and the painful memory of the experience.

Special Abilities Granted to its Owner: Understands all giant languages 95% as well as Gobblely; giants recognize the owner of Giant Slayer as a danger to giants and are fearful and intimidated by him as per M.A. attribute; +1 attack per melee when fighting true giants and takes no damage from breath attacks by giants (frost, fire, etc.), and he who possesses Giant Slayer has no fear of giants.

Note: It is said that when the Giant Slayer was in the hands of the Old One's lieutenant, the range was five times greater, damage could be doubled or tripled on a whim, and when he raised the Giant Slayer above his head and demanded obedience, all giants within a 2,000 foot (610 m) radius had to comply. To resist the Giant Slayer, a 16 or higher to save was necessary. Failure required doing as commanded whether they wanted to or not, no matter how cruel or terrible. Atrocities that tore at the souls of those forced to comply. The few who were able to resist that first time (made a successful save) could always resist Giant Slayer. But that meant they were systematically hunted down and destroyed.

Rod of Shadows and Might

This weapon is a large staff made of a black, polished metal not known to mortals. At the top and bottom of the staff are spikes resembling thorns. It was created to command and pacify the undead and their masters who refused to bend their knee to the

Old Ones, and to destroy the undead who cannot be controlled. Vampires are powerful beings that belong to a rival power of darkness, and contain the essence of a Vampire Intelligence. As a result, they are impervious to the will and mind control of the Old Ones.

The Essence: A tiny splinter of Agu.

Also Known As: Slayer of Vampires.

Range: Melee combat, or is able to usurp control of all zombies, animated dead, and Shadow Beasts within a 200 foot (61 m) radius.

Damage: 3D6+3 damage against most mortals. 1D6x10 damage to vampires, zombies, mummies, animated dead, Ghouls, and Shadow Beasts. 1D6x10+40 against Master Vampires, and 1D6x100 against Vampire Intelligences and their Demonic Familiars, as well as Demon Lords and dark gods who are Lords of the Dead.

Turn Dead (special): Same as the spell of the same name; equal to a 10th level spell caster. Can be performed as often as necessary.

Moreover, the dead – zombies, mummies, animated dead, and Wild Vampires, Ghouls and Shadow Beasts – refuse to attack he who possesses the Rod of Shadows and Might. He can walk right through an army of them without fear of being assailed.

Command the Dead (special): Zombies, mummies, animated dead, and Wild Vampires without a Secondary Vampire to command them to do otherwise, can be commandeered by the wielder of the Rod of Shadows and Might. The owner of the Rod need only to raise it above his head and demand they obey him. All such creatures within a 200 foot (61 m) radius stop in their tracks, and turn to him for his next command. All recognize the essence of the Old One known as Agu and submit to it. Duration: Until one hour before the next sunrise, after which they flee.

Whatever the command, the dead, Ghouls and Shadow Beasts obey without resistance, even turning against the one who may have raised them from the grave, magically created them from the remains of the dead, or summoned them from the beyond. The dead obey if told to return to the grave as well as any order to work, fight, etc. Likewise, if Shadow Beasts are told to return to the Shadow Realm, they do so, but are also happy to follow commands to terrorize, torture and kill.

The Old One, Agu, is the symbol of life and birth because both represent struggle, suffering, and chaos. As a result, death and darkness are his rivals. This means he who possesses Shadows and Might is not tempted to command legions of dead, but to send them away or counteract the Necromantic magic, returning them to lifeless bones and rags. He who possesses the Rod of Shadows and Might is only likely to command them to fight or perform a task when it serves his immediate purpose and/or involves defending the living or thwarting a rival. This could involve forming a defensive line between people and a charging army, or to fight to protect him and any teammates/allies, or to save a life, foil an enemy, and so on. Afterward, the Rod's owner has no use for the dead, Ghouls or creatures from the Realm of Shadows. **Note:** Only the dead under the direct command of a Demon or Deevil Lord or a god cannot be usurped in this manner. Vampires are also impervious to the commands of the Rod of Shadows and Might. Only the savage and feral Wild Vampires without a Secondary Vampire to lead them are frightened enough to comply, and do so with some hesitance. As far as the force within the Rod is concerned, vampires are dangerous rivals and

the enemy of the living to be destroyed. This heated hatred is infused into whomever wields the Rod.

Special Abilities Granted its Owner: Nightvision 1,000 feet (305 m; can see in total darkness), understands the spoken word and behavior of all dead and undead beings, all of whom recognize the owner of Shadows and Might as an enemy or a superior force and either submit to him, or in the case of vampires, flee or battle him. Impervious to Necromancy and all powers of vampires; cannot be turned into the undead, impervious to their mind control, etc. **Bonuses:** +1 attack per melee when fighting vampires and other undead or animated dead, and impervious to Horror Factor when it involves animated dead, zombies, vampires, other undead, Ghouls, Shadow Beasts and Necromancers.

The owner of the Rod is able to cast the following spells three times per 24 hour period at no P.P.E. cost to himself: Commune with Spirits, Death Trance, Heal Wounds, and Globe of Daylight, all performed as if cast by a 10th level Wizard.

