

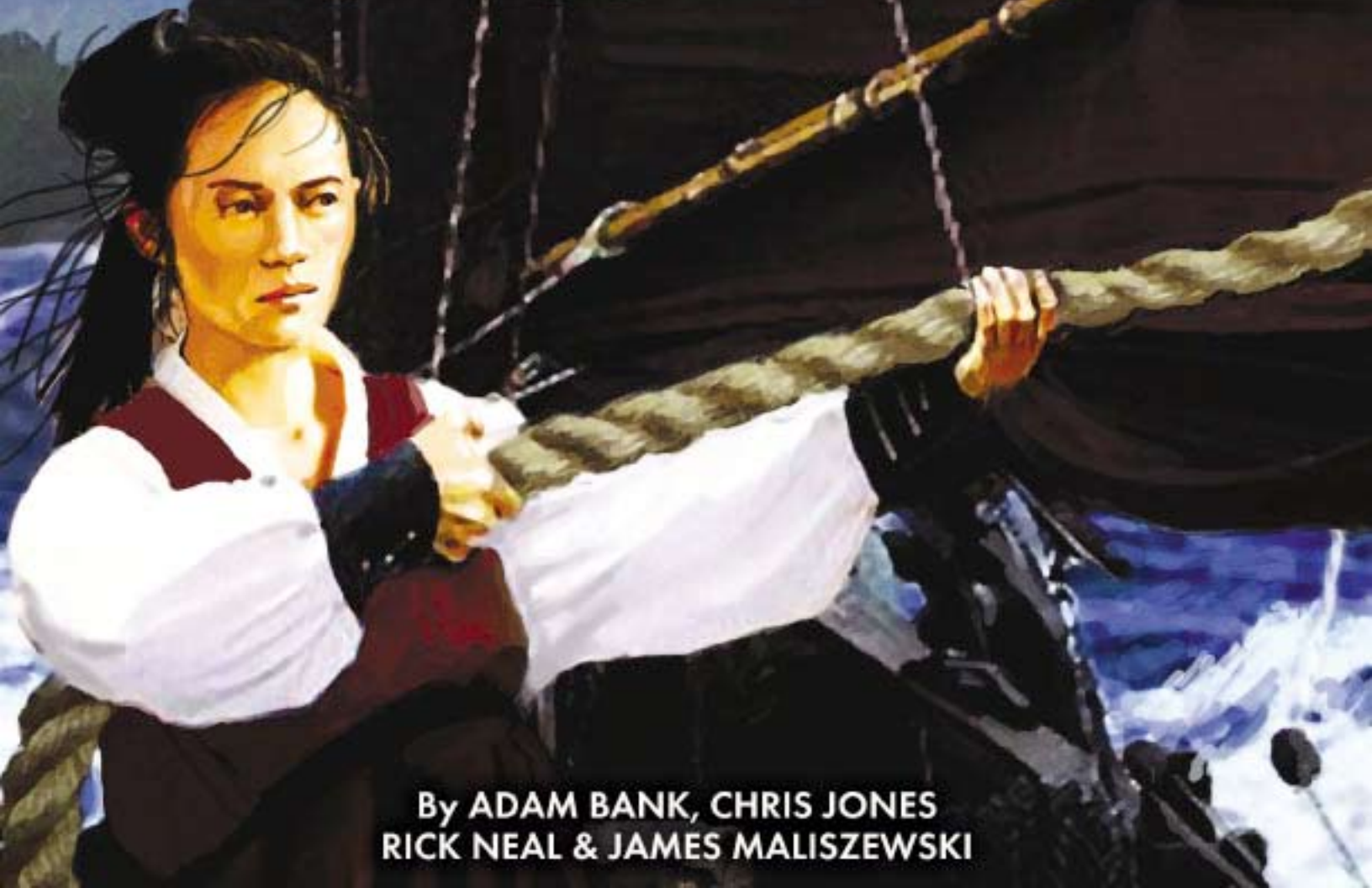
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SACRED GROUND II

A SOURCEBOOK OF HOLY SITES



By ADAM BANK, CHRIS JONES
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INTRODUCTION

SACRED SITES

Unearth the divine secrets of the deities in these four sacred sanctuaries. As in the original *Sacred Ground*, *Sacred Ground II* presents four holy sites to use as PC home bases, as settings for your next adventure, or as lairs for your characters' most powerful adversary. Each entry provides complete maps and illustrations of the location, along with magical and mundane protections, NPC stats and backgrounds, and plot ideas to bring the site to life.

Sacred Ground II presents material that's adaptable to any fantasy campaign, whether it's a published setting or a world that you've created. You can use these locations straight out of the book at a moment's notice, or make them a foundation for holy places of your own design.

THE SITES

The sites included in this book include a monk's retreat, a druid's grove, a place of healing, and the domain of a seer. Each was created by a distinct group with its own goals and motivations, and harbors secrets and dangers unique to itself.

HAI SHEN GONG

This vibrantly colorful Middle Kingdom temple sits atop a wind-blasted cliff overlooking the crashing waves of a dark ocean below. Adherents congregate daily to pray, ring bells, sound gongs, and utter chants. The head priestess personally attends to the fiery beacon that warns ships away from the dangerous shoals.

EARTHBLOOD GROVE

On the edges of civilization is an old-growth stand of hardwood trees with the reputation of being haunted and filled with strange fey creatures. Those concerned

with such things know the secret of the forest: it is a druidic grove with a powerful natural relic hidden in its heart.

CRECHE HOSPICE

A small country estate houses an unfinished temple complex and the headquarters of the Crèche Knights. The hospice is a pilgrimage site, hospital, garrison, and inn all at once, but also a prison for an entity called the Blasphemer, which prophesies that other creatures like itself will soon rise to plunge the religions of the world into chaos.

THE ORACLE OF SUMURA

This ancient mountain tower is kept by mystics dedicated to the Lady of Fate, and is home to the goddess' oracle. At the request of supplicants, this young girl can plumb the depths of history and unravel the threads of destiny.

SECTION LAYOUT

Each holy site is described using the headers below for easy reference. The index in the back of this book also lists all of the NPCs given in this book, as well as the new rules material, for quick reference.

AT A GLANCE

This section provides a quick rundown on the site's history, construction, layout, and defenses. It also briefly discusses the group that built it and why, and describes a few of the primary people inhabiting it, as well as their

basic goals and motivations. Finally, it gives an explanation of the primary uses for the site at present.

PLACEMENT

The Placement section discusses the sorts of locations where the site would work best in your campaign world. This section usually gives you some choices designed to help adapt the site into your campaign with minimal effort, and suggests changes that might help it fit in realistically.

CHARACTERS

Here you can find statistics and descriptions for the site's most influential characters and for "typical" inhabitants. In addition, this section describes their personality traits, motivations, goals, and their potential interactions with other NPCs and the player characters. The larger politics involved in the situation are often outlined in this section, as well.

THE SITE

This is the bulk of the entry, where the physical description of the site is given room by room. Detailed accounts are included here of the site's layout, traps, hazards, magical protections, design features, creatures, magic items, and all the crunchy bits that make the site what it is.

SCENES

This Scenes section contains ideas for ways PCs can become involved with the site. This includes hooks for getting the characters to the site and suggestions for

involving them in the internal machinations of its inhabitants, as well as larger plotlines that can involve your players.

ALTERNATE VERSIONS

Finally, we give some ideas for modifying the site so that it can play a different role in your campaign. The personalities and goals of the site's inhabitants might change drastically, or the site itself might be transformed. What if the residents are really the evil minions of some dark god, for instance, and not the kindly caretakers they would have the PCs think them? Maybe they're hiding a deeper agenda that only the player characters can discover. These kinds of variations are suggested in this last section.

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CHAPTER ONE

HAI SHEN GONG

AT A GLANCE

Hai Shen Gong (hai shuhn gohng), literally “the sea spirit temple,” is a colorful place that sits atop a wind-blasted cliff and overlooks the crashing waves of a vast ocean below. It is built in the traditional, gaudy style of Taoist temples throughout the Middle Kingdom. The effigies of five deities and one demon live inside it, the most important of which is the Sea Goddess. Smoke hangs thickly in the temple air, the by-product of countless wax candles and incense sticks, and a fireplace outside fuels a towering light beacon that stands like a sentinel at the cliff’s edge. The beacon itself is a perfect pearl as large as a boulder. It pulsates brightly at night atop its tower to warn ships away from the dangerous cliffs and shallows below.

Unlike other Taoist temples, Hai Shen Gong houses a small population of mendicant nuns who dedicate their lives to the ocean and their goddess.

PLACEMENT

Even though Hai Shen Gong is in a fairly remote location, each year it still draws a number of visitors seeking the Sea Goddess’ wisdom before embarking on their sea adventures. One assumption of this chapter is that the campaign in which the temple is located is an Asian analogue, specifically one similar to mythic China (generically referred to here as “the Middle Kingdom”). However, any setting will work as long as it possesses a number of animistic deities.

To use Hai Shen Gong in a campaign world that is less sino-centric, consider the following:

- If your world has a nation that’s an Asian analogue but the current campaign isn’t set in it, then the temple could have been built by Middle Kingdom immigrants. They were part of a trade mission to a distant country when a

storm blew their ship off course. After landing on this strange shore and settling in, they built Hai Shen Gong to honor the Goddess for delivering them safely.

- The temple can be used “as is” but populated with nuns from local races and cultures. Their form of worship is strange and different when compared to the mainstream faiths in the region, making Hai Shen Gong a cultish offshoot. The temple’s gaudiness and alien trappings emulate the diversity of ocean life.
- You can change the décor of the temple and the names of its inhabitants, but leave everything else more or less intact. The layout is simple enough that Sea Goddess worshippers in any culture could have built the temple.

CHARACTERS

The following NPCs are residents of Hai Shen Gong.

SHI XUAN-LAN

Reluctant Leader

“Next time Old Hu pisses in the incense pot, shoot him.”

Originally born on the plains north of the Middle Kingdom, Shi Xuan-Lan (shih shwen lahn) never expected she would end up at the absolute end of the world worshipping an ancient sea goddess her people never imagined existed. The Butong family, commoners in the service of the ruling Prairie-Lion Clan, reared her, naming her *Kita* (keeta), or “summer meadow.” By the time she could walk she was no stranger to the saddle. As a teenager, she caught and tamed a notorious stallion called Hellwind (both for his blazing speed and his wicked flatulence.) As a young woman, she exhibited the kind of ambition all seven of the khan’s increasingly worthless sons lacked. She had a hunter’s steady hand and precision, a killer’s instinct, a warrior’s battlefield



remorselessness, and a rider's finesse. Kita ruled the plains from Hellwind's back like a queen from on high.

It surprised no one when the khan, impressed by her equestrian skills, asked Kita to join him and his sons on their frequent hunting trips. Despite his sons' obvious filial piety, the khan always believed Kita should be the one to inherit his saddle. Jealousy festered in the boys' hearts, a natural and not unexpected reaction, but protocol forbade them from openly criticizing Kita or their father's admiration of her. While they doubted his judgment, he was still the clan's greatest warrior. They knew that a swift death awaited them should he suspect their disloyalty. So they did what princes have always done: they removed their enemy through manipulation and deceit. During the annual clan gathering, an assassin in their employ stabbed the sleeping khan through the throat with an arrow, snapping off the tip to ensure the old man slowly asphyxiated on his own blood. His murder stunned the clans. But their shock paled in comparison to Kita's, for she had always loved the khan like a second father. The khan's sons blamed the Cloud-Dragon Clan, their own clan's traditional enemy, but to suggest that the Cloud-Dragons had violated the neutral ground of the clan gathering in such a craven manner was tantamount to a declaration of war. The enemy khan swore his innocence vociferously, even going so far as to offer his children as hostages until his clan's name was cleared.

Four days later, the khan's wife discovered the arrow tip while preparing his body for cremation. She turned it over to the clan elders, who recognized the haft etchings as Kita's. They sent for her, but she was out riding, seeking solace in isolation. Because she had not taken her hunting gear with her, the messenger returned with her quiver instead. Inside, the elders found the matching arrow — damning evidence, indeed — then delivered the tragic news to the khan's sons. By the time Kita returned, she found an angry mob gathered outside her tent, thirsty for her blood. The khan's eldest son had them convinced she wanted leadership over the clan, that she assumed the old man's love for her was a clear indication she would inherit it upon his demise.

It became suddenly clear to Kita, as people whom she had once considered friends and family turned on her, that the boys had been setting her up for this moment for years. Rather than die for a crime she didn't commit, she spurred Hellwind around and fled. There would be time enough for justice later. The new khan sent his siblings after her, com-

 SHI XUAN-LAN
15th-Level Human Ranger/1st-Level Cleric

CR 16; Medium humanoid; HD 15d8+15 + 1d8+1; hp 80; Init +6 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+6 Dex), touch 16, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +15; Grp +16; Atk +18 melee (1d4+4/crit 19–20/x2 plus 1 Con, +3 *dagger of wounding*), or +19 ranged (1d6+5/crit x3 plus 1d6 fire damage, +4 *composite shortbow of flaming*); Full Atk +18/+13/+8 melee (1d4+4/crit 19–20/x2 plus 1 Con, +3 *dagger of wounding*), or +19/+14/+9 or +13/+13/+8/+8/+1/+1/+17 ranged (1d6+5/crit x3 plus 1d6 fire damage, +4 *composite shortbow of flaming*); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Combat Style, Combat Style Mastery, Improved Combat Style, Turn Undead, Spells; SQ Animal Companion, Aura, Camouflage, Evasion, Favored Enemy, Spells, Spontaneous Casting, Swift Tracker, Wild Empathy, Woodland Stride; AL CG; SV Fort +12, Ref +17, Will +13; Str 12, Dex 22, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 18, Cha 16

Skills: Craft (leatherworking) +12, Heal +10, Hide +18, Jump +10, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +10, Knowledge (geography) +10, Knowledge (religion) +6, Listen +16, Move Silently +16, Ride +28, Search +20, Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +7, Spot +10, Swim +16 (+20 vs. nonlethal damage), Use Rope +12, Survival +20 (+22 when underground, +22 to avoid getting lost and hazards, +22 when following tracks)

Feats: Endurance, Improved Precise Shot, Leadership, Lightning Reflexes, Manyshot, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Rapid Shot, Ride-By Attack, Skill Focus (Ride), Spirited Charge, Track

Languages: Aquan, Common, Prairie-Lion Clan dialect

Human Traits (Ex): Humans get 1 extra feat and 4 extra skill points at 1st level.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Shi Xuan-Lan is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, and with all types of armor and shields (except tower shields).

Favored Enemy (Ex): Shi Xuan-Lan gains a bonus to her Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, and Survival skill checks and a damage bonus in combat against the fol-

lowing creature types: Animals +8, Giants +2, Monstrous Humanoids +4.

Track: As a bonus feat, a ranger is able to find tracks or follow them for 1 mile at half speed with a successful Survival check based on conditions.

Wild Empathy (Ex): A ranger can improve the attitude of an animal, or magical beast with an Intelligence score of 1 or 2, within 30 feet with a Charisma check. The typical domestic animal has a starting attitude of indifferent, while wild animals are usually unfriendly.

Combat Style (Ex): This ranger chose the archery Combat Style and so is treated as having the Rapid Shot feat, which gives one extra attack per round with a ranged weapon.

Endurance: At 3rd level, as a bonus feat a ranger gains a +4 bonus to Swim checks vs. nonlethal damage, to Constitution checks to continue running, to avoid nonlethal damage from a forced march, starvation, or thirst, to hold your breath, to Fortitude saves to avoid nonlethal damage from hot or cold environments, and to resist damage from suffocation. Also, the ranger can sleep in light or medium armor without becoming fatigued.

Animal Companion (Ex): This ranger had a light horse animal companion named Hellwind. Hellwind died plummeting from the cliffs of Hai Shen Gong, and Shi Xuan-Lan has not been able to bring herself to replace him.

Improved Combat Style (Ex): A ranger who chose the archery Combat Style is treated as having the Manyshot feat, which lets her fire three arrows at a single opponent within 30 feet.

Woodland Stride (Ex): A ranger moves through undergrowth at normal speed without taking damage or impairments.

Swift Tracker (Ex): A ranger moves at normal speed while following tracks with no penalty to the Survival check.

manding them to perform their filial duty and not to come back unless they brought her head with them. They had no choice but to obey. Riding after Kita gol Butongyi, the fact that they had fallen neatly into the trap their brother had laid for them as well as for Kita fed their hatred for her even more.

That was six years ago. Since then, the brothers have pursued Kita south through the entire length of the Middle Kingdom. She quickly learned to hide in isolated country temples. Even though the austere Buddhist temples, with their gentle monks and nuns, made her feel welcome, she grew to love the garish Taoist temples more. They were almost always uninhabited, tended only by the laity who lived nearby. When they discovered her, they usually

assumed she was just another penniless traveler seeking shelter and left her alone. Many times they even let her eat the sacrificial food offerings. These places began to feel like home to Kita, and their gods like her family.

Unfortunately, the inevitable happened and Kita ran out of land. A long wall of cliffs towering over an impossibly vast ocean stopped her dead in her tracks. The brothers continued to nip closely at her heels, though, and after so many years of flight exhaustion threatened to overwhelm her. Yet Kita was filled with a sense of calm fostered by the gentle rhythms of the crashing waves below. Only the unending grass plains of her homeland compared to the majesty and scope of the ocean. It called out to her. Meanwhile, the brothers rode hard to intercept her.

SHI XUAN-LAN, CONTINUED

Evasion (Ex): If a ranger makes a Reflex save against an attack that normally deals half damage on a success, she takes no damage.

Combat Style Mastery (Ex): A ranger who chose the archery Combat Style is treated as having the Improved Precise Shot feat, which lets ranged attacks ignore the AC bonus granted by anything less than total cover and the miss change from anything less than total concealment.

Camouflage (Ex): A ranger can use the Hide skill in any natural terrain, even if it doesn't grant cover or concealment.

Ranger Spells: (3/2/2/1) Shi Xuan-Lan has a caster level of 7th and can prepare spells on the ranger spell list. The DC to resist these spells is 14 + the spell level. She normally has the following spells prepared:

- 1st Level — *alarm, entangle, magic fang*
- 2nd Level — *sleep, snare*
- 3rd Level — *neutralize poison, water walk*
- 4th Level — *summon nature's ally IV*

Aura (Ex): This cleric has a faint Chaotic Good aura.

Spontaneous Casting: Shi Xuan-Lan can "lose" a prepared spell in order to cast any *cure* spell of the same level or lower.

Turn Undead (Su): Shi Xuan-Lan can Turn Undead six times per day.

Cleric Spells: (3/2+1) Shi Xuan-Lan worships the Sea Goddess and has chosen the Sea and Travel domains, which allow her to Rebuke or Command aquatic creatures 3 times per day as an evil cleric Rebukes undead and to act normally 1 round per day regardless of magical effects that impede movement as per the spell *freedom of movement*. Survival is also a class skill. She normally has the following spells prepared; domain spells are marked with an asterisk.

0 Level — *create water, guidance, light*

1st Level — *command, endure elements,* entropic shield*

Possessions: +3 dagger of wounding, +4 composite short-bow of flaming, quiver with 23 arrows, ring of swimming, figurine of wondrous power (bronze griffon), horn of fog, explorer's outfit, jewelry (worth 206 gp), and 731 gp

Seeing her sitting there against a cold, gray sky astride her horse, they cheered in anticipation of their imminent victory. Kita swore upon the dead khan's ashes that their blades would never sever her head from her shoulders. Reciting a prayer to all the gods she had befriended over the years, she rode Hellwind off the cliff. The fall lasted an eternity. A cold darkness followed.

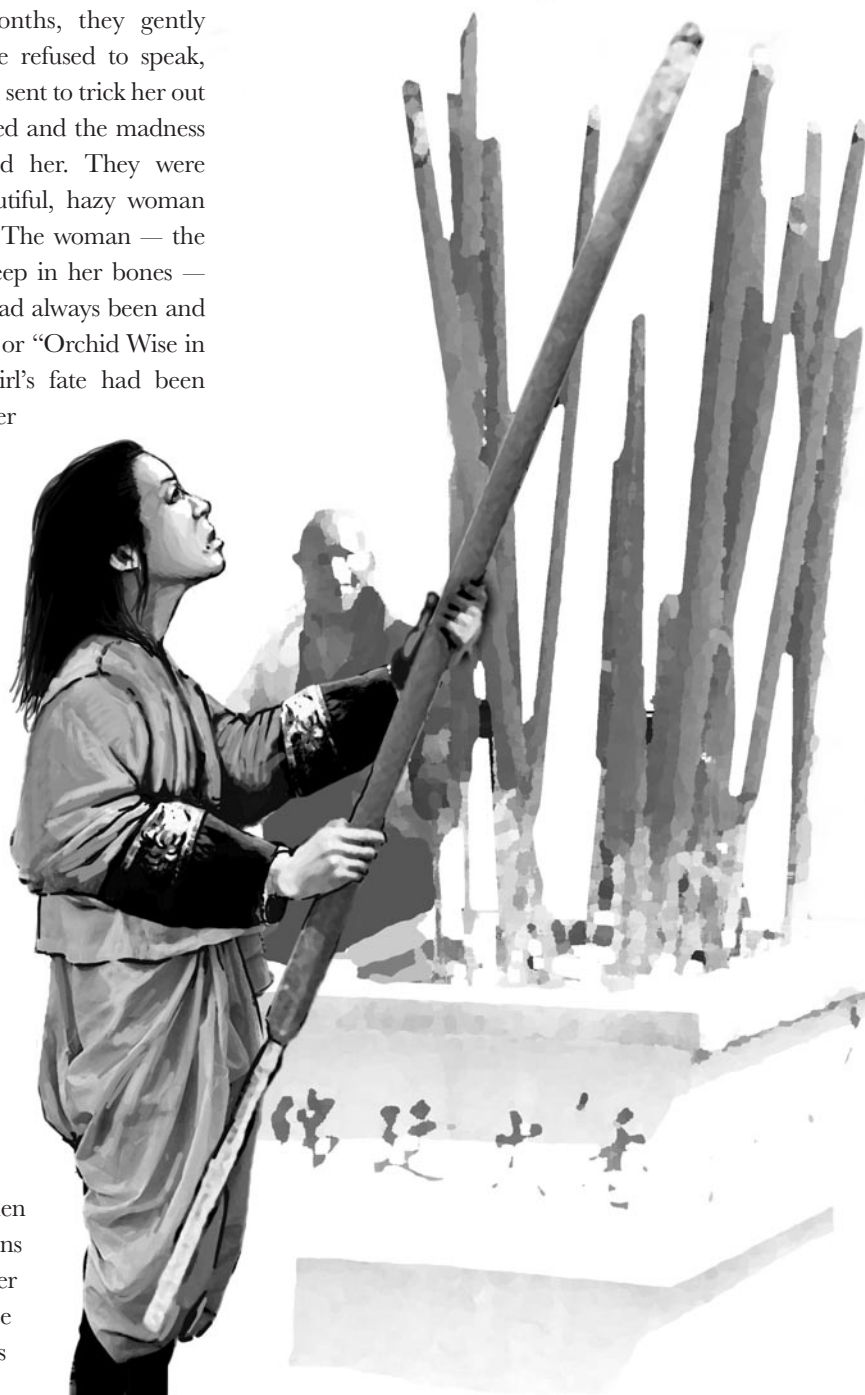
Kita awoke in Hai Shen Gong, the temple's nuns having found her floating on a piece of sea-swollen driftwood. For many long months, they gently coaxed her back to health. She refused to speak, thinking they were hungry ghosts sent to trick her out of her soul. Even as she recovered and the madness fled, disturbing dreams plagued her. They were always about water and a beautiful, hazy woman whose legs she could never see. The woman — the Sea Goddess, Kita knew this deep in her bones — revealed that Kita's true name had always been and would always be Shi Xuan-Lan, or "Orchid Wise in the Supreme Mystery." The girl's fate had been arranged long before birth. Her soul, however, was stubborn and headstrong. Choosing to be born in this life in a place as far from the Goddess' influence as she had been was proof enough of that, but now the time had come for Lan to shed her immaturity and assume her rightful place. The impetus of destiny coursed through her like a river, and though she desperately wanted to refuse it, she could not. More importantly, the Goddess would not let her. When Lan finally allowed herself to come to terms with her fate, she felt whole.

She had come home.

Today, Shi Xuan-Lan is Hai Shen Gong's head priestess. The nuns put her up to the job despite her vigorous protestations, for the Goddess had also shared the girl's

destiny with them. Lan doesn't believe she is qualified, but the other women have absolute confidence in her and in the Goddess' judgment.

Lan has a dark complexion, black eyes, and the aquiline nose characteristic of the Prairie-Lion Clan. She doesn't



shave her head like the nuns, preferring to keep her hair long and loose. She also doesn't wear their gray utilitarian clothes, instead favoring the fashion of her homeland: knee-length pants, soft boots sewn with bright patterns connoting her as "khan of the Prairie-Lion Clan," a sleeveless white tunic, and a hemp belt. On especially windy days, she puts on a short riding coat.



A successful Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (local) check (DC 30) lets a character understand the meaning of the patterns on Lan's boots.

THE NUNS

Sea Wardens

"Are you sure he's the captain and not the wet nurse? His boobs are bigger than mine!"

In a land where sea travel is not exactly encouraged, the nuns of Hai Shen Gong are atypical. They are women who prefer to live at the land's edge, or better yet, upon the ocean's waves. Some hear the Goddess "calling" them and let her guide them to the temple. Others end up taking to the sea aboard the few privateer ships licensed by the Imperial Court's Distinguished Waterways Bureau. Then there are those whose veins truly course with saltwater, spending their entire lives below the ocean surface. They are the most admired, though most infrequently met, of the Goddess' chosen.

The nuns here have found an easy equilibrium between land-locked and sea-faring life. They give guidance and blessings to the good peoples of the sea. They also teach in the nearby villages. Their knowledge of sea life is unequaled anywhere, and the shipyards where they hold court are considered the finest in the land, unsurprisingly. Another important duty that they take very seriously is the defense of the coastal laity from pirates and brigands. At Shi Xuan-Lan's behest, some of them study unarmed combat, a skill they often take abroad in their war against the Goddess' enemies.

Nuns wear gray tunics and pants, and shave their heads clean. While they dress austere, they tend to be a playful lot, possessing the kind of humor and language that

embarrasses even the coarsest sailors. When they leave the temple grounds, they carry walking sticks made from stout driftwood. In addition to being symbols of their service to the Goddess, the sticks function as defensive weapons in case trouble finds the women.

Upon taking her vows, a nun assumes a new name. Shi (shih), or "wise," is the most common surname. Contrary to Middle Kingdom tradition, Hai Shen Gong nuns share the generation name Xiao (shyaow), or "knowledgeable." They are allowed to choose their own personal names. Lay people address the nuns with either lao shi (laow shih) or shi fu (shih fu), courteous titles that mean "teacher" and "master," respectively.

Eighteen nuns live in the temple, five of which are liu ni (leeoh nee). Ten other liu ni are currently abroad and will probably not be back for some time.

Liu Ni (Wave Sisters)

Wave sisters study martial arts under the tutelage of Old Hu (hoo), the temple's resident groundskeeper. He teaches them a custom form called ji liu shi (jee leeoh shih), or "gathering wave style." While the wave sisters are crucial to village and temple defense against pirates, brigands, and reavers, they also perform special services on the Goddess' behalf in far-away places beyond the temple's purview. In such instances, they might be hired out to merchant ships as healers, weather-witches, or even bodyguards. The donations required for such services are sizeable (50 to 100 gp per day) but well worth it. Sometimes the wave sisters work as cultural attachés or intermediaries for the imperial government and its watery allies (or enemies). Rumors of their decidedly more covert duties run rampant, naturally. One of the women is even said to have assassinated the sahaugin Empress of Shells. The nuns refuse to comment on these activities, if pressed.

A liu ni looks like any other Hai Shen Gong nun except she sports two rows of black dots tattooed on her scalp. Each row has one to five dots, which connote rank among the wave sisters. Of all the women, only Shi Xiao-Yu (shih shyaow ew), the leading wave sister, possesses five dots in each row.

 NUN, SEA WARDEN (18)

5th-Level Human Cleric/3rd-Level Expert

CR 7; Medium humanoid; HD 5d8 + 3d6; hp 33; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 *amulet of natural armor*), touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +5; Grp +5; Atk +5 (1d6+1/1d6+1/crit x2, +1 *quarterstaff of defending*); Full Atk +5 or +1/-1 melee (1d6+1/1d6+1/crit x2, +1 *quarterstaff of defending*); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells, Turn Undead; SQ Aura, Spells, Spontaneous Casting; AL CG; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +11; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 18, Cha 13

Skills: Craft (sail making) +11, Craft (shipwright) +11, Concentration +4, Diplomacy +4, Heal +6, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +4, Profession (sailor) +10, Spellcraft +7, Spot +6, Swim +10

Feats: Empower Spell, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (craft, sail making), Skill Focus (craft, shipwright)

Languages: Aquan, Common, local dialect

Human Traits (Ex): Humans get 1 extra feat and 4 extra skill points at 1st level.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The nuns are proficient with all simple weapons, with all types of armor, and with shields (except tower shields).

Aura (Ex): A nun has a strong Chaotic Good aura.

Spontaneous Casting: A nun can “lose” a prepared spell in order to cast any *cure* spell of the same level or lower.

Turn Undead (Su): A nun can Turn undead four times per day, and she receives a +2 synergy bonus to the check.

Spells: (5/4+1/3+1/2+1) A nun worships the Sea Goddess and usually chooses the Sea and Travel domains, which allow her to Rebuke or Command aquatic creatures 3 times per day as an evil cleric Rebukes undead and to act normally 1 round per day regardless of magical effects that impede movement as per the spell *freedom of movement*. Survival is also a class skill. She has the following spells prepared; domain spells are marked with an asterisk.

0 Level — *create water*, *cure minor wounds*, *detect poison*, *mending*, *read magic*

1st Level — *bless water*, *detect evil*, *longstrider*,* *magic weapon*, *shield of faith*

2nd Level — *aid*, *calm emotions*,* *consecrate*, *cure moderate wounds*

3rd Level — *dispel magic*, *prayer*, *water breathing**

Possessions: *Ring of swimming*, +1 *quarterstaff of defending*, +1 *amulet of natural armor*, 3 *feather tokens* (swan boat), cleric’s vestments, 100 sp


 NUN, LIU NI (5)

5th-Level Human Cleric/3rd-Level Monk/ 2nd-Level Ji Liu Shi Monk

CR 10; Medium humanoid; HD 5d8+5 + 3d8+3 + 2d8+2; hp 50; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 40 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 18 (+1 Dex, +4 Wis, +2 Monk w/*monk’s belt*, +1 *amulet of natural armor* +1), touch 16, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +7; Grp +9; Atk +8 melee (1d6+3/1d6+3/crit x2 plus 1d6

electrical damage, +1 *quarterstaff of shock*) or +7 melee (1d10+2 lethal or nonlethal, unarmed w/*monk’s belt*); Full Atk +7/+2/+6 or +3/-2/+2/-1 melee (1d6+3/1d6+3/crit x2 plus 1d6 electrical damage, +1 *quarterstaff of shock*), or +6/+1/+6 melee (1d10+2 lethal or nonlethal, unarmed w/*monk’s belt*); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Flurry of Blows, Ki Strike, Spells, Turn Undead, Unarmed Strike; SQ AC Bonus, Aura, Bonus

NUN. LIU NI (5), CONTINUED

Feat, Evasion, Fast Movement, Purity of Body, Still Mind, Dolphin's Grace, Spells, Spontaneous Casting; AL CG; SV Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +12; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 18, Cha 16

Skills: Concentration +8, Craft (shipwright) +5, Heal +5, Hide +2, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (religion) +6, Listen +10, Move Silently +10, Spot +8, Swim +20, Tumble +10

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Improved Unarmed Strike, Stunning Fist (+1 per day w/*monk's belt*)

Languages: Aquan, Common

Human Traits (Ex): Humans get 1 extra feat and 4 extra skill points at 1st level.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The liu ni nuns are proficient with all simple weapons, with the handaxe, kama, nunchaku, sai, shuriken, and siangham, with all types of armor, and with shields (except tower shields).

Aura (Ex): This cleric has a strong Chaotic Good aura.

Spontaneous Casting: A cleric can "lose" a prepared spell in order to cast any *cure* spell of the same level or lower.

Turn Undead (Su): A cleric can Turn undead four times per day. They also receive a +2 synergy bonus to the check.

Spells: (5/4+1/3+1/2+1) Liu ni nuns worship the Sea Goddess and generally choose the Sea and Water domains, which allow them to Rebuke or Command aquatic creatures 3 times per day as an evil cleric Rebukes undead, and to Turn or Destroy fire creatures as a good cleric Turns undead and Rebuke, Command, or Bolster water creatures as an evil cleric Rebukes undead, each 6 times per day. They normally have following spells prepared; domain spells are marked with an asterisk.

0 Level — *cure minor wounds, detect magic, guidance,*

resistance, virtue

1st Level — *bane, divine favor, endure elements, entropic shield, obscuring mist**

2nd Level — *bull's strength, darkness, fog cloud,* shatter*

3rd Level — *blindness/deafness, dispel magic, water breathing**

AC Bonus (Ex): When unarmored and unencumbered, monks add their Wisdom bonus to AC and gain a +1 bonus to AC at 5th level and every 5 monk levels thereafter.

Flurry of Blows (Ex): A monk fighting unarmored with unarmed strikes or special monk weapons can make an extra attack in a round at her highest base attack bonus if she uses a full attack action, though this attack and each other attack that round takes a –1 penalty.

Unarmed Strike: Monks get Improved Unarmed Strike as a free bonus feat, so that they don't provoke attacks of opportunity from armed opponents when attacking unarmed, and the monk can choose to deal lethal or nonlethal damage with unarmed strikes. This monk deals 1d8 damage with unarmed strikes; 1d10 damage with unarmed strikes while wearing her *monk's belt*.

Bonus Feat: This monk selected Stunning Fist as a bonus feat at first level, and at 2nd level, the monk selected Deflect Arrows as a bonus feat.

Evasion (Ex): If a monk makes a successful Reflex saving throw against an attack that normally deals half damage on a successful save, the monk instead takes no damage.

Fast Movement (Ex): This monk enjoys a +10 unarmored Speed bonus, making her Speed score 40 feet.

Still Mind (Ex): A monk gains a +2 bonus to saving throws against spells and effects from the Enchantment school.

Dolphin's Grace: A ji liu shi monk gains a Swim speed of 20 ft.

Ki Strike (Su): A ji liu shi monk's unarmed attacks are treated as magic weapons against Damage Reduction.

Purity of Body (Ex): A ji liu shi monk gains immunity to all diseases except for supernatural and magical diseases.

Possessions: *Monk's belt, +1 quarterstaff of shock, +1 amulet of natural armor, 5 feather tokens (anchor), cleric's vestments, 20 gp*



The ji liu shi, or “gathering wave style,” martial art form is tailored for the watery environment the wave sisters inhabit. Not only do they learn water-centric combat maneuvers, they also gain special water-based abilities.

Hit Die: d8

Requirements

To qualify to become a ji liu shi monk, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Class: 3 levels of the monk core class

Special: Study for at least one month per level gained in the prestige class at the Hai Shen Gong temple with Old Hu.

Class Skills

The ji liu shi monk's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are as for the monk core class.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the ji liu shi monk, in addition to most of the standard class features of the monk core class.

Dolphin's Grace: At 1st level, a monk gains a Swim speed of 20 ft. At 3rd level, this increases to 30 ft., at 5th to 40 ft., at 7th to 50 ft., at 9th to 60 ft., 11th to 70 ft., 13th to 80 ft., at 15th to 90 ft., and at 17th level it increases to 100 ft. Swim skill checks are made with a +10 competency bonus. This ability replaces Slow Fall.

Gills of the Goddess: At 3rd level, a monk gains the ability to breathe underwater as aquatic creatures do. She may do this a number of hours per day equal to her half of her Constitution score. This ability replaces the monk's 6th-level bonus feat.

Water Freedom: At 9th level, a monk is no longer physically hindered by water. Any action she performs, such as attacking or dodging, is treated as if she were out of water, as per the spell *freedom of movement* but with permanent, unlimited duration. This ability replaces Abundant Step.

NEW PRESTIGE CLASS: JI LIU SHI MONK, CONTINUED

Elemental Body: At 16th level, a monk can turn her body into pure, elemental water for a total number of rounds per day equal to her level. This changes her creature type for the duration to *elemental*. As such, she is immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, and stunning. She also has no clear front or back and is therefore not subject to critical hits

or flanking. As an elemental, she gains Darkvision with a range of 60 feet, and when dealing with creatures native to the elemental plane of water while in this state she gains a +10 Charisma bonus to all social interaction. This ability replaces Empty Body.

Class Table: Ji Liu Shi Monk

	BASE	— SAVES —				FLURRY OF BLOWS	UNARMED	AC	SPEED
LEVEL	ATTACK	FORT	REF	WILL	SPECIAL	ATTACK BONUS	DAMAGE ¹	BONUS	BONUS
1st	+3	+4	+4	+4	Ki strike (magic), dolphin's grace 20 ft.	+1/+1	1d8	+0	+10 ft.
2nd	+3	+4	+4	+4	Purity of body	+2/+2	1d8	+1	+10 ft.
3rd	+4	+5	+5	+5	Dolphin's grace 30 ft.	+3/+3	1d8	+1	+20 ft.
4th	+5	+5	+5	+5	Wholeness of body, gills of the goddess	+4/+4	1d8	+1	+20 ft.
5th	+6/+1	+6	+6	+6	Dolphin's grace 40 ft.	+5/+5/+0	1d10	+1	+20 ft.
6th	+6/+1	+6	+6	+6	Improved evasion	+6/+6/+1	1d10	+1	+30 ft.
7th	+7/+2	+7	+7	+7	Ki strike (lawful), dolphin's grace 50 ft.	+7/+7/+2	1d10	+2	+30 ft.
8th	+8/+3	+7	+7	+7	Diamond body, greater flurry	+8/+8/+8/+3	1d10	+2	+30 ft.
9th	+9/+4	+8	+8	+8	Water freedom, dolphin's grace 60 ft.	+9/+9/+9/+4	2d6	+2	+40 ft.
10th	+9/+4	+8	+8	+8	Diamond soul	+9/+9/+9/+4	2d6	+2	+40 ft.
11th	+10/+5	+9	+9	+9	Dolphin's grace 70 ft.	+10/+10/+10/+5	2d6	+2	+40 ft.
12th	+11/+6/+1	+9	+9	+9	Quivering palm	+11/+11/+11/+6/+1	2d6	+3	+50 ft.
13th	+12/+7/+2	+10	+10	+10	Ki strike (adamantine), dolphin's grace 80 ft.	+12/+12/+12/+7/+2	2d8	+3	+50 ft.
14th	+12/+7/+2	+10	+10	+10	Timeless body, tongue of the sun and moon	+12/+12/+12/+7/+2	2d8	+3	+50 ft.
15th	+13/+8/+3	+11	+11	+11	Dolphin's grace 90 ft.	+13/+13/+13/+8/+3	2d8	+3	+60 ft.
16th	+14/+9/+4	+11	+11	+11	Elemental body	+14/+14/+14/+9/+4	2d8	+3	+60 ft.
17th	+15/+10/+5	+12	+12	+12	Perfect self, dolphin's grace 100 ft.	+15/+15/+15/+10/+5	2d10	+4	+60 ft.

¹ The value shown is for Medium monks. See Table: Small or Large Monk Unarmed Damage for Small or Large monks.

OLD HU

Wily Groundskeeper

“Ai-yaaaaah. I’m too old for this nonsense. Where are my balls? I’m going for a walk.”

Old Hu (hoo) was born in the streets of the Middle Kingdom capital. Both his parents were poor street hawkers deeply in debt to the triads. In his sixth year, they turned him over to the neighborhood gang boss to work as the man’s personal runner, where he sometimes earned as much as half a copper a week. As he grew older, Hu discovered he had the gift of gab. He didn’t have many friends amongst the triads, but he didn’t have many enemies either, thanks to his quick wit and easy words.

One day, a pretty girl named Hong Mei (hohng may), or “red plum,” befriended him. Her parents had sold her to the gangs to alleviate their own debt, and her fate, evident in her name alone, was to become a prostitute. Hu fell hopelessly in love with her at first sight. It wasn’t long before the gang boss received an offer to buy the girl, made by a rich aristocrat who had spied her washing clothes down in the gutter. Her beauty captivated him, and his offer was one the boss couldn’t refuse: a fine rosewood chest filled with one hundred stamped, imperial ingots. Hu heard this and panicked. With a butcher knife in hand, he ran to the boss’ house and loudly challenged him from the street outside the parlor balcony for ownership of Hong Mei. The boss, unimpressed, fetched his guards to beat Hu to within an inch of his life.

