

THUNDERSCAPE™

THE WORLD OF ADEN



THUNDERSCAPE WORLD 08

Guilds of Aden

PALEFINDER®
ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE



THE WORLD OF ADEN ORIGINALLY CREATED BY SHANE LACY HENSLEY

Thunderscape World 8:

GUILDS OF ADEN

Written by Shawn Carman & Rich Wulf



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Thunderscape World 8: Guilds of Aden

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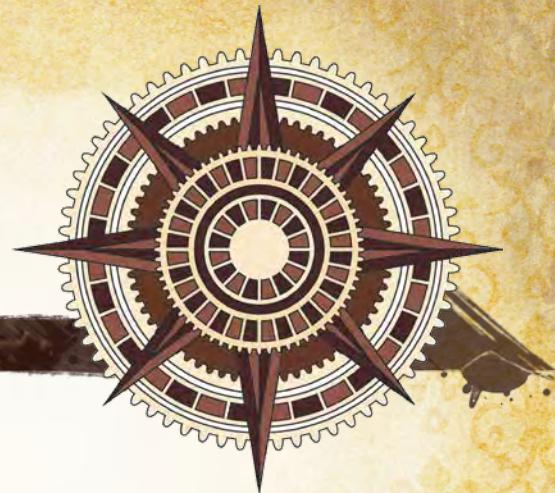
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GUILDS OF ADEN



Irina stepped into her small, stone house and sighed at the relative coolness of its interior, grateful to be out of the searing sunlight. After all these years she still hadn't truly gotten used to the heat. Not for the first time, she wondered what her life would have been like if she had been somewhere else, anywhere else, but the Rhanate when the Darkfall had trapped her in this forsaken desert.

That's a fool's thinking, she chided herself as she enjoyed a long draught of water from one of the cooling jars she kept running in the building that served as her clinic, workshop, and home. Anywhere else and I could have died, and if I hadn't been here, how many might have died because I wasn't here to help them. It was selfish and immodest to think such things, her upbringing in the Church of All Saints was not so long ago that she didn't still feel a little guilty, but it was true. She'd plied her trade in Steel Waters for years now, ever since the Darkfall, and she had helped a lot of people. It wasn't the life she'd expected when she was younger, but she didn't really regret it either. Good works were noble, no matter how you ended up doing them.

"I have to admit, I'm very disappointed you didn't listen to me," a voice came from the doorway behind her. "Not surprised, of course, but disappointed."

Irina stopped drinking and slowly put the jar back down. She sighed. "I really hoped that it wouldn't come to this, Ssark."

There was the soft hissing sound that passed for rapacian laughter. "As did I. I thought the business arrangement that I offered you was very simple and very attractive. But clearly you didn't think so."

"You know what life here is like, Ssark," Irina insisted. "I won't charge people the rates you expect for medicine and repairs just so you can get your cut. People will die."

"They will," Ssark nodded sadly. "Too bad you have to be one of the first, but then I suppose an example is a good thing, yes?" He withdrew a terrible curved blade from his belt and brandished it casually. "It makes people... think."

"It does," Irinia agreed. "But I'm not the one who'll be an example."

Now the rapacian burst into genuine guffaws. "Oh, Irina, that's too funny! Rich, even! How many times have you told the people here in town that you don't kill? But I'm supposed to be afraid of you? Ridiculous. Come on, let's do this quickly."

Irina shook her head. "You missed an important word. 'Anymore.' I told them I don't kill anymore."

Ssark's hooded visage narrowed. "What does that mean?"

"It means," a new voice said, "that she doesn't have to kill anymore." There was a blur of movement and a flash of steel. Ssark hissed once and then was on the ground, blood pooling rapidly around him. A hooded figure stood over him. "She has paid her dues, long ago, and needs pay no further."

"Thank you, sister," Irina said. She felt very tired all of a sudden.

"Think nothing of it," the assassin said, bowing slightly. "The Sisterhood remembers those who serve." She looked down at the dead rapacian with disgust. "I suppose I'll have to take care of... this."

Irina smiled sweetly. "If you wouldn't mind, of course."

The term "guild" has a large number of connotations, most of which predate Aden's Age of Thunder by several centuries. Many find the term somewhat archaic, harkening back to a time before the world was opened up by magical and technological means, allowing faster transport between distant locations and more effective communication. Generally speaking, the term implies a coalition of craftsmen of similar tradition, and while that definition still has application in the modern world, the term guild has also expanded to include any large number of individuals with common interests and some vague similarity in their daily work.

THE ANCIENT & INTREPID SOCIETY OF CARTOGRAPHERS

This organization, more commonly called by the simpler "Cartographer's Society," is one of the oldest currently operating in Aden if one discounts more esoteric groups such as the Seer Order and the various arcanist guilds that have existed in one form or another over the course of centuries. Its fortunes have waxed and waned over the course of more than a thousand years, but even the most devastating disasters have failed to eradicate it completely, and not even the Darkfall has proven capable of such a feat, at least not yet.

History

Unlike many aspects of Aden's history, the formation of the Cartographer's Society can be traced with a reasonable degree of certainty back to the days of the Great War and perhaps even beyond that. Before the war began, the political landscape of Aden was very different, and was home to a vastly larger number of nations much, much smaller than those that currently exist. Even before the Great War, skirmishes between these nations, kingdoms, fiefdoms and tribal homelands was frequent, with borders constantly being redrawn based on conflicts, treaties, and agreements of all sort. Skilled cartographers and explorers gradually became considered valuable commodities, because their service could ensure that the boundaries between holdfasts were clearly defined and documented. Some in power used such abilities to discreetly annex desired holdings, and the more elaborate the map the more legitimacy such claims possessed. Many skilled individuals, men and women of discovery and learning, chose to reject being used for such greedy, political purposes, and began to communicate with one another in an attempt to share knowledge and information in a more efficient manner. Thus the first stirrings of the Cartographer's Society began in the Known Lands.



The earliest days of the Cartographer's Society were relatively innocent, with skilled individuals working together for the betterment of their craft. As time went on and history marched toward the onset of the Great War, however, there were many incidents where the Society chose to interfere with events, ostensibly for the betterment of the people in the Known Lands. Borders were tweaked to ensure resources were possessed by a certain type of ruler, historical records were carefully altered to ensure lineages, and other minor acts of deception. The Seer Order may have been involved in this as well, given that organization's predilection for such activities and their preference for acting through cat's paws, but it may well be that the Society chose such a path on their own. Perhaps because of these manipulations, the Society began to develop a reputation as cloistered and arrogant academics, and not without just cause.

The Rose Accords were the true beginning of the Cartographer's Society as it currently exists. By that point there had been so much cooperation and intrigue among the various subgroups throughout the continent that the organization existed in all but name. When rumors of the Accords being planned began to spread, the organization seized upon the opportunity to formalize their position. A great conclave was hastily convened, and for a week the leaders of various groups throughout the Known Lands debated what role they could and should play in the potential for this new chance at peace. The matter was decided with minimum of conflict, and when the rulers of Aden's nascent nations convened at the village of Rose, members of the Cartographer's Society were there with the most accurate and up to date maps available in order to offer their assistance, which was gratefully accepted as new borders were established and agreed upon for the first time in centuries.