Note: It is said that when the Rod of Shadows was in the hands of the Old One's lieutenant, it had triple the range, damage could be doubled on a whim, and when the minion raised the Rod of Shadows and Might above his head and summoned it, the sun itself would answer. (Actually, a super-version of a Globe of Daylight that could light up an area one mile/1.6 km in diameter and atomize any vampire or Shadow Beast caught in its radiance within a melee round.) He could also use the Rod to come and go from the Shadow Realm, where he could travel without fear of being attacked.

Invincible Warbringer

The Invincible Warbringer is a large, silver bastard sword with a blood red gem set into the base of the blade on each side of the sword. The weapon can be wielded in one or both hands, the latter usually to deliver severe damage or a killing blow. Whoever possesses this powerful blade is quick to think of himself as an invincible warlord. Deluded and corrupted by bloodlust, the madman may consider himself a hero or champion of the people even as he becomes a bloodthirsty tyrant or killing machine. He is not satisfied with commanding warriors, but wants to lead them into combat himself. In battle, he who possesses the Invincible Warbringer always targets the enemy's most powerful leaders and warriors himself.

By Phase Two, the Invincible Warbringer makes its owner overconfident and prone to underestimate his enemies. This leads to increases in risk-taking and reckless strategies and tactics for both himself and the people under his command.

By Phase Three, mercy and compassion are no longer in his vocabulary, so taking prisoners is rare, and mass murder, common. The bodies of the slain often hoisted up to swing from trees or their heads mounted on poles to line the road as an example to all others.

By Phase Four, the warrior is quite mad, cruel, and lives for combat and bloodletting. He may even drink the blood or eat the organs of worthy opponents.

The Essence: A tiny splinter of Ya-blik.

Range: A sword used in melee combat or to unleash lightning up to 1,200 feet (366 m).

Damage: The sword inflicts 5D6 damage against most mortal opponents and creatures of magic. 1D6x10+6 against the supernatural, including demons and Deevils, their Host, Netherbeasts,

war mounts, Worms of Taut and Dark Priests. 1D6x10+40 direct to Hit Points against gods.

Two-Handed Power Strike (special): Does double damage, but counts as three melee attacks.

Electric Blast (special): 4D6 damage per electric blast, +12 against demons, Deevils and Worms of Taut, as noted above. Range 100 feet (30.5 m). Each blast counts as one melee attack.

Lightning Bolt (special): 2D6x10 damage per lightning bolt. Range: 1,200 feet (366 m). Each lightning bolt counts as *three* melee attacks.

Command a Squad of Demons or Deevils (special): When the wielder of Invincible Warbringer hold it high above his head and demands they accept him as their lord and master, 1D4+2 of the following will comply, provided they are present: Worms of Taut, Deevil Host, Sub-Demons, Lesser Demons and/or Lesser Deevils and similar lesser demonic beings. Does not apply to Entities. These new recruits do whatever he demands of them and may even oppose their own kind and Greater Demons once they become his. They stay with him as loyal servants/soldiers until he releases them or they are destroyed. He cannot command new Lesser Supernatural beings unless he releases the ones he has. When released, most flee without incident, too afraid of the power of the sword, and grateful to be free to go. **Note:** As a slayer of such beings, no demonic creature can use the blade. In their hands, damage is only 2D6, the electrical blast and lightning do not work for them at all, they are -2 attacks per melee round, and -8 on all combat maneuvers.

Invincible Warbringer also enables its owner to ride any hell-spawned riding mount, Netherbeast or large Worm of Taut as his war steed. If the character has a Horsemanship skill he gets a +20% skill bonus to ride the animal. If not, he gets a base skill of 55%.

Special Abilities Granted to its Owner: Understands and speaks Demongogian and all languages of evil supernatural beings, 95%. Demons, Deevils and similar beings recognize the owner of Invincible Warbringer as being linked to an Old One and that the weapon is a Demon/Deevil slayer. They are fearful and intimidated by he who possesses such a weapon and respond to him as per his M.A. attribute.

Combat Bonuses: +2 attacks per melee round against all opponents, +4 on Perception Rolls to identify the leader and most powerful or dangerous opponent in a group, +1 on initiative, +1 to strike and parry, does not fatigue, can go without food or water for 1D6+6 days, impervious to fire and smoke, has no fear of demons or infernals, and all Lesser Demons and Deevils are afraid to attack he who possesses Invincible Warbringer, even if they outnumber him 100 to one. Greater Demons and Demon Lords are jealous and resentful of him, but are not likely to take action against him unless he attacks them first. And they know their kind can never use the sword.

Vulnerabilities: Cold and Holy Weapons inflict double damage to the wielder. He craves fighting and killing, and finds it difficult to refuse a challenge to combat; and impossible to refuse if publically challenged or humiliated. Tends to be bloodthirsty and reckless, often underestimating his enemies, which can get him into serious trouble.

Note: It is said that when the Invincible Warbringer was in the hands of the Old One's lieutenant, the range was four times greater, damage could be doubled or tripled on a whim, and when he raised the sword above his head and demanded obedience,

200 demons or infernals would comply. To resist the Invincible Warbringer, Lesser supernatural beings needed a 19 or higher to save, Greater Demons/Deevils required a 15 or higher to save. Failure required doing as commanded whether they wanted to or not, no matter how cruel or terrible. Acts of evil that most demonic creatures embraced unless it went against their own kind. The few who were able to resist that first time (made a successful save) could always resist Invincible Warbringer, but those who opposed the wielder of the blade or his masters were systematically hunted down and destroyed.

