

D E L U X E • E D I T I O N

PROVIDENCE

The Ecology Companion



MI
MURA

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THE ECOLOGY COMPANION



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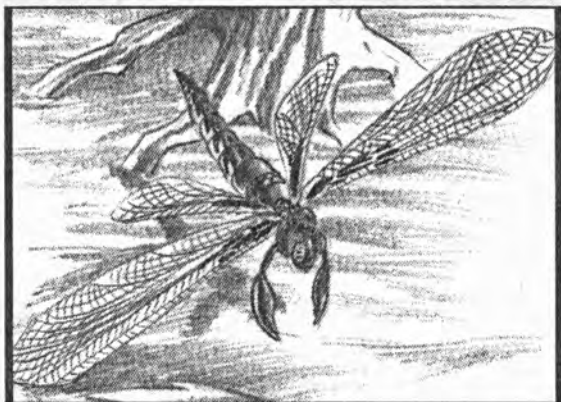
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THE DELECTABLE REALM OF INSECTS



Place the dragonfly in the water when it is still alive - you will poison the meat if you do not do this. The Scorpion Dragonfly releases its poison into its body upon death so that predators who feed on it die or become violently ill.

PLEASE NOTE:

As delectable as these recipes may sound, please do not try them at home.



the delectable realm of insects

In my time as Regent Caiylus' Head Chef, I have prepared hundreds upon hundreds of rare and exotic delicacies. Few enjoy the same praise as the dishes which include arthropods. Arthropods are creatures which have an exoskeleton – their bones are on the outside of their body rather than on the inside. The most common types of arthropods, of course, are insects.

In our wonderful prison world of Providence, we've come across thousands of different insect species and each day we encounter more. Most of these species are quite edible while a rare few are fine delicacies, if one knows how to prepare them properly. I shall endeavor to describe some of the finest dishes that make use of arthropods. Many of these insects are either rare or very dangerous to capture (and in some cases, both). Though you can purchase or barter for many of these insects in a well-stocked market, it is best to acquire them yourself so you are certain of their quality and freshness. As such, it is important that I provide you with information about each of the arthropods to prevent any mishaps or injuries.

Before I begin detailing the specific arthropods, I shall give you a brief description of insects. It is important that you understand these creatures if you are to prepare them correctly for a meal.

There are 28 groups of insects. Some of the more common groupings include bees, wasps, beetles, ants, butterflies and moths. Each group has unique characteristics. Bees and wasps are very similar in many regards, each having narrow waists and two pairs of transparent wings. The main difference between the two is that all wasps are predators while bees feed solely on plants. Beetles are insects whose front pair of wings have hardened into a shell, or carapace (called an elytra), which folds over their body to provide greater protection. Ants have the same physical appearance as bees and wasps, with the exception that they lack the ability to sting. Most ants also lack wings with the few exceptions being the queen of a hive. Moths and butterflies are very similar in appearance, both having large and broad wings. A major difference is that moths have dull coloring in an attempt to remain camouflaged. Butterflies, however, are vibrant and colorful to attract the attention of potential mates.



These are the most common groupings of insects that one will encounter, but there are many more. Within each type are hundreds of different varieties of insects.

All insects, once they reach maturity, have a hard exterior exoskeleton. They do not possess internal bone skeletons like humans, instead their exoskeleton contains their flesh and blood. This provides the insect with a greater degree of protection from its predators. The insect's head connects to the thorax. Also attached to the thorax are the insect's three pairs of legs as well as wings for flying specimens. The abdomen, the bulk of the insect's body, which contains most of the internal organs, follows the thorax.

Insects can move about in a variety of ways. They are capable of either swimming, flying, jumping, or simply walking. Insects are masters at adapting to their environment. Certain elements, however, remain constant. Insects have six legs. In some insects such as grasshoppers, these legs are quite powerful, allowing the creatures to leap great distances. In others, such as aquatic species, the legs have become similar to oars, flat and broad, allowing the insect to swim rapidly. Those insects which fly have two pairs of wings, which they use differently. For flies, one of the pairs of wings has shrunk and become an organ called the haltere - it aids the fly in maintaining its balance in flight.

the world through their eyes

Insects are remarkable creatures who have attuned sensory abilities. Most of the information Yas'Wailians have gained about the senses of insects has come from encounters with the Swarm Dancers, as well as some minimal studies of the insects themselves. Insects have two types of eyes. The first set sees the world much as we do, sensing shapes, colors, and shadows. The second type, known as compound eyes, is a grouping of several hundred small eyes. Much like members of Troupial Rat can see heat patterns, some believe that insects are capable of seeing different patterns with each eye. This would enable an insect to see virtually anything, regardless of the light conditions. Each insect has either two clusters of compound eyes, several pairs of simple eyes, or in some very rare cases, both simple and complex eyes. How an insect is able to



utilize all of this visual information is completely unknown. It is a topic Yas'Wailian scholars often debate late into the night.