As Hu lay there bleeding, the boy prayed for death to take him, but he was not so lucky that day. The best way to fix a hotheaded mongrel dog, the boss shouted, more for the benefit of the gathered audience than for Hu, was to extinguish the fire burning under its ass. So he commanded his men to drag the boy to the imperial palace’s Gate of Emptiness — the eunuch’s entrance — and sell him. The palace eunuchs paid 15 gold pieces. The next day, the half-men drugged him, performed the requisite operation, and then carefully placed his manhood in a clay jar filled with preservative brine. Hu wept. His initiation into the “foul fraternity” complete, the certainty that he would never again see Hong Mei broke him.

Years passed slowly. His life as a servant in the queen’s household was hardly difficult, but it was without purpose. Hu did only that which was required of him and no more. Then something wonderful happened. While carrying a stack of fresh linens up the Eastern Palace’s side stairs, he saw Hong Mei, looking more beautiful than ever, and her husband, now a modest-ranking court bureaucrat. The scars on his heart ached with joy and desperation, despite Mei’s apparent unhappiness: as Hu watched, the magistrate berated his wife for her stupidity. Because of her careless words, the man accused, the emperor had assigned them to a remote coastal district in the empire’s southern-most territory. Before Hu could react, a senior eunuch found him and caught him by the ears. The older eunuch scolded him roundly as he dragged Hu to the kitchens for a beating he swore would not soon be forgotten. Hu didn’t care. He had seen his one true love again after so many years. If they killed him, he’d die a happy man.

Seeing Mei renewed Hu’s will to live. From that point forward, he took an abiding interest in courtly intrigue. He secured many promotions with flattery and deceit born out of years of practice. Spying became second nature to him, and he learned to manipulate, cheat, and steal. If information was the currency of the hidden corridors and back halls of the imperial palace, then he was a master information broker. In due course, he was able to track Hong Mei’s movements from one government post to the next, relying on an extensive network of contacts to keep him informed. She gave birth to four children. Her husband slowly worked himself into the emperor’s good graces. But, before he and his family could move back to the capital, Mei’s husband died. Hu despaired, fearful that he would lose Mei forever. Tradition required that she follow her husband to Heaven, where she could continue to serve him for eternity. To Hu’s surprise, she took the one option not even the emperor could refuse: exile as a nun. In return for the imperial family’s silent approval, she donated her vast inheritance to the government. The temple to which she retired was one she had fallen in love with in her youth, and was hidden in the coastal province where she and her husband had first been assigned. She disappeared from Hu’s life for a second time, but he refused to give up.

Seasons changed and everyone grew older. The emperor's second wife, greatly pleased with Hu, promoted him to the rank of August Emperor's Chamberlain in the West, the highest rank a eunuch could achieve in this world. With the secrets of the entire realm suddenly at his fingertips, he cleverly acquired an important and wealthy patron — an imperial cousin who believed the Mandate of Heaven belonged to him. In return for sufficient wealth to increase his spy network, Hu provided the cousin with the information needed to stage a successful coup. When the overthrow finally seemed imminent, he

begged the cousin to pull a few strings and let him retire early. If everything happened as planned, every eunuch in the palace would die under the sword of reform, and if it failed they would die as traitors.

A week later, Hu found himself standing outside the palace gates with just the clothes on his back, fifty gold imperial ingots, an umbrella in one hand, and clay jar with his testicles in the other. The old eunuch was a free man at last. With the world at his disposal, he set out to reunite with Hong Mei. Unfortunately, finding the tem-

OLD HU

20th-Level Native Outsider Monk

CR 20; Medium outsider (native); HD 20d8+40; hp 130; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 90 ft.; AC 28 (+2 Dex, +5 Wis, +4 Monk, +7 *bracers of armor* +7), touch 21, flat-footed 26; Base Atk +15; Grp +17; Atk +21 melee (1d6+7/1d6+7/crit x2 plus 2d6 damage vs. evil opponents, +5 *holy quarterstaff*), or +15 melee (1d3+2/crit x2 plus chance to break weapon, sword-breaker), or +15 melee (2d10+2 lethal or nonlethal, magic, lawful, and adamantine vs. DR, unarmed); Full Atk +21/+16/+11/+15/+15 or +13/+8/+3/+7/+7/+9/+9 melee (1d6+7/1d6+7/crit x2 plus 2d6 damage vs. evil opponents, +5 *holy quarterstaff*), or +15/+10/+5/+15/+15 melee (1d3+2/crit x2 plus chance to break weapon, sword-breaker), or +15/+10/+5/+15/+15 melee (2d10+2 lethal or nonlethal, magic, lawful, and adamantine vs. DR, unarmed); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Flurry of Blows, Ki Strike, Unarmed Strike; SQ Abundant Step, AC Bonus, Bonus Feat, Darkvision 60 ft., Diamond Body, Diamond Soul, Empty Body, Evasion, Fast Movement, Improved Evasion, Perfect Self, Purity of Body, Quivering Palm, Slow Fall, Still Mind, Timeless Body, Tongue of the Sun and Moon, Wholeness of Body; AL LG; SV Fort +14, Ref +14, Will +15; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 20, Cha 11

Skills: Bluff +20, Climb +10, Concentration +10, Diplomacy +15, Escape Artist +8, Gather Information +15, Hide +10, Jump +10, Knowledge (religion) +7, Listen +15, Move Silently +10, Profession (eunuch) +20, Sense Motive +10, Tumble +15

Feats: Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Improved Trip, Improved Unarmed Strike, Mobility, Power Attack, Run, Stunning Fist, Weapon Focus (quarterstaff)

Languages: Common, Imperial Dialect

Outsider: Outsiders have Darkvision with a range of 60 feet. They are proficient with all simple and martial weapons and the armor and weapons mentioned in their entries, as well as with shields and all lighter types of armor.

Native Subtype: A native outsider can be raised, reincarnated, or resurrected, and needs to breathe, eat, and sleep.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: In addition to being proficient with all simple and martial weapons, Old Hu is proficient with the kama, nunchaku, sai, shuriken, siangham, and sword-breaker.

AC Bonus (Ex): When unarmored and unencumbered, monks add their Wisdom bonus to AC and gain a +1 bonus to AC at 5th level and every 5 monk levels thereafter.

Flurry of Blows (Ex): A monk fighting unarmored with unarmed strikes or special monk weapons can make an extra attack in a round at his highest base attack bonus if he uses a full attack action. Old Hu incurs no penalty for

 OLD HU, CONTINUED

this, and gets a second extra attack at full base attack bonus.

Unarmed Strike: Monks get Improved Unarmed Strike as a free bonus feat, so that they don't provoke attacks of opportunity from armed opponents when attacking unarmed, and the monk can choose to deal lethal or non-lethal damage with unarmed strikes. This monk deals 2d10 damage with unarmed strikes.

Bonus Feat: Old Hu selected Stunning Fist as a bonus feat, at 2nd level Deflect Arrows, and at 6th level Improved Trip.

Evasion (Ex): If a monk makes a successful Reflex saving throw against an attack that normally deals half damage on a successful save, the monk instead takes no damage.

Fast Movement (Ex): This monk enjoys a +60 unmored Speed bonus, making his Speed score 90 feet.

Still Mind (Ex): A monk gains a +2 bonus to saving throws against spells and effects from the Enchantment school.

Ki Strike (Su): Old Hu's unarmed attacks are treated as magic, lawful, and adamantite weapons against Damage Reduction.

Slow Fall (Ex): The monk can use a nearby wall to slow a descent and fall any distance without harm.

Purity of Body (Ex): A monk gains immunity to all diseases except for supernatural and magical diseases.

Wholeness of Body (Su): Old Hu can cure up to 40 hit points each day, and can spread this healing out among several uses.

Improved Evasion (Ex): A monk only takes half damage on a failed Reflex save against an attack that normally deals half damage on a successful save, and no damage on a successful save.

Diamond Body (Su): A monk gains immunity to poison of all kinds.

Abundant Step (Su): A monk can slip magically between spaces, as per the spell *dimension door*, once per day. The monk's effective caster level for this is 10th.

Diamond Soul (Ex): A spellcaster must roll 1d20 + caster level and meet or exceed the monk's Spell Resistance 30 for the spell to work.

Quivering Palm (Su): Once a week on a successful strike that does damage, a monk can try to slay the victim at any later time by willing it. Unless the target makes a Fortitude save DC 30, it dies.

Timeless Body (Ex): A monk no longer suffers ability penalties for aging and cannot be magically aged. Bonuses still accrue, and the monk still dies of old age.

Tongue of the Sun and Moon (Ex): A monk can speak with any living creature.

Empty Body (Su): A monk can assume an ethereal state for 20 rounds per day, as per the spell *etherealness*.

Perfect Self: Old Hu is forevermore treated as an outsider rather than as a humanoid for the purpose of spells and magical effects. Additionally, the monk gains Damage Reduction 10/magic.

Possessions: *Monk's belt*, +5 *holy quarterstaff*, +7 *bracers of armor*, sword-breaker, testicle jar, monk's outfit, 2 cp

ple took a lot longer than anticipated. He wasted years following empty leads and lies. His informant network disintegrated not long after he departed the Forbidden City, leading to frustration at every turn. When he finally succeeded, after a string of hardships that would have driven other men insane, he met with disappointment. The temple nuns told him Mei had died seven years earlier. Despite having not seen him for more than seven decades, she never forgot him. Knowing he would someday find her again and her death was imminent, she left him a private missive. As he read it, Hu wept for the last time.

Since finding closure, life has become hollow for Old Hu. With nowhere to go and nothing to do, he decided to stay on at the temple as groundskeeper, content to honor Hong Mei's memory until death claims him and he can join her. At Shi Xiao-Lan's insistence, he teaches the nuns the martial arts, which he learned from the imperial bodyguards during his time in the palace. He finds a much-needed solace in unarmed combat, channeling his frustration into perfecting his ability while at the same time distracting himself from the misery of not being with Hong Mei.

THE SITE

Hai Shen Gong is an old place, unusual in that it is dedicated to the goddess of seas and oceans but built on land. A magical beacon fueled by mundane fire reminds passing ships not to stray too close lest they crash against the cliffs. For many, that purpose alone is enough to justify the temple's importance. Others believe the temple is favored above all others by its Sea Goddess. Since its inception, the temple has gathered a reputation for the unparalleled wisdom of its nuns, and for the impressive pedigree of its high priestesses.

The temple's history began in a nearby town with a young girl named Nian-Yin (neeyen een). She was extraordinarily gifted, possessing eyes as white as pearls and a profound wisdom accumulated over several lifetimes. Early in her life, she found her way to the cliffs, where she sat for hours on end, day after day, month after month, praying selflessly for the safety of the sailors traveling across the trackless, watery plain. Sailors soon heard of her devotion and came to pay their respects, leaving behind donations of food and money. Her greedy parents took the offerings for themselves though, leaving the girl with just stale rice gruel to eat. Her father used the money to buy land in town, while her mother bribed her way into a regional governorship. Both prospered

NEW WEAPON: SWORD-BREAKER

Category: Exotic Light Melee Weapon

Cost: 5 gp

Damage (S): 1d2

Damage (M): 1d3

Critical: x2

Range Increment: —

Weight: 2 lb.

Type: Slashing

A sword-breaker is a rather blunt dagger with an extended hilt. Each hilt tine curves up half the length of the blade, allowing it to be used in combat to catch an opponent's sword (or similar weapon) and then with a sharp twist snap it in half.

To catch a blade, a character wielding a sword breaker must perform a sunder melee attack. If he wins the opposed roll, rather than doing damage to his opponent's weapon as normal, he makes a Strength check against the weapon's Break DC. As a rule of thumb, a weapon's Break DC is $10 + (\text{half of the weapon's Hardness}) + (\text{the weapon's total hit points})$. A success results in the weapon breaking; a failure means he does no damage his opponent's weapon.

This weapon is considered a special monk weapon. A character with the Weapon Finesse feat may use his Dexterity modifier in lieu of Strength, relying on torque rather than brute force to break an opponent's weapon.

selfishly on the girl's good intentions. When Nian-Yin pleaded with her parents to give the donations to the needy, as was proper, they ignored her and persisted in squandering it. So she stopped going to the cliffs altogether.

A thick fog soon rose to hide the rocks from sight, causing many ships to crash against them. Sailors begged Nian-Yin to return to her vigil, but she refused. Losing substantial money and face, her parents took to publicly beating her, commanding her back to the cliffs for the sake of those "poor sailors." Still, the girl refused. Ships began sailing different, longer routes in order to stay safe. Her parents, with no donations to rely upon, fell again into poverty. Everyone despised them. Nian-Yin's father took to drinking, and her mother beat and cursed her every day. The villagers, frustrated by the continued loss of trade revenue, chided the girl for being so stubborn, for not being a good, filial daughter and listening to her parents. Nian-Yin still refused, however. Then one night, she died at the hands of her abusive parents. As soon as the villagers heard, they felt deeply ashamed. They dragged the couple from their home in the dark of night and hurled them from the cliffs. Days later, the people began construction on a temple dedicated to the girl's memory and the ideals of the Sea Goddess. Many months of kowtowing and begging for the goddess' forgiveness followed. In due time, the waters beyond the cliffs again became safe for ships to sail past. Today, the temple continues to hold Nian-Yin's vigil.

THE TEMPLE

Hai Shen Gong consists of the temple proper, the nuns' living quarters, and the beacon pearl. Nan Shui (nahn

sway) is the closest population center to the temple, a seaport ten miles up the coast to the north. Hai Shen Gong does not have its own resources and so relies on its relationship with the people of Nan Shui for its continued existence.

The walls and roof of the temple are lacquered in bright primary colors. They're also adorned with auspicious words and symbols filigreed in gold leaf. The ceilings depict stories about the temple's origins and the exploits of the Sea Goddess' most beloved priestesses, while the roof bristles with ceramic statuary designed to frighten away demons and ghosts. On each corner of the roof crouches one of the Four Celestial Heralds: Dragon, Phoenix, Snake, and Tiger. The entrances that lack doors and all of the windows are circular; otherwise, the closeable entrances are rectangular with wooden doors. Those that face north have propitious ideograms engraved in the walls around them to ward off bad luck.

On religious holidays, sailors and adherents crowd the temple and its grounds. Hawkers set up shop outside the temple walls, selling incense sticks, prayer scarves, fresh fruit for offerings, and other religious miscellany. The nuns don't mind because their own supply of such items is limited and generally reserved for their own use.



Unless otherwise noted, the temple's walls and doors have the following attributes:

Walls: Superior masonry walls; thickness 1 ft.; Hardness 8; 90 hit points; Str DC 35 to break; Climb DC 20.



NEW COMMUNITY: NAN SHUI

Size: Village

Power Center: Conventional/Magical

Alignment: Chaotic Good

GP Limit: 200 gp

Ready Cash: 5,000 gp

Population: 501 adults (96% human, 4% other), 190 children (98% human, 2% other)

Authority Figures: Shi Xuan-Lan, 15th-level ranger/1st-level cleric, head priestess of Hai Shen Gong; Fan Tuan (fahn twan), 6th-level paladin, chief constable; Li De-Gao (lee duh gaow), 6th-level aristocrat, village leader; Zou Ba (dzoh bah), 10th-level rogue, chief of the Dead Seas Gang; Hai Da-Fu, 14th-level expert, merchant guild leader

Doors: Good wooden doors; thickness 1 1/2 in.; Hardness 5; 15 hit points; Str DC 16 (stuck) or DC 18 (locked) to break; Open Lock DC 25.

Rusted Iron Gate: simple iron gate; thickness 1 in.; Hardness 4; 25 hit points; Str DC 20 (stuck) or DC 20 (locked) to break; Open Lock DC 18.

Main Courtyard

The temple's ornately carved wooden doors open on the main courtyard. The smell of incense from the altar in the next room is strong here. Decorated tiles, which bear the 212 names by which the Sea Goddess is allegedly known, cover the center section of the courtyard floor. It is the only part of the courtyard that isn't roofed over. Elegantly carved stone pillars support the roof.

During holidays specific to the Sea Goddess, worshippers and sailors pack into this part of the temple, usually waiting to pray at the altar, happily sharing holiday treats, or just catching up on gossip. Otherwise, during a typical day, about a dozen elderly sailors sit around the courtyard on stools, smoking pipes and talking about "the good old days." When they're feeling spunky, they might harass a passing nun, but they're so harmless that offense is rarely, if ever, taken. Sometimes, withered prostitutes sneak in and attempt to ply what's left of their trade on these tired old courtyard crows, but once discovered by the nuns they are promptly run off with sticks.

Stairs in the northwest wall descend down through the cliff to the ocean. A rusted iron gate keeps people out at night.



The temple's ornate front doors and gate have the following statistics:

Front Doors: strong wooden doors; thickness 2 in.; Hardness 5; 20 hit points; Str DC 23 (stuck) or DC 25 (locked) to break; Open Lock DC 30.

Main Altar Room

This is the heart of Hai Shen Gong. The atmosphere here is solemn. Hundreds of red candles burn in remembrance of honored sailors, and cloth prayer scarves tied around the pillars (a Prairie-Lion Clan custom recently introduced by Lan) hold the hopes of the adherents who placed them there. The altar along the back wall displays the Sea Goddess' effigy prominently in the center. On either side of her sit her two consorts: the king of sea dragons, Hai Long Wang (hai lohng wahng), and the black-faced emperor of the moon, Hei Yue Di (hay yooeh dee).



A secret passage that exits within the submerged cliff caves (see their description at the end of this chapter) is situated behind the effigy of Hai Long Wang. The panel requires a Search check (DC 30) to discover, and a Pick Lock check (DC 30) to open without springing a silent alarm trap (see below). Shi Xuan-Lan is the only resident of Hai Shen Gong aware of the passage's presence.

Adherents use a long table opposite the altar for ritual offerings, which mostly consist of fresh fruit and candy. On certain holidays, expensive dishes such as roast squid, shark-fin soup, and clay-pot chicken are offered. Once an offering has been properly "sacrificed," it's either taken home or given to the nuns to do with as they see fit. Divination sticks may be found on the table, along with the standard complement of unused incense, prayer scarves, and candles. Adherents use the sticks to ask questions of the gods. One can never be certain, though, if the answers received are really the ones they want or deserve.

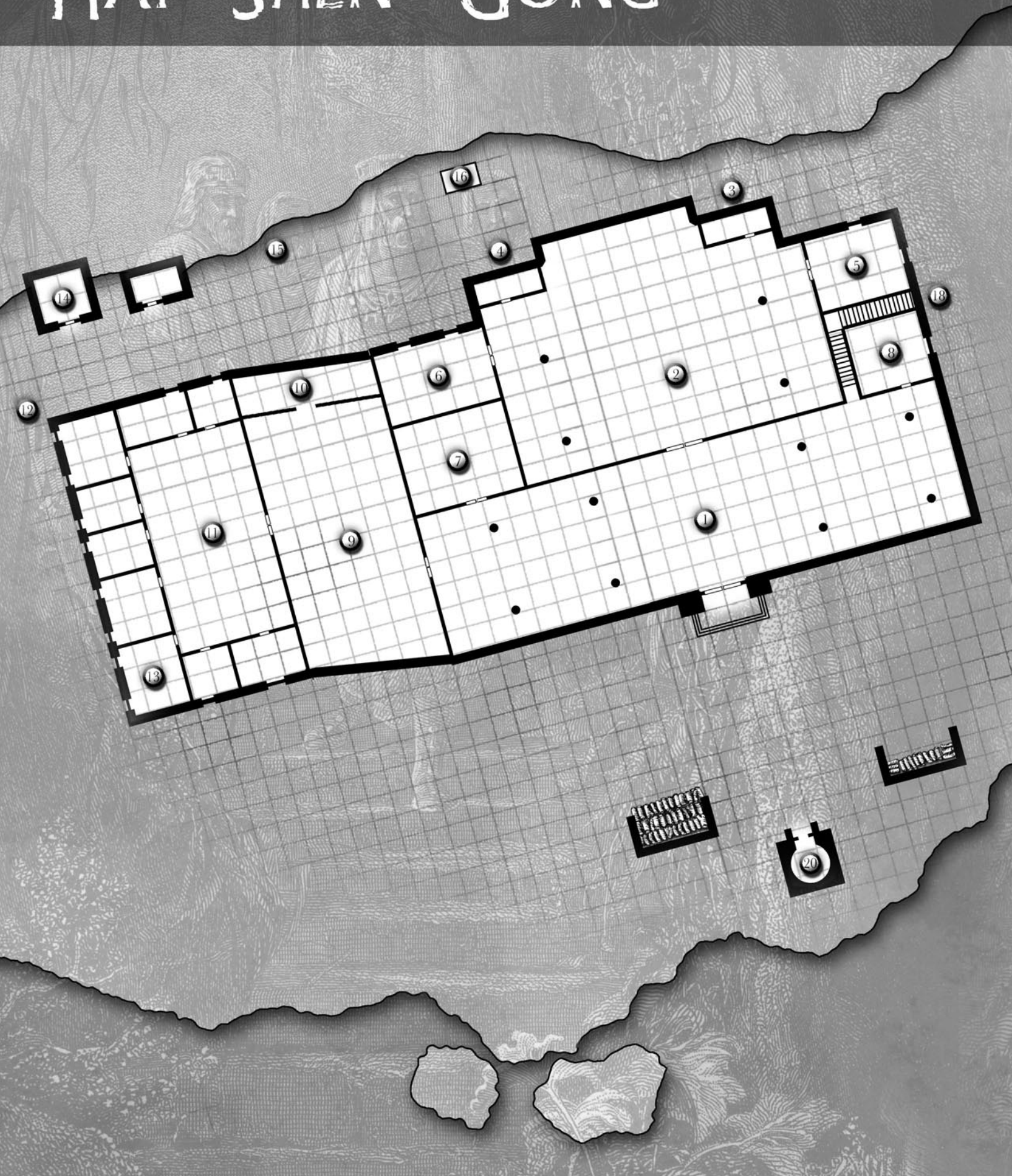


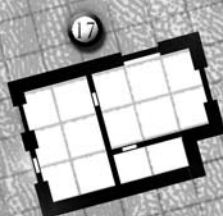
SILENT ALARM TRAP (CR 5)

If the secret panel is opened without first disabling this trap, the owner is notified of the incursion by means of a *sending* spell. The casting time in this case is instantaneous. The trap can be reset with a command word.

Silent Alarm Trap: CR 5; magical device; touch trigger; manual reset (command word); spell effect (*sending*, 7th-level cleric); Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 30. *Market Price:* 1,400 gp, 112 XP

HAI SHEN GONG





KEY

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Main Courtyard | 11. Small Courtyard |
| 2. Main Altar | 12. Nuns' Quarters |
| 3. Tu Di's Altar | 13. Shi Xioa-Yu's Quarters |
| 4. Mu Zei's Altar | 14. Storage Rooms |
| 5. North Ti Lang | 15. Well |
| 6. South Ti Lang | 16. The Khan's Altar |
| 7. Library | 17. The Head Priestess' House |
| 8. Old Hu's Quarters | 18. Ocean Stairs |
| 9. Common Hall | 19. Bell |
| 10. Kitchen | 20. The Beacon Pearl |

1 Square = 5 Feet

The large incense pot that squats on the floor between the offering table and the altar is made of heavy wrought iron and gilt in peeling gold leaf. Ash accumulated from decades of prayer fills it almost to the rim. When sending a prayer to Heaven, an adherent uses one of the brass braziers on either side of the pot to light a pair of long, thick incense sticks. Next, she recites her prayer while holding the sticks to her forehead, then embeds them in the ash when she finishes. There they will stand until burning down, their prayer-laden smoke drifting up toward the gods above.

Tu Di's Altar

On the north side of the Sea Goddess' altar rests a tiny alcove with the effigy of the god of roads and pathways, Tu Di (too dee). In the grand scheme of life, he's a relatively minor deity but one whose influence should never be underestimated, especially by people heading off on new journeys or those who have returned safely. He's often associated with the Sea Goddess by sailors. While he doesn't enjoy a place directly at her side like her consorts, he does garner his share of her adherents' respect.

Those worshipping Tu Di typically don't enter the alcove, instead reciting their prayers outside the door. To the left of

NEW WONDROUS ITEM: DIVINATION STICKS

These two half-moon-shaped pieces of polished wood are 4 inches in length. Each one is flat on one side and round on the other. Divination sticks function like the spell *augury*, except the window of divination extends up to week in the future. To use them, a character places the sticks between her palms, ask the gods a question, and then throws them. Depending on how the sticks land, her question is answered Weal, Woe, Weal and Woe, or Nothing.

The sticks may only be used to any effect once per week per person. Subsequent divinations cast beyond the first result in random answers each time. Roll 1d4

to determine the answer: 1 = Weal; 2 = Woe; 3 = Weal and Woe; 4 = Nothing.

Divination sticks only function inside a temple and they lose their potency after one month. A priest must "recharge" them by praying over them for a minimum of two hours, spending 5 gp in ritual materials, and sacrificing 1 XP.

Faint divination; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *augury*; Price 4,500 gp



NEW MINOR ARTIFACT: ALTAR OF THE SEA GODDESS

A good-aligned character about to undertake a long sea voyage of two or more weeks, and who prays at the Sea Goddess' altar should roll a Wisdom check DC 15. If successful, he receives the Sea Goddess' blessing. This imparts upon him the effects of the *shield of faith* spell. It persists for as long as he is at sea, beginning as soon as he first steps aboard a ship.

An evil-aligned character who makes a successful roll is affected as per the *doom* spell. This curse has the same duration as the blessing granted to good-aligned characters.

Characters may only receive this blessing once per year.

A cleric of the Sea Goddess who prays at her altar and succeeds at a second Wisdom check (DC 10) gains the benefits of the *divination* spell. This blessing may only be received once every two weeks and it stacks with the standard blessing.

Strong abjuration, necromancy, and divination; CL 20th; Weight immobile

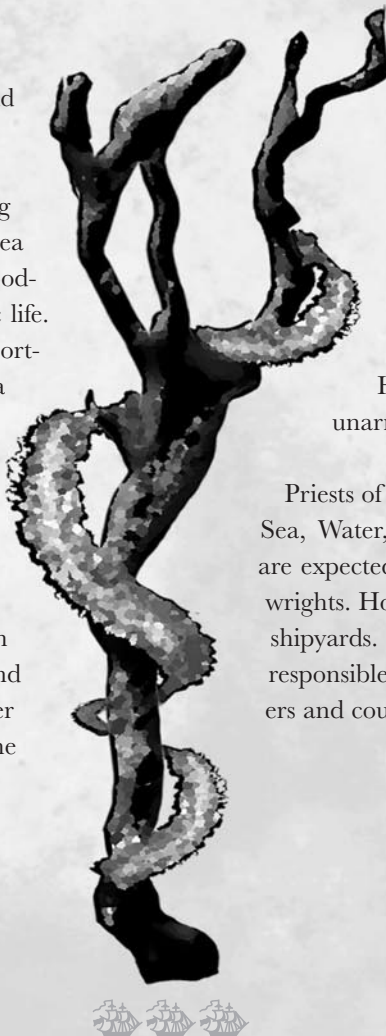
NEW DEITY: THE SEA GODDESS

Alignment: Chaotic Good

Domains: Sea, Travel, and Water

Typical Worshippers: Sailors and coastal peoples

The Sea Goddess, also called Tai Yang Hou (tai yahng ho), or the Great Sea Queen, watches over and protects all good-intentioned sailors and sentient aquatic life. Animal life, while part of her oceanic portfolio, is regarded as either food or a threat and is treated appropriately. The goddess doesn't advocate the genocide of sentient races, or the extinction of animal life. As long as a person treats her creations with respect, she honors him with blessings. Sailors in her good graces can always expect a favorable wind behind their sails, plenty of food and fresh water on their voyage, and protection from the worst of the sea's myriad scourges.



The holy symbol most representative of the Sea Goddess' canon is a piece of driftwood worked into a crooked walking stick with strands of seaweed entwining it. The symbol also doubles as a quarterstaff in the hands of a competently trained priestess and so is also the goddess' favored weapon.

However, the fists and feet of unarmed combat are also acceptable.

Priests of the Sea Goddess have access to the Sea, Water, and Travel domains. Her priests are expected to be competent sailors and shipwrights. However, they never own or maintain shipyards. The communities they serve are responsible for those, as her priests are teachers and councilors, not merchants.

NEW DOMAIN: SEA

Granted Power: Rebuke or Command aquatic creatures as an evil cleric Rebukes undead. Use this ability a total number of times per day equal to 3 + your Charisma modifier.

Sea Domain Spells

- 1 Endure Elements:** Exist comfortably in hot or cold environments.
- 2 Calm Emotions:** Calms creatures, negating emotion effects.

3 Water Breathing: Subjects can breathe underwater.

4 Control Water: Raises or lowers bodies of water.

5 Control Winds: Change wind direction and speed.

6 Control Weather: Changes weather in local area.

7 Chain Lightning: 1d6/level damage; 1 secondary bold/level each deals half damage.

8 Whirlwind: Cyclone deals damage and can pick up creatures.

9 Elemental Swarm: Summons multiple elementals; water elementals only.

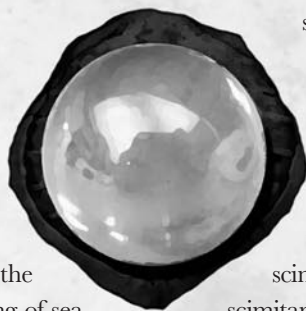
NEW DEITY: HAI LONG WANG

Alignment: Lawful Good

Domains: Knowledge, Law, and Sea

Typical Worshippers: Sea dragons

Hai Long Wang is the king of sea dragons, who are notorious for their sense of justice and propriety. It is said, especially by imperial lawmakers, that the Yellow Emperor defers to him in legal matters regarding the affairs of the Celestial Bureaucracy. The king of sea dragons is one of the Sea Goddess' two consorts. He has been hopelessly in love with her since the time she outwit-



ted him two thousands years ago in an appeal of his sentence of the poet Qu Yuan (choo yooen), whose suicide is lamented during the annual dragon boat festival.

Hai Long Wang's holy symbol is a perfect pearl embedded in the hollow of a tortoise shell's backside. His priests wield scimitars forged to resemble waves, and the scimitar is Hai Long Wang's favored weapon.



NEW DEITY: HEI YUE DI

Alignment: Neutral Evil

Domains: Magic and Moon

Typical Worshippers: Sorcerers, black magicians, and lunatics

Hei Yue Di, the black-faced emperor of the moon, is the patron deity of magic and lunacy. Sorcerers and mystics hold him in high esteem as the keeper of arcane secrets. His priests are often multi-classed cleric/wizards or cleric/sorcerers. He met the Sea Goddess when she jour-



neyed to the moon to reclaim the Lost Sea, which he stole after Coiled Antiquity created the world. They had a brief romance and now he is considered one of her consorts, even though he only infrequently receives her in his palace anymore.

Hei Yue Di's symbol is a black fan with the characters for "black" and "moon" painted in white across it. His favored weapon is the harvester's sickle.



NEW DOMAIN: MOON

Granted Power: You can cast Darkvision once per day. Gather Information is a class skill.

Moon Domain Spells

1 Darkness: 20-ft. radius of supernatural shadow.

2 Detect Thoughts: Allows "listening" to surface thoughts.

3 Clairaudience/Clairvoyance: Hear or see at a distance for 1 min./level.

4 Scrying: Spies on subject from a distance.

5 Commune with Nature: Learn about terrain for 1 mile/level

6 Greater Dispel Magic: As *dispel magic*, but +20 on a check.

7 True Seeing: Lets you see all things as they really are.

8 Reverse Gravity: Objects and creatures fall upward.

9 Foresight: "Sixth sense" warns of impending danger.

Those worshipping Tu Di typically don't enter the alcove, instead reciting their prayers outside the door. To the left of the entrance is a small incense pot.

Mu Zei's Altar

Mu Zei (moo dzay), the "Mother Bandit," is a goddess of rogues and bandits. She sits upon her own altar in the alcove south of the Sea Goddess'. Much like Tu Di, she's not as important a personage in the Middle Kingdom pantheon as others with similar philosophies, but she's not one who should be overlooked or taken for granted, either. Sailors and other adherents worship her out of fear. If they can appease her, they hope, then she won't direct her worldly minions — pirates, bandits, and

reavers — against their towns and ships. Mu Zei's demon lover, Huo Yen Xie Dao (hwoh yen shyeh daow), whose name means "The Barbed Scimitar's Flaming Eye," sits on her right-hand side. He hasn't yet been deified and probably won't be thanks to his awful reputation.

A small incense pot sits to the right of the door. Adherents are discouraged from actually entering the alcove to pray.

North Li Tang

The laity and lower-ranking nuns often use this ceremonial chamber for private prayer, meditation, and ritual. The effigies on the altar are smaller and less expensive

NEW DEITY: TU DI

Alignment: Neutral Good

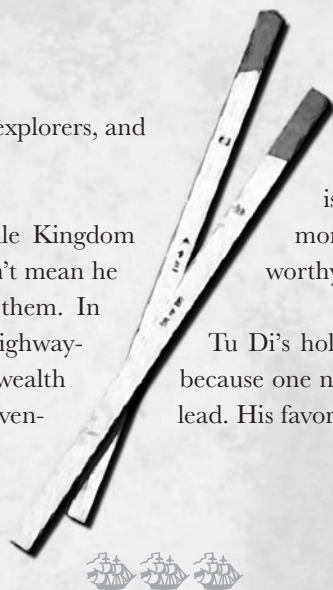
Domains: Travel and Protection

Typical Worshipers: Wanderers, explorers, and adventurers

It's said that no highway in the Middle Kingdom escapes Tu Di's attention, but that doesn't mean he protects everyone who journeys upon them. In life, as a mortal untold millennia ago, highway-men murdered Tu Di and claimed his wealth and wife for their own. After many adven-

tures in the afterworld reclaiming his scattered wealth, he ascended to godhood and became the protector of travelers everywhere. Unfortunately, he is saddled with a profound distrust of mortals. He only protects those he deems worthy and ignores the rest.

Tu Di's holy symbol is a pair of divination sticks, because one never knows where the roads in life may lead. His favored weapon is the quarterstaff.



NEW MINOR ARTIFACT: TU DI'S ALTAR

A non-rogue character in the midst of a long journey of two weeks or more who prays at Tu Di's altar may make a Wisdom check (DC 20). On a success, he gains Tu Di's blessing, the nature of which is based on his class:

Barbarian, Fighter, Monk, Paladin, Ranger: Movement rate bonus of +10 ft.

Cleric, Bard, Druid, Sorcerer, Wizard: All spells that affect movement have double duration as per the feat Extend Spell.

This blessing lasts for one month. A character may only receive it once per year.

Strong transmutation; CL 16th; Weight immobile

versions of the three found in the main altar room. There isn't an incense pot here, but if one is required it can be brought in from storage. The nuns also use this room as an informal classroom.

South Li Tang

This ceremonial chamber contains elaborate, expensive effigies of the Sea Goddess, Hai Long Wang, Hei Yue Di, Tu Di, and Mu Zei. Only Huo Yen Xie Dao is missing. The Sea Goddess' canon is frequently recited and taught to lower-ranking nuns here, though the head priestess and higher-ranking nuns may use the room from time to

time for other important rituals. Funerary rites for deceased sailors and initiation rites for new nuns are also performed here. In such instances, special incense pots are brought in.

It's commonly thought that this room is built on the spot where the temple founder, Nian-Yin, prayed and meditated each day.



The south li tang is permanently under the effect of the spell *hallow* as cast by a 20th-level cleric.

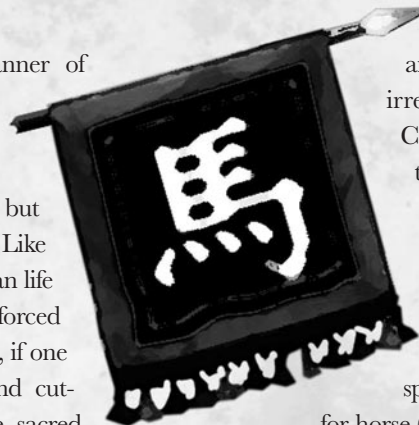
NEW DEITY: MU ZEI

Alignment: Chaotic Evil

Domains: Chaos and Trickery

Typical Worshippers: All manner of criminals

Mu Zei is not the most infamous goddess of the criminal underworld, but she is probably the most pernicious. Like most Middle Kingdom gods, she began life as a mortal, and as a young adult was forced into banditry by a corrupt aristocracy, if one believes the tales told by rogues and cut-throats. At one point, she stole the sacred *Philter of Coiled Antiquity* from the chambers of the Yellow Emperor and drank it all before he could



retrieve it. The potion contained Coiled Antiquity's aortal blood, and just one sip was capable of granting irrevocable godhood. Enraged, the Celestial Bureaucracy banished her to the Middle Kingdom, where she has been ever since, goading her minions into wreaking havoc wherever they go.

Mu Zei's holy symbol is a broken spear haft. A banner with the character for horse ("ma") dangles from the joint where its steel head connects to the wood. She favors longspear, which her followers skillfully wield from horseback.



NEW MINOR ARTIFACT: MU ZEI'S ALTAR

A rogue, or a character from another class of the same disposition, who prays at Mu Zei's altar may make a Wisdom check DC 20. On a success, she gains a +2 profane bonus to the skill of her choice. This blessing lasts for one month and may only be received once per year.

If any character, including a rogue, makes the mistake of praying to Huo Yen Xie Dao at Mu Zei's altar, then he must make a Wisdom check DC 12. On a success, the character is affected as per the spell *bestow curse*.

Strong transformation; CL 16th; Weight immobile

Clerics devoted to the Sea Goddess who cast *miracle* in this room while performing the proper ritual associated with the spell (found in the goddess' canon) may request an XP-based *miracle* at half the cost.

Library

This is a private room filled with bookshelves and scroll racks. Hundreds of volumes line the walls and rise in teetering stacks from the floor, all of it collectively known as the Cliff Record. It contains lessons spoken by Nian-Yin before her death, as well as those taught to the head priestesses in their dreams by incarnations of both Nian-Yin and the Sea Goddess. Every head priestess contributes to the Cliff Record in time. In all of the temple's history, only one head priestess — posthumously named “the Burnt Nun” — has ever been thoroughly expunged from the library's scrolls. Today, nobody living at the temple remembers her, though some elderly villagers might.



A successful Gather Information check (DC 30) made while talking to the elderly villagers suggests they believed the Burnt Nun was a reincarnation of Nian-Yin's mother. Since her death, attacks by the sahuagin have increased markedly.

In addition to religious texts, the library contains excellent information on marine nature, sailing, ship construction, sail making, sea mythology, and local history.

The nuns never let the texts leave the library unescorted. Shi Xuan-Lan and the highest-ranking nuns below her have keys to the room, which is kept locked at all times.



A character using the Gather Information skill in the temple library to learn about the Sea Goddess' canon receives a +20 circumstance bonus to his roll.

If he uses the texts in tandem with a Craft (ship-making), Knowledge (nature), Knowledge (local), Knowledge (religion), or Profession (sailor) skill check, he gains a +10 bonus. Of course, the text being consulted must have the same subject matter as the skill being used.

Library Door: stone door; thickness 4 in.; Hardness 8; 60 hit points; Str DC 28 (stuck) or DC 28 (locked) to break; Open Lock DC 40.

Old Hu's Quarters

This was a storage room before Old Hu arrived. Lan let him live here after he decided to stay, and while it's not the best room in the world, with its cracked walls and moldy odor, it still suffices nicely. A wobbly rosewood bed with stained sheets and a hard cotton mat has been shoved into the corner. Once owned by a head priestess decades ago, it saw plenty of action between her and her lover, a notorious outlander captain. Before that, the last empress of the Wei Dynasty slept upon it. Hu doesn't care about its history just so long as it works. The room also contains a similarly dilapidated chest filled with clothes and linens, and a wooden dummy for practicing martial arts stances.



A careful Search (DC 30) of the room reveals a hidden panel in the bed's baseboards. It only opens when the bed is turned on its side and the panel faces up toward the ceiling. No amount of tinkering works to the contrary. Forcing it open irreparably damages the contents. To figure out how the panel opens, a character must make a successful Open Locks check (DC 30).