Serpent Lord

One of the most powerful of the Old Ones' weapons, Serpent Lord is said to have slain more than 50,000 dragons, including two of the forgotten gods of Dragonwright! It is a staff entwined by two dragons or serpents with the heads of two particular dragons, one devouring the other. At the bottom of the staff is a spike. The staff is said to look as if it were carved from a single piece of green jade and is indestructible. Though they all have the same abilities, there are said to be several Serpent Lords created by the Old One Ya-ahk-met. One of each dragon species devouring a different dragon species.

In the days of the Old Ones, he who held the Serpent Lord had dominion over all but the most ancient and powerful dragons and is said to have been able to command as many as twenty adult dragons at a time.

The Essence: A tiny splinter of Ya-ahk-met.

Range: 1,000 feet (305 m) when thrown and returns to its owner unless its owner wants the staff to remain inside his opponent to inflict agony.

Damage: Blunt or slash and stab with the pointed end. 4D6 damage against most mortal opponents, +10 against all reptilian people and animals, 1D6x10+30 direct to Hit Points against dragons, and 1D6x100 against ancient dragons and dragon gods. Each cut or stab from its blade stings of icy cold.

Submit to the Serpent Lord (special): When the wielder of Serpent Lord has reduced a dragon's Hit Points by half and stabs the staff into the dragon, he may try to force the creature into submission. Dragon Hatchlings need a 16 or higher to save. A young adult dragon (650-1,300 years of age) needs 14 or higher. An adult dragon of some experience (1,400-4,000 years) needs to roll 12 or higher to save. Ancient Dragons are near or older than their typical life span which varies with species, but is typically in the 7,000-11,000 year range, and are impervious to submission, as are dragon deities.

When a dragon submits to he who possesses a Serpent Lord, it cannot attack or harm him, and must bow before him (humiliating for a dragon), and allow him to ride it should he desire to do so. It must also protect him from others, even its own kind, and will fight to the death to do so if necessary! However, it does not have to obey any other orders as if it were charmed and completely obedient. For example, it is not magically forced to reveal a secret, betray a friend or ally, nor take him to its secret treasure trove. That said, the dragon may find it best to comply to avoid a beating, torture, more humiliation, or death.

A dragon who has fallen to submission cannot run away or fight back against the wielder of the Serpent Lord while under submission. Worse, it can NOT Bio-Regenerate the damage inflicted by Serpent Lord while under its submission. Leaving it

vulnerable and afraid. After 48 hours, the dragon is able to attempt another saving throw (+2 to save this time). If successful, the enchantment is broken. Most do not risk attacking their enslaver and try to flee at the first opportunity. A wise move, because their "Lord and Master" realizes the submission has been broken within 1D6+1 minutes and he is likely to try to reestablish submission, or slay the dragon!

The number of dragons: He who possesses Serpent Lord can force into submission as many as three adult dragons or six dragon hatchlings (under the age of 650 years old), or a combination of the two.

Serpent Lord also enables its wielder to ride any submissive dragon at a 90% skill level, and keep one or more submissive dragons at his side as protectors.

Reverse Death Blow (special): He who possesses Serpent Lord becomes obsessed with attaining dragon treasures even more than humiliating and slaughtering them. Thus, when Serpent Lord delivers the final killing blow with the spiked end of the staff plunged into it, the moment of death is suspended, and he may offer the dragon a deal. This usually takes the form a whispered conversation in the ear of the dragon while Serpent Lord remains stabbed in its body. The dragon's last sparks of life ebbing from its paralyzed (near-death) body. **The deal is,** he will allow the dying dragon to live, but only if it either agrees to bow down before him and call him "master," right then and there, in public, **or** it surrenders its treasure trove to him. Immediately taking him to the treasure and leaving without incident, or truthfully and clearly revealing its location and any traps and defenses. *The beast must pick one, or die.* **Note:** These are non-negotiable terms, though the wielder of Serpent Lord *may* agree to release the dragon's teammates/allies unharmed (more people to recount how he bested the dragon), or not punish the innocent as part of *the deal*.

If the dragon refuses, it dies, taking double damage when Serpent Lord is removed from its body. If it agrees to either condition, it must truthfully comply and leave immediately without harming the person who defeated it. The magic of Serpent Lord prevents the dragon from seeking revenge or attacking for 72 hours. Most dragons are so humiliated by the terrifying near-death defeat that they try to put it all behind them and never retaliate for fear they will not survive the next time.

When the dragon agrees, it must comply – there is no way around this magical pact – and the madman removes Serpent Lord upon the dragon's last dying breath. Instantly and miraculously, one quarter of its Hit Points are restored. Weak but alive, it is allowed to leave, tail between its legs. He who possesses Serpent Lord smug in his triumph and/or newfound riches of the dragon's treasure.