With the success of the Accords, the Cartographers' Society entered into a golden age of its own, with carte blanche to establish houses in any agreeable nation and gradually accumulating the resources necessary to begin true exploration of the islands and wilderness areas that had remained unavailable to them during the Great War. Unfortunately, with their increasing resources, capable membership, and boundless enthusiasm, the Society completed the majority of its tasks within a matter of a few centuries. By the time the Rose Accords celebrated their three hundredth year, the Known Lands were well and truly known, with very little in the way of major mysteries remaining to be discovered. The Society had, by this time, expanded its activities to include significant archeological pursuits, such as investigations into the ruins found in Carraway and the High Steppes, as well as ancient mysteries such as the Lord of the Pale and the depths of the Skar, but nevertheless, the need for their services waned significantly as the Golden Age marched on. The Society's fortunes waned then, with membership declining and resources, while still sufficient, became more strictly regulated to prevent loss of operational ability. With few frontiers remaining, the Society began to turn its attention outward, seeking to discover any new land and resources that might exist beyond the boundaries of the known continent and its immediately surrounding islands.

Four the past six centuries, the Society has been thwarted consistently in its efforts to accomplish this goal, much to its leadership's intense chagrin. Attempts to explore to the east and west of the Known Lands

New Trait: Cartographer's Society

You are a member in good standing of the Ancient and Intrepid Society of Cartographer, and as such you have access to their chapter houses in major cities. You may stay at a chapter house for free rather than paying for an inn, and you may purchase mundane adventuring supplies at 10% less than their standard rate from the house's quartermaster.

has been typically thwarted by turbulent seas and natural phenomenon, including hurricanes, typhoons, water spouts, and any other number of dangerous storms that seem incredibly common, almost daily, when one gets more than a week past the sight of shore in either direction. In the north, numerous expeditions have been attempted to discover what lies beyond the frozen wastes north of Ionara, but again, these attempts have been failures, owing mostly to the fact that the environment is incredibly hostile and dangerous, and that it appears that when one travels far enough north, there is a robust and intensely hostile population of neferal giants that dominate the coldest regions of that continent. It is only in the south that the Society has experienced any degree of success, and even then only marginally.

South of the Known Lands, beyond the boundaries of the island that make up the Misland Republics, there are a number of small islands, island chains, and even an archipelago or two. Most of these landmasses exist roughly two weeks south by southeast of the Misland boundaries, and are difficult to reach due to natural weather phenomenon similar to but less intense than that found in the west and east, and due to extensive piracy in the region. The largest of these landmasses is an archipelago known as the Misari Expansion, so named because of a large exodus of Misari tribes who deserted the Mislands when they began to be extensively settled by newcomers from the mainland.

Current Status

In the years since the Darkfall, the Cartographer's Society has found new purpose and prosperity. The chaos of the cataclysm has threatened a great deal of the world's knowledge, and the Society has proven one of the safest strongholds of remaining knowledge, which its members have been willing and eager to redistribute in an attempt to mitigate the suffering of Aden's people. Many of the society's members died in the Darkfall, but not as many as other organizations. Because of the tendency for chapter houses to be located in national capitals, a surprising amount of the infrastructure survived, and those members who did die often left significant portions of their estates to the organization, ensuring that it has had the resources necessary to weather the storm intact. With the loss of vast swaths of the wilderness to the nocturnals, skilled explorers and navigators have once again become extremely valuable to those who have the means and the need to venture outside the protected settlements of the Known Lands.

A particular undertaking that has galvanized the Cartographer's Society in recent years has been a renewed interest in attempting to discover any significant land masses beyond the Known Lands. The nature of the Darkfall being such an unknown has convinced some among the group's leadership that it may have been limited to the Known Lands, and that other continents or even archipelagos may exist relatively nearby that may be free of nocturnals and corrupted. This particular endeavor has led the society to invest significant resources in a new, prototype airship of unparalleled advanced technology, and has been conducted largely from the society's master house in the port city of Balaquim. Sir Roderick Stormclaw, an elder of the society and a former Arastinian paladin, has been given command of the endeavor and has labored tirelessly to create a one-of-a-kind vessel, the *Intrepid*, that he hopes to use to reach heretofore undiscovered new lands. Unfortunately, this particular undertaking has drawn more than its fair share of attention, most of it unwanted. The *Intrepid*'s revolutionary design is based largely on new technology developed by the so-called Free



Thinkers of Columbey, an enclave of philosophers, arcanists, and scientists who escaped the ascension of Lord Urbane and the birth of Urbana. The augmented engine allows the Intrepid to travel twice as far in the same amount of time as a traditional airship, and the ship itself has been enchanted to allow for vastly more storage than any other ship of similar size. These two unique features afford the Intrepid a greater chance of success than any other ship has ever experienced, but has made its existence the subject of enormous interest by Eye in Urbane, and even Lord Urbane himself knows about its potential.

Holdings

During its heyday, the Cartographer's Society could claim a hundred chapter houses across the Known Lands and its immediate islands, one in every city large enough to warrant being called such. Unfortunately, a large portion of those settlements have been destroyed since the Darkfall, and with them the society's holdings. There are still chapter houses in the capital of every nation, or in the case of the Misland Republics, in each self-governing province. Unfortunately, not all of them retain true stewardship by the society, and in some cases have been largely co-opted by outside sources. The chapter house in Bulgrak of the High Steppes, for instance, has largely been abandoned due to the hostile instability of the Grand Kazaan, and while those who remain there claim to be members of the society, no one outside of the city has ever heard of them, casting a long shadow of suspicion on their claims. Likewise, the chapter house in Regorra remains empty, because the entirety of that city is lost to the immolation of the Burning Coast.

While the Society's chapter houses are its most public holdings, and the ones in which the most wealth is concentrated, the organization owns a vast number of other estates and businesses throughout the Known Lands, most of which were bequeathed to it by members who have died. The Society does not openly advertise that it controls such things, preferring to reap the benefits of anonymous ownership. Every major metropolitan center has safe houses and secret storage facilities hidden among neighborhoods and business districts, many of which have residents or operating businesses as a cover (and an additional revenue stream for the Society, in the instance of the latter).

Prominent Members

Today, the most prominent members of the Cartographer's Society are those who are attempting to bring the organization back into the limelight through one of the various endeavors currently underway. The leaders for these activities, of course, are those situations in Balaquim and Sea Reach, primarily, although there are prominent figures in other cities as well, most notably Mekanus.

Sir Roderick Stormclaw

There are few elves with a more storied pedigree than Roderick Stormclaw, a veteran of countless battles and as noble a soul as most are ever likely to meet. For an elf he seems aged, which is true, given that he is well over four hundred years old. He sports a thin, immaculately maintained beard that is a wonder among those who believe such things are not known among elvenkind, and dresses in a flawless military uniform complete with numerous medals and citations each day. His demeanor is always calm and thoughtful, never rushed, but when pressed and he must resort to physical altercation, it is immediately obvious that he has lost none of his centuries of training and experience despite his age.

Adalgar Dittrich

A severe looking man whom most believe may never have smiled in his entire life, Adalgar is a staunch supporter of the Cartographer's Society in one of the most hostile environments imaginable: the courts of Mekanus. Despite the ruthless and cutthroat nature of politics in the world's largest city, Adalgar has accomplished what some believed would be impossible: he has won the favor of the Iron Tyrant, or at least

as close as is possible with a man like Marlek Urbane. Adalgar carefully uses every opportunity to remind the lord of Urbana that resources must be available on islands and undiscovered lands, and that finding and making use of them would likely cost a great deal less than a deadly war with neighboring nations. Whether or not Lord Urbane has taken any of Adalgar's advice to heart remains to be seen.