The space behind the panel contains the letter from Hong Mei to Old Hu. It's apparent from her words that her love for Hu was as strong as his love for her, if not stronger. A paragraph inscribed along the parchment's bottom edge is written in different kind of ink with an unsteady hand. Unlike the other parts of the letter, this paragraph is not in any common dialect. Instead, it's a secret variant of the imperial dialect spoken only by eunuchs and the highest-ranking councilors. A successful Decipher Script skill (DC 35, DC 25 if using the books in the library for assistance) translates the text as follows:

“My dearest tiger,

“The dragon throne may have stolen my husband's wealth, yet it never sank its wicked claws into mine. This inheritance belongs to my precious children

only when they prove deserving of it. It saddens me to admit, this late in my life, that with each passing year their father's temperament grows stronger within them, and I do not like the men and women they have become.

"Please, my love, show them the error of their ways."

It ends with a string of naval co-ordinates that denote the treasure's location.

food for a small army. The other side has a pair of worn tables grooved with countless knife cuts. Racks displaying all manner of cooking implements lean against the walls, and towers of bamboo steamers fill an entire corner from floor to ceiling. The dishes prepared in the kitchen are all seafood-based.



Back Door: strong wooden door; thickness 2 in.; Hardness 5; 20 hit points; Str DC 23 (stuck) or DC 25 (locked) to break; Open Locks DC 30.

Common Hall

The nuns use this room as a common meeting spot. There are two large tables and matching benches here, which during afternoon hours are pushed up against the walls to give the wave sisters space to practice their maneuvers. The walls are plain, unlike the temple proper, though occasionally Lan hangs scrolls on them with various reminders or especially pithy sayings from the Sea Goddess' canon. In one corner stands a heavily abused wooden practice dummy. At the east end of the room is a wooden platform supporting three large wooden tubs for bathing. Hot rocks are used to warm the bath water during the winter months when ocean winds and constant rainstorms make the air chilly, despite the southern clime.

Kitchen

The odors of many home-cooked meals cling to every surface of this ramshackle room. One side has a large wood-burning stove and three iron woks of varying sizes, which can be used by a skilled chef to prepare enough

Small Courtyard

Like the main courtyard, the roof here exposes the room to the sky and elements. Its floor tiles are old and weathered, with verdant moss colonies growing in the cracks between them. A wooden platform encircles the courtyard, much like a hallway. It is roofed over, and a beautifully carved trellis broken only by the occasional entryway separates it from the courtyard. On hot days, floor mats from the nuns' bedrooms can be found hanging from the trellis or laid on the courtyard roof to get some sun and kill off the inevitable mold that accumulates.

Nuns leave their slippers on the stone tiles before stepping up onto the platform, unless there's rain. Others are expected to do likewise.

Nuns' Quarters

Generally, nuns share quarters together. Currently, eighteen nuns live in the temple, with sixteen sharing rooms. Each room has sparse furnishings, usually nothing more

NEW WONDROUS ITEM: WATER DRAGON HEAD

This porcelain dragon's head is permanently enchanted with a *create water* spell as cast by a 10th-level cleric. The dragon's mouth only dispenses fresh water once a vessel capable of holding water (such as a cup, a pot, or a person's mouth) is placed below it and a benediction to the Sea Goddess is uttered. Middle Kingdom sailors often take these magical spouts on sea voyages with them.

Casting *dispel magic* on the dragon head disables the spell for approximately 1/2 hour per level of the spellcaster. Casting *greater dispel magic* on it permanently destroys the enchantment.

Moderate conjuration; CL 1st; Craft Wondrous Item, *create water*; Price 1,000 gp; Weight 12 lb.

than a hard rice mat stuffed with hay for sleeping upon, and two small chests for clothes, blankets, and personal effects.

The floors are hollow underneath, and there are several removable floorboards. Some nuns keep proscribed possessions in these “secret” floorboard gaps, such as mirrors, combs, and jewelry.



The base Search DC to find the removable floorboard panel in any given room is 20. However, some nuns may have more cleverly hidden their illicit stashes, thus increasing the Search DC of their rooms by +5 to +15. As always, this is at the GM’s discretion.

STORAGE HUTS

Two rickety wooden shacks house the nuns’ dry goods and other stores. The south hut contains supplies such as sacks of rice and grain; ceramic jars filled with preserved fruit, fish, and vegetables; and small boxes filled with spices, salt, pepper, and dried chilies. Spare furniture and miscellaneous temple accoutrements, incense pots, bales of fresh incense, bundles of cloth for prayer scarves, candles, gongs, and musical instruments are kept in the north hut.

WELL

A rich blue and white porcelain basin is attached to the cliff wall behind the temple. Two horrible-looking demon warriors flank the dragon-headed spout. Water pours from the dragon’s mouth when a person makes his desire known and places a vessel beneath it.

Nuns use the well water for everything from bathing to cooking. Villagers, sailors, and other visitors are allowed to drink from it, but local custom dictates that those who quench their thirst at the well place a coin in the bottom of the basin as a sign of gratitude. These donations are collected once a week.

THE KHAN’S ALTAR

In a narrow passage between the back of the temple and the cliff wall is a small altar built into the stone. It con-

tains incense holders and a bronze bowl for receiving offerings of fruit. Sitting in the middle is a statue of a man in clothes similar to the kind affected by Shi Xuan-Lan. He has a long, thin moustache and gentle eyes. Prayer scarves hang from the corners of the altar.



If a character makes a successful Knowledge (local) or Knowledge (history) check, he realizes the altar is dedicated an ancestral Prairie-Lion Clan khan.

THE HEAD PRIESTESS’ HOUSE

Shi Xuan-Lan lives in this house built outside the claustrophobic confines of the temple. The outer courtyard gives her the privacy she often desires and protects her from the unceasing ocean wind. The house has one room with cheap, utilitarian furniture, though Lan did splurge a bit on a porcelain set for taking afternoon tea in style. The house’s north side has been converted into a sleeping alcove, with a teak and mahogany bed, a soft mat, comfortable silk sheets, and translucent curtains separating it from the rest of the room. Lan keeps spare clothes inside drawers built beneath the bed. The alcove is large enough to comfortably sleep two people.



Like the other nuns, Shi-Xuan Lan keeps her own secret stash, but hers is hidden behind a panel in the roof. A character must make a Search check (DC 30) to notice it and an Open Lock check (DC 30) to gain access to the space without setting off a magical silent alarm trap identical to the one that protects the passage behind the effigy of Hai Long Wang.

Inside are the following items:

- *composite shortbow of flaming*
- *1 tethered pearl* (see below)
- *+1 longsword*
- *efficient quiver*
- *25 feather tokens* (anchor)
- 2,348 gp

OCEAN STAIRS

Two sets of stairs, one inside the temple's main courtyard and another built along the cliff face, descend down to sea level many hundreds of feet below. The temple stairs cut through the rock to emerge at the base of the eastern cliff face, while the cliff stairs, built from weathered wood planks and beams, terminate at the base of the northern cliff face. Though there are no docks or jetties at the cliff base, there are creosote-treated poles sunk into the sea floor. They are strategically placed near the stairs so visitors can moor dinghies and rowboats to them then easily climb up to the temple.

BELL

An ancient bronze bell hangs from sturdy timbers near the cliff's northern edge. The nuns ring it when the fog rises so thick that the light from the beacon pearl becomes muted. Bell strikes correspond to the beacon's pulsing, producing a deep thrumming that can be heard up to four miles away.

THE BEACON PEARL

Near the cliff's eastern edge stands a 60-foot-tall jin ting — a granite and ceramic oven. Lively colors and protective gargoyles adorn it. Above the oven sits a flawless northern sea dragon pearl four feet in diameter. Long ago when the temple was built the first head priestess enchanted it to pulse once per minute with a bright light a hundred times stronger than a normal awakened northern sea dragon pearl, but only while the fire in the oven below it burns. Its light can be seen as far as six miles away on clear nights.

During the day, the oven lies cold unless the weather becomes inclement or other special circumstances require it to be lit. At night, the nuns take turns stoking the fire in six-hour shifts. To be selected as a beacon caretaker is one of the highest honors. Nuns so chosen spend the time feeding the fire, praying, and meditating on the Sea Goddess' wisdom. Every few days, a woodcutter replenishes the beacon's woodpiles.

CLIFF CAVES

The temple's attempts to keep the area's waters free of pirates hides a more meaningful purpose. At the base of the cliff on which Hai Shen Gong sits, many meters below sea level in a well-disguised network of caves, lies the secret heart of the temple known only to the head priestess. A tremendous northern sea dragon nest fills the greater part of these sprawling, submerged caverns, and is the location of the yearly mating and egg-laying of these creatures.

As the temple is dedicated to the Sea Goddess, who protects all sentient aquatic life and considers the sea dragons her favored children, the head priestess' secret responsibility is to look after the creatures and their eggs, protecting them from hunters and poachers until the hatchlings can take to the sea themselves.

When they mature, the northern sea dragons often act as the Sea Goddess' judges, escorting the ships of worthy captains through the dangerous waters to safety, while purposefully sinking those ships whose crews have less honest intentions. The glowing eyes of a northern sea dragon hanging in a thick fog can thus mean either good fortune or disaster for those few who witness the sight.

NEW WONDROUS ITEM: TETHERED PEARL

This appears to be a regular-sized pearl taken from an oyster. It has been enchanted by a priestess of the Sea Goddess to always guide its owner in one specific direction, such as true north or toward his home port.

As long as the owner heads in the correct direction, the pearl burns with a warm light.

Faint evocation and divination; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *light*, *locate object*; Price 30,000 gp

But the corpse of a northern sea dragon is a prize that makes the creatures hunted despite the danger involved in confrontations with them. The hide of a northern sea dragon can be used in a salve that makes the wearer immune to the cold, its blubber makes a slick substance that lets a ship travel more quickly on the water, and a certain gland in the creature's body is a component in a potion that produces a fog bank when its vial is opened.

The head priestess of Hai Shen Gong quietly directs all of the temple's resources to the goal of keeping the northern sea dragon nest protected, using both the pearl beacon and her nuns to drive ships away from the cliffs on the pretext of their ongoing battle with local pirates. Shi Xuan-Lan has faithfully kept the secret of her aquatic charges' presence, and none but she knows of the passage to the caves situated behind the effigy of Hai Long Wang in the main altar room of the temple. But the private journals of past priestesses claim that in times of danger, the Sea Goddess has prompted outsiders to volunteer their services as protectors on behalf of the creatures. These records also speculate that the thick fog that rose to hide the cliff and its rocks from sight in Nian-Yiu's time, causing many ships to crash against them, was the work of the northern sea dragons at the Sea Goddess' behest. The beacon pearl, on the other hand, was a gift for especially faithful service to the first head priestess of Hai Shen Gong.

For more information on northern sea dragons, including descriptions of the potions for which they're exten-

sively hunted as components, see the *Penumbra Fantasy Bestiary*, also by Atlas Games.

SCENES

The following are a few ideas to get the adventurers involved with Hai Shen Gong.

A WATERY GRAVE

A sahaugin necromancer who was once slighted by Shi Xuan-Lan creates an army of undead from the corpses of creatures drowned at sea and sends it against the temple. Each night, hordes of the watery zombies descend upon the nuns and it takes every person available to keep them at bay. The nuns ask the adventurers for help. The sahaugin's lair is two miles off the coast, built beneath a prickly nest of mutated coral.

THE PRIESTESS' PEARL

Far away in a landlocked city, a nun from Hai Shen Gong recruits the adventurers to help her retrieve a sacred item of immense value to her temple — an ancient sea dragon pearl with amazing powers. A wealthy city councilor keeps it in his private artifact collection, which is protected by a small army

NEW WONDROUS ITEM: AWAKENED NORTHERN SEA DRAGON PEARL

This is a beautiful white pearl harvested from a northern sea dragon's gullet. Northern sea dragon pearls are generally one to three feet in diameter, though larger ones certainly do exist. A pearl awakened by a spellcaster glows with a natural luminescence equivalent to 20 torches for every 8 pounds of its weight.

Wealthy magistrates in the Middle Kingdom use awakened northern sea dragon pearls on their estates to provide light for rooms and walkways, shielding

them completely during the day and partially at night to control the strength of the light emitted.

Harvesting a pearl from a 60- to 80-foot-long, serpent-like northern sea dragon is never an easy undertaking.

Moderate evocation; CL 6th; Craft Wondrous Item, *light*; Price 2,000 gp per 8 lb.; Weight 8 lb. per 1-ft. diameter



of guards. Once retrieved, the adventurers are to transport it back to the temple. The councilor's men will give chase all the way to the sea if need be. In return for the adventurers' help, the nun promises them the Sea Goddess' eternal gratitude and maps to three sunken ships that together contain a small kingdom's worth of gold.

SUNKEN TREASURE

A ship transporting priceless artifacts has recently gone down in a typhoon and now everyone is racing to claim the treasure. The nuns from the temple arrive first, sent at the behest of the imperial government to protect the ship from looters. Will the adventurers join with the nuns to help them defend the ship long enough for imperial reinforcements to arrive, or will they do whatever it takes to get the gold for themselves? Going up against the nuns results in some very dire consequences, as the Sea Goddess will send in her minions — not the least of which are several northern sea dragons — to aid the women in the battle.

UNGRATEFUL OFFSPRING

Hong Mei's surviving children, all of whom are important government bureaucrats, arrive at Hai Shen Gong at the head of a large contingent of soldiers, servants, and functionaries. They claim the nuns are illegally hoarding government property (which happens to be their inheritance) and they want it handed over immediately. If the nuns comply, they say, then they might consider sparing their worthless lives. If the nuns do not or cannot, the soldiers will put them to the sword. They give the nuns three days to think it over. The adventurers may be hired by Hong Mei's heirs to infiltrate the temple and get the inheritance covertly, or they may be hired by the nuns to help defend the temple or negotiate with the hotheaded heirs. The letter in Old Hu's possession details the inheritance's location.

A DANGEROUS DRUM

Word of northern sea dragon sightings off the cliffs of the Hai Shen Gong temple reaches the emperor. He sets an extravagant bounty for an unbroken northern sea dragon egg, which he plans to use in his (as yet unsuccessful) attempts to make the *Drum of Poagao* (pwoh

gaow), an artifact of great might that gives its owner absolute mastery over the seas, oceans, and rivers. Now treasure-seekers of all stripes crowd Hai Shen Gong's waters in search of the elusive creatures, and the temple's secretive northern sea dragon charges are in danger of discovery. Shi Xuan-Lan prays to the Sea Goddess to once again provide protectors for the creatures before they're found.

ALTERNATE VERSIONS

One change to the temple could be the inclusion of subterranean catacombs. The nuns are responsible for cremating the bodies of dead sailors, and then placing the funerary urns on shelves in the dark maze of cemetery tunnels beneath Hai Shen Gong. Every day, two or three nuns descend into the catacombs to offer prayers and sometimes gifts to the spirits, hoping to convince them to move on to the next world. Hungry ghosts rebuild their former bodies from ash and stone to haunt the tunnels and temple. Sailors who died unfulfilled at sea come back as chen gui (chen gway) — drowned zombies with the power to command water. The warrior-nuns, called chu mo zhe (choo moh dzuh), or ghost killers, are trained to deal with the restless dead.

In another variant, the temple sits above a beach and smuggler's village. The Sea Goddess of this temple is wicked and cruel. Smugglers and nuns come and go as they please. Warrior-nuns defend stockpiles of stolen goods, and sail with the pirates in battle against enemy privateers and merchant ships. The Mother Bandit sits at the Sea Goddess' side instead of the king of sea dragons, and Huo Yen Xie Dao is a full-fledged god in his own right. If the smugglers require better secrecy and defensibility, then the entire village is built inside the cliff, occupying numerous man-made levels that ultimately connect to the temple up top and docks hidden in a camouflaged cove below.

NORTHERN SEA DRAGON

CR 20; Gargantuan dragon (cold, water); HD 34d12+238; hp 459; Init +4 (Improved Initiative); Spd 10 ft., swim 80 ft.; AC 24 (–4 size, +18 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +34; Grp +58 (+16 size); Atk +42 melee (4d6+12, bite); Full Atk +42/+37/+32/+27 melee (4d6+12, bite), and +37 melee (2d6+6, tail slam); Space/Reach 20 ft./15 ft.; SA Breath Weapon, Improved Grab, Swallow Whole; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., Fog, Immunities, Low-light Vision; AL N; SV Fort +28, Ref +21, Will +23; Str 34, Dex 11, Con 25, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 17

Skills: Bluff +25, Diplomacy +7, Intimidate +25, Listen +27, Sense Motive +24, Spot +26, Swim +12 (+20 to avoid hazards), Survival +29

Feats: Alertness, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes

Breath Weapon (Ex): Northern sea dragons can expel a cone of frozen seawater and icy mist 60 feet in length as a standard action every 1d4 rounds. No attack roll is necessary; it does 11d6 cold damage, with a Reflex save (DC 26) for half damage.

Cold Subtype: The creature is immune to cold. It takes half again as much damage as normal from fire even on a successful save.

Dragon: Dragons are immune to magic *sleep* and paralysis effects. Unless noted otherwise, dragons have Darkvision with a range of 60 feet and Low-light Vision. They are proficient with natural weapons. Dragons eat, sleep, and breathe.

Fog (Su): Northern sea dragons travel always beneath a thick bank of mist. This cloud is roughly circular, with a 100-foot radius centered on the dragon, and rises 50 feet in the air. The mist gives any creature more than 5 feet away concealment with a 20% miss chance, and gives any creature more than 15 feet away concealment with a 50% miss chance.

Improved Grab (Ex): If the northern sea dragon hits an opponent of at least one size category smaller than itself or smaller with its bite attack, it deals normal damage and either attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity, or it pulls the opponent into its space without provoking an attack of opportunity and holds him with a –20 penalty to grapple checks, using its remaining attacks against other opponents. A successful hold does not deal any additional damage; each successful grapple check it makes during successive rounds automatically deals bite damage.

Skills: Northern sea dragons receive a +8 racial bonus to Swim checks to avoid hazards. They also get a +4 synergy bonus to Diplomacy checks and a +2 synergy bonus to Intimidate checks. This is included in the stats, above.

Swallow Whole (Ex): If the northern sea dragon makes a second successful grapple check after a grab, it swallows its prey, which can be up to one size category smaller than itself. Damage is 2d6+12 bludgeoning, plus 1d6 points of acid damage, plus 1d6 points of cold damage each round. A swallowed creature can climb back out of the stomach of the dragon with a successful grapple check. This returns it to the mouth, where another successful grapple check is needed to get free. A swallowed creature can also cut its way out by using claws or a Small or Tiny slashing weapon to deal 25 points of damage to the stomach (AC 20). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must again cut its own way out. The northern sea dragon's stomach can hold 1 Large, 2 Medium-size, 4 Small, 8 Tiny, 16 Diminutive, or 32 Fine or smaller opponents.

Water Subtype: This creature has a swim speed and can move in water without making Swim checks. It can breathe underwater and can breathe air as well.

EARTHBLOOD GROVE



AT A GLANCE

On the edge of civilization is an old-growth stand of hardwood trees roughly three miles across. It has a reputation for being haunted, and filled with strange creatures. Those concerned with such things know the secret of the forest: it is a druidic grove with a powerful natural relic hidden in its heart.

Two centuries ago, four druids discovered the Earthblood Fount in the middle of a fey-haunted wood. Understanding the importance of their find, they agreed to band together to protect and study this new source of power. Over the next decade, the four druids settled into the quadrant arrangement that they keep today, and made pacts with the resident fey creatures. Soon, students were traveling from miles away, seeking to train with the Earthblood druids. With the influx of students came others willing to dedicate themselves to the defense of the grove, and the first wardens were accepted. Reinforced by the wardens, the druids and their students turned their attention toward mastering the powers of the Fount.

These days, the Earthblood druids' power reaches far beyond the grove itself, and the surrounding settlements send offerings to the druids in return for good weather and healthy animals. Pilgrims, supplicants, and students are all welcome to enter the grove, as long as they keep to the paths and behave themselves. Any action that visitors take against the inhabitants or growth of the forest prompts a rapid and severe response from the inhabitants.

PLACEMENT

The Earthblood Grove needs to be in an unspoiled area, away from development. It can be placed in any terrain that supports a hardwood forest. There should be no settlements of more than two hundred inhabitants within a day's travel of the edge of the grove, though there may

be several thorps nearby, benefiting from the presence of the Earthblood druids.

Competition among the students to be named Wind's Heir is fierce, especially as the incumbent ages.

CHARACTERS

The four druids who claimed the Earthblood Fount and the grove surrounding it each took a quadrant of the grove to protect and oversee. They gave themselves titles, calling themselves after the four winds, and built holdings for themselves in their own territory

Over time, the druids chose successors for themselves, passing on their titles and holdings to favored students.

LIGANA STARSHADOW, NORTHWIND

Reluctant Teacher

"We all have responsibilities that we must live up to."

Ligana became Northwind twenty-four years ago, and has held the position ever since. Her good judgment and adherence to the agreements of the original Earthblood druids have won her much respect, and

LIGANA STARSHADOW

8th-Level Elf Druid

CR 8; Medium humanoid; HD 8d8; hp 26; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft.; AC 18 (+4 *hide armor* +1, +1 light wooden shield, +3 Dex), touch 13, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +6; Grp +6; Atk +6 (1d6/crit 18–20/x2, masterwork scimitar); Full Atk melee +6/+1 (1d6/crit 18–20/x2, masterwork scimitar); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells; SQ Animal Companion, Immunities and Resistances, Low-light Vision, Nature Sense, Resist Nature's Lure, Spontaneous Casting, Trackless Step, Wild Empathy, Wild Shape, Woodland Stride; AL LN; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +11; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 20, Cha 12

Skills: Diplomacy +12, Handle Animal +8, Knowledge (nature) +14, Listen +11, Search +9, Spellcraft +8, Spot +11, Survival +14

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Track

Languages: Common, Druidic, Elven

Elven Traits (Ex): Elves are immune to magic *sleep* spells and effects, have a +2 racial bonus to saves against enchantment spells or effects, have Low-light Vision that lets them see twice as far as a human in poor illumination,

and an elf who merely passes within five feet of a secret or concealed door is entitled to a Search check as though actively looking for it. Elves receive Martial Weapon Proficiencies for the longsword, rapier, longbow (and composite), and shortbow (and composite) as bonus feats. They also get a +2 racial bonus on Listen, Search, and Spot checks.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Druids are proficient with the club, dagger, dart, quarterstaff, scimitar, sickle, shortspear, sling, and spear. They're also proficient with all natural attacks of any form they assume, and with light and medium armor and shields. They're prohibited from wearing metal armor and can only use wooden shields.

Spontaneous Casting: A druid can "lose" a prepared spell to cast any *summon nature's ally* spell of the same level or lower.

Bonus Languages: A druid's bonus language options include Sylvan. A druid also knows Druidic as a free language, and is forbidden to teach it to nondruids.

Animal Companion (Ex): This druid has a wolf animal companion named Grinnel. The animal companion has Link, Share Spells, Evasion, and Devotion. This animal companion has +4 HD, +4 natural armor, Str +2, Dex +2,

she is often asked to act as arbiter in disputes between residents of the grove.

Ligana prefers to spend her time roaming the northern quadrant of the grove in wolf form. She has taken the alpha female of a pack of wolves as her animal companion, and spends most nights hunting with them. This has reduced the number of students seeking her tutelage, a condition that suits her, as she doesn't really want to spend that much time teaching when she could be running with the wolves.

This is not to say that Ligana ignores the students she has, or that she overlooks her responsibilities in training a successor. She has a few students, and rigidly adheres to her training contracts with them. Still, it is more likely for her to be encountered in wolf form, wandering through the grove, than in her elven form at Northwind Hold or Earthblood Howe.

MEETRIMIN

TOLISONDOROL, EASTWIND

Skilled Manipulator

"I need a little favor; almost nothing, really, but ..."

Meetrimin is the senior member of the Earthblood druids. He makes no bones about being in this for the power, and is up front about bargaining his co-operation in return for aid from others. He is careful never to ask others to do anything that will obviously violate their beliefs, but he has been known to use them to trigger series of events leading to disaster for others and gains for Meetrimin.

The Eastwind Hold is an armed camp of those who owe Meetrimin a favor and their allegiance. In return, Meetrimin helps his loyal followers to further

Ⓛ LIGANA STARSHADOW, CONTINUED

and 3 bonus tricks; its stats are otherwise the standard SRD stats of a wolf. Its tricks are Attack, Guard, and Track.

Nature Sense (Ex): A druid gains a +2 bonus on Knowledge (nature) and Survival checks.

Wild Empathy (Ex): A druid can improve the attitude of an animal, or of a magical beast with an Intelligence score of 1 or 2, within 30 feet with a Charisma check. The typical domestic animal has a starting attitude of indifferent, while wild animals are usually unfriendly.

Woodland Stride (Ex): A druid moves through undergrowth at normal speed without taking damage or impairments.

Trackless Step (Ex): A druid leaves no trail in natural surroundings and cannot be tracked, but can leave a trail if so desired.

Resist Nature's Lure (Ex): A druid gains a +4 bonus to saving throws against the spell-like abilities of fey.

Wild Shape (Su): This druid has the ability to *polymorph* into a Small, Medium, or Large animal for 8 hours and back again as a standard action 3 times per day.

Spells: (6/6/4/4/3) Ligana has prepared the following spells. The DC to resist them is 15 + spell level, or 19 + spell level within Earthblood Grove. Ligana can't cast chaotic spells.

0 Level — *detect magic, detect poison, guidance, know direction, light, resistance*

1st Level — *calm animals, cure light wounds, hide from animals, obscuring mist, speak with animals, summon nature's ally I*

2nd Level — *animal messenger, animal trance, hold animal, summon nature's ally II*

3rd Level — *dominate animal, greater magic fang, protection from energy, summon nature's ally III*

4th Level — *giant vermin, scrying, summon nature's ally IV*

Possessions: +1 hide armor, light wooden shield, masterwork scimitar, ring of protection +1, phylactery of faithfulness, explorer's outfit, 10 gp

MEETRIMIN TOLISONDOROL

14th-Level Gnome Druid

CR 14; Small humanoid; HD 14d8+28; hp 77; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 15 ft.; AC 20 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +1 *amulet of natural armor* +1, +1 *deflection ring of protection* +1, +5 +2 *small hide armor*), touch 14, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +10; Grp +10; Atk +11 melee (1d6/crit 19–20/x3, +1 *small spear*); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d6/crit 19–20/x3, +1 *small spear*); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells; SQ Animal Companion, Illusion Resistance, Low-light Vision, Nature Sense, Resist Nature's Lure, Spontaneous Casting, A Thousand Faces, Trackless Step, Venom Immunity, Wild Empathy, Wild Shape, Woodland Stride; AL NE; SV Fort +11, Ref +6, Will +14; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 21, Cha 11

Skills: Concentration +15, Diplomacy +13, Handle Animal +6, Knowledge (nature) +14, Listen +7, Ride +11, Spellcraft +14, Spot +10, Survival +7

Feats: Improved Critical (spear), Mounted Combat, Quicken Spell, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge

Languages: Common, Druidic, Gnome, Sylvan

Gnome Traits (Ex): Gnomes have Low-light Vision that lets them see twice as far as a human in poor illumination. They also have a +2 racial bonus to saving throws against illusions, +1 to the DC for all saving throws against illusion spells cast by gnomes, +1 racial bonus to attack rolls against kobolds and goblinoids, and +4 dodge bonus against giants. Once per day a gnome can use the spell-like ability *speak with animals* to communicate with a burrowing mammal for one minute, and Meetrimin may also cast *dancing lights*, *ghost sound*, and *prestidigitation*, each once per day. These are cast as a 1st-level caster, with a save DC of 10 + spell level. Gnomes treat gnome hooked hammers as martial weapons, and they get a +2 racial bonus to Listen and Craft (alchemy) checks.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Druids are proficient with the club, dagger, dart, quarterstaff,

scimitar, sickle, shortspear, sling, and spear. They're also proficient with all natural attacks of any form they assume, and with light and medium armor and shields. They're prohibited from wearing metal armor and can only use wooden shields.

Spontaneous Casting: A druid can "lose" a prepared spell to cast any *summon nature's ally* spell of the same level or lower.

Bonus Languages: A druid's bonus language options include Sylvan. A druid also knows Druidic as a free language, and is forbidden to teach it to nondruids.

Animal Companion (Ex): This druid has a dire boar animal companion named Dindin that he rides into battle. The animal companion has Link, Share Spells, Evasion, Devotion, and Multiattack. This animal companion has +8 HD, +8 natural armor, Str +4, Dex +4, and 5 bonus tricks; its stats are otherwise the standard SRD rules stats of a dire boar. Its tricks are Attack, Defend, Down, Guard, and Track.

Nature Sense (Ex): A druid gains a +2 bonus on Knowledge (nature) and Survival checks.

Wild Empathy (Ex): A druid can improve the attitude of an animal, or of a magical beast with an Intelligence score of 1 or 2, within 30 feet with a Charisma check. The typical domestic animal has a starting attitude of indifferent, while wild animals are usually unfriendly.

Woodland Stride (Ex): A druid moves through undergrowth at normal speed without taking damage or impairments.

Trackless Step (Ex): A druid leaves no trail in natural surroundings and cannot be tracked, but can leave a trail if so desired.

Resist Nature's Lure (Ex): A druid gains a +4 bonus to saving throws against the spell-like abilities of fey.

their objectives. Those who prove less than loyal find that the Eastwind is as skillful and conscientious in punishing betrayal as he is in rewarding faithfulness. Meetrimin's students compete with each other, vying to be useful to their master. Pecking order is important in this group, and Meetrimin pays a great deal of attention to those on top.

PARVAS COOPER, SOUTHWIND

Distracted Father Figure

"I'm busy with this, Geelvar, why don't you sort it out?"

Parvas is an erratic new addition to the Earthblood druids. He is often so wrapped up in his researches and adventures that he loses track of the regular meetings of the grove. His students are left to study on their own, although he is willing to provide instruction as long as he's not too busy with other things. The other Earthblood druids try to make sure that he shows up to the workings when he's required, with varying degrees of



MEETRIMIN TOLISONDOROL, CONTINUED

Wild Shape (Su): Meetrimin has the ability to *polymorph* into a Tiny, Small, Medium, or Large animal or plant creature for 14 hours and back again as a standard action 6 times per day.

Venom Immunity (Ex): A druid gains immunity to poisons.

A Thousand Faces (Su): A druid can change appearance at will while in normal form, as if using the spell *alter self*.

Spells: (6/7/6/5/5/4/3/2) Meetrimin casts spells as a 14th-level druid. The DC to resist these is 15 + spell level, or 19 + spell level within the grove. Meetrimin can't cast good spells.

- 0 Level — *create water, detect magic, detect poison, know direction, read magic, resistance*
- 1st Level — *detect animals or plants, detect*

snares and pits, endure elements, entangle, goodberry, obscuring mist, shillelagh

2nd Level — *barkskin, flame blade, resist energy, summon swarm, tree shape, wood shape*

3rd Level — *meld into stone, poison, protection from energy, spike growth, stone shape*

4th Level — *control plants, dispel magic, ice storm, rusting grasp, scrying*

5th Level — *animal growth, entangle (quickened), tree stride, wall of thorns*

6th Level — *barkskin (quickened), liveoak, wall of stone*

7th Level — *control weather, windwalk*

Possessions: *amulet of natural armor +1, ring of protection +1, +2 small hide armor, +1 small spear, druid's vestment, 225 gp*

PARVAS COOPER
9th-Level Human Druid

CR 9; Medium humanoid; HD 9d8+9; hp 58; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 19 (+2 Dex, +1 *ring of protection* +1, +4 *hide armor* +1, +2 *light wooden shield* +1), touch 13, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +6; Grp +7; Atk +9 (1d6+1/crit x2, masterwork sickle); Full Atk melee +9/+4 (1d6+1/crit x2, masterwork sickle); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells; SQ Animal Companion, Nature Sense, Resist Nature's Lure, Spontaneous Casting, Trackless Step, Venom Immunity, Wild Empathy, Wild Shape, Woodland Stride; AL CN; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +10; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 18, Cha 8

Skills: Craft (woodcarving) +11, Handle Animal +11, Heal +16, Knowledge (nature) +13, Listen +10, Profession (herbalist) +16, Spellcraft +15, Spot +10, Survival +14

Feats: Brew Potion, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Focus (sickle)

Languages: Auran, Common, Druidic, Terran

Human Traits (Ex): Humans get 1 extra feat and 4 extra skill points at 1st level.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Druids are proficient with the club, dagger, dart, quarterstaff, scimitar, sickle, shortspear, sling, and spear. They're also proficient with all natural attacks of any form they assume, and with light and medium armor and shields. They're prohibited from wearing metal armor and can only use wooden shields.

Spontaneous Casting: A druid can "lose" a prepared spell to cast any *summon nature's ally* spell of the same level or lower.

Bonus Languages: A druid's bonus language options include Sylvan. A druid also knows Druidic as a free language, and is forbidden to teach it to nondruids.

Animal Companion (Ex): Parvas currently has no animal companion.

Nature Sense (Ex): A druid gains a +2 bonus on Knowledge (nature) and Survival checks.

Wild Empathy (Ex): A druid can improve the attitude of an animal, or of a magical beast with an Intelligence score of 1 or 2, within 30 feet with a Charisma check. The typical domestic animal has a starting attitude of indifferent, while wild animals are usually unfriendly.

Woodland Stride (Ex): A druid moves through undergrowth at normal speed without taking damage or impairments.

Trackless Step (Ex): A druid leaves no trail in natural surroundings and cannot be tracked, but can leave a trail if so desired.

Resist Nature's Lure (Ex): A druid gains a +4 bonus to saving throws against the spell-like abilities of fey.

Wild Shape (Su): At 5th level, this druid has the ability to *polymorph* into a Small, Medium, or Large animal for 9 hours and back again as a standard action 3 times per day.

Venom Immunity (Ex): A druid gains immunity to poisons.

Spells: (6/5/5/4/3/1) Parvas has prepared the following spells. The DC to resist these is 14 + spell level, or 18 + spell level within the grove. Parvas can't cast lawful spells.

- 0 Level — *detect magic, detect poison, flare, guidance, know direction, read magic*
- 1st Level — *calm animals, endure elements, obscuring mist, pass without trace, shillelagh*
- 2nd Level — *resist energy, soften earth and stone, summon swarm, warp wood, wood shape*
- 3rd Level — *protection from energy, snare, speak with plants, water breathing*
- 4th Level — *flame strike, freedom of movement, ice storm*
- 5th Level — *wall of fire*

Possessions: +1 *hide armor*, +1 *light wooden shield*, masterwork sickle, 2 *feather tokens (tree)*, *bag of tricks (gray)*, *ring of protection +1*, *wand of faerie fire*, *wand of cure light wounds*, 2 divine scrolls of *reincarnate*, divine scroll of *ice storm*, divine scroll of *wall of fire*, *potion of barkskin*, *potion of protection from fire*, *potion of protection from cold*, peasant's outfit, 5 cp

the workings when he's required, with varying degrees of success.

For his part, Parvas is blithely unconcerned about the tensions he causes with his inattention. This behavior drives the Northwind to distraction, but both the Eastwind and the Westwind often take advantage of their compatriot's flightiness to their own political advantage.

When he's cornered into teaching, Parvas is exceptionally skilled. He has a gift for explaining difficult concepts, and for trimming complex ideas down to their most basic forms. The freedom that his hands-off approach affords to his students is the envy of the other students in the

grove, but the frustration of trying to squeeze some instruction out of the man is believed to balance it.

Over his lifetime, Parvas has had a number of animal companions that he befriended at need or at whim, and then released later. His sense of honor generally means that he rewards his former companions with intelligence, and they generally stay in his quadrant afterwards, growing into a large, disordered family. Currently, Parvas has no animal companion, but he has many creatures in his domain that will help him if he needs it.

SINDORIA BERRYWINE

12th-Level Halfling Druid

CR 12; Small humanoid; HD 12d8+12; hp 69; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 15 ft.; AC 21 (+1 size, +4 Dex, +2 deflection *ring of protection* +2, +4 +1 *small hide armor*), touch 17, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +9; Grp +4; Atk +14 melee (1d3–1/crit 19–20/x2, small masterwork dagger); Full Atk +14/+9 melee (1d3–1/crit 19–20/x2, small masterwork dagger), or +14/+9 ranged (1d3 and 2d6 vs. evil/crit x2, *small holy sling* +1); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells; SQ Animal Companion, Nature Sense, Resist Nature's Lure, Spontaneous Casting, Trackless Step, Venom Immunity, Wild Empathy, Wild Shape, Woodland Stride; AL NG; SV Fort +10, Ref +9, Will +15; Str 8, Dex 19, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 23, Cha 8

Skills: Handle Animal +9, Hide +11, Knowledge (nature) +14, Listen +12, Move Silently +13, Spellcraft +16, Survival +19

Feats: Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Track, Weapon Finesse

Languages: Common, Druidic, Halfling

Halfling Traits (Ex): Halflings receive a +2 morale bonus to saving throws against fear, a +1 racial bonus to all saving throws, a +1 racial bonus on attack rolls

with thrown weapons and slings, and a +2 racial bonus on Listen checks.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Druids are proficient with the club, dagger, dart, quarterstaff, scimitar, sickle, shortspear, sling, and spear. They're also proficient with all natural attacks of any form they assume, and with light and medium armor and shields. They're prohibited from wearing metal armor and can only use wooden shields.

Spontaneous Casting: A druid can "lose" a prepared spell to cast any *summon nature's ally* spell of the same level or lower.

Bonus Languages: A druid's bonus language options include Sylvan. A druid also knows Druidic as a free language, and is forbidden to teach it to nondruids.

Animal Companion (Ex): This druid has a dire bear animal companion named Limnal. The animal companion has Link, Share Spells, Evasion, Devotion, and Multiattack. This animal companion has +8 HD, +8 natural armor, Str +4, Dex +4, and 5 bonus tricks; its stats are otherwise the standard SRD rules stats of a dire bear. Its tricks are Attack, Defend, Guard, Perform, and Track.

SINDORIA BERRYWINE, WESTWIND

Last Bastion of Righteousness

"We cannot afford to relax our vigilance for an instant."

Sindoria has been Westwind almost as long as Meetrimin has been Eastwind, and she is fixated on counteracting his influence. Everything she does is focused on producing more good than evil with the powers of the Earthblood Fount. Every time she agrees to one of Meetrimin's requests in return for his aid, she tallies up one more reason for revenge.

Sindoria has made many contacts within the wardens, and uses them to gather information and keep an eye on Meetrimin's activities. She has also established a working relationship with the fey creatures within the grove, trading services and information. Coupled with her dire bear companion, this gives Sindoria a powerful force should she need to call them together.

Sindoria spends much of her free time patrolling her quadrant of the grove. She prides herself on her ability to move about unseen within her domain, and sometimes gives advanced instruction to the wardens. They, and her other students, find her a stern and demanding instructor who tolerates no shirking or half measures.

SINDORIA BERRYWINE, CONTINUED

Nature Sense (Ex): A druid gains a +2 bonus on Knowledge (nature) and Survival checks.

Wild Empathy (Ex): A druid can improve the attitude of an animal, or of a magical beast with an Intelligence score of 1 or 2, within 30 feet with a Charisma check. The typical domestic animal has a starting attitude of indifferent, while wild animals are usually unfriendly.

Woodland Stride (Ex): A druid moves through undergrowth at normal speed without taking damage or impairments.

Trackless Step (Ex): A druid leaves no trail in natural surroundings and cannot be tracked, but can leave a trail if so desired.

Resist Nature's Lure (Ex): A druid gains a +4 bonus to saving throws against the spell-like abilities of fey.

Wild Shape (Su): This druid has the ability to *polymorph* into a Tiny, Small, Medium, or Large animal or plant creature for 12 hours and back again as a standard action 4 times per day.

Venom Immunity (Ex): A druid gains immunity to poisons.

Spells: (6/7/6/5/4/4/3) Sindoria has prepared the following spells. The DC to resist them is 16 + spell level, or 20 + spell level within the grove. Sindoria can't cast evil spells.

0 Level — *cure minor wounds, detect poison, flare, know direction, resistance, virtue*

1st Level — *cure light wounds, endure elements, entangle, goodberry, hide from animals, magic fang, obscuring mist, shillelagh*

2nd Level — *barkskin, fire trap, flame blade, flaming sphere, heat metal, summon swarm*

3rd Level — *call lightning, cure moderate wounds, greater magic fang, poison, protection from energy*

4th Level — *cure serious wounds, ice storm, flame strike, scrying*

5th Level — *call lightning storm, cure critical wounds, death ward, insect plague*

6th Level — *fire seeds, liveoak, wall of stone*

Possessions: +1 small hide armor, +1 small holy sling, small masterwork dagger, ring of protection +2, courtier's outfit, jewelry (50 gp), 300 gp

EARTHBLOOD WARDENS

Staunch Defenders

“Are you lost? You look lost. Let me show you the way out.”