Special Abilities Granted to its Owner by Serpent Lord: Understands and speaks Dragonese and any rare language of dragons as well as Elven at 95%, and knows all legends and lore about dragons. Dragons recognize and despise Serpent Lord. They are fearful and intimidated by he who possesses it as per the M.A. attribute of the wielder.

Combat Bonuses: +1 attack per melee when fighting a dragon or any reptilian, +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize a dragon in disguise/metamorphed to look like something else, impervious to poisons from reptiles, impervious to ALL dragon breath attacks AND magic spells cast by a dragon (but is vulnerable to the same spell cast by a human or other species of creature), +2 to strike,

parry, and disarm dragons and reptilian enemies only, +2 to pull punch (likes to toy with them), and has no fear of dragons or lizard beings.

Vulnerabilities: The wielder is vulnerable to dragon psionic attacks. Tends to be so arrogant and superior that he often underestimates the beasts. He who possesses Serpent Lord becomes obsessed with attaining a dragon's treasure as well as publicly humiliating them by defeating them in battle and allowing the beast to live only if it bows before him and calls him "master," or surrenders its treasure trove to him. Sometimes this is too much for a prideful dragon to take (+2 to save), and gives it renewed fury to fight and try to kill he who possesses the Serpent Lord. Other times, the cocky person torments or toys with his dragon victims for too long, often keeping one or two imprisoned or enslaved, and regularly beaten, tortured and humiliated.

Note: It is said that when one of the Serpent Lords was in the hands of an Old One's lieutenant, the range was three times greater, damage could be doubled or tripled on a whim, and as many as 20 adult dragons (or 40 hatchlings) could be pacified and controlled at a time. Just imagine an overlord with 20 dragons to protect him and enforce his will.

Then as now, there is always the evil or Anarchist dragon who chooses to willingly serve he who possesses a Serpent Lord. They may do so to share in the power, or to exact revenge against a mutual enemy, or in hopes of attaining some or all of the treasure he accumulates.

Ghost Whip

The Ghost Whip is a bullwhip made of a flexible, transparent material that feels like leather. For human-sized beings, it is 9 feet (2.7 m) long, but can grow as long as 20 feet (6.1 m) for beings that are much taller. The weapon requires only one hand to use and feels more like an extension of your own arm than an object to be used. As the name suggests, it has influence over the physical and the ethereal, able to let its wielder see the invisible and strike ghosts, Entities, Astral Travelers and creatures made of energy and shadows. Unlike most Fangs, the Ghost Whip turns its wielder into a calm, soft-spoken and deadly killer who goes quietly insane without most people realizing the depth of insanity and danger until it is too late.

He who possesses the Ghost Whip is alert, observant and treacherous, laying ambushes and traps, and attacking from behind or without warning. Watching and waiting, silent like a cobra, and striking when least expected. Allies beware, because over time, his loyalty and allegiances fall away until his schemes and desires are all that matter. Any friendship or act of kindness or support is a pretense with betrayal looming in the future.

The Essence: A tiny splinter of Al-vil.

Range: A bullwhip used in melee combat. It has a 9-20 foot (2.7 to 6.1 m) range depending on the size of the being who wields it; triple that length in the Astral Plane or the realm of the gods.

Damage: The whip inflicts 3D6 damage against most mortal opponents and creatures of magic, +10 to physical supernatural beings like vampires, werebeasts, and demons. 5D6 against Entities, Ghosts, Spirits, Astral Beings, energy beings, and Shadow Beasts even when they are in shadow. 1D6x10+20 direct to Hit Points against Spirits of Light, Elementals and similar beings of energy, light or the elements, or deities that symbolize the sun or the stars.

Special Abilities Granted to its Owner: Is able to understand and communicate with these ethereal and strange beings, sees the invisible (a constant power), including people made magically invisible, ghosts and spirits, energy beings and Elementals. The wielder of Ghost Whip recognizes and understands all Entities and its wielder is impervious to their psionic and magical attacks as well as possession, but not their physical attacks. Ghost Whip can strike and damage such beings even if they are normally ethereal in the physical plane. That includes Astral Travelers and spirits. **Note:** See the **Monsters & Animals** sourcebook for complete details about Entities, and **Dragons & Gods** for Elementals and Spirits of Light.

Ghost Whisper (special): Entities, ghosts, energy beings and Elementals recognize the Ghost Whip and know how dangerous it and its wielder are to them. They are fearful and intimidated by he who possesses such a weapon and respond to him as per his M.A. attribute +5, because few mortals in the physical realm can see, touch and hurt them as he can. Most do not dare attack or trouble him, especially lesser beings, and all are willing to communicate with him and consider what he has to say. Which means he may be able to convince them to attack a specific person or target, but they do not fight to the death and are likely to stop after 2D6 minutes, unless they, themselves, have a reason to fight or torment for a longer period.