THE CRIMSON SISTERHOOD

Whispers of the Crimson Sisterhood have been told across the Known Lands for centuries, equally as often as cautionary tales to frighten children as genuine concern over potential danger toward those who have enemies who want them dead. Allegedly, the Sisterhood is an organization of all female assassins who ply their trade on behalf of anyone willing to pay their supposedly exorbitant fee. Any particularly powerful or dangerous woman who appears in the public eye will quickly be rumored to be a member of the Sisterhood, a practice that appears in all known nations regardless of cultural differences. Most scholars and historians, however, dismiss the idea of the organization, believing it a folktale that has been used as a cover for individual assassins over the course of generations.

The truth is somewhat more complicated.

The Crimson Sisterhood does exist, and some of those believed to be members have actually been indoctrinated into the group. Some of its members are in fact assassins, and work tirelessly to fund the Sisterhood as a whole. The organization's goal is not purely to sell death, however, as it was created for a much more altruistic purpose: to protect women from the predatory impulses of men.

History

The Sisterhood's origins began in the High Steppes, where the more brutal and primitive tribes were still ruled with an iron fist by men, and the women were treated like little better than property or livestock. Women in more egalitarian tribes saw this and worked together to try and better the lot of their countrywomen. In some instances, they tried to use education, to encourage the oppressed women to better their own lot. In others, they attempted to discretely manipulate the power structure of certain tribes to ensure more altruistic individuals had more influence. When all else failed, however, a handful of extremely competent female Steppesmen would take direct, violent action against the worst offenders, leaving power vacuums that often (but sadly, not always) resulted in better living conditions for the women of the tribe. Slowly, the nascent Sisterhood began to alter the shape of gender relations among the High Steppes tribes, although they had to be very careful to keep their activities a secret, or risk not only their own lives but setting back all they had accomplished and possibly ensuring far worse.

As the Sisterhood began to experience its first successes, although it was not yet calling itself by any organized name, the leaders of the group and their pronounced skill at discreetly dispatching troublesome targets came to the attention of another, older organization. Although little knowledge of this other organization remains even in the annals of the Sisterhood, is alleged to have been called the Hemlock Society and to have been, in effect, a guild of assassins. The Society employed some of the nascent Sisterhood's finest warriors, which gave the Sisterhood sufficient funds to begin operating on a larger scale. However, within a few years, it became apparent that the Hemlock Society viewed the Sisters as tools, either to accomplish tasks for their own end (and keeping the lion's share of the payment) or as a smokescreen to conceal their own efforts. Indeed, it was members of the Society who first began to circulate rumors of the "Crimson Sisterhood" in the first place.



This deception and manipulation was exactly the sort of thing that had led to the Sisterhood's founders banding together in the first place, and the surviving founders, while extremely aged, were incensed beyond reason at what they regarded as betrayal. The Sisters began planning immediately, gradually taking over more and more of the risk for the assassinations carried out by the Society in order to make its members complacent and overconfident. When this years-long gambit finally reached its zenith, the Sisterhood struck and wiped out the members of the Hemlock Society to a man, seizing all their resources and accepting the name of the Crimson Sisterhood in reality as well as in rumor and happenstance.

In the centuries since the Sisterhood formally organized, it has maintained a relatively low profile. The Golden Age of Aden was a peaceful time and made significant changes to society difficult to accomplish without attracting a great deal of attention, which the Sisters recognized would be a very unfortunate thing for their agenda, and likely result in others pushing back against what they hoped to accomplish. The group has taken great care to carefully influence as many situations and individuals as possible to ensure that women have received accolades and influence in accordance with their abilities.

Current Status

The nature of the Sisterhood is such that its members are exceptionally skilled and capable individuals. As a result, the organization suffered fewer losses than might be expected during the Darkfall, as the Sisters were more than prepared to defend themselves and those around them. Not all survived, of course, but the organization's period of disarray following the cataclysm was significantly less than many other groups endured.

More so than perhaps any other group, the Crimson Sisterhood has capitalized upon the chaos following the Darkfall to try and further its agenda despite the many other concerns facing the world. Although the Sisterhood has less than a hundred members, they have actively recruited since the Darkfall and attempted to have operatives near the power centers of all known nations. Thus far, the effort has been largely successful, with the Sisterhood having agents placed near positions of power in most of the nations of the Known Lands. The nations that have presented a problem thus far include Le'Ciel (due primarily to the chaotic post-Darkfall condition of that nation and its current lack of centralized leadership), Aramyst (for much the same reasons as Le'Ciel), and two of the provinces of the Misland Republics (where the Sisterhood lacks representation among the Misari). The most successful attempts for the organization have been in the Rhanate, Vanora, and the High Steppes, where members or close allies are responsible for actual governance over large portions of land and can ensure that the Sisterhood's progressive interests are seen after.

Holdings

The Crimson Sisterhood has no formal holdings. Individual members have properties and resources that they allow the organization to make use of as per the oaths they swear upon joining the group, but the group itself holds no property. This is an issue both of simplicity and secrecy, as it minimizes overhead considerations and prevents anyone from discovering the true owner of whatever front the Sisterhood might maintain.

That said, certain holdings belonging to individual members are made such use of that they may as well belong to the organization for all intents and purposes. One such example is the colorfully named *Thirsty Bastard* tavern in the city of Trubbs. Nestled amid the deserts of the Rhanate, Trubbs is an odd place under the most charitable of descriptions. The *Thirsty Bastard* is one of a series of taverns operated by a former denizen of Vanora and Steel Waters named Jai Ling, a ridiculously charismatic man with an almost inhuman knowledge of alcohol and its infinite variety of combinations. The *Bastard* is the tavern Ling takes the most active role in, despite the fact that he does not own it, unlike all the others he oversees. The *Bastard* is owned by Rhan Tresten, the city's ruler, and she for all intents and purposes, she holds her court within its noisy, boisterous confines. Tresten is a member of the Sisterhood and offers all those members who need it a safe place to hide, rest, recuperate, or celebrate, whatever the case may be depending on the circumstances. Ling may be aware of the nature of the arrangement, for it seems that he and Tresten have few secrets between them, but if so he has never given any indication of it. Indeed, to do so would likely be to invite his death; as a man, he has no place in the Sisterhood and is not entitled to any of its secrets.

Prominent Members

As mentioned previously, there are no shortage of powerful women in Aden whose detractors are quick to suggest they are members of the Crimson Sisterhood. Most of these assertions are grossly inaccurate, but a small number are correct.

Jyra Trestan

The Rhan of Trubbs is widely considered one of the most likely candidates for membership in the Crimson Sisterhood, and she has never made any attempt to deny such allegations. Indeed, she has a rather prominent tattoo of a crimson scimitar on her neck, which only furthers such allegations. Many believe she is the organization's leader, although there is nothing to substantiate such a claim. Trestan is a member of the Sisterhood, as well as one of its most accomplished warriors and, when necessary, assassins. Her most prominent role, however, is to maintain a public persona and keep the rumors about her leadership alive through whatever means possible. In doing so, she diverts attention from the organization's true leadership and its activities.

Lilith

The Black Sorceress of the Wicked City likely has more rumors circulated about her than any other person in the whole of Aden, excluding possibly only Lord Urbane himself. One of the many that are whispered about her concerns her potential membership in the Crimson Sisterhood. Lilith is aware of and amused by the rumors, for although she is well acquainted with the Sisterhood and some of its members, she is not a member herself. She has actually been offered membership before, but Lilith prefers to avoid commitments whenever possible and would never agree to join an order that could call upon her to fulfill duties at their whim. However, she does see great benefit in maintaining close ties to the group and occasionally training with them. The rumor that she is an accomplished duelist as well as a gifted spellcaster is not a rumor, after all.

THE GREY MASTERS

Off the western coast of Arasteen lie the Grey Isles. Surrounded by dangerous reefs and plagued by constant storms, these islands are inhospitable to life. Yet it is here that the Radiant Order's oldest enemies make their home. The Grey (as the natives call themselves) are a barbaric lot, shaped by their harsh environment.