The wardens have pledged themselves to the defense and protection of the Earthblood Grove. The ritual that they undergo imbues them with the primal magic of the Earthblood Fount, increasing their ability as guardians.

It is also at this ceremony that they receive the magical cloaks that allow them to move about unseen in the wild.

Though the mandate of the wardens requires that they remain neutral in all grove politics, many have sided with one or another of the Earthblood druids covertly, and feed them information. Sindoria, the Westwind, has gone out of her way to cultivate the wardens as an information source.

Ⓢ TYPICAL WARDEN (80 TO 90)

5th-Level Half-Elf Ranger/ 2nd-Level Earthblood Warden

CR 7; Medium humanoid; HD 7d8+7; hp 35; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+3 Dex, +4 *studded leather armor +1*), touch 13, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +7; Grp +9; Atk +10 melee (1d8+2/crit 19–20/x2, masterwork longsword); Full Atk +8/+3/–2 melee (1d8+2/crit 19–20/x2, primary masterwork longsword, 1d6+1/crit 19–20/x2, off-hand masterwork short sword), +11/+6 ranged (1d8+2/crit x3, masterwork [+2 Str] composite longbow); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Favored Enemy, Spells; SQ Animal Companion, Combat Style, Endurance, Endure Cold, Fey Tongue, Immunities, Low-light Vision, Spells, Track, Wild Empathy; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +2; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

Skills: Hide +20 (with *cloak of elvenkind*), Knowledge (local) +6, Knowledge (nature) +10, Listen +5, Move Silently +9, Spot +5, Survival +10

Feats: Alertness, Point-Blank Shot, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (longbow)

Languages: Common, Elven

Half-Elven Traits (Ex): Half-elves are immune to magic *sleep* spells and effects, have a +2 racial bonus to saves against enchantment spells or effects, and have Low-light Vision that lets them see twice as far as a human in poor illumination. For all effects related to race, a half-elf is considered an elf. Half-elves receive a +1 racial bonus to Listen, Search, and Spot checks, and a +2 racial bonus on Diplomacy and Gather Information checks.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A ranger is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, and with light armor and shields (except tower shields).

Favored Enemy (Ex): This ranger gains a bonus to Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, and Survival checks and a damage bonus in combat against the following creature types: Animals +4, Fey +2.

Track: As a bonus feat, a ranger is able to find tracks or follow them for 1 mile at half speed with a successful Survival check based on conditions.

Wild Empathy (Ex): A ranger can improve the attitude of an animal, or of a magical beast with an Intelligence score of 1 or 2, within 30 feet with a Charisma check. The typical domestic animal has a

Although there is some variety within the wardens, there are more half-elves than any other race. They claim that the grove and the powers of the Fount are especially welcoming to them, although the druids have found no evidence of this. Still, the half-elven wardens tend to be a bit smug and superior to their fellows of other races, knowing that the grove likes them best.

Wardens spend most of their time wandering through the Earthblood Grove, patrolling its borders and the nearby area, leading in supplicants, and turning away

intruders. When a threat manifests itself, they gather in force to deal with it. In total, there are usually about eighty or ninety wardens serving the grove at any given time, many of whom have animal companions such as wolves, badgers, or hawks.

TYPICAL WARDEN (80 TO 90), CONTINUED

starting attitude of indifferent, while wild animals are usually unfriendly.

Combat Style (Ex): This ranger chose the two-weapon Combat Style, and so is treated as having the Two-Weapon Fighting feat, which lessens the penalty on the primary hand by 2 and the off hand by 6 when fighting with two weapons.

Endurance: As a bonus feat a ranger gains a +4 bonus to Swim checks vs. nonlethal damage, to Constitution checks to continue running, to avoid nonlethal damage from a forced march, starvation, or thirst, and to hold your breath, and to Fortitude saves to avoid nonlethal damage from hot or cold environments and to resist damage from suffocation. Also, the ranger can sleep in light or medium armor without becoming fatigued.

Animal Companion (Ex): As rangers, Earthblood wardens usually have wolf, badger, or hawk animal companions. The animal companion has Link and Share Spells. This animal companion has +2 HD, +2 natural armor, Str +1, Dex +1, and 2 bonus tricks; its stats are otherwise the standard SRD rules stats of a wolf, badger, or hawk. Its tricks are Attack and Track.

Endure Cold (Ex): Earthblood wardens are able to ignore up to 5 points of cold damage each round. In addition, they never need to make saving throws to avoid cold nonlethal damage from exposure.

Fey Tongue (Su): The Earthblood warden is able to communicate verbally with any and all fey creatures (creatures with the fey type). Speaking in this manner gives a +4 competence bonus on all Diplomacy checks involving fey creatures.

Spells: (1) This ranger's caster level is 2nd and he can prepare spells on the ranger spell list. The DC to resist these spells is 12.

1st Level — *pass without trace*

Possessions: +1studded leather armor, masterwork longsword, masterwork short sword, masterwork (+2 Str) composite longbow, *cloak of elvenkind*, explorer's outfit, 10 gp

 Ⓢ NEW PRESTIGE CLASS: EARTHBLOOD WARDEN

Earthblood wardens are the sworn protectors of the Earthblood Grove. They have pledged themselves to patrol and defend the grove and its denizens for at least a year and, in return, they have gained certain powers from the Earthblood Fount. When a warden chooses to serve in this manner, he is initiated into the fellowship by the druids in a ceremony at the Earthblood Howe, where the power of the Fount is used to seal them to the grove.

Rangers and druids are the most likely to become wardens, already having strong ties to the natural world. Barbarians, fighters, rogues, and bards are also possible, though far less likely. Sorcerers and wizards almost never become wardens.

Hit Die: d10

Requirements

To qualify to become an Earthblood warden, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

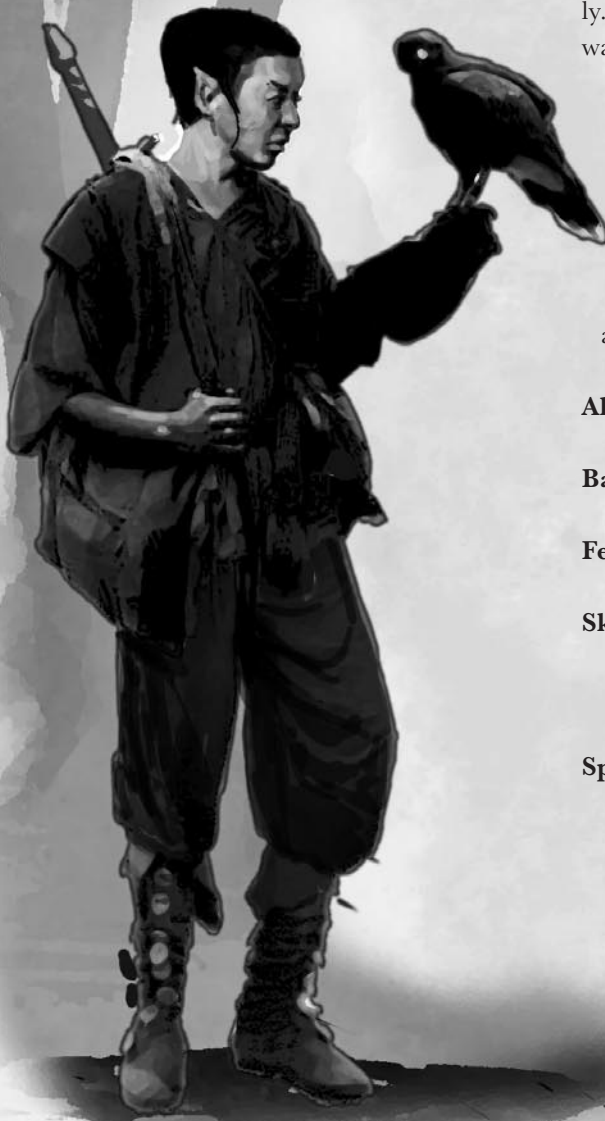
Alignment: Any Neutral

Base Attack Bonus: +5

Feats: Alertness, Point-Blank Shot, Track

Skills: Hide 5 ranks, Knowledge (nature) 8 ranks, Move Silently 5 ranks, Survival 8 ranks

Special: In addition, the prospective warden must petition the Earthblood druids for membership in the warden corps, agreeing to serve for at least one year, and undergo the ritual of Investiture. If the warden violates this agreement, he loses all levels in the Earthblood warden prestige class. After a year and a day, the character is free to leave, but doing so means that he may not



NEW PRESTIGE CLASS: EARTHBLOOD WARDEN, CONTINUED

gain further levels in the prestige class afterwards; the levels and abilities already gained are not lost in this case.

Class Skills

The Earthblood warden's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Knowledge (fey) (Int), Knowledge (Earthblood Grove) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Ride (Dex), Search (Int), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), and Survival (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Earthblood warden prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Earthblood wardens gain no extra weapon or armor proficiencies.

Endure Cold (Ex): At 1st level, Earthblood wardens are able to ignore up to 5 points of cold damage each round. In addition, they never need to make saving throws to avoid cold nonlethal damage from exposure.

Fey Tongue (Su): At 2nd level, the Earthblood warden is able to communicate verbally with any and all fey creatures (creatures with the fey type). Speaking in this manner gives a +4 competence bonus on all Diplomacy checks involving fey creatures.

Scent (Ex): At 3rd level, wardens gain the Scent special quality, which allows them to detect approaching enemies and sniff out hidden foes within 30 feet, and track by sense of smell. They can also identify familiar odors as readily as they do familiar sights.

Vanish (Su): At 4th level, the warden may vanish instantly from sight in a natural setting. As long as there's plant life and ground cover in the area, the warden may make a Hide check (DC 20) to disappear from sight with a single quick step even if directly observed at the time. This is a standard action, and an instantaneous alteration effect. Once the warden has vanished, all rules for concealment and movement are as normal.

Call Aid (Sp): At 5th level, an Earthblood warden may, once per day as a full-round action, call for help. This has the same effect as the spell *summon nature's ally V*, cast by a 10th-level druid.

Class Table: Earthblood Warden

CLASS LEVEL	BASE ATTACK	— SAVES —			SPECIAL
		FORT	REF	WILL	
1st Cold	+1	+2	+2	+0	Endure
2nd	+2	+3	+3	+0	Fey Tongue
3rd	+3	+3	+3	+1	Scent
4th	+4	+4	+4	+1	Vanish
5th	+5	+4	+4	+1	Call Aid

THE SITE

The Earthblood Grove is a roughly circular section of old-growth hardwood forest three miles in diameter. Beneath the sheltering trees, the four Earthblood druids have each built a holding and their wardens maintain cottages. In the center of the grove, a hill topped with a ring of standing stones holds the heart of the grove's power: the Earthblood Fount.

Scattered through the grove are a number of small settlements for the fey creatures native to the woods. Many sprites live in the forest, as well as a large group of satyrs, several dryads, a nymph or two, an unknown number of treants, and at least two unicorns.

Seasons in the grove are the same as in the surrounding area, but the weather within the grove is more intense. Warm summer days are baking hot, thunderstorms are true marvels of nature's fury, and winter days are fierce and cold. This isn't all bad: the nice days are paradise, the most ideal dreams of nature made manifest.

The various locations within the grove are connected by a maze-like network of narrow trails, although only four reach right to the Earthblood Howe at the center of the wood. These four trails run directly from the druids' Holds, and are used only for ritual purposes.

Invited visitors are met by a warden at the border of the woods, and led wherever they're bound. Anyone wanting to visit the Earthblood Howe must convince one of the Earthblood druids to take him; none of the wardens

⊗ EARTHLOOD GROVE ENCOUNTER TABLE

Check for an encounter once each hour in the grove. None of the creatures with Intelligence scores of 2 or lower will attack anyone sticking to the trails, but the more-sentient ones are free to act as they see fit, and anyone not sticking to the trails is fair game.

D100	ENCOUNTER	D100	ENCOUNTER
01 – 02	Assassin vine patch (2–4 assassin vines)	52	Nymph
03 – 06	Badger cete (2–5 badgers)	43 – 58	Owl
07 – 09	Black bear pair (2 black bears)	59 – 60	Owlbear pair (2 owlbears)
10 – 13	Boar	61 – 62	Pseudodragon clutch (3–5 pseudodragons)
14 – 16	Centaaur company (5–8 centaurs)	63 – 69	Raven
17 – 18	Dire weasel	70 – 71	Satyr band (2–5 satyrs)
19 – 20	Druid student	72	Shambling mound
21 – 22	Dryad grove (4–7 dryads)	73 – 76	Small monstrous spider colony (2–5 small monstrous spiders)
23 – 27	Eagle pair (2 eagles)	77 – 78	Southwind
28 – 34	Earthblood warden	79 – 81	Grig band (6–11 grigs)
35 – 36	Eastwind	82 – 84	Pixie band (6–11 pixies)
37	Geelvar	85	Stirge swarm (5–8 stirges)
38	Giant eagle pair (2 giant eagles)	86	Treant
39	Giant owl pair (2 giant owls)	87 – 88	Tree mite garden (2–6 tree mites; see below)
40 – 41	Giant stag beetle cluster (2–5 giant stag beetles)	89 – 91	Unicorn
42 – 46	Hawk pair (2 hawks)	92 – 93	Westwind
47	Krenshar pride (6–10 krenshars)	94 – 98	Wolf pack (7–16 wolves)
48 – 49	Medium viper	99 – 00	Wolverine
50 – 51	Northwind		

will agree to take outsiders to the heart of the grove for any reason.

Uninvited visitors are spotted, either by the wardens or by the fey, within minutes of entering the grove. Wardens try to chase intruders away, although a diplomatic party may be able to convince them that they're better being led to their destination than turned away. If the fey spot the intruders first, the party becomes the target of jokes and tricks designed to lead them astray or into danger. No matter who finds the party, attacking the denizens of the grove is a certain recipe for a retaliatory attack by wardens, fey, and the Earthblood druids themselves.

GMs who have access to the *Penumbra Fantasy Bestiary* may want to include cernans, forest gods, and tree devils in the mix.

EARTHBLOOD HOWE

The Howe sits in the center of the grove, a grassy hill rising steeply to a height of fifteen feet. It's topped by a ring of standing stones, with a trilithon set at each of the cardinal compass points. Within the circle is the Earthblood Fount, the source of power for the Earthblood druids and the entire grove. The overflow from the Fount runs down the southwest side of the hill, forming a stream that flows out through the grove.

NEW CREATURE: TREE MITE

Tree mites are miniscule faerie creatures that tend to trees, bushes, shrubs, and other plants. They look like tiny, wizened elves formed of twigs, berries, flowers, and leaves. In attitude, they are rather testy, quarrelsome, and pompous, though their memories are impressively short. They view their tasks as more important than anything else in the world. Often, their presence is announced by a strange wooden rattling sound, as the tree mites drum on branches and trunks to communicate with each other over a distance.

Diminutive Fey

Hit Dice: 1/4d6+3 (4 hp)

Initiative: +5 (Dex)

Speed: 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

AC: 21 (+4 size, +5 Dex, +2 natural)

Base Attack/Grapple: +0/−17

Attack: 2 claws +9 melee (1)

Full Attack: 2 claws +9 melee (1)

Space/Reach: 1 ft./0 ft.

Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +7, Will +4

Abilities: Str 1, Dex 21, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 10

Skills: Balance +9, Hide +21, Knowledge (nature) +7, Listen +6, Move Silently +9, Search +5, Spot +6, Survival +8

Feats: Toughness, Weapon Finesse (claws)

Languages: Sylvan, Common

Environment: Any forest

Organization: Garden (2–6), grove (7–12), or forest (10–30)

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement Range: 1/2 – 1 HD (Tiny)

Level Adjustment: —

Fey: Fey have Low-light Vision, and are proficient with all simple weapons and those mentioned in their entries.

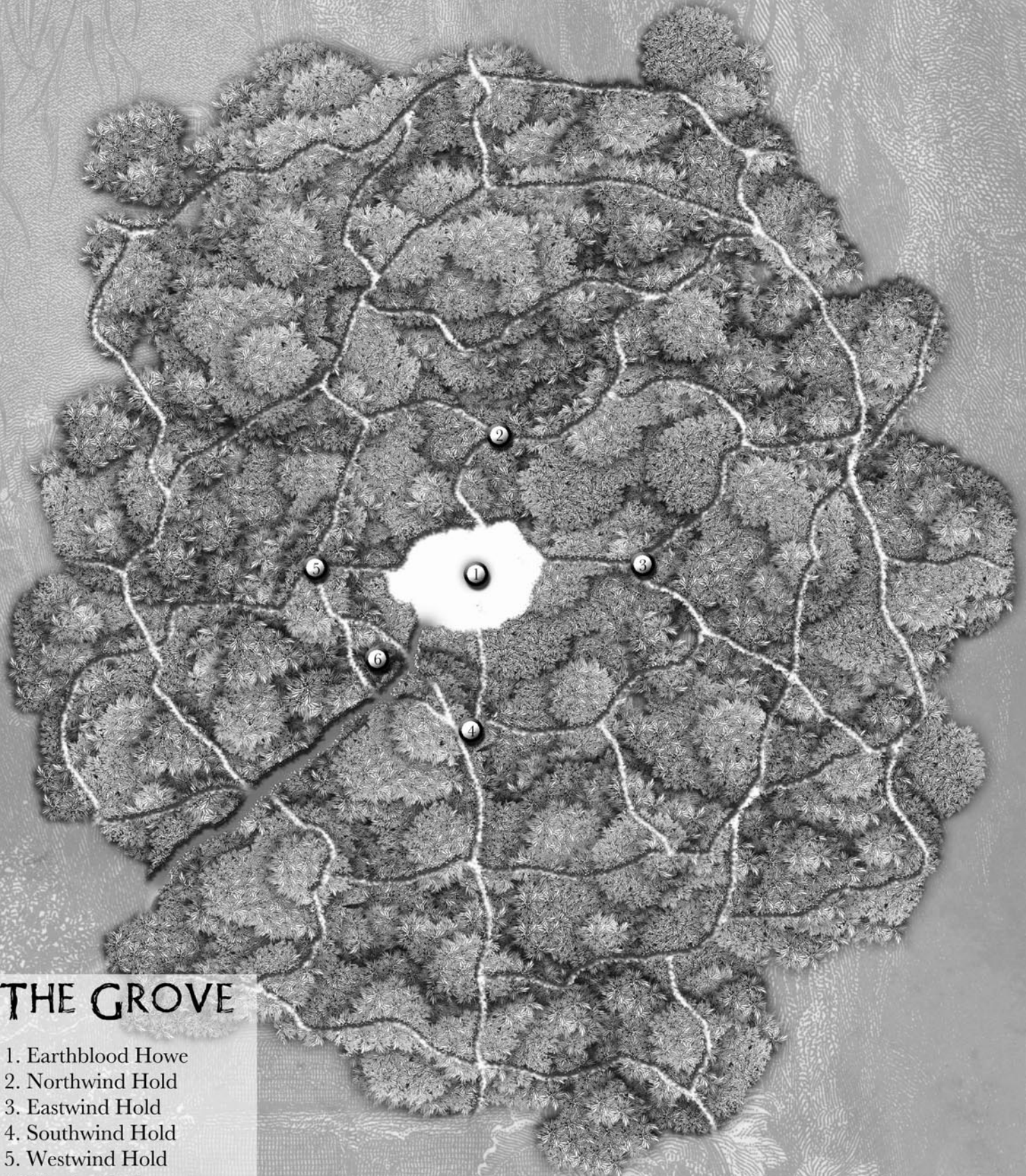
Spell-Like Abilities: Tree mites can cast the following spells as a 10th-level druid. The DC to resist these abilities is 12 + spell level.

1/day — *plant growth*, *summon nature's ally III*, *tree stride*

3/day — *barkskin*, *tree shape*, *wood shape*

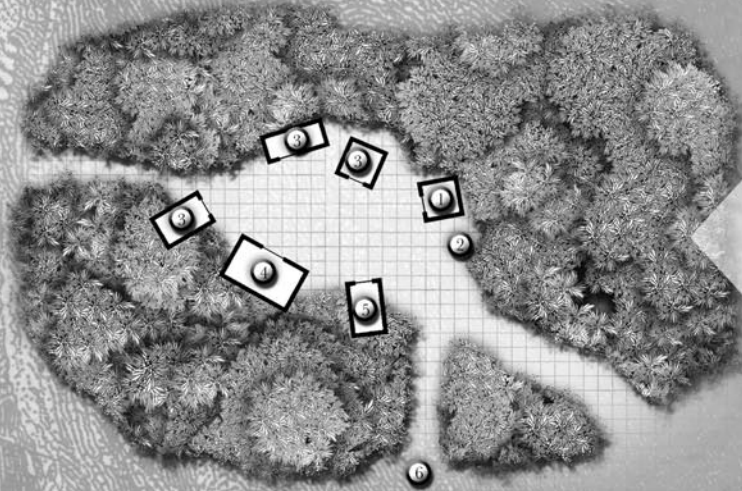
At Will — *detect animals or plants*, *entangle*, *goodberry*, *light*

EARTHBLOOD GROVE



THE GROVE

1. Earthblood Howe
2. Northwind Hold
3. Eastwind Hold
4. Southwind Hold
5. Westwind Hold
6. Warden Dell

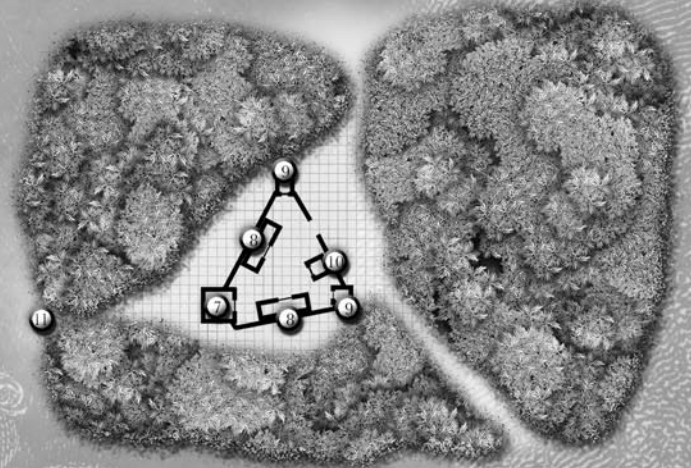


NORTHWIND HOLD

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Northwind Cottage | 4. Student Cottage |
| 2. Wolf Dens | 5. Workroom |
| 3. Empty Cottage | 6. Howe Trail |

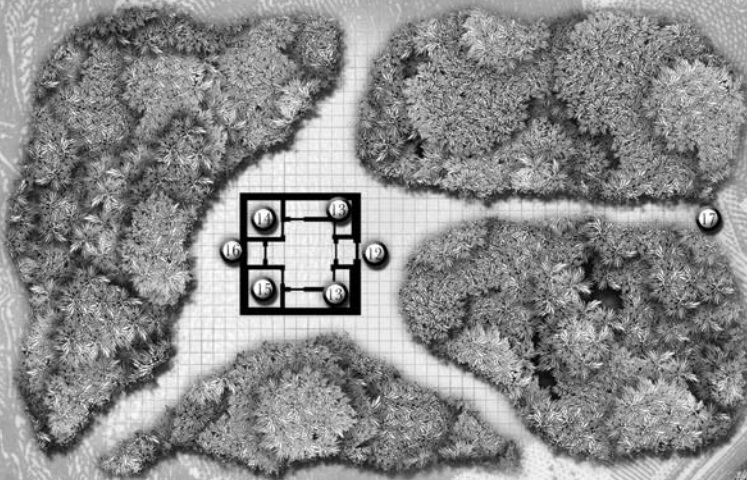
EASTWIND HOLD

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 7. Eastwind Tower | 9. Watchtower |
| 8. Barracks | 10. Storage |
| | 11. Howe Trail |



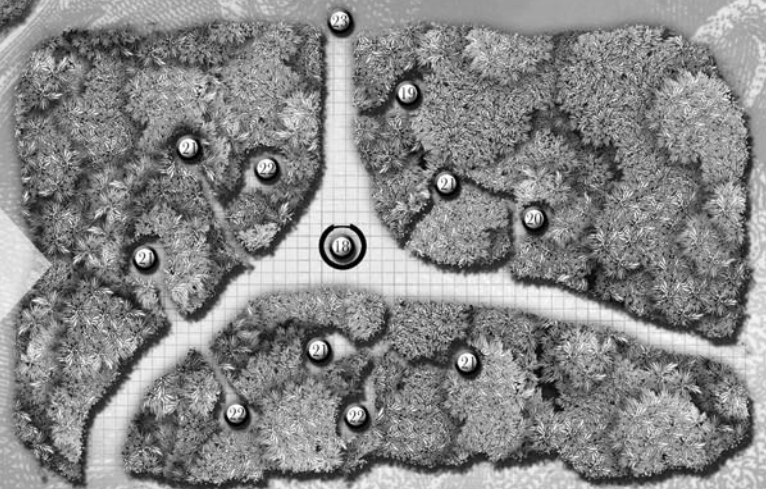
WESTWIND HOLD

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| 12. Gatehouse | 15. Westwind Keep |
| 13. Storage/Barracks | 16. Baths |
| 14. Student Keep | 17. Howe Trail |



SOUTHWIND HOLD

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 18. Southwind Cottage | 21. Student Hut |
| 19. Geelvar's Hut | 22. Empty Hut |
| 20. Work Hut | 23. Howe Trail |



1 Square = 5 Feet

NEW NATURAL MAJOR ARTIFACT: EARTHBLOOD FOUNT

The Earthblood Fount is a natural spring welling up from solid granite in the heart of the Earthblood Grove. The water from the spring comes straight from the heart of the world, and is brimming with natural power. This power is harnessed and focused by the Earthblood druids for their rituals, but the raw form of the energy can still be used either by bathing in the Fount, or drinking directly from it. These methods are extremely risky, but the rewards are profound. The waters of the Earthblood Fount have power only in this place; once the water flows out from the Fount, or is placed into a container, it instantly becomes non-magical.

Bathing: If a character takes ten minutes to bathe from head to toe in the waters of the Fount, she gains Acid, Cold, Electricity, Fire, and Sonic Resistance 5, and a +1 natural armor bonus for a year and a day. The character must also succeed at a Will save (DC 15) or permanently lose 1d3 point of Intelligence, as the wild nature of the magic batters at the character's mind. Bathing again before the year and day has passed gives no added benefit, and the character automatically loses 1d3 points of Intelligence permanently. The fountain cannot reduce Intelligence below 3.

First Draught: The first time a character drinks from the Fount, he gains the ability to *speak with animals* at will permanently. He must also succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) or lose 1d4 points of Charisma permanently as his features take on a bestial aspect. Charisma cannot be reduced below 3 by the fountain.

Second Draught: The second time a character drinks from the Fount, she gains the ability to use the following spell-like abilities:

1/week – *control weather*, *call lightning*
1/day – *sleet storm*, *obscuring mist*

These abilities are as the spells cast by a 15th-level druid. She must also succeed at a Will save (DC 20) or lose 1d4 points of Wisdom as the wildness of nature tears her attention and focus in a thousand different directions. Wisdom cannot be reduced below 3 by the fountain.

Third Draught: The third time a character drinks from the Fount, he gains the ability to use *transport via plants* as a 15th-level druid as a free action at will. He must also succeed at a Reflex save (DC 25) or lose 1d6 points of Dexterity permanently, as his newfound harmony with plants and trees causes his body to slow and stiffen. Dexterity cannot be reduced below 3 by the fountain.

Fourth Draught: A fourth drink from the Fount causes the character to be absorbed into the life force of the forest, vanishing forever. There is no save against this effect; she is gone forever, never to return. The soul is consumed by the grove, and only a *wish* or *miracle* spell, coupled with *true resurrection*, can bring the character back.

The Earthblood druids know about the various effects and dangers of the Fount, and will explain them to faithful supplicants. Their caution is well-founded; after taking his first draught from the Fount, a character must succeed at a Will save (DC 18), or feel compelled to drink again, regardless of any adverse effects from the first drink. After the second drink, the save DC is 23, and after the third, the DC is 28. Any failed Will save forces the character to take another drink.

There is one further restriction on the powers granted by the Earthblood Fount: no one who is benefiting from one of the raw powers of the Fount is able to use the more controlled powers that it grants to the Earthblood druids through their rituals. Thus, no Earthblood druid or warden has bathed in or drunk from the Fount, although according to legend, the original four Earthblood druids gave themselves back to the grove by each taking four draughts after they had appointed their successors.

The hill is two hundred yards across, with thick grass and a myriad of wildflowers growing on it. No matter what the time of year, on the Howe it is always summertime, at the top of the hill it's always dusk, and within the circle it's midnight on Midsummer's Eve.

The circle itself is seventy-five feet across, and the stones that make it up are ornately carved with vines, leaves, and symbols of the nature gods. Each is roughly circular, five feet in diameter, and twelve feet tall. The trilithon openings are also twelve feet high, and their lintel stones are carved with elaborate symbols of elemental power.

⌘ RITES OF THE EARTHLOOD DRUIDS

Over the years, the Earthblood druids have developed a number of rituals that allow them to tap into the primal energy of the Fount in a very controlled and powerful way. The nature of the Fount means that its powers can only be harnessed by four druids working in concert, and they must either all be of True Neutral alignment, or one each of Chaotic Neutral, Lawful Neutral, Neutral Evil, and Neutral Good.

Additionally, harnessing the power in this rather sophisticated way can only be done if none of those involved in the rite has ever bathed in or drunk from the Earthblood Fount. The raw magic of direct exposure interferes with the more controlled application of the rites, which automatically fail if one of the participants has benefited from the powers of direct exposure.

There are four established rites that the druids use, although there are rumors that the Eastwind knows of several others that he has not seen fit to share with his compatriots. The four common rituals are Initiation, Investiture, Reaching, and Unifying.

Initiation: This is the ceremony that allows one Earthblood druid to pass his position on to a successor. The rite lasts four hours, and involves the outgoing Wind removing his robes and accoutrements of power, washing them in the Fount, and dressing his successor. Chants and prayers accompany this, and the ceremony ends with a ritual welcome from the three other Winds. The main benefit of this rite is that it allows the newly initiated Wind to participate in the Earthblood rites. It also increases by 4 the save DCs for all spells cast by the new Wind within the confines of the grove.

Investiture: When a new Earthblood warden is pledged to the grove, she undergoes the ritual of Investiture. This hour-long ceremony sees the prospective warden anointed by the waters of the Fount on the eyes, hands, and heart, coupled with a terrifying oath of service. At the conclusion, the new warden is charged with defense of the grove by each of the four Winds, and presented with the cloak that is the uniform of the Earthblood warden. The newly invested character automatically gains a level in the Earthblood warden prestige class provided the character has enough experience points to advance into it normally. Otherwise, the rite has no effect.

Reaching: If each of the four Earthblood druids casts the *scrying* spell on the Earthblood Fount at the same time, they are able to share a single scrying session. The character with the highest Will save DC based on knowledge of the target leads and directs the scrying session, but all the participants are able to see the vision in the Fount. In addition, the Earthblood druids may cast any spells that they have prepared at targets seen within the Fount, as if the caster was present in the target area.

Unifying: If all four of the Earthblood druids have the same spell prepared, and stand with their feet within the Earthblood Fount, they may cast the spell simultaneously. This spell takes effect as if cast by a caster of the combined level of all the Earthblood druids. Thus, use of this rite currently would result in the spell taking effect as if cast by a 43rd-level druid for purposes of determining range, area of effect, duration, damage, etc. The druids must remain in the Earthblood Fount for the entire duration of spells that require concentration to continue.

The Howe itself exists in an alternate plane, and so the top of the Howe where the Fount exists can only be reached by passing through one of the Gates listed below, each of which is guarded to prevent unwelcome intrusions.

Northwind Gate

The lintel stone of this gate is inscribed with images of clouds and lightning, alongside the sigils and glyphs of the elemental lords of air and the weather gods. This is the entry point for the Northwind, and anyone passing through it without the Northwind triggers the summoning of an elder arrowhawk. This is the Northwind's bound protector, and it attacks any intruders, fighting to the death. The Northwind is instantly aware if the creature is summoned, and comes quickly to investigate.



Use the standard SRD statistics for the elder arrowhawk.

Passing through the Northwind Gate, with or without the Northwind, characters a momentary sensation of being buffeted by an icy wind blowing off a glacier, to the howling of wolves.

Eastwind Gate

This trilithon has waves and rain inscribed on its lintel, along with the marks of the elemental water lords and the symbols of the sea gods. This is the entry point for the Eastwind, and passing through it without the Eastwind results in the summoning of an elder tojanida. Like the arrowhawk, this tojanida is a bound guardian creature, and it fights to the death against any intruders. It is somewhat awkward and less than ideally deadly on land, but was required to maintain the elemental balance of the site. The Eastwind is immediately aware if the tojanida is summoned, and makes haste to investigate.



Use the standard SRD statistics for the elder tojanida.

Whether accompanied by the Eastwind or not, passing through the Eastwind Gate causes characters to

experience the sensation of a fresh sea wind blowing into their faces, to the sound of whale song.

Southwind Gate

This lintel is covered with carvings of mountains and trees, interspersed with the sigils of the elemental earth lords, and the symbols of the nature gods of the earth. This is where the Southwind enters the circle around the Earthblood Fount, and where he has bound his guardian beast. Passing through this gate without being accompanied by the Southwind summons an elder xorn. Like the other guardian creatures, the xorn fights to the death against any intruders. If the xorn is summoned, the Southwind is instantly aware of it, and comes to investigate.



Use the standard SRD statistics for the elder xorn.

Passing through the Southwind Gate, with or without the Southwind, gives characters the sensation of a cool forest breeze blowing into their faces, to the bellowing of a bear.

Westwind Gate

The lintel stone of the Westwind Gate is etched with pictures of flames and sand, mingled with the glyphs of the elemental lords of fire and the symbols of the gods of fire. This is the path of the Westwind when she arrives for rituals. Unless accompanied by the Westwind, anyone passing through the trilithon summons the guardian beast: a noble salamander. Like the other guardian creatures, the salamander fights to the death. The Westwind knows instantly if the salamander is summoned, and hurries to the Howe to investigate.



Use the standard SRD statistics for the noble salamander.

Passing through the Westwind Gate, with or without the Westwind, gives characters a momentary sensation of hot wind blowing off the desert, to the sound of a lion's roar.

Earthblood Fount

In the center of the circle, a large protrusion of granite thrusts up through the sod. The escarpment is fifteen feet across and a spring wells up from the middle of it, forming a pool three feet across and a foot deep before it spills over into the stream that runs down the southwest side of the Howe. This is the Earthblood Fount.

The water in the Fount is cold and clear, and glows softly with reflected moonlight. Tiny breezes play through the grass around the spring, whirling in little eddies and spirals. There is a sense of peace and anticipation in the air, but no sense of urgency.

NORTHWIND HOLD

Northwind Hold is the seat of Ligana Starshadow, the Northwind druid. She is often away from her Hold, running with the pack of her wolf companion through the grove, but maintains this site of residence both out of tradition, and to have a place to teach her students. She keeps the number of students to a minimum, begrudging the time that teaching requires but unwilling to shirk her obligations in this regard.

The Hold itself is a clearing in the wood, with a low hill rising on one edge, and a number of small cottages under the boughs of the trees. In the middle of the clearing is a well that provides water for the inhabitants. The hill has a number of small burrows in it, and Ligana's home, Northwind Cottage, sits on top.

Northwind Cottage

This sturdy thatched cottage stands atop the hill to the northeast of the clearing, sheltered by the spreading trees. The walls are thick timber, chinked with moss, and

a fieldstone chimney rises from one end. The door is solid oak, as are the shutters on the two small windows in the south face. The door and shutters are closed with stout latches, but are not otherwise locked or protected; Ligana relies on her wolves and students to prevent intrusion when she isn't in residence.

Inside, the cottage is one large room, with a sleeping pallet piled high with furs, a rough table and several chairs, a work counter with cupboards under one window, and a fireplace with cooking hooks in one end. The interior walls are rough finished, as is the floor.



Hidden under some loose floorboards under the sleeping pallet is Ligana's store of magical items, traded from the Southwind. Finding the hiding spot requires a Search check (DC 23). Inside, the items are stored in a locked wooden chest (Open Lock DC 25). The items are 3 *potions of cure moderate wounds*, 2 divine scrolls of *reincarnate*, and a *wand of dispel magic* with 40 charges. Ligana also keeps the Northwind funds here, a total of 500 gp.

Wolf Dens

The face of the hill is pierced by two holes, each about three feet in diameter. They lead to a network of tunnels and chambers within the hill that have been carved out by the wolves over the years. This is the home of the pack whose alpha female Ligana has taken as a companion. There are usually one or two wolves here, especially during spring and summer when the pups are young. They are fiercely protective of the hill and Northwind Cottage, and will attack anyone who approaches it without an escort they know, while baying for help.



There are 8 adult wolves in the pack. Use the standard SRD statistics.



NEW COMMUNITY: NORTHWIND HOLD

Size: Thorp

Power Center: Magical

Alignment: Lawful Neutral

GP Limit: 40 gp

Ready Cash: 500 gp

Population: 4 adults (50% human, 50% elf)

Authority Figure: Northwind Ligana Starshadow, 8th-level elf druid

Empty Cottages

There are three cottages keyed to this entry. They are similar to Northwind Cottage, but are slightly smaller, and obviously untenanted. This is where visitors to Northwind Hold stay when they come, and where students live when there are more of them.

Student Cottage

This cottage is similar to the other cottages in the area, but it has three sleeping pallets inside, separated by hanging curtains. The Northwind's three students live here, sharing the cooking and cleaning duties when not receiving instruction from Ligana. Each has a small chest of personal possessions at the foot of his or her pallet.



Ligana's students are a human woman named Verbena (4th-level druid), an elf woman named Romemenos (2nd-level druid), and human man named Tanner (3rd-level druid).

Workroom

This cottage has been given over to workspace for the students. Workbenches and cupboards line the walls, and several tables run down the center of the room. Drying herbs hang from the ceiling, and jars and bottles containing various spell components and herbal concoctions rest on shelves around the top of the wall. Paper, ink, and pens sit on a table with three tall stools around it and good light coming in through the window.



The teaching tools, books, and scrolls in this room grant a +2 bonus to any



ADVANCED ASSASSIN VINE

CR 3; Huge plant; HD 8d8+40; hp 72; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 5 ft.; AC 16 (-2 size, -1 Dex, +9 natural), touch +7, flat-footed +15; Base Atk +6; Grp +23; Atk +13 melee (1d8+13, slam); Full Atk +13/+8 melee (1d8+13, slam); Space/Reach 15 ft./15 ft. (25 ft. with vine); SA Constrict 1d8+13, Entangle, Improved Grab; SQ Blindsight, Camouflage, Immunity to Electricity, Low-light Vision, Resistance to Cold and Fire 10; AL N; SV Fort +11, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 28, Dex 8, Con 20, Int —, Wis 13, Cha 9

Plant: Plants are immune to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, and polymorphing. They are not subject to critical hits and mind-influencing effects. Plants have Low-light Vision unless otherwise noted, and are proficient with natural weapons. They breathe and eat, but do not sleep.

Constrict (Ex): The assassin vine deals 1d8+13 point so damage with a successful grapple check against Medium or smaller creatures.

Entangle (Su): The assassin vine can animate plants within 30 feet of itself as a free action (Reflex DC 13 partial). The effect lasts until the vine dies or decides

to end it (also a free action). The ability is otherwise similar to *entangle* (caster level 4th).

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the assassin vine must hit with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Blindsight (Ex): Assassin vines have no visual organs but can ascertain all foes within 30 feet using sound, scent, and vibration.

Camouflage (Ex): Since the assassin vine looks like a normal plant when at rest, it takes a successful Spot check (DC 20) to notice it before it attacks. Anyone with Survival or Knowledge (plants or herbs) can use those skills instead of Spot to notice the plant.

Immunity to Electricity (Ex): This creature takes no damage from attacks that inflict electricity damage.

Resistance to Cold and Fire (Ex): The creature ignores the first 10 points of cold and fire damage done to it each time it takes damage of that kind.

Knowledge (nature) checks made as long as the character can spend one hour performing research and experimentation here.