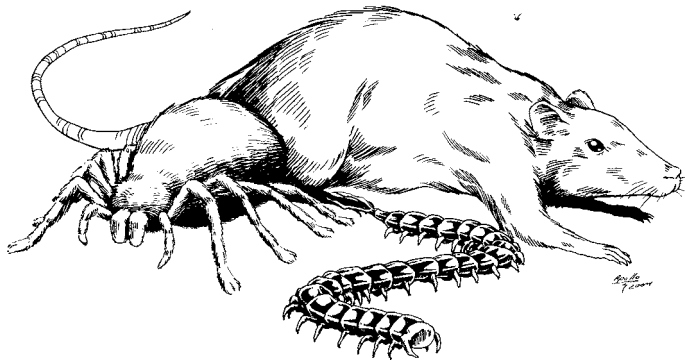
Ghostly Companions (special): He who possesses the Ghost Whip has 1D4+1 Poltergeists with him at all times. The Entities function like attack dogs and pranksters. And whenever one or more Tectonic Entities are present, he can take control of one of them and command it for 1D6+3 minutes.

Magic (special): The wielder of the Ghost Whip can cast each of the following spells up to three times per 24 hour period, each cast as if by a 10th level Wizard: Astral Projection, Banishment, Breathe Without Air, Commune with Spirits, Constrain Being, Control/Enslave Entity, Energy Bolt, Exorcism, Fear, Fingers of the Wind, Float in Air, Globe of Silence, Heavy Breathing, and See Wards.

Combat Bonuses: +1 attack per melee round when fighting Entities, energy beings, ethereal beings, and Elementals. +3 on Perception Rolls to identify supernatural possession and the presence of such beings and forces. +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, dodge, disarm and entangle, impervious to possession and the psionic and magical attacks of Entities, and unafraid of Entities, Spirits, Elementals and energy beings. +20% to Prowl skill. If he doesn't have the skill, he gets it at the base level of 45%.

Vulnerabilities: Holy Weapons and electricity inflict double damage to the wielder. He who possesses the Ghost Whip seems cool, calm and reliable. Steady as a rock in control almost all of the time. However, the character is becoming increasingly ruthless, paranoid and self-serving with every passing day. He keeps his machinations and treacherous schemes to himself, because he trusts no one and will turn on anyone if it benefits him. The Ghost Whip seems to attract Assassins, Thieves and psychics, though not usually Mind Mages.

Note: It is said that when the Ghost Whip was in the hands of one of the Old One's lieutenants, the range was double, damage could be doubled on a whim, magic spells were cast as if by a 30th level mage, and he could command 100 Haunting Entities, 100 Poltergeists, and 20 Greater Entities or Lesser Air or Fire Elementals.



Encounters at the Black Pit

Anyone who camps within a half mile (0.8 km) of the Black Pit may hear voices, and have strange dreams or nightmares about the Black Pit and dying there. G.M. discretion as to the nature and truthfulness of the dreams or the voices whispering in their heads. All of this gets worse once the character(s) enters the Black Pit — or not. Some people never experience bad dreams, voices, or frightening encounters.

Any of the encounters listed below can also happen outside the Black Pit, but are much less frequent and less extreme or life threatening. Moreover, most are terrestrial encounters such as one or more Faeries warning them that they should leave this evil place. No kind Faerie Folk will go inside the Black Pit. On the rare occasion that one does, such as the bold Pixie, it will not be for long, and it makes a fast exit at the first sign of a ghost, monster or trouble. The nastier, menacing and thieving Faerie Folk may make an appearance outside or inside the Black Pit, as might mortal thieves, bandits, spies, and con-artists.

Voices and Dreams: While characters of good alignment feel dread, and selfish alignments feel uncertain and wary, characters of evil alignment feel extra confident and bold the farther they travel inside the Black Pit. They feel as if something of great promise awaits them, if only they can find it. Most Anarchist and evil characters inside the Black Pit are willing to take chances they might not take when away from the place. Some may also feel the urge to lie, cheat, and do bad things to others they may encounter or even to their comrades. A small number hear voices or have dreams in which a humanoid shadow with 2D6 tentacles and 1D6 eyes appears and speaks about seizing opportunity, trusting no one, being ruthless and fierce, dark magic, and the majesty and power of the Old Ones, who they are encouraged to embrace and emulate. And some might hear a Fang pleading to be found and the glory of its use.

Note: The Entities, Faerie Folk, and other monsters are described in the **Monsters & Animals sourcebook**.

01-02% 1D4 Faeries appear to warn adventurers this is not a safe nor a good place and that they should go back to town and not come back. They will not reveal any secrets, but may regale people with stories about ghosts, monsters and curses. Some true, some not, all of them exaggerated. They will not enter the Black Pit.

03-05% A Kelpie out to kill people. It appears to be a beautiful black stallion that trots away when approached. It wants to lure one or a few adventurers away from their comrades so it can

transform and attack them. Runs off for the nearest body of water if the people it attacks prove to be more than it can handle.

06-08% A Brownie warns travelers this is not a safe nor a good place and that they should go back to town and not come back. That there is nothing of value in the Black Pit, only ghosts and danger. Brownies are shy creatures so it will not say much more before running off. He will not enter (or go any farther if inside) the Black Pit.

09-12% Two Kinnie Ger, a mated pair. They make their home somewhere nearby or inside the Black Pit. They often stalk adventurers who come to the Black Pit as well as adventurers who get separated and lost inside the tunnels; easy prey. The pair typically pick off one or a few people who have wandered off on their own or are at the tail end of a group. Dragging captured or slain prey away to finish off and eat! They run off if the person(s) they attack prove to be more dangerous and hard to kill than expected. **Note:** May substitute for a pair of Hairy Jacks or 3-4 Toadstools or Pucks.