These expert sailors are notorious for evading the Arastinian navy, allowing them to stage daring raids deep into the mainland. Grey warriors are known for their tenacity as well as their cruelty. Though Arasteen's Radiant Knights are better equipped, organized, and numerous, an experienced Grey raider is a deadly enemy for any knight. Yet even these terrifying warriors are not the greatest danger of the Grey Isles. That honor falls to their rulers - the Grey Masters.

The Grey Masters are an ancient sect of necromancers that trace their history back to well before the Peace of the Rose. They are the greatest known masters of the dark arts in modern Aden, with the exception of certain powerful demons and nocturnals. Many Grey Masters have embraced their craft so completely that they have transformed themselves into liches or mummies. They use their terrible power to protect their people and to smite their ancient enemies - the Radiant Order.

History

The Grey Islanders have occupied their island home since at least two centuries before the Peace of the Rose. Though the Masters do not share their historical records with outsiders, it is known that they formerly served one of the Twin Tyrants, powerful entities that instigated the Great War. During that conflict, Archmage Zeloch and his people fled to the Grey Isles to escape the chaos of the war. Zeloch proclaimed himself the immortal lord of the Grey Isles and named the order of necromancers that followed him the Grey Masters.

Zeloch's talents in necromancy were unmatched by any save the Tyrants themselves. He used his dark arts to reanimate thousands of dead sailors that had perished in Broken Bay during the war, transforming the dead into his new home's eternal guardians. The Tyrants were willing to ignore Zeloch while they dealt with one another, allowing the Grey Isles to escape the conflict largely unscathed.



When the Peace of the Rose was brokered, Zeloch was insulted to find that, unlike other leaders who had maintained some semblance of stability during the war, he had not been invited to help shape the new face of Aden. Over time, the Grey Masters became paranoid that the Seer Order had conspired to weaken and destroy them by excluding them from this new alliance. Just over one century later, Grey Isle forces led an army of the dead into the city of Sea Reach.

Unfortunately, Zeloch's savage raiders and undead legions are no match for the nascent Radiant Order, led by King Tirrian. Realizing that he could either save his people or



die beside them, Zeloch made a bold final stand against Tirrian and his order while his surviving troops fled. The necromancer was ultimately slain, though at great cost to the defenders of Sea Reach.

The Grey Masters rule the Grey Isles to this day. All inhabitants of the Isles are considered outlaws in the nation of Arasteen. The Radiant Order occasionally embarks on crusades into the area, seeking to bring the Masters to heel, but these ventures rarely boast any lasting success and no Arastinian army has ever set foot in the Masters' stronghold at Greyfaust. While vastly outnumbered, the Masters are adept at using weather magic and undead creatures to destroy any intruders that venture too deeply into their territory.

The Order's largest victory against the Masters was fifty years before the Darkfall, when a relatively large Radiant Order expedition ousted the Grey Masters from one of the larger southern islands. There, they founded the colony of Grissom, which prospered for decades. Grissom was intended to eventually be used as a staging ground to cleanse the Isles, though said mission was perpetually postponed due to various other matters.

When the Darkfall came, the Grey Isles were largely devoid of any nocturnal activity. Unfortunately, this also meant that Grissom became a low priority as Arastinian military assets were reassigned elsewhere to deal with the rampant chaos. Grey raiders took advantage of Grissom's weakness and slaughtered every soul in the colony.

The Radiant Order dispatched another expedition to retake Grissom some years later, but this also failed when Terramys Scratch, one of the expedition leaders, was seduced by the teachings of a Grey Master prisoner. He reanimated an army of dead colonists and proceeded to kill most of his own troops before he was finally defeated. Arasteen has not embarked upon any large military expeditions into the Isles since this demoralizing failure. The Grey Masters have likewise not moved to establish any new settlements in Grissom, leaving a ruined city of the undead to mark the tragedies that occurred there.

Objectives

The Grey Islanders rely upon their Masters' gifts to survive in their harsh homeland. As a result, even the common folk are familiar with undead, showing no more fear of them than they would a dangerous trained animal. Grey Islanders use undead creatures for labor as well as protection. Many Grey show simple undead, such as ghouls or

zombies, the same affection one might show a family pet. Every Grey Isles raiding ship boasts a complement of undead that serve as frontline troops as well as tireless rowers. The necromancer that commands these undead is typically also the ship's captain.

While the Grey Masters bear an enduring hatred for Arasteen and the Radiant Order, their frequent defeats at the Order's hands have taught them some measure of humility. For the time being, their primary objective is survival. Though the islanders are mostly self-sufficient, they must regularly emerge from their homes in search of certain tools, weapons, and supplies. They are particularly eager to recover fresh corpses for reanimation. The aftermath of a Grey Master raid is easy to recognize, as they never leave bodies behind. Grey attacks are almost exclusively directed against Arastinian targets, though they are opportunistic enough to threaten any ship that enters their territory, making attempts at trade or diplomacy with them extremely hazardous.

The Grey Masters are voracious scholars, constantly seeking ways to expand their mastery of the magical arts. While they discount what they see as the inferior knowledge of most contemporary spellcasters, they eagerly seek out any remnants of lore from the time before the Great War. They are keenly interested in any artifacts or lore left behind by the Seer Order, the Celestial College, or ancient races that predate modern Aden such as the Fomori. Though a few Masters have expressed curiosity regarding mechamagic, most take a more traditional stance, considering the art nothing more than a dangerous novelty.

Current Status

The Grey Masters are active to this day, conducting frequent raids against the Arastinian mainland. Memories of their defeat at Grissom are still fresh in the minds of many Grey Islanders, so they are eager to test their mettle against Arastinian knights. At the same time, the Grey Masters are no fools and know that they cannot win a protracted battle against the Radiant Order. They will retreat to the sea if they believe reinforcements are imminent.

The world paints the Grey Masters as vicious and monstrous necromancers, but the reality is slightly more complex. The Grey have adopted their own twisted reflection of their enemies' Radiant Path. Where Radiant Knights embrace the Twin Virtues of Justice and Compassion, the Grey Masters extol the Twin Necessities of Vengeance and Loyalty.

The Necessity of Vengeance is simple enough - if you are wronged, vengeance for that wrong is not merely a right but a duty. Balance must be maintained, or all is chaos. Grey Isles culture reflects this. A wronged individual is expected to seek fair retribution. The Grey Masters ultimately determine whether said retribution is just, and if not, it is their right to mark the balance (usually by killing someone or claiming someone's property). Justice is swift and invariably violent. Because of this, the Grey have developed an extraordinarily complex system of etiquette. They have learned to be very polite toward one another - as when conflicts do occur, they explode into violent brawls that can devastate entire villages.

The Necessity of Vengeance demands that any denizen of the Grey Isles must never forget or forgive the people of Arasteen for their transgressions against the Masters. Arastinians, especially Radiant Knights, are not to be trusted. To slay a Radiant Knight in personal combat is an extraordinary honor.

The Necessity of Loyalty binds all the Grey. Children born in the Grey Isles are marked with complex tattoos within days of their birth, describing their home village and their family. The Grey are expected to help one another to ensure mutual survival in their harsh homeland. Anyone who bears the mark of the Grey is expected to show hospitality and friendship to any other, regardless of their status. As a result, even the cruelest Grey Masters have been known to demonstrate great compassion towards fellow islanders. Necromancers will not use their talents to kill, feed on, or desecrate their fellow Grey. Only outsiders are reanimated as undead servants. Violation of this tenet is the gravest crime any denizen of the isles can commit.