This is where Ligana's lessons take place, and where her students study and practice the less-physical aspects of her teaching. On any given day, there's an even chance of finding any or all of the students in this cottage, diligently working through lessons. The rest of the time, they're out patrolling the woods with their animal companions.

Howe Trail

This trail runs due south from the Northwind Hold to the Northwind Gate of the Earthblood Howe. It is well tended and clear, with small stone markers placed every fifty feet along the edges. This is the processional path for the Northwind and any who accompany her to the rituals at the Earthblood Fount. It's forbidden for others to make use of it for any other reason, and Ligana has groomed an assassin vine to guard this end of the trail. The vine attacks anyone coming down the trail who isn't accompanied by Ligana.

EASTWIND HOLD

This is the holding of Meetrimin Tolisondorol, the Eastwind. It's a far more defensible place than the Northwind Hold, reflecting the Eastwind's more sedentary lifestyle and desire for security. The holding itself is a three-sided wooden palisade, with wooden towers at the three corners and several log buildings in the enclosed bailey. The whole compound sits on a built-up earth mound surrounded by a ditch.



The palisade walls are nine feet tall, with a walkway around the inside at six feet up. The tops of the posts are pointed. The Climb DC for scaling the wall is 20. The walls are one foot thick, with a Hardness of 5 and 120 hit points. The gate is ten feet wide, six inches thick, with a heavy bar across the inside (Str DC 25 to break). The gate has a Hardness of 5 and 60 hit points. It's always kept barred.

The woods around the holding are the foraging grounds of the dire boar that serves as Meetrimin's battle mount. The animal is fiercely territorial, and does not hesitate to attack anyone wandering off the trails. It also guards the Howe Trail when Meetrimin is at the Fount.



Use the standard SRD statistics for the dire boar.

The entire clearing and compound are affected by an *unhallow* spell, with *dispel magic* tied to it. The *dispel magic* affects creatures of good alignment that enter the area.

Eastwind Tower

This two-story wooden tower is nearly twenty feet tall. It has two windows on the main floor that face into the compound, and two windows on the second floor looking out at the Howe trail. The main floor is a large common room used for cooking, eating, and study. It's an open area, with thick beams supporting the eight-foot-high ceiling, and a large hearth on the north wall. Trestle tables are set up in the center of the room, and bags, barrels, and boxes of provisions line the walls. A well in one corner of the room provides water for the complex.



NEW COMMUNITY: EASTWIND HOLD

Size: Thorp

Power Center: Magical

Alignment: Neutral Evil

GP Limit: 40 gp

Ready Cash: 4500 gp

Population: 20 adults (15% human, 70% half-elf, 15% other)

Authority Figure: Eastwind Meetrimin Tolisondorol, 14th level gnome druid

The second floor, reached by a narrow stair on the west wall, is the Eastwind's living quarters, and is divided into two rooms. The first, larger room is his sitting room and workroom, with a sturdy table, several chairs, and carpets scattered on the floor. Two windows look out at the Howe Trail. Meetrimin's bedroom is in the northeast corner, and contains a bed and some personal items.



In a locked chest under the bed (Search DC 15, Open Lock DC 28), Meetrimin keeps his emergency funds. He has 300 platinum pieces, 1000 gold pieces, and 5000 silver pieces locked away here. Meetrimin carries the only key.

Barracks

There are two buildings that act as barracks for Eastwind Hold. Each is a long, low log building with bunks and footlockers for twenty people. This is where Meetrimin's students and guards stay. The students have claimed the northern barracks, leaving the southern barracks for the guards.



The Eastwind currently has five students: a human woman named Brook (2nd-level druid), a gnoll woman named Arithsta (5th-level druid), a human man named Ash (6th-level druid), another human man named Till (4th-level druid), and an orc man named Melorn (3rd-level druid). He also keeps a contingent of 14 Earthblood wardens as guards.

Watchtowers

The two watchtowers are twenty-foot-tall structures, with a small guardroom at the bottom of each and a watch platform with arrow slits on top. There are always three Earthblood wardens on guard in each, two watching from the top floor and one waiting on the bottom floor to open the gates.

Privies/Storage

The two privies are long, low buildings with doors opening into four different rooms. Two of the rooms in each building

are given over to storage of supplies and weapons. One of the others is a collection of privy stalls, and the last room in each building has two large copper tubs and a stove to heat water for baths.

Howe Trail

This trail runs due west from Eastwind Hold to the Earthblood Howe. It is bare earth, with small stone markers every fifty feet along the length of it. This is the processional path that Meetrimin uses to travel to the Fount for the rituals and ceremonies. The dire boar keeps close watch on this trail, and attacks anyone who travels down it without the Eastwind.

SOUTHWIND HOLD

This is the holding of Parvas Cooper, the Southwind. At first glance, it looks like a single large hut sitting at a trail junction. Closer inspection shows a number of narrow trails in the woods leading to some smaller huts. The empty-seeming woods in the area is deceptive; Southwind Hold is filled with the Southwind's former animal companions and trees that he has brought to sentience.



Parvas has *awakened* many squirrels, rabbits, weasels, trees, bushes, birds, frogs, snakes, and other creatures in the area. These tend to behave as one big, quarrelsome family, gossiping and bickering among themselves and with the students here. Assume that anything that happens within the Southwind Hold is observed by at least one of these *awakened* creatures. Eventually, word of the event will make its way back to the Southwind, although probably in garbled form some lengthy time after the event.

Any looting or combat does cause any observing creature to take action, either scolding and lecturing or running to fetch Parvas, the tiger Geelvar, or one of the students to assist with the situation. Despite the long-lasting, deep-seated feuds within the community, the inhabitants of the Hold and the surrounding woods are all willing to put aside all differences to deal with a common enemy.

Southwind Cottage

This is the residence of Parvas Cooper. It's a round building made of fieldstone, with a thatched roof. Inside, it is one large room, with an open hearth in the center and a pile of sleeping furs nearby. Cured meat and dried vegetables hang from the low rafters, and clay jars of honey, mead, meal, and spices sit along the edge of the wall.



Hidden behind a loose stone in the wall, behind a clay jar of licorice root (Search DC 20), is a *wand of awaken* with 24 charges remaining.

Geelvar's Hut

Geelvar is one of the earliest and most faithful former animal companions of the Southwind. She has taken the responsibility of guarding the Howe trail for Parvas. Geelvar gives intruders one chance to explain, then attacks, knowing that the other creatures watching will fetch the students and Parvas quickly.

The other creatures of the Hold treat Geelvar as a superior, knowing that she stays neutral in any interfamily squabbles. They are also wary of her temper, which is fierce and unpredictable.

Her hut is a simple open room, with grass and pine boughs spread over the floor. The door doesn't latch, allowing her to push it open and closed at will.

Work Hut

This is where the Southwind provides instruction to his students when he can be bothered, and where he works on creating his magical items. It's as cluttered and disor-

derly as his cottage, but has several work tables and chairs clustered around the open hearth in the center.



The materials and half-finished projects lying around on the tables can provide up to 25,000 gp worth of raw materials for crafting magic items, if carefully picked through.

There are usually a couple of students working here, and Parvas is likely to wander in at any time, day or night.

Student Hut

Each of the four student huts is a small, single-room circular structure made of fieldstone with a thatched roof. Each has a sleeping pallet, open central hearth, and a few personal objects. One of the Southwind's students has claimed each of these four huts.



Parvas has four students, currently: a human man named Maple (1st-level druid), an elf woman named Saraina (5th-level druid), a lizardfolk man named Throrasst (2nd-level druid), and a half-elf man named Tilliar (3rd-level druid).

Empty Hut

There are four empty huts much like the student cottages.

Howe Trail

This trail runs due north, from Southwind Hold to the Earthblood Howe. It's somewhat overgrown, but still clear enough to follow, with marker stones every fifty feet along its length. Geelvar guards this trail, and takes her duty very seriously.



NEW COMMUNITY: SOUTHWIND HOLD

Size: Thorp

Power Center: Magical

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

GP Limit: 40 gp

Ready Cash: 90 gp

Population: 5 adults (40% human, 10% elf, 10% half-elf, 10% lizardfolk)

Authority Figure: Southwind Parvas Cooper, 9th-level human druid

GEELVAR
5th-Level Awakened Tiger Barbarian

CR 9; Large magical beast (augmented animal); HD 6d8+18 + 5d12+15; hp 107; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 50 ft.; AC 18 (–1 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural, +3 *amulet of natural armor* +3), touch 12, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +9; Grp +19; Atk +15 melee (1d8+6, claw); Full Atk +15 melee (1d8+6, 2 claws), +9 melee (2d6+3, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Pounce, Improved Grab, Rake 1d8+3, Barbarian Rage; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., Fast Movement, Illiteracy, Improved Uncanny Dodge, Low-light Vision, Scent, Trap Sense, Uncanny Dodge; AL N; SV Fort +12, Ref +9, Will +4; Str 23, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 9

Skills: Balance +6 (+10 in undergrowth), Climb +7, Hide +7 (+11 in undergrowth), Jump +14, Listen +11, Move Silently +9 (+13 in undergrowth), Spot +3, Swim +11

Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Improved Natural Attack (claw), Weapon Focus (claws)

Languages: Common, Auran

Magical Beast: Magical beasts have Darkvision with a range of 60 feet and Low-light Vision, and are proficient with their natural weapons. Magical beasts eat, sleep, and breathe.

Pounce (Ex): If Geelvar charges a foe, she can make a full attack, including two Rake attacks.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, Geelvar must hit with a claw or bite attack. She can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If she wins the grapple check, she establishes a hold and can Rake.

Rake (Ex): If Geelvar gets a hold, she can make two rake attacks (+14 melee) with her hind legs for 1d8+3 damage each. If she pounces on an opponent, she can also rake.

Scent (Ex): This creature can detect opponents within 30 feet by sense of smell, and can pinpoint the source of a scent if it is within 5 feet.

Fast Movement (Ex): The barbarian has a speed faster than the norm for her race by +10 feet when wearing no

armor, light armor, or medium armor (and not carrying a heavy load).

Illiteracy: A barbarian does not automatically know how to read and write, but may spend 2 skill points to gain the ability to read and write all languages the barbarian is able to speak.

Barbarian Rage (Ex): During a Rage, a barbarian temporarily gains +4 to Strength, +4 to Constitution, and a +2 morale bonus on Will saves, but suffers a –2 penalty to AC. The increase in Constitution increases Geelvar's hit points by 10 points, but these hit points go away at the end of the Rage. While Raging, a barbarian cannot use Charisma-, Dexterity-, or Intelligence-based skills (except for Balance, Escape Artist, Intimidate, and Ride), the Concentration skill, or abilities that require patience and concentration, nor can she cast spells or activate magic items requiring a command word, spell trigger, or spell completion to function. The barbarian can use any feat except Combat Expertise, item creation feats, and metamagic feats. Geelvar's fits of Rage last for 8 rounds. At the end of a Rage, she loses the Rage modifiers and restrictions and is fatigued (–2 to Strength, –2 to Dexterity, can't charge or run) for the duration of that encounter. Geelvar can only fly into a Rage once per encounter, and only 2 times per day.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): The barbarian retains her Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) if caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker.

Trap Sense (Ex): The barbarian gains a +1 bonus to Reflex saves made to avoid traps and a +1 dodge bonus to AC against attacks by traps.

Improved Uncanny Dodge (Ex): The barbarian can no longer be flanked. The exception to this defense is that a rogue of at least 9th level can still flank.

Skills: Geelvar receives a +4 racial bonus to Balance, Hide, and Move Silently checks. In areas of tall grass or heavy undergrowth, the Hide bonus improves to +8.

Possessions: Geelvar has only one real possession: an *amulet of natural armor* +3 that Parvas has crafted for her. It's an intricately carved wooden chain collar carved from a single piece of wood.



WESTWIND HOLD

The Westwind Hold is the seat of Sindoria Berrywine, the Westwind. It's a stone manor house sitting in a clearing, two stories high with an open court and well surrounded by the heavy stone walls. There are walkways around the tops of the walls, allowing for guards to be posted, but all windows look in to the courtyard. Two Earthblood wardens watch in each direction from the walkways.

The students and guards of Westwind Hold live within the manor house. The one member of the household that doesn't live inside is Sindoria's dire bear companion.



Use the standard SRD statistics for the dire bear.

The bear and the guards in the manor house keep a close watch on the head of the Howe Trail, and respond quickly to anyone trying to take the trail without the Westwind.



The manor house and the clearing are affected by a *hallow* spell tied to a *bane* spell. The *bane* spell affects any creatures of evil alignment in the area.

Gates

The gates are ten feet wide and one story tall, opening into a twenty-foot-long tunnel with murder holes in the ceiling. Heavy oak gates bar both the inner and outer openings.



The gates are six inches thick, have a Hardness of 5, and 60 hit points. They are always kept barred (Str DC 25 to break).

Two Earthblood wardens are stationed to watch the gates and open them quickly should the need arise.

Storage/Barracks

There are long sections of the surrounding manor house given over to storage and barracks. The lower floor of each section is storage area, and is filled with boxes and barrels of sundry supplies. A narrow set of stairs leads upstairs.

The second floor is barracks, each containing six beds for the resident Earthblood wardens that serve as guards. Each bed has a small washstand and footlocker beside it. Currently, a total of twenty guards live here. A ladder in one corner leads up to a trapdoor and the walkway above.

Student Keep

This larger area is given over to the students at Westwind Hold. Each of the two floors has four small bedrooms, each with a bed, washstand, chamber pot, writing desk, chair, chest, and brazier.



Sindoria currently has five students: a gnome man named Rillandoril (2nd-level druid), a human man named Brook (3rd-level druid), an elf man named Niavinis (5th-level druid), a half-elf man named Arys (4th-level druid), and a human woman named Clover (5th-level druid).

Westwind Keep

Sindoria makes her home on the top floor of this section of the manor house. The main floor is given over to the kitchen and the main hall, which is also used for training. The upper floor has a large sitting room with several comfortable chairs, and Sindoria's bedroom.

Sindoria's room is warmly decorated, with carpets and furs on the floor, and tapestries of natural scenes covering the walls. A large brazier keeps the room warm in winter.



Against one wall, Sindoria has a locked cabinet (Open Lock DC 28) holding the wealth of the manor. It contains 3,000 gp, 2 *candles of truth*, and 4 blocks of *incense of meditation*.

Baths

Both floors of this area have large copper tubs and stoves for heating water, as well as privy stalls.

Howe Trail

This trail runs due east from the Westwind Hold to the Earthblood Howe. It's clear and well tended, with stone markers every fifty feet along its length. If any uninvited persons start down the trail, a force of Earthblood wardens comes from Westwind Hold, sounding an alarm that calls the dire bear to help defend the area. If Sindoria is in residence she joins the battle, as do her students.

WARDEN DELL

The Warden Dell is a wooded valley that the Earthblood wardens have chosen for their home base. It has numerous scattered cottages throughout, although each is iso-

lated from the others for privacy. The Earthblood Stream runs through the valley, providing ready access to water for the residents.

There are usually only about a dozen wardens in residence here at any time, with 14 permanently installed at Eastwind Hold, 20 at Westwind Hold, and the rest of the 80 to 90 wardens preferring to camp in the grove whenever their patrols and wandering takes them.

On warm evenings, the wardens often host impromptu parties, with satyrs, treants, dryads, and the lesser fey joining in. Often, students from the various Holds come down to join the festivities, sometimes accompanied by the Winds. These all-night parties are the primary social occasions in the grove.

SCENES

The following adventure ideas can be used to involve characters in Earthblood Grove's workings.

LORDS OF THE STORM

At the request of the Eastwind, the Earthblood druids have been drowning a nearby village with constant rain. The lord mayor needs someone like the heroes to travel to the Earthblood Grove and discover what insult has been given, and what redress can be made. If the storms don't cease soon, the village won't be able to finish the planting for the summer, and a winter famine will be inevitable.

Of course, to stop the storms, the Eastwind must be appeased. The reason that he's convinced the Earthblood druids to send the storms may be anything



NEW COMMUNITY: WESTWIND HOLD

Size: Thorp

Power Center: Magical

Alignment: Neutral Good

GP Limit: 40 gp

Ready Cash: 3,000 gp

Population: 26 adults (77% half-elf, 23% other)

Authority Figure: Westwind Sindoria Berrywine, 12-level halfling druid

from a perceived slight given by a resident of the village, to a favor done for the feudal lord who wants to cancel the village charter for non-payment of taxes. Once the reason is discovered, an agreeable solution must be reached, or the Eastwind eliminated.

LOST TO THE WOOD

The son of a wealthy merchant ran away to the grove in order to indulge his aspirations of druidism. His parents want the characters to track down their wayward boy and bring him home.

The boy may have met any one of a number of fates: he may be accepted as a student, or as a warden, or he may have managed to drink from the Earthblood Fount. If he's a student, his teacher is likely to want to keep him. If he's a warden, he has a vow to fulfill. And, if he has drunk from the Fount, he may be too changed to want to return to his home, or he may have been absorbed by the grove.

Finding him is obviously much easier than bringing him back to his parents.

LURE OF THE FOUNT

Rumors of the powers of the Earthblood Fount may be enough to bring some parties to the grove. Whether they come as pilgrims and supplicants, hoping for the favor of the Earthblood druids or a drink from the Fount, or as thieves and spies, planning to steal a sip without anyone's knowledge, they must make their way to the center of the Earthblood Howe. Persuading the Winds to allow them to drink is a different challenge, depending on which Wind they approach first.

Stealing a sip from the Fount is a sure way to bring the wrath of all the druids and wardens down on the thieves. Slipping out of the grove while being hunted by a large force that knows the area well is a daunting task, but perhaps worth the risk.

ALTERNATE VERSIONS

There are two simple ways to vary the current tension in Earthblood Grove.

First, conflicts between the grove's factions can be eliminated by changing the alignments of each of the Winds to true neutral. This cuts down on a lot of the infighting and scheming, turning the Winds into a strong, unified force and a real power in the area. The wardens might represent a military threat if they're united in a single cause, and the local secular lords may be worried about the possibility of grove aggression. When facing a threat, the Winds can act with surprising speed and power, using their rituals to extend their will over the entire kingdom. The grove becomes a powerful political factor, as the local government must consider the will of the resident druids in all their deliberations.

Second, the situation may have descended into open conflict. The subtle battles between the Eastwind and the Westwind escalate to running battles through the grove, with the Northwind and Southwind trying to stay out of the way, but often getting caught in the middle due to their relative weakness. The wardens all take sides and hunt each other through the forest. The Earthblood Howe is under siege, as opposing forces seek to deny each other access to the raw powers of the Earthblood Fount. Of course, the rituals of the Earthblood druids cannot be used without all four of them participating, so the grove devolves into political irrelevance for the surrounding area.



CHAPTER THREE

CRÈCHE HOSPICE

AT A GLANCE

Crèche Hospice is an unfinished temple complex and headquarters for a small but famous order of ordained knights. Funding for infrastructure comes sporadically and some buildings still stand incomplete within the complex's outer walls. The hospice is owned, operated, and maintained by the Most Holy Military Order of the Ordained Knights of the Hospitable Crèche, or "Crèche Knights" for short. The hospice tries to be a pilgrimage site, a hospital, a garrison, and a hotel all at once, and the knights quarrel over which element of the place is most important.

Along with the hospice itself, the Crèche Knights were founded eighty-three years ago by a band of seven paladins. A petty political struggle between local noble families boiled over into all-out civil war. To protect children, pilgrims, and other innocents from the violence, the paladins fortified an abandoned mansion and converted it into a hospital. Two of the seven, including the great elf paladin Zherdào, were slain protecting the site. An uprising of the common people, roused by tales of Zherdào's martyrdom, forced the families to reach a truce.

The mansion's portico, consecrated by Zherdào's spilled blood, became a sacred nexus of positive divine energy



— the so-called Crèche. In the peace of the truce, the noble families made reparations by donating funds to convert the fallen mansion into a temple of healing and ordaining the surviving five paladins as knights of the realm. The unity of vision spurred by Zherdào's death did not last long, however, and in the passing years the hospice has seen both fortune and folly.

PLACEMENT

Place Crèche Hospice in the countryside near a large urban center of your choice. The complex is built on a small estate — a former “summer retreat” for a noble family living in the city. At your option, it can be one of many vacation retreats for several cosmopolitan powers-that-be, clustered in a valley or near a coastline where seasonal breezes keep mansions cool even in high summer. The hospice's surroundings are lush and idyllic, contrasting the current turmoil that goes on inside.

CHARACTERS

The Crèche Knights obey a rigid chain of command, at least in theory. The commanders are both military leaders and executive decision-makers. No knight should accept a mission outside the hospice or access the order's treasury without their approval. A commander is advised by chaplains who oversee the spiritual, physical, and financial operations of the hospice. The rank and file of the order is filled with knight-sergeants who serve in the hospital and ride under the Crèche Hospice's banner in times of war.

The paladin founders of the order have always served as commanders, but only one founder remains. Political intrigue and power struggles are usually contained within the ranks of the chaplains, but at least one chaplain challenges the supremacy of the lone commander. Even the most loyal knight-sergeants know that the old chain of command must soon give way to something new.

The predominately human knight-sergeants and chaplains have trouble seeing the long-term plans for devel-

oping the hospice. For the half-elfin commander and her gnomish exchequer, Gerick Cobbler, eighty years is the passing of only one generation, and care of the hospice has yet to be handed down from one generation to the next. For young humans, however, the hospice dates back to their great-grandparent's time. The long-delayed (to human eyes) completion of the physical complex vexes the majority of the hospice's inhabitants.

DAME JAQUINTHE

Half-Elf Commander of the Hospice

“Damn, damn, damn! Well, someone has to do the right thing, and I guess it's our turn again ... damn it.”

The Grand Lady of Crèche Hospice is a handsome older woman with aquiline features. She keeps her steel grey hair up in a severe bun, held together by two long, lacquered hairpins; without the pins, her hair would fountain down below her waist. She's tall, lean, and angry. She balls her hands into tight fists when her mind wanders. Her knightly colors are green and mustard-yellow. She prefers to wear a no-nonsense green gown with a yellow sash, which looks very out of place among the glinting armor of the other knights.

Dame Jaquinthe, Commander Successor to the Most Holy Military Order of the Ordained Knights of the Hospitable Crèche, feels her retirement is long overdue. She took the oath of the paladin on her nineteenth birthday; she turns 114 this year.

Thanks to the longevity of half-elves, she maintained the order as the other paladins of her company grew old. Never comfortable around the pure-blood elfin families of the city and oversensitive of the frailty of mortal human life, Jaquinthe has earned a quirky reputation among the local nobility: a cynical paladin with a heart of gold, to be handled with care lest it explode.

During the first three decades of Crèche Hospice's existence, recruitment prospects were slim and the future looked bleak. Jaquinthe convinced her fellow knights to recruit warriors other than oath-sworn paladins and to accept donations for their prowess during battle as well as their medical skills afterward. She is responsible for the commander-chaplain-

 DAME JAQUINTHE
10th-Level Half-Elf Paladin

CR 10; Medium humanoid; HD 10d10; hp 64; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 Dex), touch 12, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +10; Grp +11; Atk +12 melee (1d10+1/crit x3, masterwork halberd); Full Atk +12/+7 melee (1d10+1/crit x3, masterwork halberd), or +12/+7 ranged (1d8+1/crit x3, [Str +1] composite longbow); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Smite Evil, Spells, Turn Undead; SQ Aura of Good, Aura of Courage, Detect Evil, Divine Grace, Divine Health, Immunities, Lay on Hands, Low-light Vision, Remove Disease, Special Mount; AL LG; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +12; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 18, Cha 16

Skills: Bluff +9, Diplomacy +12, Handle Animal +9, Heal +14, Listen +5, Ride +12, Search +5, Sense Motive +6, Spot +9, Knowledge (religion) +9

Feats: Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Iron Will

Languages: Common, Elven, Draconic, Gnome, Dwarven

Half-Elven Traits (Ex): Half-elves are immune to magic *sleep* spells and effects, have a +2 racial bonus to saves against enchantment spells or effects, and have Low-light Vision that lets them see twice as far as a human in poor illumination. For all effects related to race, a half-elf is considered an elf. Half-elves receive a +1 racial bonus to Listen, Search, and Spot checks, and a +2 racial bonus on Diplomacy and Gather Information checks.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Paladins are proficient with all simple and martial weapons,

with all types of armor, and with shields (except tower shields).

Aura of Good (Ex): This paladin has a strong good aura.

Detect Evil (Sp): At will, the paladin can use *detect evil* as per the spell.

Smite Evil (Su): 3 times per day, Jaquinthe may attempt to Smite Evil with one normal melee attack. The paladin adds +3 to the attack roll and deals 10 extra points of damage.

Divine Grace (Su): Jaquinthe applies a +3 bonus to all saving throws.

Lay on Hands (Su): Each day the paladin can cure herself or multiple recipients of a total of 30 hit points as a standard action. Alternatively, the paladin can use any or all of these points to deal damage to undead creatures with a successful touch attack. Jaquinthe decides how many cure points to use as damage after successfully touching the undead creature.

Aura of Courage (Su): A paladin is immune to fear (magical or otherwise). Allies within 10 feet of the paladin gain a +4 morale bonus on saving throws against fear effects.

Divine Health (Ex): A paladin is immune to all diseases, including supernatural and magical diseases.

Turn Undead (Su): At 4th level, the paladin may Turn undead 6 times per day as a 8th-level cleric would.

DAME JAQUINTHE, CONTINUED

Special Mount (Sp): This paladin has called a heavy warhorse named Elminx to act as a special mount. It has Empathic Link, Improved Evasion, Share Spells, Share Saving Throws, and Improved Speed. This special mount also has +4 HD, +6 natural armor, Str +2, and Int 7; its stats are otherwise the standard SRD rules stats of a heavy warhorse. The special mount can be called as a full-round action for 20 hours per paladin level once per day, and dismissed as a free action; it is always in full health when called.

Remove Disease (Sp): Jaquinthe can produce a *remove disease* effect twice per week.

Code of Conduct: A paladin must be of lawful good alignment and loses all class abilities upon committing an evil act. A paladin respects legitimate authority, acts with honor, helps those in need, and punishes those who harm or threaten innocents.

Associates: A paladin will never knowingly associate with evil characters, and can only accept henchmen, followers, or cohorts who are lawful good.

Spells: (2/2) Jaquinthe's caster level is 5th. The DC to resist her spells is 14 + spell level. She has prepared the following spells:

1st Level — *cure light wounds*, *divine favor*

2nd Level — *resist energy*, *shield other*

Possessions: (Str +1) composite longbow, masterwork halberd, courtier's outfit, 100 gp, and a suit of masterwork full plate, though she only wears this during war campaigns.



afterward. She is responsible for the commander-chaplain-sergeant system.

Jaquinthe's parentage is a scandal within the secretive ranks of the local elf nobility. The elves treat her as an outcast, although only the eldest among them know why. She is the bastard offspring of Zherdào the Martyr, the product of an unlawful tryst. Jaquinthe suspects the truth — she remembers Zherdào giving her preferential treatment when she was a novice. While the other knights consider Zherdào a true saint, Jaquinthe entertains dark thoughts about him. Did he die to protect the innocent, his own flesh and blood, or worse, the truth itself?

GERICK COBBLER. “FATHER JACK”

Underestimated Gnomish Chaplain

“The rank ‘Father-Captain’ sounds commanding, don’t you think? I am sure I could win the loyalty of the sergeants with a title like that.”

Gerick Cobbler serves the order as exchequer and solicitor. (Now that the other founders are dead, only Jaquinthe and the roughnecks call Gerick Cobbler “Father Jack.”) He is a “lay chaplain,” meaning his spiritual duties are minimal and he wields no divine authority or magic. Instead, his command of accounting keeps the hospice financially sound in lean times. He has charmed many widows of the city to bequeath their estates to the hospice. And he uses the hospice’s coffers to hide many merchants’ and minor nobles’ wealth from debt-collectors and royal taxes (for a donation fee to the hospice, of course). Some of the knight-sergeants despise him outright, most consider him harmless, and a few even pity the knavish gnome.

Only Jaquinthe knows the true story of how Cobbler bravely fought alongside Zherdào the Martyr on that fateful day. Cobbler and his three daughters were among the commoners the founders rescued. Once healed, Cobbler joined Zherdào at the portico as the other paladins helped the remaining patients escape through a servants’ entrance. Cobbler’s daughters were head-

strong. They refused to follow Jaquinthe to safety and ran off to find their father, but met their deaths instead.

Cobbler is deceitful, spontaneous, conniving, and indulgent. He plays the role of a greedy buffoon to disguise his true ambitions. He hates war and thinks valor and glory are empty goals that lead only to suffering. His ultimate aim is to take control of the order and demilitarize it by any means necessary. Jaquinthe both loves and fears him for his passions, but Cobbler still thinks of her as the naïve girl who failed his family.

Father Jack is ready to drop his pretences and challenge Jaquinthe for the soul of the hospice. If the knight-sergeants learn of Cobbler’s stand with Zherdào, his reputation among them would skyrocket.

Gerick “Jack” Cobbler is an endearingly ugly old gnome. He is beardless and bald except for the unruly tufts of dun-colored hair behind (and in) his ears. He wears a crisp olive cassock with silver brocade and buttons. Cobbler always carries his old dagger, permanently stained with Zherdào’s blood, concealed somewhere on his person. He has kept the dagger a secret for eighty-three years, afraid someone would falsely accuse him of killing Zherdào — or would the accusation be false? How did Zherdào the Martyr actually die? Old Father Jack is the only living soul who knows for sure.

FATHER YADVINDER SOONG

Exemplary Senior Chaplain

“Dead again? That’s twice this month alone!”

Yadvinder is a prototypical Crèche Hospice chaplain: an old, unlucky cleric who chose to abandon adventuring before it killed him. Jaquinthe recruited him almost twenty years ago after a bad bout of mummy rot nearly reduced him to dust. Since then, he has enjoyed the relative calm and luxury of the hospice. Like the other chaplains, his passions focus on politics and climbing up the pecking order within his rank. He has little patience for Gerick Cobbler’s antics and refuses to recognize “that pint-sized lawyer” as an equal, although Cobbler’s growing popularity among the hospice’s

 FATHER GERICK COBBLER, "FATHER JACK"
7th-Level Gnome Rogue

CR 7; Small humanoid; HD 7d6+14; hp 41; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 size), touch 13, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +5; Grp +0; Atk +9 melee (1d3–1/crit 19–20/x2 plus 1 per round, *small blooded dagger*); Full Atk +9 melee (1d3–1/crit 19–20/x2 plus 1 per round, *small blooded dagger*); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Sneak Attack; SQ Evasion, Low-light Vision, Traps, Uncanny Dodge; AL CN; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +2; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 11, Cha 13

Skills: Appraise +9, Bluff +11, Craft (alchemy) +6, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +5, Escape Artist +6, Forgery +6, Gather Information +6, Hide +8, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +11, Listen +2, Move Silently +10, Profession (accountant) +11, Profession (attorney) +9, Search +9, Spot +0, Tumble +8

Feats: Weapon Focus (dagger), Weapon Finesse, Dodge

Languages: Common, Gnome, Elven, Dwarven, Draconic

Gnome Traits (Ex): Gnomes have Low-light Vision that lets them see twice as far as a human in poor illumination. They also have a +2 racial bonus to saving throws against illusions, +1 to the DC for all saving throws against illusion spells cast by gnomes, +1 racial bonus to attack rolls against kobolds and goblinoids, and +4 dodge bonus against giants. Once per day a gnome can use the spell-like ability *speak with animals* to communicate with a burrowing mammal for one minute. Gerick may cast *dancing lights*, *ghost sound*, and *prestidigitation*, each once per day. These are cast as a 1st-level caster, with a save DC of 11 + spell level. Gnomes treat gnome hooked hammers as martial weapons, and they get a +2 racial bonus to Listen and Craft (alchemy) checks.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Rogues are proficient with all simple weapons, plus the hand crossbow, rapier, shortbow, and short sword. They are proficient with light armor, but not with shields.

Sneak Attack: Any time the rogue's target would be denied a Dexterity bonus to AC (whether the target actually has a Dexterity bonus or not), or when the rogue flanks the target, the rogue's attack deals +4d6 extra damage. Ranged attacks can only count as Sneak Attacks if the target is within 30 feet.

Trapfinding: Rogues can use the Search skill to locate traps when the DC is higher than 20. Finding a nonmagical trap has a DC of at least 20, higher if it is well hidden. Finding a magic trap has a DC of 25 + the level of the spell used to create it. Rogues can use the Disable Device skill to disarm magic traps. A magic trap generally has a DC of 25 + the level of the spell used to create it.

Evasion (Ex): If exposed to any effect that normally allows a character to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage, a rogue takes no damage with a successful saving throw. Evasion can only be used if the rogue is wearing light armor or no armor.

Trap Sense (Ex): The rogue gains a +2 bonus to Reflex saves made to avoid traps and a +1 dodge bonus to AC against attacks by traps.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): The rogue retains any Dexterity bonus to AC if caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker.

Possessions: *small blooded dagger*, cleric's vestments, 350 gp


 NEW WEAPON SPECIAL ABILITY: BLOODED

A *blooded* weapon deals damage to a creature such that a wound it inflicts bleeds for 1 point of damage per round thereafter in addition to the normal damage the weapon deals. Multiple wounds from the weapon result in cumulative bleeding loss; two wounds deal 2 points of damage per round, and so on. The bleeding can only be stopped by a successful Heal

check (DC 15) or the application of any *cure* spell or other healing spell.

Moderate necromancy; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *mass inflict light wounds*; Price +2 bonus

rabble is a bit troubling. Yadvinder respects Jaquinthe's authority, preferring to avoid military responsibilities (and risks). But who will command when Jaquinthe is gone?

Yadvinder is short and sallow — a wan shadow of his youthful stature — thanks to an ill-advised incursion into a mummy-lord's necropolis. He bears a curious mark — a bloom of silvery-white skin on his left cheek — where the mummy-lord once touched him. His sharp wit and sense of poise make up for his lack of physical attractiveness, though. His attitude and history are typical of other chaplains serving the hospice.

KNIGHT-SERGEANTS

Veteran Healers

"Our military order may be small, but our cause great ... isn't it?"

Crèche Knights are recruited from the hospice's ward in times of war. Ordained knights keep their eyes out for promising young warriors with insufficient funds to "donate" in exchange for their care. In lieu of a donation, the patient is offered the chance to clear his debt by swearing himself to the hospice's cause.

FATHER YADVINDER SOONG/ TYPICAL CHAPLAIN (10)

9th-Level Human Cleric

CR 9; Medium humanoid; HD 9d8-9; hp 27; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (Dex), touch 11, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +6; Grp +7; Atk +7 melee (1d3+1 nonlethal/crit x2, unarmed strike); Full Atk +7/+2 melee (1d3+1 nonlethal/crit x2, unarmed strike); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells, Turn Undead; SQ Aura, Spontaneous Casting; AL NG; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +10; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 8, Int 14, Wis 18, Cha 15

Skills: Concentration +14, Diplomacy +8, Heal +16, Gather Information +5, Knowledge (religion) +10, Profession (apothecary) +10, Ride +5, Spellcraft +8

Feats: Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Empower Spell, Extend Spelled, Extra Turning

Languages: Common, Elven, Gnome

Human Traits (Ex): Humans get 1 extra feat and 4 extra skill points at 1st level.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Clerics are proficient with all simple weapons, with all types of armor, and with shields (except tower shields).

Aura (Ex): This cleric has a strong good aura.

Spontaneous Casting: This cleric can "lose" a prepared spell in order to cast any *cure* spell of the same level or lower.

Turn Undead (Su): This cleric can Turn undead 5 times per day.

Spells: (6/5+1/5+1/5+1/3+1/1+1) Yadvinder devotes himself to divine principles of health and righteousness instead of worshipping a particular deity; his chosen domains are Good and Healing, which allow him to cast good and healing spells at +1 caster level. The DC to resist the cleric's spells is 14 + the spell level. He has the following spells already prepared; domain spells are marked with an asterisk.

0 Level — *detect poison* x3, *detect magic* x2, *mending*

1st Level — *command*, *comprehend languages*, *cure light wounds*, *deathwatch* x2, *protection from evil**

2nd Level — *calm emotions*, *cure moderate wounds**, *delay poison*, *gentle repose*, *lesser restoration* x2

3rd level — *magic circle against evil**, *remove blindness/deafness*, *remove curse*, *remove disease*, *speak with dead*

4th level — *cure critical wounds**, *neutralize poison*, *lesser planar ally*, *restoration*

5th level — *mass cure light wounds**, *raise dead*

Possessions: cleric's vestments, 10 gp

Consequently, knight-sergeants tend toward a mercenary, rather than chivalrous, attitude. Their expert horsemanship and medical skill have earned them great prestige, however. When preparing for battle, the city's noble families donate handsomely to the hospice in exchange for a company of mounted Crèche Knights (called a "lance") on their side.

Instead of a crest, every knight-sergeant has his own set of two or three knightly colors chosen before ordination. Knight-sergeants decorate their breastplate armor in their personal colors, but all shields are painted white and emblazoned with a red obelus on its side, the sign of the order.

ROUGHNECKS

Hired Highwaymen

"Who's me, friend? Why, I'm a keeper of the peace. See this stick? It's me staff o' office. And this ..." Whack! Thwack! "... is how I keeps the peace!"

These thugs are local boys who guard the highway to the hospice, escort important visitors and cargo, and perform other tasks that knight-sergeants consider beneath their station. Roughnecks are officially paid 1 gp per month, but their real compensation comes from "tax-

TYPICAL KNIGHT-SERGEANT (25)

3rd-Level Human Fighter/2nd-Level Cleric

CR 5; Medium humanoid; HD 3d10+6 + 2d8+4; hp 40; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+1 Dex, +5 breastplate, +2 heavy steel shield), touch 11, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +4; Grp +6; Atk +6 melee (1d8+2/crit 19–20/x2, longsword); Full Atk +6 melee (1d8+2/crit 19–20/x2, longsword), or +5 ranged (1d8/crit 19–20/x2, light crossbow); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells, Turn Undead; SQ Aura, Bonus Feats, Spontaneous Casting; AL NG; SV Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +6; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 9

Skills: Concentration +5, Handle Animal +3, Heal +9, Listen +1, Ride +9, Spot +1

Feats: Improved Initiative, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge

Languages: Common

Human Traits (Ex): Humans get 1 extra feat and 4 extra skill points at 1st level.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Knight-sergeants are typically proficient with all simple and martial weapons and all armor and shields.

Bonus Feats: Knight-sergeants generally take Mounted Combat and Ride-By Attack as 1st-level and 2nd-level fighter bonus combat-oriented feats.

Aura (Ex): This cleric has a moderate good aura.

Spontaneous Casting: This cleric can "lose" a prepared spell in order to cast any *cure* spell of the same level or lower.

Turn Undead (Su): This cleric can Turn undead 2 times per day.

Spells: (4/3+1) Crèche Knights honor Zherdào the Martyr and are dedicated to the principle that health is a sign of righteousness and grace. Their chosen domains are Healing and Protection, which allow them to cast healing spells at +1 caster level, and once per day to generate a *protective ward* for one hour as a standard action, granting someone the character touches a +2 resistance bonus on the recipient's next saving throw. The DC to resist these spells is 11 + the spell level. This cleric has the following spells already prepared; domain spells are marked with an asterisk.

0 Level — *cure minor wounds, detect poison, purify food and drink, virtue*

1st Level — *entropic shield, magic weapon, shield of faith, sanctuary**

Possessions: breastplate, heavy steel shield, longsword, light crossbow, explorer's outfit, 10 gp

ing” and “tolling” travelers on the side. Each roughneck carries a contract signed and sealed by Gerick Cobbler, permitting him to keep the peace on hospice roads and property. These scrolls of parchment are the only things preventing legitimate guardsmen from arresting and executing the roughnecks for highway robbery.

Gerick Cobbler (whom the roughnecks call “Father Jack”) takes care of his lads, teaching them the tricks of the extortion trade and advising them on how to expand their territory. Unknown to Jaquinthe and the other knights, most roughnecks are fiercely loyal to their sweet, clever, bloody-ruthless Father Jack.

A group of two or three roughnecks is called a “pally.” Individual roughnecks are called “pals.” When stopping a group of travelers, one pal does the talking while the others

sneak up and flank their targets. The pally with the most “earnings” calls the shots and its members are Cobbler’s right-hand men.