13-16% A Leprechaun makes an appearance. He's here to chat and drink booze. The player characters' booze, of course. He doesn't know anything about the Black Pit that isn't common knowledge. This amicable and cheerful little fella is more interested in the adventurers and hearing their stories, especially about their successes, wealth and magic items. His goal is to get them drunk and trustful or distracted so he can pick pockets and steal valuables for his pot of gold. Leaves at the first sign of trouble, but might return when most of the group is asleep to rob them. **Note:** Can substitute with a thieving *Pixie*, or an evil or Anarchist *Saytr* or a *Hairy Jack*, though the latter may clearly seem malevolent and dangerous, but won't attack a group that is too large and likely to be able to overpower him. He'll lurk in the shadows a distance away and wait for an opportunity to strike, or attack when the adventurers exit the Black Pit and think the worst is behind them.

17-20% A wicked Dead Moon Hag. She is looking for plunder and/or someone to eat. She is especially fond of eating Gnomes and young humans, especially beautiful young women, but she's not that fussy. She pretends to be an innocent old woman who is looking for her pet cat, dog or grandchild (and his playmate) and it/he/she/they went into the Black Pit even though she told them not to. When asked why she isn't afraid to go into the Black Pit alone, she insists the legends and tall tales are gross exaggerations to thrill and scare the tourists, and that any dangerous people or ghosts are deep inside the Pit. She may ask the group to help her find her missing loved one, because she's afraid they'll get lost and die of thirst or hunger. **Note:** If appropriate or desired for the player group, she may have some teammates. 2-4 Bogies that ride on her shoulders and back, tucked under her scarf or shawl, and in the folds of her baggy, layered clothing. She has a cane or wooden staff to support her seemingly frail body, but has a dagger hidden in each of her boots.

21-23% 1D4+2 Toadstools that hate "big people" and are out for blood.

24-26% Three Pucks and one Toadstool looking for a fight. They may kill or just try to beat up and rob "big people."

Ghosts & Troublesome Entities:

27-35% Poltergeists are mischievous spirits with small intelligences and little or no memory of their past life. They feed on the P.P.E. and emotions of the living (so do Haunting Entities, below), and like to startle, scare and confound the living. That means making noises such as footsteps, heavy breathing, bang-

ing and thumping. They also knock over items, stack skulls, send bones clattering across the floor, blow out candles, touch and trip people, and make loose objects hover and possibly fly right at people. None of this is life threatening or seriously damaging, but it can be scary and unnerving. It's the Poltergeist's idea of fun. 1D4 of them are encountered.

36-40% A Syphon Entity has inhabited an object such as a piece of jewelry, amulet, gemstone, lantern, comb, tool, weapon, small shield, helmet, or a skull. It encourages anyone who takes possession of that item to do selfish and bad things, and/or to take dangerous chances.

41-45% 1D4 Ghosts of those of good alignment who died recently or long ago try to warn people that only death and sorrow awaits them in the Black Pit, and that they should leave and never return. The Haunting Entities never reveal what dangers lurk ahead, nor do they ever mention the Fangs of the Old Ones. No good spirit ever mentions them or reveals their location under any circumstance. Quite the opposite, if a character or group, even if they are heroes and of good alignment, are getting too close, the ghosts do whatever they can to lead them away from it by any means possible. Sometimes that's a wild goose chase about finding a treasure that doesn't really exist. Other times it may include leading them into the arms of bandits, evil Entities or monsters. Better that these foolish and obstinate adventurers perish than unleash the evil of the Old Ones.

46-50% Haunting Entities of evil alignment are malignant echos from the past. They harass, lie to and trick people, leading them in circles or into the clutches of bandits, deadlier Entities, and monsters out of spite and resentment for the living. They are happy to see people suffer and die, or get scared out of their wits and run screaming out of the Black Pit. Most don't know anything about the Fangs of the Old Ones or where one might be hidden. If one does know, it's because it sought the weapon while alive and died trying to acquire it, so it is not going to help someone else accomplish what it could not. 1D4 of them are encountered.

51-54% A Tectonic Entity made of bones attacks. This is a hodgepodge of mismatched bones and skulls to build a humanoid, bipedal shaped body with which to attack and kill. Like all Tectonic Entities it is driven to inflict pain and suffering upon mortals while it feeds on their emotions and P.P.E. energy. To get the P.P.E. energy, which is doubled at the moment of death, the Tectonic Entity needs to kill its humanoid prey. Those with high amounts of P.P.E. energy are attractive, but the Entity knows they are also the most dangerous, so it is more likely to go after someone with 2-40 P.P.E. before attacking somebody with more. Destroy its physical body and the threat is over, at least for now.

All Tectonic Entities in Physical Form have 4 attacks per melee and are +1 on initiative, +3 to strike, +2 to parry and dodge, +2 to save vs magic, +1 to save vs psionic attacks, +10 to save vs Horror Factor, and +15 to damage due to a P.S. 30. May also attack via Telekinesis as per the psionic ability. Has 20 I.S.P. (See the **Monsters & Animals sourcebook**, page 53, for complete details.)