The Necessity of Loyalty applies in quite the opposite direction toward outsiders. While befriending an outsider is not necessarily forbidden, the Grey ultimately see all outsiders as potential resources. If an outsider cannot benefit the Grey by providing information, resources, or protection, then consorting with them is a waste of time. Of course, no outsider is *entirely* useless - they can, at the very least, provide a fresh corpse for reanimation, a meal for the undead, or a subject for the Masters' experiments. The Grey are not above instilling a false sense of security into a lost traveler only to kill or capture them once they have the advantage. (A Grey who is loyal to the Necessities will *never* befriend an Arastinian without the intent to betray them.)

The common folk of the Isles are reclusive and fearful of outsiders. They are taught from an early age that dark magic is their birthright, so every Grey peasant knows a bit of necromantic folk magic. They are



New Spell: Animate Dead, Minor

School necromancy [evil]; **Level** cleric/oracle 1, shaman 1, sorcerer/wizard 1

Effect

Target one corpse

Duration instantaneous

This spell functions as *animate dead*, except it may only create a single Small (or smaller) skeleton or zombie. You cannot create variant skeletons or zombies with this spell.

taught that the people of Aden fear and despise them, which is mostly true, considering how most civilized nations regard necromancy. Other than raiding parties, the Grey Masters venture beyond their islands only with extreme caution. Though they are curious about the outside world, they know that their dark arts mark them as criminals or heretics. Those who explore Aden often use magic or subterfuge to disguise their true nature.

Though the Masters are hostile toward any Arastinians, travelers from other lands have slightly more leeway. Few sea captains are brave (or foolish) enough to venture into the Grey Isles, but those who survive the fierce storms and deadly reefs may be able to broker a deal with these curious necromancers. Though paranoid and unpredictable, the Grey Masters have accumulated a great deal of wealth via centuries of plundering the coast. An enterprising individual could make his fortune serving as their eyes or ears if he's willing to take the risk.

Though their enemies would scarce believe it, the Grey Masters despise nocturnals and actively root out any corrupted among their ranks. Since the time of the original Zeloch, the Masters have been stubbornly independent and in modern times it is no different. These vile necromancers refuse to serve any masters but themselves.

If their independence was more widely known, other nations might be somewhat more willing to attempt peaceful relations with the Grey Masters. Servants of the Darkfall frequently make use of necromancy and no one knows how to combat such powers better than the Grey. Of course, given the Masters' disdain for outsiders and generally untrustworthy nature, such a venture may offer as much danger as advantage.

Holdings

The Grey Masters have small settlements throughout the Gray Isles. The largest of these is the village of Greyfaust, located in the center of the island chain. Grey captains know how to chart a safe path through the dangerous reefs that surround this island, but outsiders are forced to progress slowly. Large numbers of aquatic undead prowl the waters, charged by the Grey Masters to destroy any vessel that does not bear their mark. Grey raider ships also patrol the area, sinking any vessel that approaches without the Masters' permission. Venturing near Greyfaust without the permission of the Masters is thus an extremely deadly prospect.

In Greyfaust, the Masters meet to make plans for the future of their people and perfect their art. Though they are few in number, the Grey Masters protect a vast hoard of mystical lore dating to centuries before the Peace of the Rose. If not for the intense suspicion and hostility that they bear toward outsiders, much of Aden's history might be learned from these reclusive necromancers.

Prominent Members

The Grey Masters are led by a small circle of master necromancers, called the Lords of Greyfaust. New Lords can only be invited to this body via secret ritual. The leader of this circle always takes the name Zeloch. When the previous Zeloch dies or retires, a new leader is selected by unanimous vote among the circle. The appointment of a new

Zeloch is kept secret to maintain the illusion that the Grey Masters are ruled by the original Zeloch, who perished in battle with King Tirian.

Lord Zeloch

The leader of the Grey Masters conceals his identity behind billowing black robes and a skull-like mask. He has ruled the council for at least three centuries, leading many of his cohorts to believe that he is a lich or at least possesses elven blood. While the truth is unknown, it is known that Zeloch is a necromancer of extraordinary might.

Several years ago, Zeloch led his people in an attack against Arasteen. Ultimately, they intended to join forces with the Lord of the Pale, a mysterious extradimensional entity that bears some unknown connection to the Grey Masters. When the Lord of the Pale was banished from Aden, Zeloch and his followers retreated rather than face the Radiant Order's wrath. Since that time, Zeloch has cautioned his people to avoid conflict with the mainland. While some among the Masters feel that Zeloch has lost his nerve, others wonder if perhaps the ancient lord is waiting for the proper time to strike.

Lady Elisedd

One of the youngest Lords of Greyfaust, Lady Elisedd has earned a reputation through a mixture of ruthless cunning and mystical might. She served the Grey Masters for many years as a sea captain, leading countless bloody raids against the Arastinian coast. She is an outspoken political opponent of Zeloch, as she believes the needs of the Grey would be better served by leading the people to war against Arasteen. She believes Zeloch's "patience" is merely a mask for his cowardice.

Elisedd has dispatched numerous spies and saboteurs into Arasteen without Zeloch's knowledge, preparing for the day that the Masters might unleash their wrath upon Arasteen. She is an extremely charismatic individual with a great deal of support among the common folk, especially the raiders who consider her one of their own. If the current Zeloch should perish or retire, it is extremely likely that she would draw upon her supporters to force the Lord of Greyfaust to appoint her as their new leader. With her as the new Zeloch, the Grey Isles would soon embark upon a new era of bloody conflict.

THE HERALDS GUILD

The Heralds Guild, largely destroyed by the Darkfall and existing now only in a handful of undermanned outposts with an even small number of aging guild members, was one of the early products of the Golden Age of Aden, and one that was almost exclusively responsible for the improved communication that was available during that era.

History

The Heralds Guild first began as the dream of an expatriate from Le'Ciel who desired nothing so much as renewed contact with his family, who were among the first citizens of that magocratic nation and with whom he lost contact with the establishment of the Veil enchantment that surrounded the whole of its island lands. Obsessed with reconnection despite his inability to return home, this man delved into study of all manner of communication spells, from the simplest repeated whisper to the most elaborate and ornate scrying rituals. Others took note of his interest and it piqued their own. In order to fund his research, the nameless Cielan took on a number of apprentices, both to aid in his work and to provide some of the secrets that he had discovered as part of his studies. While the man whose work laid these foundations name is not remembered, the name of one of his apprentices is well known: Ilyana Berkel of Columbey.

Though her mentor was a man possessed of a singular mission, Berkel was much more broad-minded and fortunate enough to have a brilliant mind for business. Recalling a recent incident during which a

conflict between Columbey and Kyan had narrowly been avoided, and which had been caused by a delay in new orders arriving at the front from the capital city of Tarello, Berkel decided that those in a position of legitimate power would likely find the notion of communicating rapidly with those throughout their domain highly valuable, and would pay accordingly for such a service. A canny woman in every respect, Berkel developed her plans over the course of years while mastering all her teacher's lessons and helping him accomplish his goal of re-establishing contact with his family. Once that was done, she left his service along with a dozen students she had recruited to her cause and began implementing her plan.

Berkel and her associates began their new business in Columbey, which she had determined was most likely to facilitate their endeavor, both because of their recent difficulties and the royal family's reputation as the wealthiest in western Aden. After a month of cautious and deliberate petitions, she was able to secure an audience with one of the king's closest advisors, whom she convinced of her plans to create a magical communication network throughout the kingdom in order to avoid any further difficulties such as the border skirmish with Kyan some two years prior.