The ability of insects to hear remains an enigma. This is particularly puzzling since they do not appear to possess ears. Several people believe that insects "hear" by feeling their surroundings. Most scholars hypothesize they do this with their antennae or through their legs. Some people also believe that insects which possess body hair can sense the movement of the air in the same manner as Bats.

Insects also clearly possess a sense of smell. Several species use pheromones, or scents, to attract their mates. Some suggest that insects taste the air while others insist that they possess organs allowing them to smell. Either way, there are numerous theories to explain the delicate senses of these fascinating creatures.

the insect diet

Insects eat a variety of food including meat, blood, plants and even dung. Furthermore, each insect has a different method for eating. Generally, insects have two sets of jaws. They use one set, known as mandibles, to hold and cut food. The shape of the mandibles depends on what the insect eats. Predator insects have sharp, serrated mandibles which they use to kill and shred their prey. Plant-eating insects have flat mandibles which they use to hold their food. Insects use their second set of jaws for chewing food.

Some insects do not chew their food – they drink it. Whether it is blood or tree sap, these insects have very peculiar mouths. The proboscis, as it is known, is similar to a straw. Insects use it to suck up liquid. Those species that drink blood usually have a tough, sharp proboscis for piercing the skin of their victims. Insects that drink sap or other more available liquids have a softer proboscis which they retract when not in use. Some have a soft proboscis and a set of sharp mandibles. They use their mandibles to cut the skin of their prey, causing victims to bleed. This allows the insect to uncoil its proboscis and drink the blood which flows from the cut.

This introduction should give you a good basic understanding of insects and the terminology I will use in the recipes that follow. Though I understand the apprehension many people have about eating insects, this cookbook should turn all skeptics into fine connoisseurs of insect culinary delights.

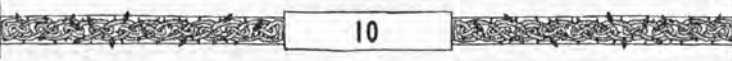
Enjoy!

honey ant drops



These wonderful ants are exquisite all by themselves, requiring little preparation. Honey Ants are small insects, measuring about half an inch in length, most of which is due to their abdomen. They live in many regions of the Exodus Plain, though most often near flowering plants. Honey Ants feed off the nectar of these flowers. They build large underground nests that can stretch 30 feet or more into the ground, but usually only extend about 10 feet deep. These hives are home to anywhere from several hundred thousand to well over a million ants.

There are three types of Honey Ants; the first is the queen. There is only one queen per ant hive, no matter the hive's size or population. She lives in the deepest section of the hive for protection from predators. When a queen is born, she leaves the hive and searches for another Honey Ant hive. Once she finds a new hive, she enters and challenges the resident queen of that hive. If she defeats the native queen, she becomes the new queen. If she fails, the population of the hive kills her. Once a queen establishes herself, her sole purpose is to lay eggs to maintain the hive's population.



The next type of Honey Ant is the warrior ant. Warrior ants make up about three to five percent of the total population of the hive. This increases if predators are numerous in the area. The warrior ant's sole purpose is to defend the hive and the queen at all costs.

The only intruder that a warrior will not attack immediately is a rival queen – Honey Ant warriors treat rival queens like a hive queen until one of the two loses the challenge. If something attacks the hive while the two queens are in battle, the warrior ants will protect both with equal vigor. Luckily, the worst that these ants can do to most people is cause minor skin irritations; the result of their bites. Individually, victims barely even notice the bites. When attacking in sufficient numbers, however, they can cause enough discomfort for most animals to retreat.



The last type of Honey Ant is the worker ant, or the drone. These ants spend most of their existence in a quest for food. They spend the rest of their time building, repairing, and maintaining the hive. Worker ants have bloated abdomens filled with nectar which they digest, transforming it into honey. This honey feeds the ants as well as the hive's queen and larva. The drone ants will regurgitate their honey to feed themselves or others within the hive.



Now, when you wish to serve Honey Ants, capture the drone ants as the queen and warrior ants do not have the bloated, honey-filled abdomens. Catching the ants is a simple process which involves little danger. You should cover as much of your body as possible to avoid the bites of the warrior ants. Should you suffer a bite, it is unlikely that it will be more than a discomfort.

Once captured, carefully pluck the abdomen from the ant. Store the abdomens in a cool place until serving to allow the honey to crystallize and harden. It will often take a while before one learns how to pluck the abdomen from the ant without crushing it, so don't become discouraged if this happens. It requires a very delicate touch, but the rich, sweet honey is well worth it.