This Collection of Bones Tectonic Entity has 150 S.D.C., an A.R. 10, P.S. 30, Spd 12, and four attacks per melee round. Damage: 2D6+15 or via Telekinesis.

55-58% A Tectonic Entity made of Leather and Rags. Same as #51-54% above, but has 200 S.D.C., a Natural A.R. 11, P.S. 30, Spd 12, and four attacks per melee round. Damage: 2D4+15 or via Telekinesis.

59-61% Tectonic Entity made of Metal, Armor, Shields, Debris and Weapons, making it one of the deadliest of all. Same as #51-54% above, but has 500 S.D.C., a Natural A.R. 16, P.S. 30, Spd 12, and four attacks per melee round. Damage: 5D6+15 or via Telekinesis.

62-65% 1D4+2 Tectonic Entities, each of which has Animated a Skeleton. Being attacked by Skeletons can be a harrowing experience. Each has 90 S.D.C., a Natural A.R. of 9, Spd 12, and four attacks per melee round. Damage: 2D6+15 or via Telekinesis.

66-70% Madman. Some are violent, some friendly, others shy and reclusive, some are paranoid, or schizophrenic, or delusional. All are out of their heads and drawn to the Black Pit for any number of reasons. They may be waiting for their teammates or a sign from a deity; or believe being there is their destiny, but can't remember what that destiny is; or live in or around the Black Pit with their "friends," the ghosts, Faeries, monsters, or memories of people they lost in the Black Pit.

Some are thieves and others are violent and attack adventurers until they leave his area of the tunnel, or pay him a toll for passage (anything from a single silver or gold coin to food or water, candy or alcohol, to a trinket like a feather or shiny object), or until they are able to physically restrain or slay him.

The most dangerous are the ones who search for, and probably speak to, a **Fang of the Old Ones**. A quest for power they refuse to give up, though they may not even remember why they want it so badly or what it is they seek. Some of these are serial killers because the voice(s) from the abyss tell them to do so.

"It's mine! You can't have it!"

"What's yours?"

"Don't play dumb. I know why you're here. It's mine!"

"We don't want it."

"Liar! Die!!"

And attacks and fights until the intruders or he are killed or restrained. This battle can be fierce under any circumstances, but can be really bad if the insane seeker of a Fang is a skilled warrior or powerful spell caster such as a 1D6 level Knight, Soldier, Mercenary Warrior, Thief, Assassin, Priest, Wizard, Witch, Summoner, or Mind Mage, as it is often those with the courage, means and learning who seek the power and knowledge of such ancient artifacts as the Fangs of the Old Ones and who explore places like the Black Pit in search of fame, power, or wealth.

Of course, "it" is one of the Fangs, but the person has been driven insane by his obsession to attain one and his inability to do so. Crazy, he still searches the labyrinth, probably the same tunnels over and over again. He has driven away all who ever cared about him and squandered his fortune on ill-fated expedition after expedition.

Not all Madmen are murderous or violent. Some are just crazy beggars who need food and water, but refuse to leave the Black Pit. If dragged away they will find their way back.

Others speak to the dead and other spirits (and even a Fang) and do not want to leave their ghostly "friends." If dragged away they will find their way back. Moreover, this madman may be protected by 1D6 Poltergeists and/or Haunting Entities, or even a Tectonic Entity, which attack when they think their "friend" is being attacked or taken away against his will. They also bring him water and food stolen from adventurers or taken from the dead. Gifts from adventurers of food, water, soap, and maybe a new set of clothes or a blanket are appreciated but unnecessary.

In ALL cases, not even a psionic probe, Telepathy or Mind Bond can pierce the veil of insanity and reveal the madman's past or what "it" may be, or who his "friends and voices" or "god" are. The insane attracted to the Black Pit, or driven insane by the dark forces at work there, are too far gone to reveal much of anything. And whatever may be glimpsed will be a jumble of images, thoughts and emotions all out of context.

71-75% Human Bandits. There should be one bandit for each player character. Each Thief is one level less than the player character, plus 1D4 second level bandits. The bandits may be Thieves out to mug the character or player group via finesse and picking pockets, or at sword point, and are happy to take obvious items of value and run off without any further incident of violence. If challenged or attacked, they fight only long enough to escape.

76-80% Mixed Group of Bandits. There should be one bandit for each player character. Each Thief is one level less than the player character, plus 1D4 second level bandits. This is a racially mixed group of bandits, probably a combination of humans, Orcs, and Goblins or an Elf or Dwarf or two. They are thugs, a mixed group of Thieves and Mercenary Warriors who are used to taking what they want by force. They threaten and fight anyone who challenges them, retreating only when it appears they are clearly outmatched or half of them are seriously injured or slain! They are not out to kill people, but they have no problem fighting and hurting people, and if necessary, killing a few people when their victims refuse to cooperate. Sometimes an example needs to be made.