Current Status

It would not be a particular exaggeration to say that the Heralds Guild no longer exists. Because the guild's function required it to exist primarily outside of the confines of large cities, most of its holdings fell during the Darkfall or very shortly thereafter. Some scholars who study the Darkfall, particularly those most devoted individuals who serve the Radiant Order of Arasteen, believe that this was no mere coincidence, but instead that it was a calculated and deliberate effort to cripple the ability of nations in the Known Lands to communicate with one another.

Holdings

The central towers of the Heralds Guild, those that stood within the capitals of the established nations prior to the Darkfall, still stand. A small number of heralds in each city survived, although the bulk of their comrades perished in the vast, rural stretches between cities. However, without any significant guiding body to lead the guild in an attempt to rebuild or reorganize, many of these surviving heralds have had to abandon whatever duties remained in order to find other work and survive the perilous world after the cataclysm. In many cases the



towers now stand abandoned and have either been occupied by refugees or, such as in the case of the tower in Mekanus, have been co-opted by the government for other uses; the former guild tower in the capital of Urbana is now an outpost for the Inquisitors of the Eye, for example.

Although it is quite rare, there are a handful of herald waystation towers that did survive the Darkfall. For the most part, these towers survived only because, for whatever reason, they happened to be in locations where other structures or individuals established holdings in the same region. In the forests of Arasteen, for example, there was a minor fort built in the same location as a herald tower. While the fort was abandoned a few months after the disaster, an enterprising family now occupies both the fort and the tower it encircles, offering sanctuary to travelers as the so-called Dunswood Inn. This circumstance is not entirely unique, but rare enough that there are perhaps only one or two such remaining towers inside the borders of any given nation.

The only real holding that remains of the guild other than its handful of abandoned and ruined towers is the litany of rituals and spells that were developed by its members over the course of the past few centuries. These spells still survive in numerous spellbooks, scrolls, and other forms and have been learned by several non-heralds since the Darkfall. Unfortunately, so few people know them that they are difficult to use in the same effective manner as the guild once employed them.



New Spell: Greater Message

School transmutation [language-dependent]; **Level** bard 2, sorcerer/wizard 2, summoner 2, witch 2

Elemental School air 2

Casting

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S, F (a piece of copper wire)

Effect

Range medium (50 miles + 10 miles/level)

Target one creature

Duration 1 min./level

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** no

As per *message*, save for its increased range and capabilities. A greater message can only be sent to someone that the caster has previously met and touched, even though it may be as simple as a handshake.

anyone. Recently he has had some glimmer of a herald sending from the wilderness of Arasteen, but has not been able to reach whoever might be sending it. Desperation is leading Lebeau to consider making an excursion to the mainland, something he hasn't done in five years and is terrified to even attempt, but he's been alone in a foreign land for a long time.

THE JUSTICARS

Unusual figures who have become something of a sensation during the last century, the Justicars are an order of warriors who specialized in combining ranged combat with magic acumen to devastating effect. The organization has its roots in Yzeem, in the sprawling port city of Balaquim, but have spread to other major cities as well as their talents have become of great interest to others. Since the Darkfall, their skills have become even more in demand and they have had more applicants than they can accommodate, having no choice but to turn away potential students and comrades simply because they lack the resources and capability to deal with such a large number of newcomers.

Prominent Members

Thyri Bjornson

Thyri was a child when the Darkfall happened, and as such she has no recollection or real firsthand knowledge of the Herald's Guild, only what little information her parents could pass on to her (and never having known or used any heralds themselves, much of this information is specious at best). However, shortly after the Darkfall the Bjornson family came across an abandoned fort in the wilderness of Arasteen and made it their home, along with the herald tower that was within its boundaries. The tower was emptied by Thyri's family long ago to serve other purposes, but the young girl, ever an avid reader, took many of the scrolls and books they found there and has studied them dutifully for years.

The Bjornsons have never been a particularly powerful family in terms of their magical ability. One of Thyri's brothers fancies himself a mechamage of sorts, something Thyri finds amusing, but she has discovered that she does in fact possess considerable talent for magic. She has little in the way of instruction, only a smattering of spells taught to her by those who have passed through Dunswood Inn over the past few years, and she is frustrated by her lack of access to other types of magic. However, she has mastered many of the herald spells and rituals detailed in the books she found, and has been casting her sendings in an increasingly wide range from her home at the inn in hopes of discovering someone, anyone, who can hear her. Thus far she hasn't found anyone, and she knows that what she is doing is dangerous, but she can't bring herself to stop. There must be some others out there who know the secrets of the heralds, mustn't there?

Lebeau Descartes

As far as he knows, Lebeau is the only surviving member of the Heralds Guild. Unfortunately, he was stationed in Le'Ciel when the Darkfall occurred, and the guild always had an extremely limited presence there because of the preference of the ruling Exarches class to be directly in control of all things magical. The confusing that plagued Le'Ciel immediately after the Darkfall led Lebeau to falsely believe that the cataclysm was limited to that nation, and he made numerous attempts to flee to the mainland. After nearly dying each time and never making it farther than the coast of the Rhanate before being threatened by vast hordes of nocturnals, Lebeau returned to Le'Ciel and has accepted that the entire world is largely doomed. He has determined that his only hope is to try and contact any other survivors from the Heralds Guild, but in the past four years he has not been able to reach

History

The city of Balaquim in Yzeem was once a hotbed of corruption and vice, much like other smaller cities elsewhere in the Known Lands. This was not beneficial for the majority of the city's many, many citizens, and the situation was rife with the possibility for armed insurrection against the rulers. It was into this environment that the now-famous Veiled Council of Yzeem was created by the enigmatic first Green Councilor. Within the span of a few years, the corrupt members of the ruling council had been ousted or retired, replaced with anonymous individuals who wore veils to ensure that the same forces that had co-opted their predecessors would not be able to corrupt them so easily.

This idea was noble, of course, but also incredibly impractical, and there was little hope that the new, veiled leaders would be able to protect their identities indefinitely, or even for any real length of time. Fortunately, the people of the city were very much in favor of this new development, and some found themselves in a position to lend assistance. One group in particular, a collection of wealthy arcanists who had created a sort of sportsmen's club, decided to take direct action in order to ensure the Veiled Council was protected. This group, roughly three dozen in number, had developed new magical techniques that had been intended primarily for use in their hunting and competitive endeavors, but which they now employed as armed guardians of the Council. Adopting stylized uniforms that resembled the dress of



traditional desert-dwellers and wielding specially crafted weapons, including bows, crossbows, and firearms, these men and women called themselves the justicars and took the defense of the Veiled Council and its government as their responsibility.

Obviously, the justicars were looked at with suspicion by the Council and most of their allies, who suspected that this was a ruse perpetuated by the criminal cartels in an attempt to gain access to the councilors and learn their identities. This was anticipated, however, and the justicars took no offense. Over the course of two years following their inception, they thwarted numerous assassination attempts toward the Council as well as various other efforts by criminal organizations to compromise the new government. Six of the original members were killed in action during this time, but they had more applicants than they could possibly hope to investigate and train, so the organization slowly began to expand. The most important aspect of it, however, was finding applicants who could be confirmed were not compromised by external forces and who had the necessary sense of honor and strength of will in order to master both the justicar's techniques and their purpose.

A few years prior to the Darkfall, a schism developed within the ranks of the justicars. There were those who believed that the organization could accomplish a great deal more by expanding its purpose and scope, expanding ranks to serve in other capacities rather than simply serving as the defenders of the Veiled Council and as high-ranking members of law enforcement throughout Yzeem (a duty that was gradually bestowed upon their organization over time). Others believed just as strongly that to expand the organization was to invite the opportunity for lost focus and external corruption. The division became increasingly heated until it was considered possible by some that the order might split into two different organizations, or possibly even come to blows over the differing philosophies. The Darkfall prevented that from occurring, however.