THE SITE

A wide path, stomped flat by almost a century of riding cavalry, cuts through the rolling countryside to the hospice. The road is often crowded with sick-carts, teamsters trucking supplies, merchants traveling in coaches, roughnecks delivering donations of gold, and pilgrims eager to catch a glimpse of Zherdào’s death-place. Wooden placards, some crumbling with age, warn travelers that passage on “the future Martyr’s Highway” will soon be tolled to pay for “grading, aggrega-

TYPICAL ROUGHNECK PAL (15)

1st-Level Human Rogue/1st-Level Fighter

CR 2; Medium humanoid; HD 1d6+1 + 1d10+1; hp 14; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 studded leather), touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +1; Grp +3; Atk +4 melee (1d6+2/crit 19–20/x2, short sword); Full Atk +4 melee (1d6+4/crit 19–20/x2, short sword), or +3 ranged (1d6/crit x3, shortbow); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Sneak Attack; SQ Bonus Feats, Evasion, Trapfinding; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 8

Skills: Bluff +3, Forgery +5, Gather Information +3, Hide +5, Intimidate +7, Jump +5, Listen +4, Move Silently +5, Search +5, Spot +4

Feats: Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (short sword), Weapon Specialization (short sword)

Languages: Common, Elven

Human Traits (Ex): Humans get 1 extra feat and 4 extra skill points at 1st level.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The roughnecks are proficient with all simple and martial weapons, the hand crossbow, and all armor and shields.

Bonus Feats: Roughnecks generally take Improved Initiative as their 1st-level fighter bonus combat-oriented feat.

Sneak Attack: Any time the rogue’s target would be denied a Dexterity bonus to AC (whether the target actually has a Dexterity bonus or not), or when the rogue flanks the target, the rogue’s attack deals +1d6 extra damage. Ranged attacks can only count as Sneak Attacks if the target is within 30 feet.

Trapfinding: Rogues can use the Search skill to locate traps when the DC is higher than 20. Finding a nonmagical trap has a DC of at least 20, higher if it is well hidden. Finding a magic trap has a DC of 25 + the level of the spell used to create it. Rogues can use the Disable Device skill to disarm magic traps. A magic trap generally has a DC of 25 + the level of the spell used to create it.

Evasion (Ex): If exposed to any effect that normally allows a character to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage, a rogue of 2nd level or higher takes no damage with a successful saving throw. Evasion can only be used if the rogue is wearing light armor or no armor.

Possessions: leather armor, short sword, shortbow, peasant’s outfit, 100 sp

tion, and other improvements thereon.” The signs are all written by Gerick Cobbler.

Before any structures are visible, travelers can see the hospice’s grand flag flying above trees. The white flag ripples like water and shines like snow, displaying the sigil of Zherdào the Martyr, now the symbol for the entire Crèche order: a red obelus, turned sidewise.



A Bardic Knowledge check (DC 15), reveals that the hospice flag is the banner of Zherdào the Martyr himself. It is composed of pure spun mithril — a gift from an ancient gnome king for the paladin’s battles with fire giant raiders. Any creature of evil alignment with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher who sees the flag on a sunny day must make a Will saving throw (DC 10) or become shaken, suffering a –2 morale penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks until the next sunset. Legend says that an army warring under Zherdào’s banner is guaranteed victory, but the Crèche Knights refuse to carry it out of respect for their fallen patron.

THE OUTER COMPLEX

The majority of the Crèche Knights’ early assets were devoted to making the site more secure. The original mansion faced a small grass meadow. The natural meadowland was artificially expanded by chopping down trees and uprooting stumps. The meadow now extends at least 100 feet around the outer complex walls. The knights seeded the extended meadow with razor-sedge, and redirected streamlets to keep the earth soft. The road to the hospice, paved on a raised embankment, wanders through this unpleasant stuff.

Earthworks and Walls

The complex is surrounded by a twenty-foot-high, hexagonal wall. One point of the hexagon points due south and is considered the “front” of the complex. The road to the hospice leads up to the front point, which is guarded by a gatehouse. This is the grand “Whitestone Gate” of the hospice, intended for pilgrims, dignitaries, and wealthy patients. The north point of the hexagon is considered the “back” of the complex. This is known as the “Sick Gate,” intended as a service entrance. Construction on the Sick Gate has not yet begun, and so the opening is temporarily walled off. The road leading from the site of the future Sick Gate loops back and joins the hospice road at the tollbooth.

The complex’s walls are themselves surrounded by a dry moat, a ditch fifteen feet wide and twelve feet deep. The ditch is filled with razor-sedge and wooden spikes. If the knights are truly desperate, they will set the razor-sedge in the moat on fire.

Four towers, each twenty-five feet high, stand at the remaining points of the hexagon (the southeast, southwest, northwest, and northeast towers). The southeast, southwest, and northeast towers are round and made of stone and mortar. While the northwest tower is a temporary, square structure made of wood, it is sturdy and well fortified. The stone northeast tower, on the other hand, is incomplete and covered with wooden scaffolding and canvas tarps. Although there is no direct access from inside the towers to the walls, a sentry-walk runs around the backs of the towers, connecting adjoining walls and permitting a guard to run from one point atop the wall to any other. Because of the delayed construction of the north tower, however, access from that tower to the wall is blocked, transforming an effective ring-shaped defense into an inadequate U-shaped one. Enemies of the Crèche who learn the secret of the northeast tower could use it to great advantage.



NEW COMMUNITY: CRECHE HOSPICE

Size: Hamlet

Power Center: Magical

Alignment: Neutral

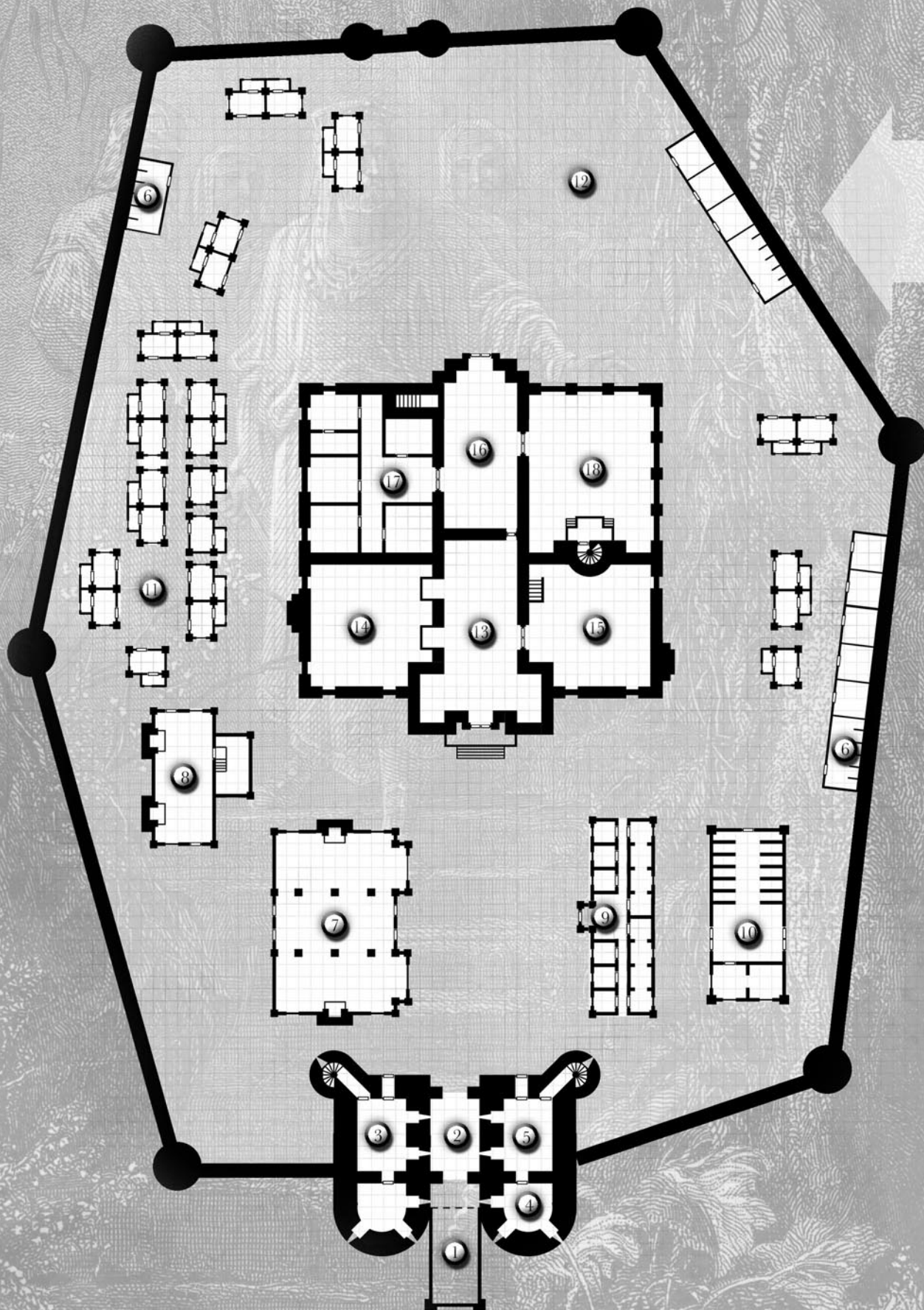
GP Limit: 800 gp

Ready Cash: 3,400 gp

Population: 85 adults (79% human, 21% other)

Authority Figures: Dame Jaquinthe, 10th-level half-elf paladin; Father Gerick Cobbler, 7th-level gnome rogue

CRECHE HOSPICE





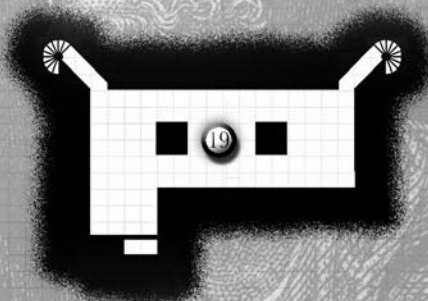
GROUND LEVEL

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Drawbridge | 7. Hall | 13. South Gallery |
| 2. Gate Passage | 8. Kitchen | 14. Sick Room |
| 3. Guardroom | 9. Hostelry | (open to Basement) |
| 4. Private Chapel | 10. Stables | 15. Chirurgic Room |
| 5. Armory | 11. Quarters | 16. North Gallery |
| 6. Latrine | 12. Graveyard | 17. Chaplain's' Chambers |
| | | 18. Chapel |

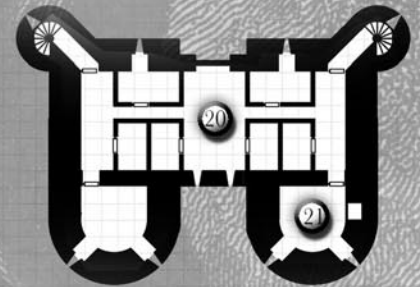
GATEHOUSE

19. Basement
20. Commanders'
Quarters
22. Office

BASEMENT

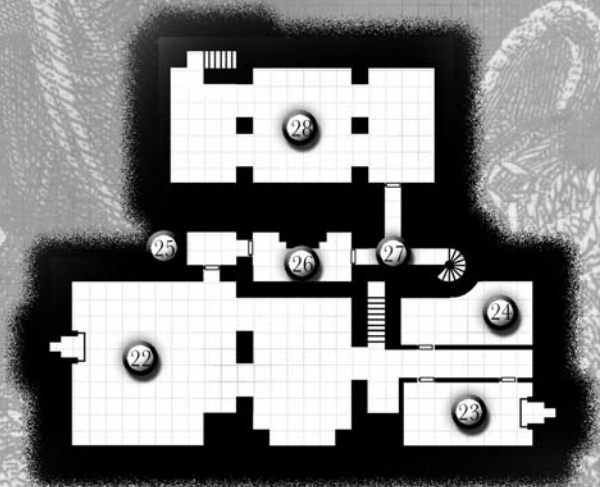


2ND FLOOR



TEMPLE BASEMENT

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 22. Sick Room | 25. Antechamber |
| 23. Balneum | 26. Creche |
| 24. Workroom | 27. Annex |
| | 28. Barracks |



1 Square = 5 Feet



Crossing the northeast tower without descending to the ground requires either a Climb check (DC 15) or a 12-foot jump (DC 12 Jump check with a 20-foot running start, DC 24 Jump check from standing position).

The walls connected to the Whitestone and Sick Gates — the northwest, northeast, southwest, and southeast walls — are completed stone curtains almost 15 feet wide, surmounted by hourds. (“Hourds” are wood-roofed galleries projected on brackets and built on the outside of castle walls, with funneled openings in the floor to fire missiles down on invaders.) The flooring of the hospice’s



RAZOR-SEGE TRAP (CR 1)

Razor-sege is strain of tufted grass that developed in lands populated with monstrous herbivores. Its leaves are edged with minute, razor-sharp teeth. Movement through the marshy, razor-sege meadow surrounding the hospice suffers a x4 additional movement cost for being hampered; determine a character’s walk, hustle, or run standard distance, and then multiply divide the standard distance by 4 to determine the actual distance covered. Every round it moves through razor-sege, a creature must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or suffer 1 point of temporary Constitution score damage due to the dozens of minor cuts inflicted by the grass. Add the creature’s armor bonus (but not the creature’s entire AC) to this saving throw. A character with a machete or similar instrument

can hack his way through the razor-sege to avoid having to make this Fortitude save, but movement is reduced to a maximum of 2 feet per round regardless of the character’s standard speed.

Razor-Sedge Trap: CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; DC 15 Fortitude save avoids (1 temporary Constitution damage per round); Search DC 10 to notice hazard razor-sege poses; Disable Device not applicable. *Market Price:* 100 gp per 20 square feet of razor-sege



DRY MOAT TRAP (CR 3)

In addition to suffering falling damage (1d6 damage), any creature falling into the dry moat must make a Reflex save (DC 20) to avoid the awaiting spikes. If the save fails, the creature lands on 1d4 spikes. The spikes attack with a +10 melee bonus, doing 1d4+1 hp in damage per spike.

Movement through the spikes and razor-sege suffers a x5 additional movement cost. For every round it moves through razor-sege, a creature must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) or suffer 1 point of temporary Constitution damage. Add the creature’s armor bonus (but not the creature’s entire AC) to the saving throw.

Hauling oneself out of the moat and onto the bank requires a Climb check with a DC of 25. A character can make one Climb check per round, and must make one Fortitude save against the razor-sege each round he

remains in the moat. Scaling the outer walls of the hospice also requires Climb checks with a DC of 25.

Dry Moat Trap: CR 3; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; 12 ft. deep (1d6, fall); multiple targets (first target in each of two adjacent 5-ft. squares); pit spikes (Atk +10 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d4+1 each); razor sedge (DC 15 Fortitude save avoids, 1 temporary Constitution damage per round; Search DC 10 to notice hazard moat poses; Disable Device not applicable. *Market Price:* 1,600 gp + 100 gp per ft² of razor-sege

hours are lined with lead, allowing guardians to pour boiling oil on invaders. The remaining two walls — those facing due east and west — are 10-foot-wide earthwork ramparts encased in sturdy timber. The space where the Sick Gate will be built is also sealed with an earthwork-and-timber wall. The top of the timber walls have no hours but sport crenellations in gables. A sentry-way runs behind the gables of all the walls.



The hours on the stone walls provide improved cover — an AC bonus of +8 and Reflex save bonus of +4 to defenders. They effectively grant defenders Improved Evasion against any attack to which the Reflex save bonus applies, as well as providing a +10 bonus on Hide checks. The crenels on the wooden walls provide an AC bonus of +4 and a Reflex save bonus of +2 to defenders. Attacking down through the openings in a hourd floor with ranged weapons imposes a 30% miss chance.

Tollbooth

Although not contained within the complex's walls, the tollbooth is part of the hospice's outer defenses. The tollbooth sits at the Y-shaped junction where the roads leading to the Whitestone Gate and Sick Gate meet. It is little more than a square wood hutch topped with a miniature bell tower.



The tollbooth provides a +4 AC bonus and +2 Reflex save bonus to characters inside.

A roughneck pally keeps watch here, twenty-four hours a day. The pally's job is to ask for "donations" to maintain the road, keep an eye out for anything suspicious, and ring the bell should any serious trouble arise. One ring puts the hospice on alert, two rings brings out a Crèche Knight on foot, and three rings brings out a couple of knights on horseback. For anything more than three rings, the knights raise the draw bridge and start boiling the oil.

All roughnecks covet manning the tollbooth, since it's the best location to shake down travelers for a few extra copper pieces.

GRAND GATEHOUSE

The gatehouse guards Whitestone Gate, so named because the structure is whitewashed each winter. The gatehouse is constructed as two adjacent tower houses called the east and west wings. The gap between the wings forms a passageway into the inner complex. Both towers' spiral staircases connect to each floor. The two towers merge both above and below the gate passage to become the grandest and most secure structure in the temple complex.



The entire gatehouse is protected by a permanent *hallow* spell with four effects. First, the structure is guarded by a *magic circle against evil* effect. Additionally, all Charisma checks to Turn undead gain a +4 sacred bonus and Charisma checks to Command undead suffer a -4 sacred penalty. Spell Resistance does not apply to this effect. (Note: This provision does not apply to the druidic version of the spell.) Third, any dead body interred in a hallowed site cannot be turned into an undead creature. Fourth, a *discern lies* spell is fixed to the *hallow* effect, granting any ordained member of the Crèche Knights within the gatehouse the spell-like ability to know if any creature deliberately and knowingly speaks a lie (Will negates, DC 18).

Drawbridge

A wooden drawbridge stretches across the dry moat, connecting the hospice road to the gatehouse's first set of double doors. The drawbridge and doors are wide enough to admit horse-drawn carts, and are constructed of cabers reinforced with iron bands. No means of raising the bridge is visible from the outside. Instead, the bridge extends backwards behind the first doors into the gate passage, where visitors discover a second set of double doors just fifteen feet after the first. There are two arrow-loops, one on each wall, to discourage aggression.



The two iron-reinforced gate passage doors and the iron-reinforced drawbridge have the following stats.

Gate: Iron doors; thickness 2 in.; Hardness 10, 60 hit points, Str DC 30 to break.

Arrow-loops provide improved cover — a +8 AC bonus and +4 Reflex save bonus to any creature standing in the alcove behind them. They effectively grant defenders Improved Evasion against any attack to which the Reflex save bonus applies, and they provide a +10 bonus on Hide checks. The arrow-loops grant a 10% miss chance to any creature attacked through the loop from the alcove, however.

The drawbridge closes and opens in the “turning” style, pivoting like a seesaw underneath the first set of doors. When the drawbridge outside the gatehouse swings up to close, the half of the drawbridge inside the gatehouse swings down into a pit. The drawbridge is locked in place by an iron bar running underneath the inner half of the drawbridge.



The locking bar can be moved by operating a small windlass in the gatehouse guardroom (moving the locking bar takes 1 round). A counterweight lashed to the underside of the inner half of the drawbridge ensures that the drawbridge swings into position. The drawbridge can be slowly lowered again by turning a huge, rusty iron wheel in the gatehouse basement (again taking 1 round).

Would-be invaders have met a very nasty end in the twenty-foot-deep pit under the inner half of the drawbridge. The bottom of the pit is filled with jagged stones and splinters of wood. Two arrow-loops permit guardians to attack creatures in the pit from the safety of the gatehouse basement. Adding injury to insult, the gatehouse’s guardroom contains eight barrels full of stones intended to crash down into the pit should the need arise.

BOILING OIL THROUGH HOURD TRAP (CR 3)

The hourds have one funneled opening for every ten-foot square beneath them. When poured through the funneled opening, a rain of boiling oil does 4d6 burning damage to every creature in the target grid square, and 1d6 splash damage to any creatures in any adjacent grid squares. No attack roll is necessary to hit the grid square directly below the funneled opening.

Boiling Oil Through Hourd Trap: CR 3; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; DC 20 Reflex save halves damage (4d6 plus 1d6 splash damage); Search (DC 15) to notice; Disable Device not applicable. *Market Price:* 3,000 gp



TURNING DRAWBRIDGE TRAP (CR 8)

Any creature standing on the inner half of the drawbridge when it begins to swing downward must make a Reflex saving throw with a DC of 20 or fall into the pit below, taking 2d6 points of falling damage. Falling into the pit, however, is only half of an invader’s problem.

While roughnecks and knight-sergeants keep invaders at bay with missile attacks into the pit, it takes 1d4 rounds for the guardians to begin dropping barrels full of stones onto the invaders. For each barrel dropped, every creature inside the pit must make a Reflex save

with a DC of 25. The creature who fails and rolls lowest (and any creature who fails and ties rolls with the lowest result) takes 6d6 points of crushing damage.

Turning Drawbridge Trap: CR 8; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Reflex save DC 20 avoids; 20 ft. deep (2d6, fall); rocks (Reflex save DC 25 avoids, 6d6 bludgeoning); Search (DC 15) to notice trap; Disable Device (DC 10) possible only in gatehouse guardroom. *Market Price:* 8,000

Gate Passage

The gate passage runs another 25 feet before opening into the inner complex. A massive portcullis is lowered and raised by a windlass in the guardroom and can seal off the end of this passage. Six arrow-loops, three on each side, are the remaining security measures.

A pally of roughnecks stops and interviews any suspicious looking visitors, especially armed adventurers, while another pally stands ready at the windlass to lower the portcullis and pepper the visitors with arrows until they leave.



The portcullis is an iron and wood monstrosity that only masterwork machinery has any hope to raise and lower. It has the following stats.

Portcullis: Iron portcullis door; thickness 2 in.; Hardness 10; 60 hit points; Str DC 25 to lift, Str DC 28 to break

Guardroom

This first floor of the west wing is a bustling guardroom and headquarters of the roughnecks. The southern half of the room is designed for active duty. There are a few desks covered with paperwork, a rack of short swords, and a dozen spare shortbows and full quivers. A bell pull rings the bell on the roof, and a small oak windlass moves the drawbridge's locking bar. Bundled in burlap and hidden by a false bottom in one desk drawer is a gift from Father Jack: a set of six masterwork daggers.

The larger northern half of the first floor is the roughnecks' barracks, little more than a few rows of cots and supplies. A complex, masterwork windlass of gnomish design squats in one corner. It raises and lowers the gate passage portcullis. Eight barrels full of stones lurk in another corner.

The very back of the room is cornered off by wooden screens, forming a semi-private chamber for the captain of the guard. Captaining the guard is a monthly duty performed by a knight-sergeant. The captain's main

chore is making sure the roughnecks stay out of trouble and out of the armory.

Private Chapel

The Crèche Knights' private chapel takes up the southern half of the first floor of the east wing. Only chaplains, commanders, and knight-sergeants are permitted to enter unless the complex is under attack.

A wood altar, draped in white linen, sits beneath the chapel's southern windows. Crèche Knights pray to multiple gods and principles of goodness, valor, and health, so the altar is covered with a wide variety of holy symbols and sacred items. A sedilia (a row of stone seats for the chaplains) runs along the east side of the room. A piscina (a stone basin kept full of holy water by the chaplains) is built into the wall next to the arrow-loop on the west side. Oak pews take up the rest of the space. The ceiling is vaulted and cross-vaulted, creating delightful acoustics.



Perform skill checks made in the private chapel enjoy a +4 circumstance bonus from the room's excellent acoustics.

Armory

The armory takes up the remaining space on the east wing's first floor. The armory is a chaotic mess of wardrobes, chests, and mannequins behind a maze of locked iron grates. No locks or latches are trapped, but the armory does not contain any extraordinary equipment. Most of the armor in the armory is lamellar horse armor — over two dozen suits in various states of disrepair. All humanoid armor is disassembled into pieces and painted in hundreds of mismatched bright colors.



A Medium humanoid character can find enough viable pieces of armor to reconstruct a suit of breastplate armor by making a Search check (DC 30). If a player decides to match up sets by color, she gains a +10 circumstance bonus to the check. Up to 2d4 suits of breastplate armor can be found in the armory this way.

Other items in the armory include: 1d6 usable heavy steel shields, 1d6 usable military saddles, 2d6 unbroken longswords, and 3d6 unbroken lances.

If the PCs intend to stay at the hospice for any substantial length of time, they must surrender their arms to Gerick Cobbler (or his agent if he is unavailable), who will take careful inventory, sign for them, and have them deposited in the armory. If the PCs can convince Cobbler that they deserve VIP treatment — that they're the bodyguards of a noble or members of a merchant house, for example — he permits them to remain armed inside the hospice, provided they sign a hold-harmless waiver against the Order of the Crèche Knights for the duration of their stay. This exchange between Cobbler and armed adventurers typically occurs in the gate passage.

Basement

The cool basement of the gatehouse makes an ideal storage space. Casks of wine, sacks of grain and flour, and barrels of other foodstuffs and provisions are neatly organized, and itemized on a long chalkboard on the east wall. The west wall sports a huge iron wheel, about six feet in diameter, that can lower the drawbridge to the open position. The wheel is padlocked and hidden behind a pyramid of barrels full of pickled herring (Jaquinthe's favorite). The wheel is connected to a system of differential gears and counterweights hidden in a bricked-up alcove behind it. This system handles most of the brute force required to open the drawbridge.

Three levers stick out of the wall next to the wheel. These levers move various elements of the turning system into position. Each lever can be locked into the up, middle, or down position, and only one combination of positions lowers the bridge. The combination can be reset any time the drawbridge is open through a complex process of wheel turns and lever-pulls.

The knights follow a standard operating procedure for the drawbridge: the combination is changed once a month, with the appointment of the new captain of the guard. No one is to leave the room vacant with the levers in the proper position to lower the drawbridge, although a harried captain of the guard might make that mistake.

Jaquinthe, Gerick Cobbler, and the on-duty captain of the guard know the current combination to lower the drawbridge. Only Jaquinthe and Cobbler know the procedure for changing the combination.



If a character wants to bypass the levers to open the drawbridge, finding the wheel requires a Search check (DC 15), and picking the wheel's padlock requires an Open Lock check (DC 25). It takes six full turns of the wheel to completely lower the drawbridge, requiring a Strength check (DC 15).

If the wheel is turned more than ten degrees with any of the levers in the wrong position, however, the gears of the internal mechanism jam and the drawbridge is stuck in the closed position. While the wheel is turning, a Listen check (DC 20) or a Disable Device check (DC 15) will reveal that something is wrong, as metal softly groans and gears slip. Working out the right combination of lever-positions takes a Disable Device check (DC 28). Working out the procedure to reprogram the lever combination is a DC 40 Disable Device task. If the gears jam, the wall must be torn down and the gears repaired or replaced, requiring a Craft (engineering) or similar skill check (DC 20).

Commanders' Chambers

These are the living quarters for all active commanders, situated directly above the gate passage. Wood screens split the wide stone room into several well-appointed apartments. A garderobe (second-story latrine) is built into the thick outer wall of the building. A channel runs inside the wall from under the stone toilet (called a "throne") to a small grate hidden in the moat.



A Tiny or smaller creature can shimmy up the garderobe channel with a Climb check (DC 15). Three iron grates are placed inside the channel to prevent access. Breaking through these grates requires a Strength check (DC 20). After each grate, the channel bends slightly, requiring a climber to make an Escape Artist check (DC 25) to continue.

The chambers feel very empty to Jaquinthe, now that she is the last commander. She has been nervously entertaining the idea of inviting Gerick Cobbler to move in, both as a political move and the first step in testing out a possible romance.

Jaquinthe's armor, last worn during her adventuring days, stands on display in the center of the chamber. Skid marks on the floor hint that the display has been recently moved into a new position. The armor also appears very well dusted, polished, and oiled for a display piece.



Jaquinthe's old armor is a masterwork suit of full plate mail (+8 to AC), painted mustard-yellow and green. It takes a Spot check DC 15 to notice the skid marks around the display.

Hospice Office

All the hospice's paperwork and finances come through here. Bookshelves full of accounting and activity logs line the walls. A huge roll-top desk, made of rosewood and inlaid with intricate patterns of mother-of-pearl, dominates the center of the room. Instead of a chair, a tall stool stands at the desk, just the right height for a gnome. Except when he's working within, Gerick Cobbler keeps the office's iron-reinforced oak door locked.



The office door is kept fast by a steel masterwork lock that requires a Open Lock check (DC 35) to pick.

A hidden panel in the floor underneath the roll-top desk hides a locked, trapped chest. Inside the chest is a fat, leather-bound book and a bundle of loose parchment papers. The pages of the book are scribbled upon with accounting notation. The papers are promissory notes

between the Order of the Crèche Knights and local merchants, noble families, and banking institutions.



It takes a Search check with a DC of 30 to find the panel in the floor under which the chest is located.

This financial log is the real treasure of Crèche Hospice. During a good year, Gerick Cobbler keeps over 300,000 gp worth of funds floating from one financial scheme to another, 3d6 percent of it available in a moment's notice by contacting the necessary parties. Anyone with legal and accounting knowledge in possession of that book could either forge documents to try to access the hospice's funds for themselves, or turn the book over to the proper authorities and have a handful of local dignitaries thrown in debtor's prison for violating the law.

Treasury

This tiny, windowless room is only accessible from a secret door in the hospice office. The back of a middle shelf on a bookcase in the office moves to reveal a small hole in the wall. The room contains ten locked, trapped chests containing 1000 sp each.



Noticing the false back panel on the bookcase requires a Search check DC 30. The hole leading to the treasury is easily accessible to gnomes and other Small creatures, but Medium creatures must make an Escape Artist check (DC 30) to wriggle inside.

The chests in the treasury and the hospice office can be opened with an Open Locks check DC 18, but each contains a poison needle trap that deals thieves a painful victory.



POISON NEEDLE TRAP (CR 2)

Typical poison needle traps are used to protect the chests in the treasury and the hospice office.

Treasure Poison Needle Trap: CR 2; mechanical; touch trigger, repair reset; lock bypass (Open Lock DC

30); Atk +17 melee (1 plus poison, needle); poison (blue whinnis, DC 14 Fortitude save resists (poison only), 1 Con/unconsciousness); Search DC 22; Disable Device DC 17. *Market Price:* 4,720 gp

Parapet Level

The gatehouse has two parapets, one for each wing, accessible by staircase. Both parapets boast tall, pointed conical roofs covered with gold leaf. The roof on the west wing contains a bell that the roughnecks toll to mark the hour and “all’s well.” Both roofs are topped with high flag poles. The east roof displays the original banner of Zherdào the Martyr. The west roof displays a silk duplicate.

INNER COMPLEX

The outer complex guards a hexagonal space about three hundred sixty feet long and one hundred feet wide in the center. The Temple of the Crèche itself, a relatively small building compared to its surroundings, lies at the center. Cobblestone pathways direct visitors to present and future buildings, with manicured lawns and gardens taking up the empty space.

Unfinished Buildings

All permanent structures are built flush with the outer wall, essentially thickening the wall with at least another twenty feet of living space. The hospice office contains plans for two great halls, several chapels, a huge kitchen, and dozens of private chambers, all extending from the outer walls. Construction halts whenever Jaquinthe and Gerick Cobbler bicker, however. Scaffolding and raw materials lurk under muddy tarps, unused.

Temporary Structures

Many temporary timber buildings stand in for their future stone replacements.

Communal Latrine: Called “the jakes,” this building serves the basic hygienic needs for all hospice residents. It’s built directly under the scaffolding on to the outer wall. A covered drainage trough runs through a grate through the wall and into the moat. “Mucking out the jakes” is slang for being thrown out of the hospice.

Hall: A no-nonsense mess hall that is a very poor replacement for the grand halls of most castles. The commanders, chaplains, and knight-sergeants each have their own tables, while the roughnecks eat with the less-important guests.

Hostelry: Healthy and wealthy guests of the hospice rent private rooms in this plain but comfortable hostel.

Kitchen: Often the busiest place in the hospice, the kitchen prepares meals for all residents and visitors. The kitchen’s root cellar holds the hospice’s perishables.

Quarters: These are small, private lodgings for the service staff and their families. Older knight-sergeants also prefer to live here rather than with the youngsters in the temple garrison.

Stables

The hospice possesses some of the sturdiest horseflesh in the land. The largest building inside the complex, the stable is a long structure of stone and mortar with a thatched roof. Connected to it is a wide corral that the knight-sergeants use for training and exercising their steeds. The stable can comfortably hold three dozen horses, and a dozen more can be crowded in if necessary. The stable hands are very attentive, the oats and hay are always fresh, and a skilled horse doctor is always on call. Visitors can stable their horses here for 1 sp per night per horse.

Cisterns

Rainwater is channeled from the walls and the gatehouse roofs into two cisterns — round stone structures 10 feet in diameter and just as high — situated at either end of the complex. An herb garden rings the northern cistern, and a small vegetable garden surrounds the southern. The water collected in the cisterns supplements the well during the summer months.

Capped Well

The well is little more than a raised, stone platform. A lever-handle pump of clever, gnomish design draws from

the deep aquifer beneath the hospice. The capped well design discourages contamination of the hospice's main water source.

Graveyard

Surrounded by a picket fence, this small graveyard is the final resting place of patients who could not afford resur-rection and those few Crèche Knights who chose not to undergo the ritual.

TEMPLE OF THE CRECHE

The temple is the oldest building in the complex. It's a square, composite structure of stone and mortar about 60 feet wide. The older southern half of the temple, which was the original abandoned mansion, is constructed of irregular, soot-black stones. The narrow windows are shuttered with iron bars or bricked up. Ivy covers much of the old masonry. The new northern half boasts even limestone bricks and large windows with garden sills. The pitched roof is shingled in shale, and ringed with limestone gables.

Before the mansion was converted into a temple, it had two opposing entrances in the center of the north and south walls. Zherdào died guarding the original north entrance, which is now the shrine at the heart of the composite building, while the mansion was evacuated through the south entrance. To better protect the shrine, earthworks were raised around the building, converting the second story of the old mansion into the first floor of the new temple, and the ground floor of the old mansion into a cellar. The old south entrance has been covered with wide, granite ramps leading up to a set of lacquered beechwood double doors opening onto the South Gallery of the first floor. A similar ramp on the north face leads to an archway protected by a wrought-iron gate.



The southern doors can be barred from the inside. They have the following stats.

Southern Doors: Strong wooden doors; thickness 2 in.; Hardness 5, 20 hit points, Str DC 23 (stuck) or DC 25 (locked) to break.

The north gate swings outward, and has the following stats.

North Gate: Iron gate; thickness 2 in.; Hardness 10, 60 hit points, Str DC 28 to break

Patients are directed through the temple's southern entrance. Only the knight-sergeants and high-paying pilgrims or patrons are allowed to use the northern entrance. The southern entrance is left open throughout the day and barred only at night, whereas the north entrance is always barred with two knight-sergeants on guard duty behind it.

FIRST FLOOR

South Gallery

This hardwood gallery looms over the sick hall in the basement below. Benches and cubbies line the walls. The central space is kept clear except for several racks hanging with fresh linen cloth. Rainwater from the roof funnels down copper pipes and into a clay reservoir tucked into a corner of the ceiling at the far end of the room, next to which are several pewter washing basins.

This is the hospice's equivalent to a waiting room. Patients are encouraged to undress, wash of any sweat and grime, and wrap themselves in a length of linen. Personal possessions are stored in cubbies. Some thirty patients can perform ablutions in this room without overcrowding.

Knight-sergeants assigned to temple duty work their way through the south gallery at least once an hour. They interview, examine, treat, and accept donations from patients. If a knight-sergeant determines a patient requires an extended stay, invasive care, or the attention of a chaplain, he escorts her into the inner rooms of the temple.

Chirurgical Room

This room contains eight operating tables. Cloth screens on wheeled frames provide some privacy, but otherwise

the room is open. Carts sprout bone saws, lancets, bandages, jars of leeches, rubbery sheets, and other ingredients normally found only in a healer's kit. The floor is spattered with dark stains that, despite decades of bleaching, never seem to completely come out. An open stairway leads to the basement hallway.



At any time, there are sufficient medicinal and scientific materials scattered throughout the various work and storage rooms in the temple to assemble over one hundred healer's kits and fifty alchemist's labs.

Chapel

This small but elegant chapel delights the eye. Painted glass windows on the outside walls mottle the room with subtle colors. The spiral staircase from the annex below opens behind an antique altar of elfin make. Pilgrims kiss it for good fortune.

Chaplain's Chambers

Similar to the commanders' chambers, this large stone room is split by screens into several private apartments. The furnishings, a source of fierce competition among the chaplains, are very luxurious, including four-poster beds with down mattresses, copper sinks, teak writing desks, and silver candelabrum.

Gerick Cobbler secretly hopes to one day convert the rooms into luxury suites for high-paying guests.

North Gallery

This wide hallway is dominated by a huge oil painting of Zherdào the Martyr, hung on the south wall. Zherdào clutches a war-helm to his armored breast, and wears his black hair long and plaited. He sits astride Ruin, his red warhorse. His armor is painted a brilliant white with curls of fiery red. His wide, liquid eyes, focused on something just behind the viewer, burn with passion.

The painting was commissioned forty years ago. If asked about the portrait, Gerick Cobbler comments, "It truly

brings out the essence of the man," but Jaquinthe will murmur, "Looks nothing like him."

Doors on the east and west walls lead to the chapel and the chaplains' chambers, respectively. A pair of shutters opens up to the gated archway of the north entrance. Two knight-sergeants keep watch behind a desk in the northwest corner of the gallery. A secret door directly behind the desk reveals a spiral staircase leading down to the garrison.



Noticing the secret door behind the desk requires a Spot check (DC 20). The watch desk provides cover — a +4 AC bonus and +2 Reflex save bonus — to creatures behind it.

CELLAR

Sick Hall

The stairs from the chirurgic room lead down a musty narrow hallway and into the sick hall, the former hall of the original mansion. Rows of patient cots pack the chamber. A hearth on the west wall keeps the room warm in the winter months. Iron chandeliers hang from the ceiling two floors above. Instead of candles, the chandeliers burn fragrant oils to mask the odors of contagion.

Balneum

Formerly the mansion's kitchen, the knights use this room as a modest bath. The brick oven has been converted into a furnace. Water is drawn up from the ground and into a large copper drum above the furnace by a smaller version of the well's lever-handle pump. Copper pipes run from the drum to the half-dozen round wooden tubs (like oversized, short barrels) scattered about the room. Rocks are placed on the furnace and plunked directly into the baths to warm them. Wastewater drains from the tubs into the earth through channels in the floor. Salts and minerals are scooped from barrels into the water to for soothing bath regimens.



Any character who takes a bath in the balneum gains a +2 circumstance bonus to any saving throws against disease or poison for 24 hours after the bath.

Workroom

This room is used mostly for storage. It's filled with crates of linen, spare tubs, extra cots, copper tubing, a vat roiling with leeches, boxes of candles, casks of oils and unguents, splints, crutches, and a few burial caskets of various sizes.

Antechamber

A polished steel door leads from the sick hall to the antechamber of the Crèche. At least two knight-sergeants guard the door at all times. The guards scrutinize the door's reflected image of anyone seeking entry.

The entire antechamber is covered in colorful stone tiles, forming a single fresco that spreads across the entire floor, walls, and ceiling. Standing in the center of the room on an irregular patch of blood-red tiles gives the visitor a 360-degree panoramic view of the moment of Zherdào's martyrdom from the viewpoint of Zherdào himself. The ceiling depicts a cloudy sky at sunset. A round brass lamp glows with a soft-yellow magical light in place of the sun. The floor is littered with fallen enemies. Three walls surround the viewer, depicting wicked warriors in battered armor and cruel weapons, while the southern wall shows the mansion and portico that Zherdào refused to abandon.

The mirrored door from the sick hall opens inward into the antechamber. When the door is in motion, a very observant character might notice a subtle but startling change in the reflected image of the antechamber. Several images of Gerick Cobbler are incorporated into the fresco, one on each wall. On the three walls depicting enemies, Gerick Cobbler is seen fighting bravely against them, but on the southern wall, Gerick now stands with dagger raised as if stabbing the viewer in the back.



Seeing the change in the image on the southern wall requires a Spot check (DC 35)

A second, unenchanted steel door built into the north wall leads to the Crèche itself.



The mundane steel door's stats are as follows:

Crèche Door: Steel door; thickness 2 in.; Hardness 10, 60 hit points, Str DC 28 to break.

Crèche

The Crèche itself is a tiny, vaulted chamber, about twenty feet wide and ten feet long. The simple stonework of the original archway can still be seen, and the rough cobbles of the floor remain unchanged save for the permanent stain of Zherdào's blood. Pillars of striking red alabaster line the wide walls, and all other surfaces are lined with slabs of pinkish-gray marble. The room stands empty.