81-85% Mixed Group of Bandits. There should be one bandit for each player character. Each Thief is the same level as the player character, plus a leader who is a 3rd level Wizard, Witch, or Mind Mage. They may be all the same race or a racially diverse group that combines humans with any of the other common people of the region, probably a combination of humans, Orcs, Goblins, Elves, Dwarves or Centaurs. They are thugs, a mixed group of Thieves and Men-at-Arms O.C.C.s (Mercenary Warrior, Ranger, etc.) who are used to taking what they want by force and are quick to use deadly force.

86-90% Treasure Hunters. These are probably a group of adventurers and fortune hunters very much like the player group. Those of good alignment may try to be helpful, sharing food and water, tending to the injured and sharing information. Others are more wary of strangers and keep their plans and what they know to themselves.

Selfish Treasure Hunters are likely to try to get information from the player group and others they encounter but don't like to share what they know, or the resources they have, with others. They hold their secrets tightly and may look for ways to mislead those they consider competing rivals. That may include lies and misdirection that lead the player characters on wild goose chases, to dead ends, and into danger. Such a group may also steal from others.

Evil aligned Treasure Hunters are similar to the selfish ones, only they are willing to take more extreme action like mugging, fighting, killing and capturing and selling rivals into slavery or trading them for supplies from slavers and pirates, and unscrupulous merchants. Lopan is safer than most places and there are generally more good people than bad, but there are still cutthroats and evildoers.

Monster Encounters: Since Lopan, as it is known today, was settled by humans, it is largely populated by humans and their allies, most notably Elves and Dwarves. There are not many of the

people humans indelicately call the monster races: Trolls, Orcs, Goblins, Kobolds, Wolfen, and others. However, there are those non-humans who come to visit the Garden of the Gods or to participate in the Lopanic Games, as well as the occasional pirate, thug and fortune hunter.

And of course there are wild animals and monsters that may make the Black Pit their home.

91% 1D4 Ogres who will take advantage of those they think they can defeat and rob, or kill and loot.

92% 1D4+2 Orcs who will take advantage of those they think they can defeat and rob, or kill and loot.

93% One Troll who leads 1D4 Goblins. They are all cutthroats who will take advantage of those they think they can defeat and rob, or kill and loot. May be substituted with 1D4 Minotaurs.

94% One Dragon Wolf or Lizard Mage investigating the Black Pit.

95% 1D4 hungry Gruunors attack. May be substituted with 1D4 Rock Crawlers or Giant Cave Spiders (not found on Lopan, and yet ...).

96% One Shadow Beast attacks and tries to kill whoever tries to get past it. It never explains why or what it may be protecting. May substitute with a Zavor (which is bad news).

97% A Mummy Immortalis searching for you know what. May substitute with a Scarecrow or Sphinx!

98-00% One Spirit of Light appears and warns the adventurer(s) that there is nothing worth their time or their lives inside the Black Pit and tells them to turn back. First, it pleads with them to turn back, saying that despite their good intentions, they threaten the balance of good and evil and must not advance any farther. If the adventurers refuse and continue on, it may throw up some barriers. Like the Ghosts of good alignments, if the Spirit of Light cannot convince them to abandon their current course, it will try to mislead them on one fool's errand and one dead end after another. It may also run them into evildoers, Entities or monsters that will hopefully make them turn tail and leave, or kill them. Better they die than unleash the evil of the Old Ones.

However, a Spirit of Light has a few other cards to play. Their somewhat twisted sense of balance might have it think, if these heroes are so hellbent on fighting monsters or finding great adventure, or challenging the Old Ones (or forces they don't understand), it may send them to the *Land of the Damned!*

There are two ways to get to the Land of the Damned. One is the labyrinth carved out by the archaic creatures that dug their way out of their prison only to perish in the world that had forgotten them. This is a long, arduous underground trek that finally opens up to a natural cave network that leads out into the **Darkest Heart**.

The other is a dimensional portal that instantly teleports them into **the Bleakness** and too close for comfort near the fabled Citadel.

Note: Four Spirits of Light, all the same or each different, appear to anyone getting too close to one of the Fangs of the Old Ones. They don't play games or engage in deception. They tell the travelers they must turn back. Period. Sorry, but they cannot allow them to pass. If the Spirits are rebuffed, they attack with deadly force, even if the adventurers are of good alignment and heroes. If the adventurers wise up, the Spirits of Light allow them to retreat, and do not pursue them. If the heroes do not relent, the Spirits of Light fight to the death with the intention of destroying them.



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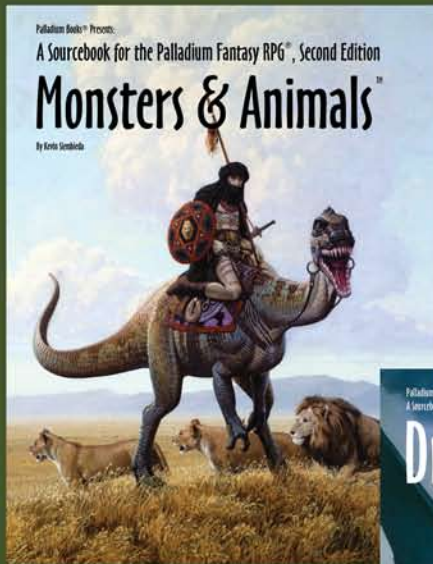
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