In the wake of the Darkfall, the justicars who survived the cataclysm (which was a large portion of the order, given their urban nature) agreed that once they could ensure their duties could continue to be fulfilled, they should expand their operations. To do nothing when it was possible to give others the tools to fight against the nocturnals would be, in the estimation of the justicar leadership, dishonorable in the extreme. A handful of skilled senior justicars were selected and given the resources necessary to start academies in other major cities. Thus far, they have established academies to train suitable candidates in their arts in Sea Reach, Tanto, Mekanus, and St. Chandrey, with plans to expand to other nations when the opportunity presents itself.

Current Status

The justicars are now stronger and more numerous than they have ever been at any point in their history, which makes them somewhat unique among most organizations; few can claim to have improved their lot since the Darkfall. However, the justicars regard their expansion as a necessary step if they are going to do their part to defend the Known Lands and its people against the nocturnals. It has been a difficult adjustment for the older members to make, because they still regard the Veiled Council as their primary responsibility. Looking after others is, they fear, a dangerous diversion of their resources and attention.

Holdings

The foremost holding of the Justicars is its primary headquarters in Balaquim. The building was constructed long ago with the intent of being absolutely secure, and after the Darkfall was expanded and strengthened until it is essentially a fortress in the middle of the city. If Balaquim were to fall to chaos, the headquarters of the Justicars would be able to survive for months if not years independent of the rest of the city. Beyond that, the order maintains four other academies in the capital cities of Arasteen, Caraway, Urbana and Vanora. All of the academies are funded wholly by the organization itself.

New Feat:

Arcane Weapon Training [Combat]

You are capable of focusing your arcane power through weapons to combine their power.

Prerequisite: Ability to cast 2nd level arcane spells

Benefit: As a full-round action, you may make a single ranged attack at your highest attack bonus using a weapon. You may expend one casting of a ray spell to add all effects of that spell to your attack, including damage.

Prominent Members

Because they are relatively few in number, perhaps no more than a hundred fully trained justicars distributed among the various academies, members of the justicars tend to be well known in their area. This is partially because of their distinctive dress, weapons, and fighting style, but also because of their distinctly honorable character. Only in Vanora, where the samurai who serve the Dragon Emperor have an even more rigid code of honor than the justicars, do they not stand out because of their conduct.

Alys Moonfeather

The daughter of decorated Doom Rider veterans, Alys Moonfeather was one of the first justicars, serving in a squire-like capacity for her father, one of the founders. She became one of the order's most trusted agents and, within a matter of five years, was one of the leaders. Centuries later, she is the eldest and most respected of the order's leaders, and is now regarded by most as the de facto commander of all justicars, which is not entirely accurate but not entirely inaccurate either. Moonfeather is a cautious, thoughtful elven woman who has seen the Justicars through many difficult times. She continues to have reservations about the creation of academies in other nations, but recognizes that there are more pressing concerns in the Known Lands than her preference for traditional duties.

Carsten Bariss

A young officer of the Eye in Mekanus, Carsten is as far from the stereotype of a corrupt inquisitor as is possible. Young, idealistic, and honorable, Carsten's father was in law enforcement in Tarello before the Darkfall and subsequent events changed it to Mekanus. Carsten has followed in his late father's footsteps, but forged his own path. He used what remained of his family's wealth to purchase a place in the Justicar Academy prior to beginning his training. Already possessed of a strong sense of honor from his father, the training there only reinforced his beliefs and determination to be a force for good in a corrupt city. Although his magical talents are somewhat meager, Carsten complements them with a comprehensive knowledge of technology and often augments his weapons to ensure that they can compensate for any of his shortcomings.

THE SALVAGERS

Every golemoid knows of the Salvagers, either by their dark reputation or personal experience. These mysterious black marketeers run a hidden network of body chop-shops and secondhand manite implant stores throughout much of Aden. They are known for their discretion, and are willing to provide implants to anyone with the gold to pay for them, no questions asked. Though these services are hardly unique, they are unique among disreputable body augmenters in that they will also pay for used manite implants.

Via a process known only to the Salvagers, these ghoulish mechanics have devised a means of severing a manite implant's connection with its host, allowing it to be implanted into a new host. This allows the Salvagers to drastically reduce the material cost of supplying manite implants. Many an unfortunate golemoid has met his end to a Salvager scalpel. Yesterday's limbs become tomorrow's merchandise.

History

The Salvagers are a relatively young organization. Their origins are entwined with the origins of golemoids who serve as both their customers and their victims. The mechamage Horatius was an Urbanan soldier who worked closely with Vixil Visheer, the father of modern golemization. With his help, Visheer established the framework of what would become Mekanus' Smoketown industrial district. Horatius conducted hundreds of golemization conversions on Urbanan soldiers, transforming mortal soldiers into unstoppable weapons against the Darkfall.

Horatius soon became disillusioned with his work. As golemization grew more common, it became clear that all those who underwent the process would inevitably succumb to the Wasting. Even if the implants were removed, the process inevitably caused the subject's health to deteriorate. Consumed with guilt for the countless soldiers he had subjected to such a fate, Horatius dedicated himself to finding a cure for the Wasting. Within a matter of months, he believed he was on the path to discovering a spell that could cure the Wasting. He called this spell the Renewal.

Unfortunately, Horatius could not complete such difficult research without aid and not all of his assistants were as altruistic as he. His apprentice, Lucia Wrent, theorized that the Renewal could be used not only to cure the Wasting, but to sever the permanent bond between a manite implant and its host. Wrent proposed that the Renewal could be utilized to harvest implants from dead soldiers, allowing them to be reused. However, taking their research in that direction would require a great deal of time and effort.

Horatius realized that, given the Iron Tyrant's obsession with victory at any cost, Wrent's proposal was more likely to gain support among the Urbanan elite than a cure for the Wasting. He attempted to discredit her before she could go public with her proposal, fabricating evidence that she had embezzled Smoketown resources to fund a liquid haze addiction. She was summarily dismissed from her position and spent nine months in a Mekanus dungeon. Upon her release, Wrent confronted her old master and, in a fit of rage, murdered him with a pistol. She then stole her master's research and fled into the Rhanate before the Urbanan authorities could find her.

Among the bandit clans, Wrent took the simple alias "Fixer." In the desert, she found steady work as a surgeon and weaponsmith. In her spare time, she continued her research on the Renewal. Though she never devised a means by which to cure the Wasting (and never cared to) she soon perfected its use as a means by which used manite implants could be recycled. Through the connections she had made in the Rhanate, she reached out to other amoral mechamages and offered to share her secrets. Together, they would build a network that offered an unrivaled service to those who could not otherwise obtain manite augmentation.

The Salvagers were born.

Objectives

The Salvagers' goals are not complex. They seek mainly to accumulate wealth and evade punishment by the various authorities. They operate as a loose network of independent cells, allowing the rest of the organization to easily cut ties and move on if one cell falls under too much scrutiny. The Salvagers purchase and provide manite implants - no questions asked. Life can suddenly become quite dangerous for a lone golemoid in an area where the Salvagers have set up shop.