NEW WONDROUS ITEM: MIRRORED DOOR

Images reflected in a *mirrored door* reveal creatures and objects as they actually are, stripping away magical disguises. *Invisible* creatures become visible in the mirror, and the true form of any *polymorphed* or otherwise transmuted object is also reflected. Finally, the mirrored surface allows anyone who looks into it to see through all illusions.

Breaking the mirrored door destroys this magical effect. The steel door has a thickness of 2 in., Hardness 10, 60 hit points, and Str DC 28 to break.

Moderate abjuration; CL 11th; Craft Wondrous Item, *greater dispel magic*; Price 132,000 gp; Weight immobile

Everything exposed to the cool air of the Crèche glows with a soft white nimbus. The Crèche rings with the reverent silence of a tomb and vibrates with the expectant energy of a womb. The Crèche normally functions as a positive divine energy nexus, as described below.

Annex

A door on the east wall of the Crèche connects to the annex, a wide corridor running some forty feet to the east, ending in a spiral staircase that leads to the chapel on the first floor. Racks line the annex, displaying a large collection of canes, ear horns, spectacles, and trusses, as well as a number of ghastly prosthesis such as painted

DIVINE ENERGY NEXUS

Clerics believe divine energy nexuses sometimes arise in an area after a powerful being makes a great sacrifice of divine energy. Most divine scholars say nexuses only arise by accident and from selfless sacrifice. Otherwise, the creation of such places seems unpredictable.

A divine energy nexus can be either positive (holy) or negative (unholy); positive energy nexuses cannot be used by negative energy users, and vice versa. When revealed by *detect magic* or similar spells, a nexus registers as an overwhelming spherical aura no more than ten feet in diameter. A nexus arising outdoors or underground can last for many hundreds (perhaps even thousands) of years as long as the ground is not disturbed. A nexus arising in a manmade structure lasts until the structure is destroyed.

A nexus acts like a mystical lens, focusing divine energy and allowing individual divine magic-users to store and share their powers. Clerics and other agents of the divine seeking to take advantage of a nexus should beware: the process is not without risks, and the ultimate effects of so much power poured into one place remains unknown.

Storing Energy in a Nexus

Transferring some of your divine energy into a divine nexus costs one Turn or Rebuke undead attempt. Make a special Turning or Rebuke Charisma check and consult the table below:

TURNING CHECK

RESULT	EFFECT
Up to 1*	no storage; energy drain
2 – 5	no storage
6 – 9	store nexus levels = caster level – 4
10 – 13	store nexus levels = caster level – 3
14 – 17	store nexus levels = caster level – 2
18 – 21	store nexus levels = caster level – 1
22+	store nexus levels = caster level

* Including rolling a natural 1

No Storage — The storage attempt fails, but still costs one Turn or Rebuke attempt.

Energy Drain — On a total of 1 or less, or on a natural roll of 1, the character is overwhelmed by the nexus and suffers 1d6 levels of temporary negative levels worth of energy drain (Will save DC 20 halves number of levels lost). Negative levels remain for 24 hours or until removed with a spell such as *restoration*. After 24 hours, the afflicted character must attempt a Fortitude save (DC 30). If the save succeeds, the negative level dissipates. If not, the negative level is removed, but the character's level is permanently reduced by 1. The afflicted character makes a separate saving throw for each negative level gained. A character with negative levels at least equal to her current level, or drained below 1st level, is instantly slain.

Store Nexus Levels — The nexus energy storage increases by the appropriate number of levels. For example,

stone eyes, bronze noses, hook hands, and wooden feet. All of these objects were supposedly cast aside by pilgrims and patients healed by the power of the Crèche.

Two doors concealed behind racks of abandoned crutches on the north wall open into the garrison.



Noticing the two hidden doors requires a Search check (DC 15).

Garrison

Most of the basement on the “new” side of the temple is devoted to garrisoning knight-sergeants. Wardrobes



DIVINE ENERGY NEXUS, CONTINUED

Jaquinthe, a 10th-level paladin, makes a turn check and rolls a total of 16. If Jaquinthe were a cleric, the nexus’ storage would increase by 8 levels. Paladins, however, Turn undead as a cleric of 2 levels lower would, so the nexus’ storage increases by 6 levels. Successful storage does not result in energy drain. If a storage attempt results in a negative number of nexus levels, however, the nexus loses all levels previous stored and the caster attempting to store energy suffers 1d6 temporary negative levels of energy drain (as per Energy Drain above).

Duration of Storage

A nexus loses all levels previously stored at sunset and sunrise. Otherwise, there is no known limit of levels a nexus can hold, but scholars caution that the effects of nexus overload could be devastating.

Using Energy Stored in a Nexus

Levels stored in a nexus are used to cast spells higher than your caster level typically allows.

First, you must pick a spell to cast. You cannot cast spells that are not on your spell list.

Second, look up the caster level you would normally need to be to cast the spell, and your chosen spell’s spell level. For example, Jaquinthe decides she wants to cast *holy sword*, which is a 4th-level paladin spell. Normally, Jaquinthe would need to reach 14th level before preparing *holy sword*.

Third, calculate the number of stored nexus levels it will cost to cast the spell by using the following formula:

$$[(\text{Required caster level} - \text{your current caster level}) \times (\text{level of chosen spell})] = \text{stored nexus level cost}$$

Continuing the example, it will cost 16 stored nexus levels for Jaquinthe to prepare *holy sword*; 14 (required caster level) minus 10 (Jaquinthe’s current caster level) is 4, multiplied by 4 (*holy sword*’s spell level) is 16.

Finally, you must attempt to prepare the spell. You do not need to have a spell slot open to prepare the spell. Attempting to prepare a spell using a nexus always costs one Turn or Rebuke attempt. Reduce the stored nexus levels by the number of nexus levels it costs for you to cast the spell (the stored nexus levels are spent even if you fail to prepare the spell). You can spend stored nexus levels placed in the nexus by any caster, including yourself. To successfully prepare the spell, you must also make a Concentration check with a DC equal to 10 or the number of stored nexus levels spent, whichever is higher. Rolling a natural 1 is an automatic failure that overwhelms the caster and results in 1d6 negative levels of temporary energy drain (as per Energy Drain above).

If the Concentration check succeeds, you have prepared the spell and can now cast it as normal, with the following two exceptions: the spell must be cast within the nexus, although the effects of the spell can reach outside the nexus (continuing the example, Jaquinthe must cast *holy sword* inside the nexus, but she can then carry the enchanted weapon out of the nexus and use it for the duration of the spell); and the DC for saving throws against any spell prepared using nexus levels is 10 + the spell’s level + the caster’s Constitution modifier.

stand between every two beds, giving the illusion of private space. A lockable trunk lies at the foot of each bed. Another's trunk is off-limits; even Commander Jaquinthe would be breaking a taboo by going through a knight-sergeant's trunk.

A large cabinet next to the spiral staircase contains the duty roster. Each knight-sergeant has his own wooden chit, and each duty has its own hook in the cabinet. Duty hooks include gatehouse watch, gallery watch, cavalry work, sick work, and so on. Knight-sergeants compete for their chits to stay on their favorite duty hooks (cavalry work being the most popular), but the commander makes sure some duty rotation occurs. A tin can labeled "Muck Jakes" teeters on the top of the duty roster cabinet.

SCENES

The following ideas can help player characters become involved with Crèche Hospice.

A WELL-EARNED REST

The hospice is a famous retreat for heroes resting up between adventures, so PCs unlucky in battle can become frequent hospice patrons. And sickbed is a unique place for untried PCs to be hired by a mysterious old man offering a life of adventure. The hospice turns no patient down, although it asks adventuring types to donate up front.

All the services listed below are theoretically provided free of charge, as the Crèche Knights are a charitable order. For each service, however, the Crèche Knights suggest a donation of coin, or of goods and services of equal value. If a character chooses not to donate, the roughnecks pointedly suggest the character go muck the jakes.



Divine spells greater than 5th level are available at the hospice only through the use of the Crèche. Chaplains do not use the Crèche on a whim or for gold. Instead, the chaplains will

only provide such high-level magic if the recipient or the requester accepts a *geas/quest*.

WELCOME TO THE ROUGHNECKS

Interacting with the roughnecks can directly involve 1st- or 2nd-level PCs with the inner workings of the hospice. A sick noble can hire the PCs to deal with "those ruffians" who harass visitors on the way to the hospice. Alternatively, during a visit to the city, Jaquinthe employs the PCs to pose as eager roughneck recruits, infiltrate their ranks, and report any interesting scuttlebutt about Gerick Cobbler.

THE CRECHE WILL ROCK

While the roughnecks are looking for greenhorns with questionable scruples, the Crèche Knights want honorable gentlemen with military prospects. Jaquinthe is eager to recruit new blood to side with her in the inevitable power struggle with Gerick Cobbler. She can also offer good-aligned PCs employment as temporary lay chaplains. Wizards and scholars can advise on the construction of the hospice, bards would be great for morale, clerics could lead religious services, rogues could provide intelligence services (in other words, spy on Gerick Cobbler), and fighters might keep those blasted roughnecks in line. As commander, Jaquinthe has the advantage. For every new face that arrives, Gerick Cobbler must delay and reevaluate gambits to seize control of the hospice.

Any PC paladins would be a prize find for Jaquinthe. She offers mid-level paladins immediate promotion to captain of the Crèche (a position she invents on the spot) with a career track straight to commander. Such a sudden move would surely cause more turmoil than it could resolve, but Jaquinthe is overeager to delegate some of her duties and spend more time off duty.

ALTERNATE VERSIONS

Magic plays a background role in everyday life at the hospice, particularly in the arena of defense, so magic's presence in the hospice can be ramped up with relative ease. Seed the razor-sedge meadow with shambling mounds trained to avoid the elevated roads. Let the hospice join forces with a host of celestials, thanks to Father Soong's judicious use of the Crèche to empower spells that call such planar creatures. Glowing lantern archons wander the night and discourse with important guests. Hound archons guard the Crèche antechamber and annex while lecturing knight-sergeants on the importance of duty and loyalty. Two avoral archons nest in the gold parapets of Whitestone Gate, always watching.

The political tension within the hospice can be damped down, just as easily. Inspired by Zherdào's legend, a band of human paladins swear in as captains of the Crèche, filling the power vacuum between the last surviving founder and the chaplains. The physical installation can finally be completed, although such an alter-

ation will require significant changes to the outer complex map.

Finally, the turmoil in the hospice can be exacerbated by putting the place under siege. War breaks out once again between the noble houses, catching commoners in the middle. Jaquinthe refuses to hire out the knight-sergeants to either side, and offers free hospice sanctuary to all who ask. By refusing to take sides, Jaquinthe accidentally creates her own side, becoming the reluctant champion of a new serf uprising. The nobles put aside their differences to join forces against the hospice and its "traitorous" separatists, and history begins to repeat itself.

Taking a more magical bent, the divine energy nexus could prove to be an irresistible lure for an arch-geomancer and his zealous monk followers who collect nexuses to power their own world-domination. Or perhaps a wrathful mummy-lord, leading an army of undying minions, wants to warp the Crèche into a negative energy nexus and summon his beloved, the fiendish sorceress who mummified him in the first place, from the underworld.

CRECHE HOSPICE SERVICES

SERVICE	DONATION	SERVICE	DONATION
Hostelry, inn stay	1 gp per day	One <i>neutralize poison</i> spellcasting	280 gp
Hostelry, recuperative visit*	5 gp per day	One <i>restoration</i> spellcasting	380 gp
Sick Ward, recuperative visit*	3 gp per day	One <i>raise dead</i> spellcasting	5,350 gp
One <i>cure light wounds</i> spellcasting	10 gp	One <i>regenerate</i> spellcasting	<i>geas/quest</i>
One <i>cure moderate wounds</i> spellcasting	60 gp	One <i>resurrection</i> spellcasting	<i>geas/quest</i>
One <i>cure serious wounds</i> spellcasting	150 gp	Mercenary cavalry work**	10 gp per knight-sergeant per day
One <i>cure critical wounds</i> spellcasting	280 gp		

* For each day of a recuperative visit, the guest has full accesses to a healer (Heal skill +9, +2 circumstance bonus for healer's kit) for curing disease, curing poison, and long-term care.

** As exceptional professionals, knight-sergeants' initial attitudes are "friendly" even in the face of hazardous or combat conditions.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ORACLE OF SUMURA



AT A GLANCE

To know the future is to control it, at least in part. It's little wonder, then, that oracles and prophecies have long fascinated humans and demihumans alike. The Oracle of Sumura is an example of this phenomenon — a temple and monastery complex from which a seer dispenses her wisdom. The uncanny accuracy of the seer's predictions has spread her fame far and wide, making the place a popular pilgrimage location.

In recent years, the Oracle of Sumura has become more significant than ever thanks to two related, though quite different, causes. The first is the abbot Starkad's effort to promote the oracle as a pilgrimage site, encouraging many more supplicants to visit the seer and seek her wisdom than has been typical in the past. The second is a growing apocalyptic fervor among many of these visitors, who are convinced that the prophecies inscribed on the obelisk outside the temple predict a great change in the years ahead, in which the Oracle of Sumura plays a major — if not decisive — role.

PLACEMENT

You should place the Oracle of Sumura in an out-of-the-way locale that requires significant effort to reach. The default assumption is that the temple and monastery complex is built into the side of a high mountain. This certainly makes the oracle difficult to reach and ensures that it remains well removed from the mainstream of the campaign world. On the other hand, it should not be wholly inaccessible, since visitors and pilgrims do journey here with some regularity. Indeed, it's vital that there be continuous, if irregular, contact between the priests of the temple and the villages on the slopes of the mountain range in which it's placed.

CHARACTERS

The following NPCs are residents of the Oracle of Sumura.

STARKAD

Ambitious Abbot

“I foresee the day when our isolation will be at an end and all will know the wisdom we possess.”

A middle-aged man with a weathered, craggy face, Starkad nevertheless presents a pleasant expression to the world. He was elected abbot of the temple because of his great charisma and exceptional administrative abilities rather than because of his piety. This isn't to say Starkad is not devout; he is, in his own way. Rather, the abbot is a man who is not content to rest on the temple's considerable laurels. He believes that the Oracle of Sumura is a treasure that the whole world must one day behold — an incomparable source of enlightenment that the temple cannot keep hidden forever. That the newest seer was once a simple peasant girl is a boon to his efforts, as it's a selling point he never overlooks.

STARKAD

12th-Level Human Cleric

CR 12; Medium humanoid; HD 12d8; hp 54; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+1 Dex, +3 bracers of armor +3), touch 11, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +9; Grp +9; Atk +10 melee (2d4+1/crit x4, *scythe* +1); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (2d4+1/crit x4, *scythe* +1); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells, Turn Undead; SQ Aura, Spontaneous Casting; AL N; SV Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +14; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 21

Skills: Concentration +5, Diplomacy +25, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (religion) +16, Profession (lawyer) +10, Sense Motive +7, Spellcraft +4

Feats: Brew Potion, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Martial Weapon Proficiency (scythe), Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Diplomacy)

Languages: Common, Elven

Human Traits (Ex): Humans get 1 extra feat and 4 extra skill points at 1st level.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Clerics are proficient with all simple weapons, with all types of armor, and with shields (except tower shields).

Aura (Ex): This cleric has no discernable aura, as his deity's alignment is neutral and he does not have the Chaotic, Evil, Good, or Lawful domain.

Spontaneous Casting: This cleric can “lose” a prepared spell in order to cast any *cure* spell of the same level or lower.

Turn Undead (Su): This cleric can Turn undead 8 times per day.

Spells: (6/5+1/4+1/4+1/3+1/3+1/2+1) Starkad worships the Lady of Fate and has chosen the Luck and Fate domains, which allow him to once per day reroll one roll just made before its success or failure is declared, and once per day to re-roll a single attack roll, skill check, or saving throw. The DC to resist the cleric's spells is 12 + the spell level. This cleric has the following spells already prepared; domain spells are marked with an asterisk.

0 Level — *create water, detect magic, guidance, light, read magic, virtue*

1st Level — *bless, command, comprehend languages, divine favor, entropic shield,* magic weapon*

2nd Level — *aid,* augury, bear's endurance, hold person, spiritual weapon*

3rd Level — *continual flame, dispel magic, helping hand, prayer, protection from energy**

4th Level — *discern lies, freedom of movement,* greater magic weapon, sending*

5th Level — *commune, flame strike, mark of justice,* true seeing*

6th Level — *find the path, geas/quest,* word of recall*

Possessions: bracers of armor +3, +1 scythe, cleric's vestments, 50 gp

Consequently, Starkad has been encouraging pilgrims to come to the oracle by hiring bards and other messengers to spread stories of its wonders to outsiders. So far, these efforts have been very successful, increasing visits significantly, even if doing so also brings men like Vladik Garabed as well. Starkad sees this as just the beginning, though. He looks for-

ward to the day when the oracle complex covers the entire mountaintop and the pilgrims number in the thousands.

Of course, Starkad's plans also include the abolition of longstanding prohibitions against accepting large donations or providing preferential treatment to visitors of wealth and position. Some of the priesthood's

NEW DEITY: THE LADY OF FATE

Alignment: Neutral

Domains: Fate, Knowledge, Luck

Typical Worshipers: Adventurers, gamblers, seers, prophets

The Lady of Fate is an important, if esoteric, deity concerned with the destiny of all beings in the cosmos.

The Lady takes an interest in the ultimate fate of all beings, although she does so dispassionately, feeling neither pleasure nor anguish in what she sees. The goddess herself does not actually determine the fates of those who she observes. Instead, she simply metes out destinies according to a plan that transcends even her power — the exact nature of which is a matter of

debate within her faith. Of course, the Lady cares little for such matters, being content to act as she always has, without concern for the whys or wherefores of her actions, only the results.



The Lady of Fate is usually depicted as a handsome older woman sitting at a spinning wheel, where she measures and cuts the threads of individual destinies. Some representations of the Lady show her as the consort of the Judge of the Dead, but this interpretation is not widely held (especially by worshippers of the Judge himself).

Her symbol is a spool of thread and her

weapon is a scythe.



NEW DOMAIN: FATE

Granted Power: Once per day of game time, you may re-roll a single attack roll, skill check, or saving throw. You do not need to announce the re-roll until after you've already made an unsatisfactory die roll. If the second die roll is worse than the first, you may choose to use the first instead, but the granted power is nevertheless used up for that day.

Fate Domain Spells

- 1 Divine Favor.** You gain +1 per three levels on attack and damage rolls.
- 2 Augury.** Learns whether an action will be good or

bad.

- 3 Bestow Curse.** -6 to an ability score; -4 on attack rolls, saves, and checks; or 50% chance of losing each action.
- 4 Divination.** Provides useful advice for specific proposed actions.
- 5 Mark of Justice.** Designates action that will trigger curse on subject.
- 6 Geas/Quest.** As *lesser geas*, plus it affects any creature.
- 7 Greater Scrying.** As *scrying*, but faster and longer.
- 8 Vision.** As *legend lore*, but quicker and strenuous.
- 9 Foresight.** "Sixth sense" warns of impending danger.

number see the logic in such plans, despite their unorthodoxy. Dima, the librarian, views the matter as a necessary way to guarantee that the temple continues to acquire solid prophetic texts and can keep doing the work it must do. However, the seer herself remains opposed and has said so on numerous occasions. Though she has no official role within the temple's hierarchy, her status as an avatar of the Lady of Fate makes her well regarded, and has convinced many of the priests of her correctness in this matter.

For now, Starkad is biding his time, convinced that he'll be able to bring Anhaga around to his perspective. She is, after all, merely a peasant girl and in Starkad's view easily swayed. In the meantime, he continues to do his best to attract more pilgrims and bring attention to the inadequacies of current arrangements on the mountaintop. He hopes that he can manufacture a "crisis" in which the seer is forced to choose between turning away visitors and acquiescing to his plans for expansion and change. Starkad believes the seer would rather accede to the latter than keep pilgrims away in contravention of her vocation. Even if his plan does not work soon, it nicely lays the groundwork for a time when it will — and the oracle can make real the abbot's dream of celebrity and renown.

ANHAGA

Inexplicable Seer

"I did not choose to be the conduit for divine wisdom, but I accept my role willingly — and you should do the same."

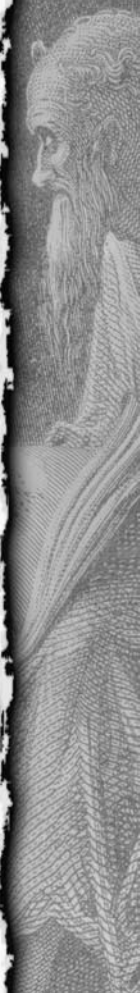
Anhaga is the current seer of the Oracle of Sumura, and one of the most unusual by far. In addition to the fact that she is quite young — only twenty years of age — she is also not a cleric of the Lady of Fate. Until she came to the temple six years ago, at the tender age of fourteen, she was nothing more than a peasant girl from a nearby village. She had spent her short life helping her parents on their farm and expected to marry and raise children, like every other young person in her home.

The Lady of Fate had other ideas. When the previous seer died, the priests of the temple, as is their custom, ventured out of their stronghold and sought his replacement. The teachings of the Lady include signs by which her seer may be identified, specifically prescient dreams and the ability to see visions that others cannot. Anhaga had never been able to do either of these things — until the day after her predecessor died. Suddenly, the young woman began having the most vivid and illuminating dreams, which could not merely predict the future but also help her to understand the present.

When Starkad found her, Anhaga was confused and more than a little frightened. Her fellow villagers were relieved when the abbot pronounced her to be the next Seer of Sumura and an avatar of the Lady of Fate. The simple peasants had begun to believe the young woman was insane. Starkad assured them she was not; instead, she was to be the centerpiece of his push to promote the oracle more widely. With a common young woman as his new seer, he was sure he had found his way to popularize his temple and spread its word throughout the world.

Anhaga is extremely skeptical of the abbot's plans. For reasons she cannot understand, she feels she must oppose him. She suspects that the Lady is telling her to do so, but she can never be sure. The dreams and visions she sees often imply that great evil might result if the oracle does not remain isolated and remote. Anhaga assumes that this has something to do with the prophecies carved on the Tower of Sumura and that, one day, the temple's resources will be needed to prevent a terrible catastrophe. So far, Anhaga's efforts have won the day and the abbot has been forced to modify his plans, although she knows this situation cannot prevail forever.

The situation is made worse by Anhaga's isolation. She is not a priestess, and yet the temple's inhabitants revere her as a living goddess. She is allowed to do few things on her own, as she is constantly attended on by servants. From time to time, she muses that it might be best to give in to Starkad's plans, if only to give her more experience of the outside world. Yet, she has not because she knows the Lady of Fate has other plans. However much she might wish otherwise, Anhaga plays the role fate has dealt her.



 ANHAGA

2nd-Level Human Commoner
(Divine Avatar of the Lady of Fate)

CR 6; Medium humanoid; HD 2d4; hp 5; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk +1 melee (1d6/crit x2, sickle); Full Atk +1 melee (1d6/crit x2, sickle); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SQ Ability Bonuses, Aura, Bonus Feat, Damage Reduction 10/magic, Exhaustion, Mind Blank, Skill Bonuses, Spell-like Abilities, Spell Immunities, Spell Resistance 30; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 20, Wis 19, Cha 12

Skills: Climb +1, Diplomacy +3, Handle Animal +3, Jump +1, Knowledge (arcana) +6 (+16 related to domains Fate, Knowledge, and Luck), Knowledge (religion) +10 (+20 related to domains Fate, Knowledge, and Luck), Listen +5, Profession (farmer) +5, Profession (herbalist) +5, Prophecy +19, Ride +2

Feats: Divine Perception, Skill Focus (Knowledge: religion), Skill Focus (Prophecy)

Languages: Common, Elven, Gnome, Dwarven, Halfling, Orc

Human Traits (Ex): Humans get 1 extra feat and 4 extra skill points at 1st level.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Anhaga is proficient with daggers.

Aura (Ex): Anhaga has no aura, as her deity's alignment is neutral.

Damage Reduction (Su): Anhaga ignores 10 hit points from most weapons and natural attacks. A magic weapon negates the ability.

Exhaustion (Su): The process of housing divine essence is physically taxing. Each 8-hour period during which an avatar is active requires a successful Constitution check (DC 20) or the avatar becomes exhausted. Exhausted characters move at half normal speed and suffer an effective penalty of –6 to Strength and Dexterity. After an hour of complete rest the character becomes fatigued, incurring an effective Strength and Dexterity penalty of only –2 and an inability to run and charge; another 8 hours of complete rest is needed to eliminate this penalty completely.

Mind Blank (Sp): Anhaga is constantly protected as per the spell *mind blank* cast by a 15th-level cleric.

Spell-Like Abilities: Each day, the divine avatar may freely cast one divine spell from each cleric level 0 through 9 as a spell-like ability. A divine avatar casts spells as a 17th-level caster, and the DC to resist these spells is 14 + the spell level. Typically, Anhaga chooses the following spells:

- 0 Level — *detect magic*
- 1st Level — *comprehend languages*
- 2nd Level — *augury*
- 3rd Level — *speak with dead*
- 4th Level — *divination*
- 5th Level — *commune*
- 6th Level — *geas/quest*
- 7th Level — *greater scrying*
- 8th Level — *discern location*
- 9th Level — *astral projection*

A divine avatar can also use the following abilities.

- At Will — *bless/curse water*, *consecrate/desecrate*, *detect chaos/evil/good/law*

Spell Immunities (Ex): Anhaga is immune to all forms of Enchantment (Charm) [Mind-Affecting] spells and spell-like effects.

Spell Resistance (Ex): To affect Anhaga, a spellcaster must make a caster level check (1d20 + caster level) at least equal to 30. If the caster fails the spell doesn't affect the avatar.

Skill Bonuses: Anhaga gains a +10 circumstance bonus to all Knowledge and Craft skill checks related in any way to the domains of Fate, Knowledge, and Luck. She also gets a +10 bonus to all Prophecy checks (see below). These bonuses are applied in the stat block above.

Ability Bonuses: A divine avatar gains a +5 bonus to the two ability scores most closely associated with the deity, in this case Intelligence and Wisdom.

Bonus Feat: The character gains the feat Divine Perception (see below).

Possessions: sickle, cleric's vestments, 5 cp

NEW TEMPLATE: DIVINE AVATAR

A divine avatar is an unusual fusion of a mortal being with a divine essence. At any given time, a deity may have no more than one divine avatar for each domain she commands. More mortal than divine, the avatar nevertheless possesses shards of a god's powers, making him a formidable opponent or valuable ally. Divine avatars frequently rise to prominence in the service of their deity, leading cults, armies, and even nations. The avatar retains his own personality and will, although he understands the wishes of the deity with whom he is joined.

Being chosen as a vessel for a god's power is a rare gift granted only to the truly devout — mortals who have given their lives to the service of their deity. Typically, such mortals must possess at least 18 character levels in classes favored by the deity (as determined by the GM), in addition to an alignment identical to that of the god. Clerics and druids are the most common candidates for this gift, but other classes are far from impossible. Of course, these requirements are not absolute. A deity may choose to grant avatar status on anyone she chooses, regardless of whether he meets the typical requirements.

Creating a Divine Avatar

"Divine avatar" is a template that can be applied to any divine spellcaster (referred to hereafter as "base creature").

Hit Dice: Same as base creature.

Initiative: Same as base creature.

Speed: Same as base creature.

Armor Class: Same as base creature.

Base Attack/Grapple: Same as base creature.

Attack: Same as base creature.

Full Attacks: Same as base creature.

Damage: Same as base creature.

Space/Reach: Same as base creature.

Special Attacks: Same as base creature.

Special Qualities: A divine avatar retains all the special qualities of the base creature and gains those described below.

Feats: The character gains the feat Divine

Perception (see below).

Environment: Same as the base creature.

Organization: Same as the base creature.

Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +5.

Treasure: Same as the base creature.

Alignment: Same as the base creature.

Advancement: Same as the base creature.

Level Adjustment: Same as base creature.

Aura (Ex): A divine avatar of a chaotic, evil, good, or lawful deity has an overwhelming aura corresponding to his deity's alignment.

Damage Reduction (Su): A divine avatar has Damage Reduction 10/magic.

Exhaustion (Su): The process of housing divine essence is physically taxing. Each 8-hour period during which an avatar is active requires a successful Constitution check (DC 20) or the avatar becomes exhausted. Exhausted characters move at half normal speed and suffer an effective penalty of –6 to Strength and Dexterity. After an hour of complete rest the character becomes fatigued, incurring an effective Strength and Dexterity penalty of only –2 and an inability to run and charge; another 8 hours of complete rest is needed to eliminate this penalty completely.

Mind Blank (Sp): A divine avatar is constantly protected as per the spell *mind blank* cast by a 15th-level cleric.

Spell-Like Abilities: Each day, the divine avatar may freely cast one divine spell from each cleric level 0 through 9 as a spell-like ability. A divine avatar casts spells as a 17th-level caster, and the DC to resist these spells is 10 + Wisdom modifier + the spell level. These spells must be chosen on a daily basis, just like any other divine spell, but different spells may be chosen on each day. A divine avatar can also use the following abilities.

At Will — *bless/curse water, consecrate/desecrate, detect chaos/evil/good/law*

NEW TEMPLATE: DIVINE AVATAR, CONTINUED

Spell Immunities (Ex): A divine avatar is immune to all forms of Enchantment (Charm) [Mind-Affecting] spells.

Spell Resistance (Ex): To affect a divine avatar, a spellcaster must make a caster level check (1d20 + caster level) at least equal to 30. If the caster fails the spell doesn't affect the avatar.

Abilities: A divine avatar gains a +5 bonus to the two ability scores most closely associated with the deity, as determined by the GM. Any increases in these abilities

will affect bonuses related to them, such as AC for Dexterity, damage for Strength, and so on.

Skills: Because he gains limited access to the knowledge of the deity with whose power he is imbued, a divine avatar gets a +10 circumstance bonus on all Knowledge and Craft checks related to the god's domains that the avatar possesses. At the GM's discretion, a divine avatar might instead take this bonus for other skills closely tied to the deity's domains, such as Prophecy for the Lady of Fate (see below).



NEW FEAT: DIVINE PERCEPTION [GENERAL]

You can sense the workings of the gods in the mortal world.

Prerequisites: Wisdom 13+, Skill Focus (Knowledge: religion)

A character with this feat is sometimes aware of the active presence of the gods and other powerful outsiders. For example, the character might feel a chill when in the presence of an evil shrine, or he might

become calm when visiting a sacred spring dedicated to a good-aligned deity. The awareness this feat grants is purely passive, meaning the GM should determine if and when the character detects the hand of the gods in the mortal world. Moreover, this awareness is extremely inexact; it does not replace spells such as *detect chaos/evil/good/law*.



NEW SKILL: PROPHECY (WIS: CLERIC, DRUID ONLY)

You can use your connection to the divine to foresee events in the future.

Prerequisites: Wis 16+, Divine Perception

Benefit: This skill works only in conjunction with divination spells like *augury* or *divination*. Each rank of Prophecy possessed by the character who casts these spells increases its chance of success by 2%. Thus, a character with 10 ranks in Prophecy would increase the success rate of *augury* by 20%.

Special: Although this skill is exclusive to certain classes, it can be used untrained. This means that a character with no ranks in Prophecy, and who is not allowed to buy ranks in this skill, can still make a Wisdom check to gain brief enhanced flashes of the future. The quality of the information the character gains depends greatly on how well he scores during such a check. Naturally, those with ranks in the skill are more likely to gain worthwhile insights than those who use it untrained.

A character may take 10 during a Prophecy check, but he may not take 20.

DIMA

Librarian of Prophecy

"Let me see: it's the Prognostications of Karolek you want, not the Predictions of Karolus. No wonder you're confused!"

As important as the seer herself is the collection, preservation, and cataloguing of the perhaps tens of thousands of prophetic books that the temple has in its library. The oversight of this mammoth effort falls to Dima, a middle-aged bird-like woman of dark complexion. She dresses in loose, flowing robes and shows little interest in anything besides her beloved library. Indeed, she is so obsessed with the library that she often spends all her waking hours within its confines, neglecting even her duties as a priestess of the Lady of Fate.

Dima is a lukewarm adherent of the Lady at best. Those who meet with her usually describe her as "dry" and "professorial." That is, she is not animated by a love of her chosen deity or out the determination that infuses most priests in the temple. Dima works at the Oracle of Sumura almost entirely out of a love of learning and a fascination with prophecy. In many ways, she is not dissimilar to Vladik Garabed, except that she is much better adjusted socially and has no doubts about her role in life. She's certain that it's her calling to catalog and disseminate genuine prophecies and prognostications. She considers it her sacred duty

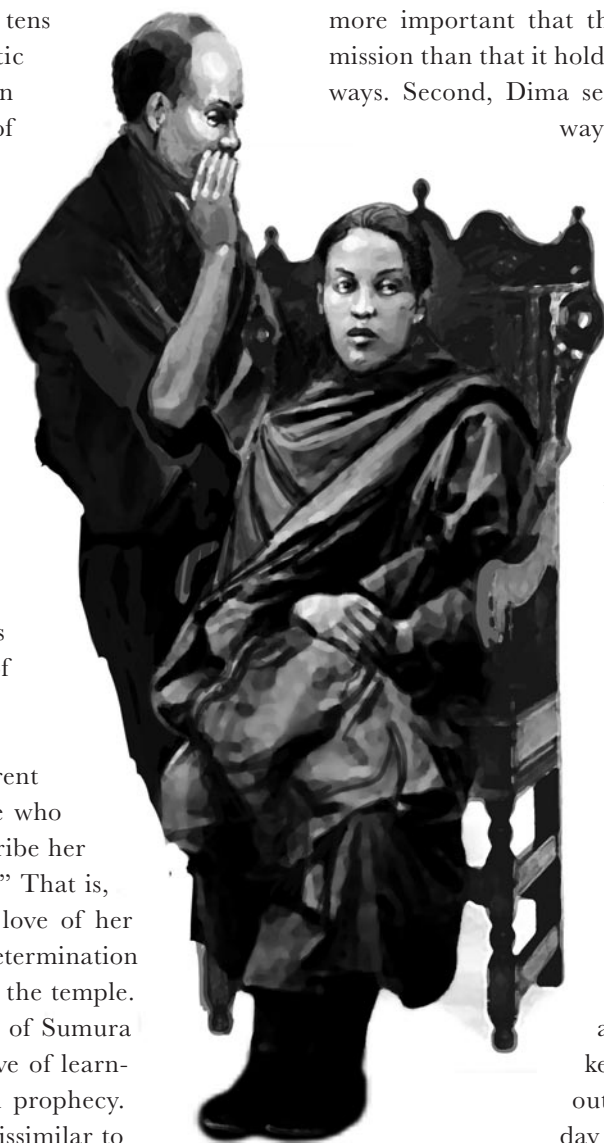
and she dares not shirk from it, even if it sometimes interferes with the rites she owes the Lady.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Dima is a supporter of Starkad's plans to expand the oracle and attract more pilgrims. Her reasons for this are twofold. First, she sees it as a way to acquire more money with which to purchase new texts. She realizes that this runs counter to long-standing tradition within the temple, but sees no way around it. In Dima's opinion, it's more important that the temple continues its vital mission than that it hold true to the niceties of the old ways. Second, Dima sees Starkad's plans as a sure

way to increase the dissemination of the temple's copied texts. Though academic by nature, the librarian also believes fervently in many of the prophecies she has preserved and is certain that great changes are afoot in the world — perhaps dire ones that can only be averted or successfully navigated if the temple's work becomes better known.

Dima can be found in the library most of the time, or else in the scriptorium. Even so, she is always happy to see visitors and is one of the few long-standing clerics of the temple who ventures outside its confines. She respects the ancient traditions and has kept the library off-limits to outsiders, but she longs for the day when this may change. In

this respect, Dima is something of a radical reformer, hoping that the abbot might revolutionize the temple and bring it into the light once more. Of course, her position is also fueled by an equally genuine belief that the world needs the temple and its wisdom.



VLADIK GARABED

Clueless Pilgrim

"This is my two hundred and twenty-first visit to the oracle ... two hundred and thirty-ninth if you count the eighteen

times the abbot kicked me out for being a 'disruptive influence' ... whatever that means."

There are those for whom a pilgrimage to the Oracle of Sumura is the highpoint of their lives, the culmination of a lifetime of searching and self-reflection, the crowning

 DIMA

7th-Level Human Cleric/3rd-Level Loremaster

CR 10; Medium humanoid; HD 7d8–14 + 3d4–6; hp 32; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 *amulet of natural armor* +4), touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +6; Grp +7; Atk +7 melee (1d4+1/crit 19–20/x2, dagger); Full Atk +7/+2 melee (1d4+1/crit 19–20/x2, dagger); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells, Turn Undead; SQ Aura, Lore, Secret, Spontaneous Casting; AL N; SV: Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 7, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 14

Skills: Appraise +5, Concentration +9, Craft (bookbinding) +7, Craft (calligraphy) +7, Decipher Script +9, Diplomacy +5, Forgery +5, Gather Information +10, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (history) +10, Knowledge (religion) +16, Profession (bookkeeper) +5, Profession (scribe) +6

Feats: Brew Potion, Craft Wondrous Item, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Knowledge: arcana), Spell Focus (divination)

Languages: Common, Elven, Draconic, Sylvan

Human Traits (Ex): Humans get 1 extra feat and 4 extra skill points at 1st level.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Clerics are proficient with all simple weapons, with all types of armor, and with shields (except tower shields).

Secret: Dima has gained the secrets of Instant Mastery (+4 to Craft: calligraphy) and Secret Knowledge of Avoidance (+2 Reflex saves).

Lore: Dima may make a special Lore check with a +6 bonus to see whether she knows some relevant information about local notable people, legendary items, or noteworthy places. The DC is 10 for common knowledge, 20 for uncommon, 25 for obscure, and 30 for extremely obscure knowledge.

Aura (Ex): This cleric has no aura, as her deity's alignment is neutral and she does not have the Chaotic, Evil, Good, or Lawful domain.

Spontaneous Casting: This cleric can "lose" a prepared spell in order to cast any *cure* spell of the same level or lower.

Turn Undead (Su): This cleric can Turn undead 5 times per day.

Spells: (6/5+1/4+1/3+1/3+1/2+1) Dima worships the Lady of Fate; her chosen domains are Knowledge and Luck, which allow her to cast divinations at +1 caster level and take all Knowledge skills as class skills, as well as to once per day re-roll a single attack roll, skill check, or saving throw. The DC to resist the cleric's spells is 11 + the spell level; divination spells have a DC of 12 + spell level. She has the following spells already prepared; domain spells are marked with an asterisk.

0 Level — *create water, detect magic, guidance, light, mending, read magic*

1st Level — *bless, comprehend languages, detect secret doors,* divine favor, doom, shield of faith*

2nd Level — *augury, detect thoughts,* enthrall, make whole, silence*

3rd Level — *clairaudience/clairvoyance,* dispel magic, glyph of warding, obscure object*

4th Level — *divination,* lesser planar ally, restoration, tongues*

5th Level — *commune, scrying, true seeing**

Possessions: *amulet of natural armor* +4, dagger, scholar's outfit, 10 gp

achievement of the inner struggle to come to terms with their place in the universe and the gods' expectations of them.

Vladik Garabed is not one of them.

Vladik (or Vladi, as he prefers to be called) is an example of what might be termed a "religion junky." He is obsessed with all manner of religious and theological matters, from the base question of how many gods actually exist to the niceties of precisely where the gods reside and whether their domains are actually physical realms or something much more rarified. Unsurprisingly, Vladik is also extremely inter-

VLADIK GARABED

4th-Level Half-Celestial Half-Human Expert (Merchant)

CR 5; Medium outsider (native); HD 4d6+12; hp 25; Init +0; Spd 30 ft. (run 150 ft.); AC 12 (+1 natural, +1 deflection *ring of protection* +1), touch 11, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +3; Grp +4; Atk +5 melee (1d6+1/crit 18–20/x2, rapier), or +4 melee (1d3+1 nonlethal magic/crit x2, unarmed strike); Full Atk +5 melee (1d6+1/crit 18–20/x2, rapier); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Smite Evil, Spell-like Abilities; SQ Damage Reduction, Darkvision, Daylight, Immunities, Resistances, Spell Resistance; AL NG; SV Fort +1 (+5 vs. poison), Ref +1, Will +6; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 16, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 16

Skills: Appraise +9, Bluff +8, Decipher Script +9, Diplomacy +10, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (history) +11, Knowledge (local) +11, Knowledge (religion) +11, Profession (merchant) +9, Sense Motive +11

Feats: Iron Will, Run, Weapon Focus (rapier)

Languages: Common, Elven, Halfling, Dwarven, Gnome, Orc

Outsider: Outsiders have Darkvision with a range of 60 feet. Vladik does not have the wings typical of a half-celestial, and so has no fly speed.