Always cover the Honey Ants before serving as the honey will attract other, less savory insects.

perfume beetle

These beetles aren't edible, but I feel that they deserve some mention as they do serve an important role in high society. These tremendously rare and valuable beetles are some of the most colorful and beautiful insects encountered in Providence. They measure about four inches in length and have bright, intricately patterned colors covering their carapace.

Originally discovered in the Leviathan's Spine region, these beetles are now almost extinct in the wild. As such, traders breed them for high prices. The Pure keep these docile beetles in glass cases in their bed chambers.

Perfume beetles have developed a defense mechanism to ward off predators; they expel a scent when threatened. This scent is offensive to most animals. Yas'Wailians, however, seem to find the scent quite pleasing.

Those who can afford these rare treasures use the scent as a perfume. Rats, however, cringe at the very thought as few can stomach being near the scent for long.

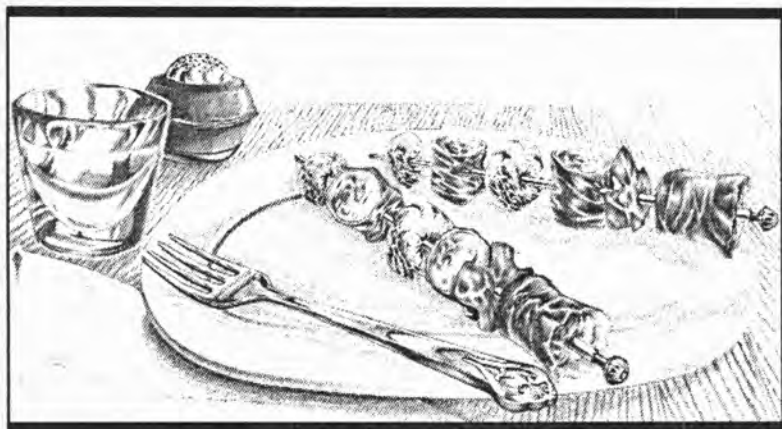
To acquire the scent, simply pick a beetle up and tap its carapace. The beetle, feeling threatened, will release its scent in a small cloud. This scent will cling to a person for several hours before it wears off.

Everyone should avoid using the perfume if you must be near animals as they hate the smell. Most people who use these wondrous beetles, however, don't mind – they leave the animal handling to their staff.

Certain traders have begun carefully breeding these beetles. They've learned that each beetle gives off a slightly different scent. People are willing to pay high prices for the beetles.



lemon spire termite kebabs



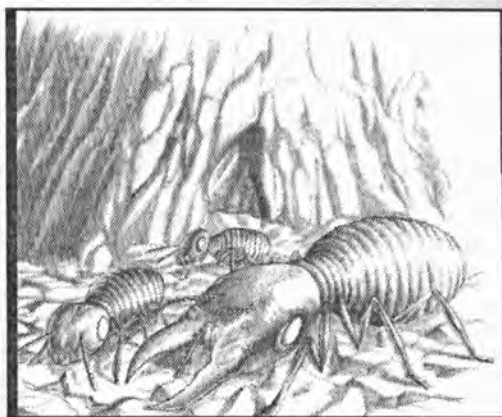
2 mandibles of warrior Spire Termite
2 cups of lemon juice
1 cup of olive oil
1 tablespoon of salt
1 tablespoon of sugar
1 tablespoon of tarragon