Lucia Wrent, now known as Queen Fixer, leads the Salvagers. Wrent guards the secret of the Renewal carefully, teaching it only to mechamages that have proven their loyalty. These individuals, dubbed Fixers, act as her lieutenants throughout Aden. All Fixers undergo manite augmentation before they learn how to cast the Renewal. This process not only strengthens the Fixers, but also insures their loyalty. Among their other implants, each Fixer's heart has been replaced by a manite prosthetic guarded by a potent magical contingency. If a Fixer attempts to teach the Renewal to another mechamage, the heart immediately casts an instantaneous version of the Renewal on itself, killing its host instantly. Queen Fixer can activate this contingency at will from any distance, and will do so if she learns that any of her Fixers have betrayed her or have been captured by the authorities.

Fixers rarely indulge in direct violence. Instead, they prefer to work as middlemen with local criminal organizations - called Harvesters - offering manite augmentation in return for salvaged implants. Most Harvesters are granted implants in advance, in return for their services in harvesting more. Much like the Fixer's hearts, these implants are implanted with failsafes that allow the Fixers to punish any Harvesters who turn against them. Harvesters that prefer to be paid in gold can opt for such an arrangement, though Fixers treat such operatives with a great deal more caution, as their loyalty cannot be guaranteed.

Fixers don't ask questions about where harvested implants originate, but they caution their Harvesters not to take them from Shadow Army soldiers or other authority figures unless they can make the death look like an accident. The Salvagers are, first and foremost, a business. Murdering the authorities is bad for business.

Current Status

The Salvagers are currently active throughout Aden, though the majority of their cells operate out of the Rhanate, Yzeem, and Urbana. These areas offer the highest demand for and availability of manite implants. Though the Shadow Army has placed an open bounty on all Salvager operatives, the Fixers have found plenty of corrupt officials and greedy mercenaries willing to tolerate their presence in the more remote regions of the Urbanan wasteland. The Veiled Council has likewise denounced the Salvagers' ghoulish business but they have found a welcome home among the pirates of Rook's Roost. Meanwhile, in the lawless regions of the Rhanate, Salvager bandit cells operate openly. Queen Fixer makes her home here, though she keeps a low profile and does not participate directly in Salvager activities.

The Salvagers are mercenaries, and as such avoid forming any permanent alliances. They have much more to gain by offering their services to both sides of any given conflict. Though murderous and amoral, they have no particular love for the Darkfall, though they prefer

to avoid nocturnals than to confront them directly. The sole exception to this rule is the Wasted. The Salvagers will hunt and destroy the Wasted wherever they are found. These wretched creatures make for an excellent source of new merchandise and, unlike living golemoids, no one particularly seems to mind when the Salvagers destroy them. Naturally, the Salvagers are careful to clean and refurbish any parts taken from Wasted subjects; the customer don't need to know that his new body parts were only recently stripped from an undead abomination.

The Salvagers are, in fact, usually quite careful to clean and repackage all of their harvested parts before resale. In areas where the Salvagers are very active, harvested implants are always transported to distant locations before resold. This helps to avoid the possibility that the stolen parts are recognized by those who knew their previous owner.

Holdings

As purveyors of illegal chop-shops, the Salvagers value anonymity. Fixers operate out of discreet workshops in dangerous neighborhoods or isolated locations. Here, they can avoid the authorities and do their work in peace. Fixers do not ask questions of their clients (as long as they have gold) and do not answer questions regarding the origins of their merchandise. Salvager workshops are designed to be cheap, efficient, and easy to pack up in case of discovery. As such, amenities such as anesthesia and proper surgical hygiene often go by the wayside. Salvager workshops in Rook's Roost and the Rhanate tend to be of somewhat higher quality - though not by much.

Queen Fixer's portable laboratory is the exception. Lucia Wrent lives in a nomadic camp, escorted by a troop of her most loyal and powerful golemoid bodyguards. The vast wealth she has obtained as leader of the Salvagers has allowed her to construct a mobile laboratory equal to that of any Smoketown mechamage.

In contrast to the Fixers, Harvesters are anything but discreet. These roving gangs of thugs are indistinguishable from the various other bandits and raiders that roam post-Darkfall Aden, other than that they tend to have more manite implants. Some Harvesters mark their armor or flesh with the bloody bone and gearspanner sigil of the Salvagers. In some cases, those who face Harvesters and peacefully surrender any golemoid members of their party are allowed to leave without further conflict. In other cases, unfortunately, they show no mercy at all. Witnesses can also be bad for business.

Prominent Members

Queen Fixer

Once a brilliant and idealistic young mechamage, Lucia Wrent's experiences have turned her into a bitter and sadistic mercenary. She despises the harsh arid climate of the Rhanate and misses her homeland, but knows the Shadow Army will show her no mercy if they should ever capture her. For the time being, she hides in her desert camp, surrounded by her loyal bodyguards and the luxuries her illicit wealth has won. In private, Wrent continues her research on the Renewal. In her heart, she still believes that a cure for the Wasting would be of great benefit. Perhaps if she finishes her master's work, that might balance out some of the terrible things she has done.

And even if it doesn't, it's probably worth a lot of money.

New Mechanics

Fixer's Coin (Wondrous Item)

Aura minor transmutation; **CL** 5th; **Slot** none; **Cost** 150 gp

Clients who frequently partake of Salvager services and have a reputation for paying on time are rewarded with a small metal token bearing the Salvager seal - a blood red gearspanner and bone crossed on a black field. Individuals who carry such a seal are considered "protected" from Harvester teams. Fixers keep careful track of individuals to whom they have distributed these items. Any Harvester that kills a protected client is blackballed from the organization - a punishment which usually ends with their own implants being forcibly reclaimed by other Harvesters.

Any Fixer can recognize the aura of a *fixer's coin* via *detect magic*. The particular mix of energies used to create these tokens is difficult to duplicate without instruction by a trained Fixer. In the case of counterfeit tokens, consider a Use Magic Device check by the coin's creator, opposed by the Fixer's Perception with a +25 circumstance bonus. This bonus is reduced to +10 if the item's creator had a real *fixer's coin* to study while crafting the fake.

Construction Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *arcane mark*; **Cost** 75 gp

The Renewal

School conjuration (healing); **Level** mechamage 3

Casting Time 1 hour

Components V, S

Range touch

Target creature or manite implant touched

Duration instantaneous

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** no

This spell can only be cast upon a willing or helpless target, or upon a manite implant that has been removed from its host.

When cast upon a living creature, all manite implants are immediately rejected from the subject's body upon completion of this spell. This includes prosthetic implants or items that must be surgically implanted in a manner similar to implants, such as ripfangs. These implants no longer contribute to their former host's Impact or maximum number of manite implants. The host suffers 1d4 damage per minor or basic implant removed, 1d8 damage per advanced or superior implant removed, and 3d10 damage per prosthetic limb or organ removed. If any implants are necessary for their host's survival (such as a prosthetic heart or brain) the host immediately dies regardless of damage taken.

A golemoid character affected by this spell loses access to any golemoid specialization he possessed (these are expelled from his body in the form of implants). A mechamage can replace these lost specializations via a grueling surgery that takes eight hours to perform and 5,000 gp worth of materials per ability lost. The original implants expelled from the golemoid may be used in place of these materials. A true golemoid who loses his implants also loses access to his steam reserve and is no longer considered a true golemoid until he regains at least one implant.

All manite implants removed from a host or affected by this spell are fully functional and can be implanted into a new host in the usual manner.

This spell is only known to the Salvagers.

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Guilds of Aden

UNITED WE STAND

The world of Aden is a dark and dangerous place, and there are many who lack the strength and the skill to survive on their own. Fortunately for them, there are still organizations that have survived in the years since the Darkfall and can provide the strength that others lack, although such a thing always comes at a price. Every guild, every society, every clique has its own agenda, and these groups are no different. Whether the price of survival is worth it is a decision that each member must make on their own.

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