Native Subtype: A native outsider can be raised, reincarnated, or resurrected, and needs to breathe, eat, and sleep.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Vladik is proficient in the use of all simple and martial weapons, shields, and light armor.

Daylight (Su): Vladik can use *light* as the spell at will.

Smite Evil (Su): Once per day Vladik can make a normal melee attack to deal 4 points of damage against an evil foe.

Spell-like Abilities: Vladik can use the following spells as if cast by a 4th-level caster. The DC to resist these abilities is 13 + the spell level.

1/day — *aid*, *bless*, *detect evil*

3/day — *protection from evil*

Immunities (Ex): Vladik takes no damage from diseases.

Resistances (Ex): Vladik ignores the first 10 points of acid, cold, and electricity done to him each time he takes damage of that kind. He also gets a +4 racial bonus for Fortitude saves against poison.

Damage Reduction (Su): Vladik ignores 5 hit points from most weapons and natural attacks. A magic weapon negates the ability. Vladik's unarmed attacks are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming Damage Reduction.

Spell Resistance (Ex): To determine if a spell or spell-like ability works against Vladik, the spellcaster makes a level check (1d20 + caster level). If the result equals or exceeds 14, the spell works normally, though the creature still gets a saving throw if the spell allows such.

Possessions: *ring of protection* +1, rapier, courtier's outfit, 1,000 gp

ested in seers and prophecies — anyone and anything purporting to augur the future. He claims that he was inexplicably drawn to the mountaintop on which the oracle resides, and has been an almost constant fixture of the place for over five years, much to the consternation of its priests.

Vladik is actually quite knowledgeable about religious matters and is a veritable treasure trove of trivia about theology, liturgy, and obscure sects. His father was a wealthy merchant and he never knew his mother, who, according to his father, died when he was born. He lives off his inheritance while pestering the oracle's priests. Affable and open-minded, Vladik is actually an engaging, if often garrulous, conversationalist. His primary defect is that he assumes others have as much interest in the minutiae of religious esoterica as he does.

Vladik also suffers from a distinct lack of direction in his life. He has no idea what to do with himself or his great wealth.

He visits the oracle regularly to gain insight into his purpose, but has thus far been unsuccessful. He has great respect for the seer's prescient abilities and will vouch for her efficacy if asked (and even if he isn't). However, he remains disappointed that her prophecies have not yet given him the insight to find his way in the world — even though the seer has often told him that she sees great things ahead of him.

The truth of the matter — something Vladik does not know — is that his mother was a celestial in the service of divine forces. Vladik thus possesses remarkable potential and indeed may well hold the key to great events, perhaps even those for which the oracle was established. His sense of being drawn to the oracle is a very real phenomenon, and one that Vladik feels keenly. It is a subconscious reminder of his hidden heritage, and one day he may well discover his true purpose in life.

TYPICAL PRIESTS (15)

3rd-Level Human Clerics

CR 2; Medium humanoid; HD 2d8; hp 9; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 leather armor), touch 11, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +2; Grp +3; Atk +3 melee (2d4+1/crit x4, scythe); Full Atk +3 melee (2d4+1/crit x4, scythe); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA: Spells, Turn Undead; SQ Aura, Spontaneous Casting; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +4; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 10

Skills: Concentration +3, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (religion) +8, Profession (scribe) +5, Spellcraft +5

Feats: Improved Initiative, Martial Weapon Proficiency (scythe)

Languages: Common, Elven

Human Traits (Ex): Humans get 1 extra feat and 4 extra skill points at 1st level.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Clerics are proficient with all simple weapons, with all types of armor, and with shields (except tower shields).

Aura (Ex): Priests of the Lady of Fate have no aura, as their deity's alignment is neutral and they do not have the Chaotic, Evil, Good, or Lawful domain.

Spontaneous Casting: The priests can “lose” a prepared spell in order to cast any *cure* spell of the same level or lower.

Turn Undead (Su): The priests can Turn undead 3 times per day.

Spells: (4/3+1) The priests worship the Lady of Fate; their chosen domains are Fate and Luck, which give them the ability to once per day re-roll a single attack roll, skill check, or saving throw, and once per day to reroll one roll just made before its success or failure is declared. The DC to resist the priests' spells is 11 + the spell level. This priest has the following spells already prepared; domain spells are marked with an asterisk.

0 Level — *detect magic*, *light*, *mending*, *read magic*

1st Level — *command*, *comprehend languages*, *detect evil*, *divine favor**

Possessions: leather armor, scythe, cleric's vestments, 5 gp

PRIESTS OF SUMURA

Servants of Fate

“We do as we must, for we can do nothing less.”

The priests of Sumura are an odd lot of men and women. At once dour and determined, they also approach their sometimes tedious and demanding work with a zest that borders on the ridiculous. Like other members of their order, they recognize that no one can fight Fate, so there is no point in wasting energy trying to do so. Instead, they throw themselves into their work, knowing that what they do is what they are called to do by a power that none can resist, despite any efforts to the contrary.

THE SITE

The oracle complex in which the seer resides is located at the top of a mountain. The complex was carved from the very rock of the mountaintop hundreds of years ago by devotees of the Lady of Fate, who found the Tower of Sumura (described below) and took it as a sign of their goddess' favor for this location. The process of excavating the complex took many years and required the efforts of the best dwarf and gnome miners, as well as the use of powerful magic. There is evidence that the Tower of Sumura is all that remains of a much older complex that once stood on the mountaintop, but the nature of that structure and its builders remains largely unknown, even to the priests of the temple.

The complex may be approached by a winding road that makes its way from the villages below. The road is uneven in quality and varying in its width, depending on the terrain through which it was carved. In most places, it's wide enough to allow two horses to walk side by side. In others, it is barely sufficient to allow a single horse to pass. Abbott Starkad has plans to make the road more accessible by widening and paving it, but so far has not acted on this.

The terrain at the top of the mountain is forested for the most part, with areas where the trees have been cleared to make way for additional structures. Again, Starkad intends

to clear more space to facilitate the enlargement of the oracle complex. For now, though, the mountaintop remains much as it was when the priests first found this site — green and shady. The temperature here is cold and snow is a common occurrence, which makes staying outdoors an uncomfortable experience most of the time.

OBELISK

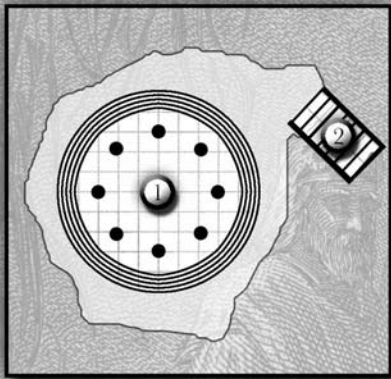
The obelisk, sometimes called the Tower of Sumura, is the oldest structure on the mountaintop. Its origin is unknown, although there are many theories as to who and why it was constructed. Based on the antiquity of the inscriptions, scholars presume that it was, in fact, elves who erected it here. As best as any have been able to determine, the oldest and largest inscription reads:

*At the Final Battle,
Amid the dark swords' rattle,
This place shall stand witness
To test the Enemy's fitness,
The dead's silence replaced by prattle.*

There are as many interpretations of this prophecy, known as the Words of Sumura, as there are theories as to its origin. The most popular (among pilgrims, if not the priests of the temple) is that the mountain range in which the oracle is built will one day serve as a citadel for the forces of good in an apocalyptic battle against an evil opponent — a battle in which even the dead shall rise up and defend the mountains. Since neither the priests nor the seer have ever dissuaded pilgrims from believing this interpretation, it has become very widespread, making the site even more popular among the devout.

The obelisk also has other inscriptions upon it, some of them in Elven, but most in Common. These are generally as obscure as the Words of Sumura, although few have captured the imagination of visitors in quite the same way. It's a hallowed tradition for pilgrims to touch or kiss the letters inscribed in the Words of Sumura. Over the years, this has led to a slow erosion of the inscription to the point where it is now hard to read some of the words. The priests discourage this pious practice in order to save the prophecy from oblivion, but very few pilgrims heed their admonitions.

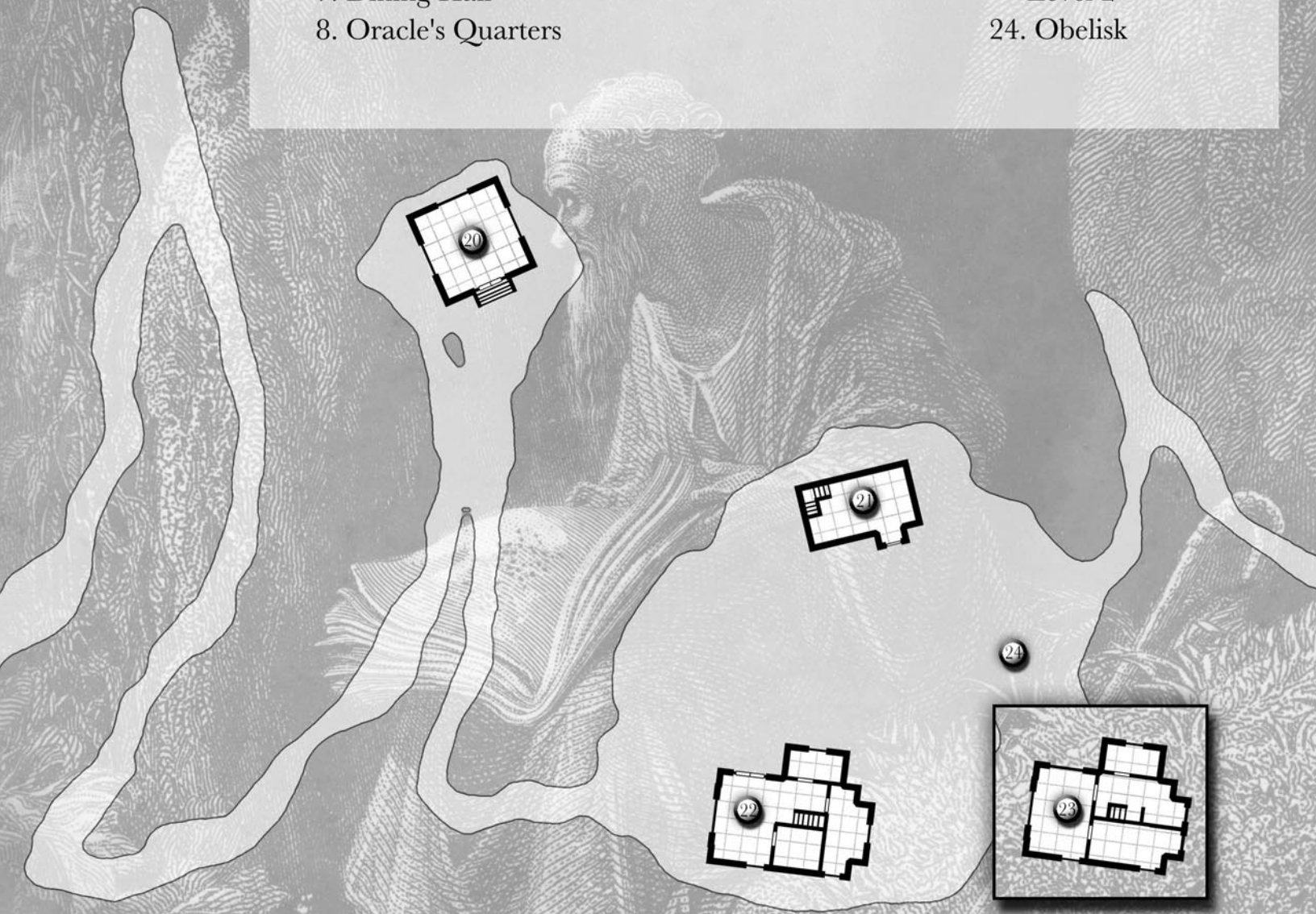
THE ORACLE OF SUMURA





KEY

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Open-Air
Communion Area | 9. Abbot's Quarters | 17. Stable Storage |
| 2. Stairs Down
to Temple | 10. Paper Storage
& Manufacture | 18. Storage |
| 3. Stairs Up to
Communion Area | 11. Scriptorium | 19. Stable |
| 4. Priests' Cells | 12. Reliquary | 20. Temple to
the Sky God |
| 5. Larder | 13. Library | 21. Dry Storage |
| 6. Kitchen | 14. Main Temple | 22. Guest House
Level 1 |
| 7. Dining Hall | 15. Blacksmithy | 23. Guest House
Level 2 |
| 8. Oracle's Quarters | 16. Entry Hall | 24. Obelisk |



1 Square = 5 Feet

GUEST HOUSE

Except for the Main Temple, the priestly precincts of the mountaintop site are off limits to most pilgrims. Visitors to the oracle must lodge outside, either under the sky or at the Guest House, whose few rooms are available for a donation to the temple. The Guest House is available only on a first come, first served basis, and the priests make few exceptions to this rule, even for eminent pilgrims such as monarchs or religious leaders.

The expected donation is 1 sp, intended more as a show of good faith than of genuine generosity. The temple has many times refused overly extravagant donations, in order to discourage those who think that wealth can buy them better treatment than anyone else. Over the centuries, the priests of the temple have remained doggedly unmoved by such attempts to shift their focus away from their mission of disseminating the prophecies the seer provides. Of course, the abbot hopes to change these attitudes over time, and is having some success in his efforts, although they go slowly.

First and Second Floors

The Guest House consists of two floors, both which is roughly similar in size and shape. Each floor consists of three rooms that can be used by visitors for rest and relaxation while at the oracle. There are no facilities for cooking or washing, however, so visitors must bring their own if they wish these things. In general, the Guest House is extremely primitive and provides only a warm, dry place to sleep, nothing more.

At most times, the Guest House has at least one visitor; Vladik Garabed, described above, prefers to occupy one of the rooms on the second floor, if possible. There are also likely to be other pilgrims present, especially during important holy days and festivals. Spring seems to attract

more pilgrims than other seasons, due to the relative mildness of the weather at that time. Because of the egalitarian nature of the temple's philosophy, visitors to the Guest House may well find themselves sharing a room with a prince or high priest rather than a simple commoner. The priests here do not tolerate favoritism or shows of luxury, so it's quite possible visitors might never realize how powerful or important their fellow pilgrims actually are in such cases.

The guest master is an old priest named Vassi (use the Typical Priest stats), who is somewhat unctuous and ingratiating to strangers. Though not a bad fellow, he longs for news of the outside world, which he gladly trades for gossip about other pilgrims. Some of this information is inevitably false, or at least less than wholly true. Abbot Starkad tolerates Vassi's behavior, because the old priest occasionally acquires useful news in this way, but he is quick to reprimand him if any pilgrims complain that the guest master has told tales about them.

CHAPEL TO THE SKY GOD

This small outdoor chapel is a relatively recent addition to the buildings outside the temple complex. It was constructed by a powerful king who consulted the seer several centuries ago. The king visited the oracle at the command of his own god, a deity of the sky. The king made the long journey overland to the complex, even though there was no formal relationship between the oracle and his own faith. When the seer provided him with information that aided him in securing his rule against his enemies, he wished to donate a large sum to the temple in thanksgiving, which the abbot at the time refused. Instead, the king offered to build a chapel to his deity, which was deemed more appropriate.

Over the centuries, the original chapel has grown somewhat to encompass several shrines to other deities, many of whom

TYPICAL NEW COMMUNITY: ORACLE OF SUMURA

Size: Thorp

Power Center: Magical

Alignment: Lawful Neutral

GP Limit: 200 gp

Ready Cash: 1,000 gp

Population: 30 adults (96% human, 4% other)

Authority Figures: Abbot Starkad, 12th-level human cleric; Anhaga the seer, 2nd-level human commoner (divine avatar of the Lady of Fate); Dima the librarian, 7th-level human cleric/3rd-level loremaster

are also deities of weather and the sky, thereby leading to its present name. The priests of the temple do not tend to the chapel themselves. Consequently, it often appears fairly dilapidated and run-down unless a priest or devotee of one of these gods has visited the oracle recently. Many visitors have berated the priests for their supposed neglect of the chapel, but they simply shrug and explain they serve no god but the Lady of Fate.



Earnestly praying at the chapel for at least 30 minutes grants the supplicant a +1 sacred bonus to all Fortitude saves versus weather effects for the next 24 hours.

DRY GOODS STORE

This simple, one-story building is the aboveground portion of the temple's larder. When pilgrims and other visitors come to this complex, they're instructed to leave their gifts of food, clothing, and other necessities here. The monks later collect these offerings via the stairs and take them down into their monastery below, where they're placed in whatever chamber is considered appropriate.

Of course, this is how the system is supposed to work, but it doesn't always. Sometimes overzealous pilgrims descend into the complex themselves, much to the consternation of the priests. At other times, a large influx of pilgrims can fill this store to bursting so there's little room for additional offerings. The monks try to ensure that neither situation occurs very often, but events often get the better of them.

CONTEMPLATION AREA

Not everyone who visits the oracle actually wishes to enter the temple itself. Some of the most devout pilgrims desire nothing more than to pray in the vicinity of the seer. For these individuals, the priests have established an open-air contemplation area, where they may offer their sacrifices and supplication to whatever gods they revere. The only restriction here is that no one may use the area to seek the guidance of the Lady of Fate. Those wishing to do so must use the Main Temple below, which is specifically reserved for her rites. Consequently, the priests of the temple are

never to be found here and, most of the time, this area is empty of worshippers.

Anhaga, the seer, has been known to sneak out of the temple and visit this meditation area on her own. Both Starkad and the other priests disapprove of this behavior, although for different reasons. The abbot is more concerned that, if his vaunted seer wanders about freely, it will diminish her value as a draw to the oracle. The priests worry about more practical matters, namely that she might fall into the hands of unsavory sorts who might wish to harm her or, worse yet, misuse her gift from the Lady of Fate. Neither perspective carries much weight with Anhaga, who simply wishes to see more of the world than the priests normally allow.



Anyone who meditates in this area for an hour or more gains a +2 sacred bonus to all Concentration checks made within the next 10 hours.

MAIN TEMPLE

The Main Temple is the heart and soul of this religious site. It is where the priests' daily rituals take place, as well as where the seer pronounces her public visions. Despite the fact that visitors over the centuries have not been encouraged to enrich the site with their donations (something Starkad would like to change), the Main Temple is an impressive and awe-inspiring place, worthy of the uniqueness it occupies in the world.

The Main Temple is a huge audience hall, whose vaulted ceiling is held aloft by tall and sturdy pillars. The pillars are made of red-veined marble and embellished with gold filigree. The ceilings themselves, like the walls, are covered with all manner of artistic representations. Everything from the lives of saints to representations of prophecies can be found here. At the far end of the building is the apse in which stands a massive statue of the Lady of Fate. The statue is made of iron and is twice the height of a human. In fact, it is an iron golem built centuries ago by an abbess who felt the temple needed a guardian in case of attack. However, no one currently living within the site knows this secret, not even Dima, although a book within the library contains the information necessary to activate and control the creature.



The iron golem uses the standard SRD stats for a Large creature of its kind.

To recognize that the statue is in fact an iron golem, a character must first make a successful Spot check (DC 15), followed by a successful Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 20).

The Main Temple also possesses movable bleacher-like seats that the priests bring out for their use during religious rituals; these are held daily. Visitors and pilgrims are allowed to attend these rituals, but may not participate in them, unless they are also priests of the Lady. Otherwise, they are expected to remain silent and respectful. As one might expect, Starkad dislikes the strict separation between the priests and their lay visitors and hopes to institute changes once he has a firmer grip on the religious community.

Of course, the primary reason visitors come to the Main Temple is to seek an audience with the seer. When Anhaga is present here, she is seated upon an ornate throne made from dark-veined marble that rests at the feet of the Lady's statue. Attendant priests bring out a number of braziers in which burn aromatic incense. The smell of the incense (which is called blackleaf) can be quite overpowering to those unused to its strength, but it also aids in the clarity of the seer's visions. Some visitors have even claimed that the incense has had an effect upon them as well, much to

Starkad's consternation; he greets such news as a potential threat to his plans here. He has consequently forbidden that anyone in the temple sell the incense to pilgrims.

On most days, the seer receives at least a handful of people. On others, she sees several dozen. Since Starkad began his campaign to promote the temple, such days are becoming more common. Those who see Anhaga may do so in one of two ways. The first is simply to present themselves before her and ask that she read their futures. The seer is under no obligation to do so and often turns away such supplicants, whether because she cannot read them, is exhausted, or sees something she does not wish to reveal. If she agrees, she will provide as little or as much information as she wishes, again dependant on what she discovers and whether she believes it is in their best interests to hear such prophecies.

The second way is preferred; it involves a supplicant coming to the seer with a specific question or request. In such a case, Anhaga rarely turns away the supplicant. The Lady of Fate, of whom she is an avatar, prefers to use these occasions to make her pronouncements. They show that the supplicant recognizes that he is helpless before Fate and has no choice but to turn to the very power that tosses him to and fro for guidance. Anhaga also provides better clarity and specificity in her answers to such entreaties, which is why they are generally more revealing than "cold" readings of pilgrims.



BLACKLEAF INCENSE

Blackleaf incense is a fine powder created from the leaves of the blackleaf plant, a rare herb found only at the uppermost peaks of the mountain on which the Seer of Sumura resides. The priests use this powder to aid the prophetic trances of the seer, who inhales the smoke generated by the incense and gains greater clarity as a result. The same effects can be had by others who inhale the smoke, which is why the priests endeavor to keep it to themselves. It's pointless to use more than one dose of incense at a time, since its effects do not stack, although doses can be used one after the other.

The Constitution damage from inhaling the smoke is temporary in nature.

Type: Inhaled DC 18

Initial Damage: 1 Con*

Secondary Damage: 1 Con**

Price: 1,000 gp

* Failure also grants a +10 circumstance bonus to all Prophecy checks within the next 10 minutes. It likewise imposes a +5 Will save modifier for *scry* and similar spells cast within the same time period.

** Failure also grants the temporary ability to see the future, as if the user cast the 4th-level divine spell *divination*. The effect is one-time only. That is, if a particular character fails his Constitution save and gains the ability, he may never do so again, no matter how many times he subsequently fails his save while inhaling blackleaf incense.

Dealing with Prophecies

One of the most difficult aspects of using the Oracle of Sumura in an ongoing campaign is its potential to destroy the GM's best-laid plans through the indiscriminate use of the seer's prophetic abilities. That's why the GM needs to make certain decisions before integrating this site into his campaign.

Availability: As written, the characters should have little difficulty gaining access to the seer, especially now that Starkad is trying to increase the number of pilgrims who visit the temple. Of course, Anhaga disagrees with this policy and, as an avatar of the Lady of Fate, can use her influence to become less available to anyone she does not wish to see. This leaves the GM plenty of wiggle room in which to justify keeping the seer under tight wraps, if he so desires. The power struggle between Starkad and the seer is meant to be a low-intensity affair, but there's no reason it couldn't be heated up to give the GM an excuse to limit the characters' access to her.

Cost: Another way to limit access to the seer is the cost of her readings. By this, the GM shouldn't understand mere money, although that is a possibility if Starkad wins the day. Rather, the seer may demand something of those who seek her wisdom. In the case of player characters, this makes good sense and allows the GM to use her demands as the catalyst to spark other adventures. Indeed, this is a preferable approach, since it doesn't simply deny the characters access to the seer, but instead uses their desire to see her to good effect.

Efficacy: This is probably the most fundamental question every GM should ask himself: How accurate is the seer? As written, she is uncannily accurate, far better than most low-level divination spells. Her status as a divine avatar of the Lady of Fate also improves her ability to see the future beyond that of ordinary mortals. Naturally, this can pose a problem if the GM wishes to keep certain future events shrouded in secrecy. Fortunately, the seer is given to speaking in vague or puzzling ways. If the GM wishes, he can simply provide accurate but enigmatic answers to the questions the characters ask. This might seem like a cop-out, especially given the degree to which the abbot promotes the seer, but it's very much in keeping with the classical fantasy treatment of oracles and seers. The important thing to

bear in mind is to provide genuine information to the characters without giving away the whole show. It's a fine line to walk, but, with practice, it can be done — to the satisfaction of the players and the improvement of the campaign.

BLACKSMITHY

Until the abbacy of Starkad, the temple prides itself on self-sufficiency. Although the priests would trade with the villages below when necessary, they preferred to provide for their own needs however they could. The Blacksmithy was created for similar reasons. The priests who work here, along with their assistants, forge and shape metal for use in the temple and elsewhere on the mountaintop. Many of these priests are quite artistically talented as well, having crafted ironworks and statues that are now found throughout the site. The iron golem in the Main Temple was crafted here generations ago, although no one realizes it.



The oversized equipment used to create the golem are still here and any spellcaster who possesses the feat Craft Wondrous Item and succeeds at a Knowledge Arcana check (DC 15) will recognize their true nature, provided they are willing to examine them for a few minutes — something no one in the temple has done in some time.

STABLES

Though isolated on their mountain, many people live at the base of the range in which the temple is located. Consequently, there is a sizable population of "day visitors" who take advantage of the seer's proximity to consult with her regularly, as well as to pay their respects to the Lady of Fate in the Main Temple. The stables exist to cater to the needs of these pilgrims, providing a place to keep their horses and other riding animals while they visit the oracle. During daylight hours, there are usually at least a half-dozen horses, donkeys, and mules here.



A single hostler named Borya (3rd-level expert) is here most of the time, along with his two young assistants, Doniska and Aslak (both 1st level experts).

The three live in a room adjoining the stable, and tend to the needs of any animals that are brought to the oracle. It's customary to tip the hostler when visiting, although it's not strictly required since he and his assistants receive a stipend from the temple.

LIBRARY

The library of the temple is one of the best of its kind, although it's not the largest by far. The books and scrolls within its walls are all dedicated in one degree or another to the prediction of the future or the interpretation of such predictions. Unlike other prophetic libraries, the library here contains only those books the priests have determined to contain useful — which is to say, accurate — information.

In theory, then, the library has only books of prophecy and commentary that contain genuine predictions of the future. The GM should bear in mind that genuineness is in the eyes of the beholder and all of the books in the library were chosen according to the judgment of the priests, whose perspective is not always that of an adventurer looking for easy answers to his current dilemma. Oftentimes, the books held here are just as obscure and esoteric as those found elsewhere, to the consternation of outsiders looking to use them for their own ends.



There are many valuable books in the library that grant small benefits to those who consult them. Finding a book appropriate to one's needs requires a successful Search check (DC 15 or 20, depending on the obscurity). Once found, a book grants a +1 competence bonus to subsequent skill checks that derive from the information found therein, if the book is consulted for 10 minutes when the skill check is made (GM's discretion).

The library also contains the long-lost book that includes the command words needed to control the statue of the Lady of Fate in the Main Temple. Finding this book requires a successful Search check (DC 25), since it's hidden behind several layers of books on an out-of-the-way shelf.

SCRIPTORIUM

Just as important to Dima as the library is the scriptorium. In this, Starkad shares her enthusiasm, as he sees it as a potential moneymaking venture. The temple has always been devoted to the copying, transcription, and distribution of prophetic texts from across the world. The scriptorium here maintains a large staff to ensure that this tradition continues unabated.

The temple maintains a lengthy catalog of its holdings, which it makes available to the public. If someone wishes to obtain a copy of a particular book, she may place an order and it will be provided for a nominal fee, usually ranging from 10 to 100 gp; very large or otherwise unusual books might be more expensive. Most books are available in four to six months, perhaps longer if the book is long or the demand is great. In the past, the fees charged covered only the costs of creating the copy, as well as a small stipend. Starkad, naturally, has deemed this insufficient, which is why he has authorized the use of the spell *transcribe* in order to keep up with the growing demand for the temple's texts. So far, these efforts have proven very successful and the abbot intends to expand them once the priests become more accustomed to the new order he is establishing.

RELIQUARY

This room holds a number of relics and artifacts associated with the worship of the Lady of Fate. They are among the most prized possessions of the temple and, as such, are brought out for use only during important rites or on high holy days.



Normally, the relics remain locked within this room, whose entrance is protected by a *greater glyph of warding* (blast glyph), placed on it by Anhaga herself. In addition, the door possesses an intricate lock that can be opened only with a key held by Starkad or a successful Open Lock check (DC 40).

The reliquary's treasures include the following:

- one *book of exalted deeds*
- 10 blocks of *incense of meditation*
- an iron flask
- a *pearl of power* (6th-level spell)

The aforementioned items are in addition to the collection of non-magical items, such as the finger bone of Mauranus (an early abbot of the temple), the scythe of Jhaerith (a warrior devoted to the Lady), and the prayer book of Renz (a prophet revered for his piety). In many ways, these non-magical items are far more valuable to the temple than the other items contained within the reliquary, as they have historical and spiritual significance for the priests, which the magical items lack.

PAPER STORAGE AND MANUFACTURE

This room is a necessary adjunct to the scriptorium. The priests use this place to produce and store the paper they manufacture for their own use. Originally, this room also doubled as a general storage area, but in recent days it has been given over completely to paper-related matters. Starkad, supported by Dima, is very much intent on turning the temple's scriptorium into the world's premier source of prophetic books and scrolls. That requires an ever-growing supply of paper, as more and more supplicants take an interest in this service.

The priests obtain the wood pulp and other supplies necessary for their operation from locals in their employ, who bring these supplies to the dry goods store on the surface, just like any other gifts to the temple. Of course, the priests pay for these supplies, quite handsomely in fact. Vassi, the Guest Master, is responsible for paying the locals, as he is well known to them and is one of the few priests who has regular dealings with the villagers at the present time.

ABBOT'S QUARTERS

Starkad's quarters are probably the most luxurious in the entire temple, even more so than the seer's. That's not wholly due to the current abbot's taste for the good life (though he does enjoy it); it's also a function of history. The quarters consist of two rooms: an antechamber and his private quarters. This division was created in the past, because, once upon a time, the abbot interviewed perspective supplicants before allowing them audience with seer. He would meet them in the antechamber and talk with them at length about why they came and what it was they wished to ask the seer.

If he was satisfied that their reasons were just, he would then allow them access to the seer in her own quarters down the hall.

Those days are long gone. They ended well before Starkad became abbot and reflect the slow withdrawal of the priests of the Lady from the affairs of the world. Indeed, Starkad occasionally makes reference to these past events as proof that his efforts are simply restoring the old ways to a place long since forgotten. The abbot is, of course, disingenuous in this claim, but it has made some headway with the priests of the temple, particularly the librarian, Dima.

The antechamber is sparsely furnished and somewhat drab in appearance. Almost no one ever uses it, since the abbot has few visitors. His private quarters are much more lavish in appearance. The walls are adorned with expensive tapestries (worth a total of 2000 gp) and his furniture is made from rare woods from beyond the mountain range (worth a total of 1000 gp). He owns a small collection of prophetic texts, as well as a handful of relics he keeps for private devotion (worth a total of 2500 gp). Again, few people ever see Starkad's private quarters, which suits him just fine, since he prefers his privacy.

SEER'S QUARTERS

Anhaga lives in a large, though simple room; this is the same one that has housed dozens of seers since the foundation of the Oracle of Sumura. In times past, the room also served as an audience chamber, which explains its somewhat sepulchral appearance and design. Even now, the room seems better suited to theater than to living, with its high ceiling and excellent acoustics. Built into the far wall of the quarters is a raised dais and throne, upon which the seer once set and pronounced his readings. Now, Anhaga uses the throne as a place to rest her small collection of books, and no one besides Starkad ever comes to visit her here. The abbot comes daily to ensure she does not forget her regular audience with the pilgrims in the Main Temple.

When not in the Main Temple, Anhaga spends the majority of her time here. She is frequently meditating or in a half-awake state, partially out of her own desire to think on various matters and partially as an effect of her divine avatar status. She does not fully understand all the images and voices she hears in her head. However, Anhaga has become



increasingly convinced that great changes are afoot in the world and that a reckoning of some sort is imminent. She does not know the nature of this impending event, but she believes that some day soon she will meet a person or persons who will make it all clear to her. Despite her opposition to Starkad's naked attempts to profit from the oracle, she is coming to believe that an increased flow of pilgrims may also speed the arrival of the person she seeks, and pave the way to understanding the future better than she ever has.

LARDER

This small room is used primarily for food storage, although as noted elsewhere, it often serves as a general storage area for other essentials, such as wood pulp and supplies for the scriptorium. The larder also contains stairs to the dry goods store on the surface of the mountain.



The top of these stairs is protected by a very good padlock (Open Lock DC 20), the key to which is held by the abbot and several senior priests, as well as any priests who work regularly in this room.

KITCHEN

This room is where the priests prepare the food they eat in the dining hall next door. The room is large and open, with a few wood-burning stoves and preparation tables scattered about the room. The kitchen also contains additional storage spaces in which dry goods of various sorts are kept, as well as cured meats and other victuals. Wine, ale, and water are kept here as well, the latter drawn from a small well located in one corner of the room. Meals within the temple are simple affairs, even for the seer and the abbot.

DINING HALL

When the priests gather communally to eat, they do so in the spacious Dining Hall. The room holds several large tables, each with many chairs. The priests generally eat together all at once, taking whatever seats are available at the time. There is no official arrangement of places, although Starkad, Dima, and the other senior priests usually sit together while their juniors occupy other tables. The seer never eats in the Dining Hall. Food is usually brought to her room by one of the priests. From time to time, she has ventured into the Dining Hall on her own, but Starkad frowns



NEW SPELL: TRANSCRIBE

Transmutation

Level: Clr 2

Components: V, S, M (see text)

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: Touch

Duration: Permanent

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: Object

Duration: 10 minutes/level

Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (object)

Spell Resistance: Yes (object)

You are magically able to copy text from the page of one book or scroll to a blank piece of paper, whether loose or bound into another book. This transcription occurs at a rate of 100 words per minute and faithfully reproduces the text exactly as it appears in the original, right down to errors and other imperfections. The spell also copies illustrations, diagrams, and any other non-textual representations. However, magical texts such as scrolls, spellbooks, or magic items like a

book of exalted deeds cannot be transcribed. For this reason, the spell doesn't set off any magical traps that require reading the text to work, such as a *sepia snake sigil*. The caster need not understand the text to use this spell.

To use this spell, you must have enough blank sheets of paper or other writing material to contain all the words the spell is able to copy. If there is insufficient paper for this purpose, the spell will continue to copy until it runs out of space to do so, after which it stops and the spell's effects end, even if there was technically still time left in its duration. However, the user may designate precisely at what point in a given text he wishes the spell to begin and precisely where in another book he wishes it to start its copying. In this way, the caster may easily resume the process of copying that has elapsed with a subsequent casting of this spell.

Material Component: A writing implement, material to write upon (papyrus, parchment, hide, etc.)

on this behavior, believing (rightly so) that her presence is disruptive to the junior priests, some of whom regard her with justifiable awe.

PRIESTS' CELLS

The priests of the temple, outside of the abbot, reside in these small cells. The rooms contain only a bed and a small table on which to place religious icons or personal effects. In most cases, only a single priest resides in each cell, but there are times when two may share a single cell, uncomfortable though that may be. Starkad worries that there are too few cells at present, especially if his plans for the expansion of the temple complex succeed. For now, though, all of the cells are occupied only by a single priest, many of whom spend a fair bit of their free time here, if they're not engaged in activities elsewhere.

SCENES

There are many ways that the Oracle of Sumura could be introduced into an ongoing campaign.

DRAGONSLAYERS

The PCs become the unwilling objects of prophetic fervor on the part of harried villagers who believe them to be the heroes prophesied to slay the dragon that dwells nearby. The PCs must seek out the Oracle of Sumura in order to prove that they're not the expected messiahs. Of course, the GM may have other ideas, in which the seer might well confirm exactly what the PCs want to avoid.

THE FUTURE KING

The king of the realm recently died, and those who would vie to be his successor must now travel to the Oracle of Sumura to receive confirmation that one of them has the right to rule. The PCs are asked to accompany the party that visits the Oracle of Sumura for this purpose — and deal with the political intrigue that ensues. Between assassination attempts between con-

tenders and the natural hazards of the journey, the PCs will have to be on their toes just to keep everyone alive. And when one of the PCs is named rightful heir to the throne by the seer, their own lives will likely be put into jeopardy, as well.

TO CATCH A THIEF

The PCs hear stories of the seer's powers — and of the many priceless holy relics and magic tomes that reside there — from one of the wandering bards hired by Abbott Starkad to promote the Oracle of Sumura. They might decide to follow up on these tales and visit the temple in hopes of learning the outcome of a current quest, or of better understanding their own futures. Or if they're of a more mercenary bent, to seize this treasure for themselves. But how can a thievery attempt work when the inhabitants are magically alerted to it days or even weeks in advance?

ROGUE SEER

Anhaga disappears from the Oracle of Sumura complex, and the desperate abbot hires the characters to find her and bring her back. But has Anhaga run away on her own, having decided that she must see more of the world to be able to serve properly as seer, or is there a darker design behind this? Perhaps Anhaga fled because a vision promising certain doom might not come to pass if she leaves the oracle, or maybe the forces of darkness have kidnapped Anhaga in an attempt to use her prophetic abilities for evil purposes!

ALTERNATE VERSIONS

The Oracle of Sumura can be used in several alternate ways. The most obvious option is to assume that the entire site is built upon fraud — the seer is a sham. As written, the seer is very real and the abbot wishes to promote her abilities mercilessly to enrich the priests who run the temple. It's only a small stretch to turn Starkad into a full-fledged charlatan

with only personal aggrandizement on his mind. In such a case, Anhaga could either be a willing participant in his chicanery or a simple peasant girl duped into participating in his nefarious scheme.

Another option is to assume that the seer is slowly going mad. Her divine avatar status is imperfect and adversely affecting her mind. With each day, she grows more and more insane and paranoid. In this version, Anhaga rules the Oracle of Sumura like a whimsical tyrant, her directives becoming increasingly odd and even frightening. She still sees visitors and pilgrims, but the truth of what she says is very much in doubt, since she often twists facts in accordance with her own bizarre understanding of reality. Starkad is in fact a heroic character, who has drawn more people to the temple in the hope that one or more of them might recognize the inner corruption of the Oracle of Sumura and do something about it. He

fears for his life and that of his fellow priests before the power of an insane avatar of the Lady of Fate.

A final option downplays the oracle's interaction with the world. The Oracle of Sumura is an isolated and even forgotten place that quietly serves the Lady without much interest in what goes on beyond its walls. If the characters stumble upon it, the priests will react in one of two ways. Possibly, they might treat the PCs as unwelcome guests and summarily dismiss them, for fear that they might gain access to the library of prophetic texts and use them for evil ends. More interestingly, they might welcome the PCs as brave souls who have been drawn to the temple by the Lady's own ineffable plans. In such a case, the priests will greet them with pleasure and do what they can to inform the PCs of their true fate in the world — an excellent way to kickstart a new phase of an ongoing campaign, especially one of epic proportions.

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A SOURCEBOOK OF HOLY SITES



UNEARTH THE DIVINE SECRETS OF THE GODS ...

... in these four sacred sanctuaries. *Sacred Ground 2* presents four more holy sites to use as PC home bases, as settings for your next adventure, or as lairs for your characters' most powerful enemies. Each entry provides location maps and fortifications, NPC stats and backgrounds, and plot ideas to bring the site to life.

This plug-and-play sourcebook includes:

- **HAI SHEN GONG:** A vibrantly colorful Middle Kingdom temple sits atop a wind-blasted cliff overlooking the crashing waves of the dark sea below. The head priestess personally attends to the fiery beacon that warns ships away from the dangerous shoals ... and from the sacred creatures hidden within the cliff itself.
- **CRÈCHE HOSPICE:** A small country estate houses an unfinished temple complex and the headquarters of the Crèche Knights. The hospice is pilgrimage site, hospital, garrison, and inn all at once, but also a prison for an entity called the Blasphemer, which prophesies that other creatures like itself will soon rise to plunge the religions of the world into chaos.
- **THE ORACLE:** This ancient mountain tower is kept by mystics dedicated to the Lady of Fate, and is home to the goddess's oracle. At the request of supplicants, this young girl can plumb the depths of history and unravel the threads of destiny itself.
- **EARTHBLOOD GROVE:** On the edges of civilization is an old-growth stand of hardwood trees with the reputation of being haunted and filled with strange fey creatures. Those concerned with such things know the secret of the forest: it is a druidic grove with a powerful natural relic hidden in its heart.

Requires the use of the *Dungeons & Dragons®* Players Handbook,
Third Edition, published by Wizards of the Coast.®

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