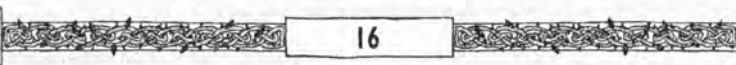
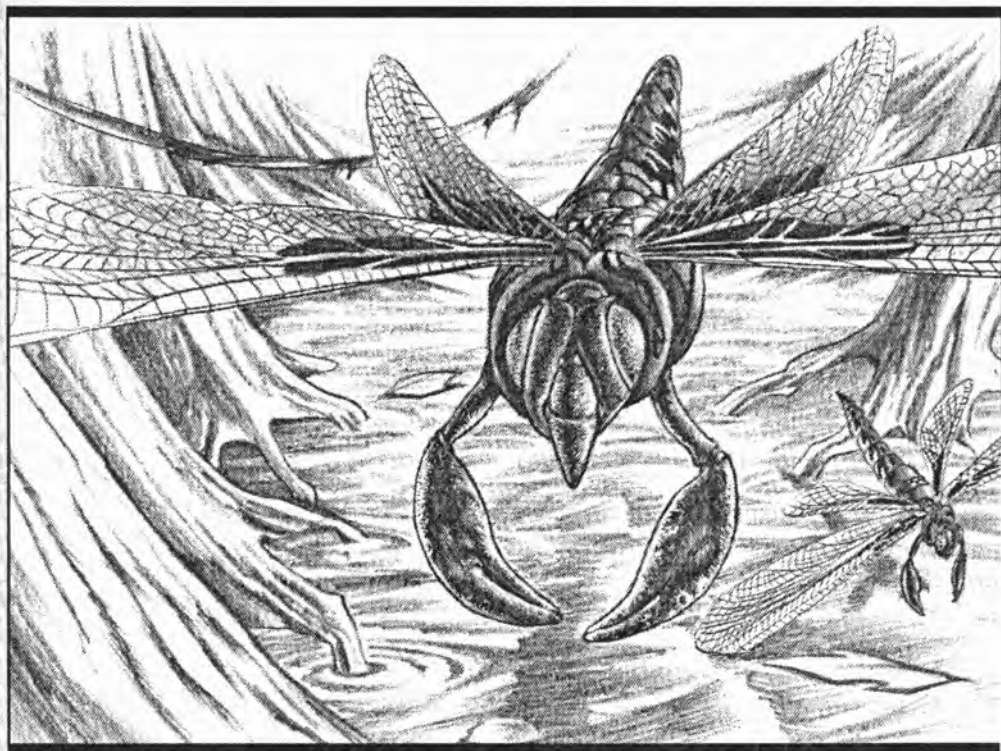
These enormous termites build nests that can measure well over a hundred feet high. Some believe that the Spire Termites created the spires that stretch across Providence. This would explain the tunnel systems that seem to exist in all the spires. Proof of this theory, however, has yet to surface. Regardless, these insects are not only delicious, but their immense size means that one can provide a great deal of meat. The difficulty is in their capture – they fiercely defend their spire hives. The warriors, which provide the most savory meat, are very difficult to kill.

An average hive is home to over 100,000 termites, almost 15% of which are warriors. As with most hive insects, there is one queen that lays eggs and controls the movements of the hive. The queen is truly huge, measuring upwards of 15 feet in length. There is also a much smaller king who is about the

size of a warrior termite. His sole function is to mate with the queen. The queen and king hide from predators deep within the spire hive, protected by a large number of warriors. Small drones make up about 85% of the hive population. These termites, which measure around one foot in length, spend their time collecting food and caring for the hive, building it up and repairing any damage. They collect the food for the hive, which includes carrion, dead trees, small animals, and feces. The warriors are much larger than their drone brothers (for all but the queen are born male), measuring around three feet in length. Most of their increased length is due to their large heads and mandibles. Their mandibles are tremendously strong, capable of biting off a Yas'Wailian's leg. What is worse is that the termites, as with most hive insects, defend their hive in large numbers. Capturing the warriors is therefore a very dangerous endeavor. This has resulted in a scarcity of these insects in food markets. The safest and easiest way to capture warrior termites is to kill them swiftly and make a hasty retreat before others arrive to deal with you. If you remain in the area, you risk engendering a fight against several hundred warriors.

Once you kill and capture your specimen, you must remove the warrior's mandibles. Chefs can use the mandibles of the smaller drones, but the meat is far less tasty and the portions are significantly smaller. One can also use the meat from the entire head of the warrior, but it tends to have a tough, gritty texture that most people find unpleasant. Once removed, carefully crack the mandible open, revealing the meat beneath. As this meat is powerful muscle, you must tenderize and marinate it prior to use. I recommend marinating it in lemon juice, olive oil, salt, sugar and tarragon for three days in a cool area. Afterwards, cook the meat over a controlled flame for about 30 minutes. Serve with garlic cheese bread and a salad with a honey mustard vinaigrette. This meal is best served with a glass of white wine.





scorpion dragonfly with garlic butter



2 cups of butter
2 tablespoons of olive oil
1 lemon
2 cloves of garlic
Scorpion Dragonfly

Scorpion Dragonflies are large insects, measuring well over four feet in length with an astonishing wingspan of eight feet. These insects, which resemble their smaller dragonfly cousins, earned their name because their front legs possess large claws. These are similar to a scorpion's, which they use to capture their prey. Scorpion Dragonflies most often hunt smaller airborne animals, though they attack flying Yas'Wailians from time to time. Additionally, they have a stinger at the tip of their abdomen. They use it to kill after their claws have immobilized their prey. The stinger, however, is more like a bee or wasp's stinger than that of a scorpion. One must always be careful when attempting to hunt these insects; the poison from their sting is strong enough to do serious harm.

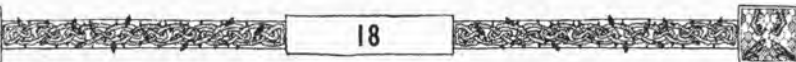


Native to the Pendulum Islands, these insects are solitary creatures. They only socialize with others of their kind when they mate. This does not mean that one will not encounter several in an area – it simply means that they will not work together towards a common goal like other hive-minded insects. Scorpion Dragonflies seem to like swamps with a dense canopy and open underbrush, allowing for their large wingspan.

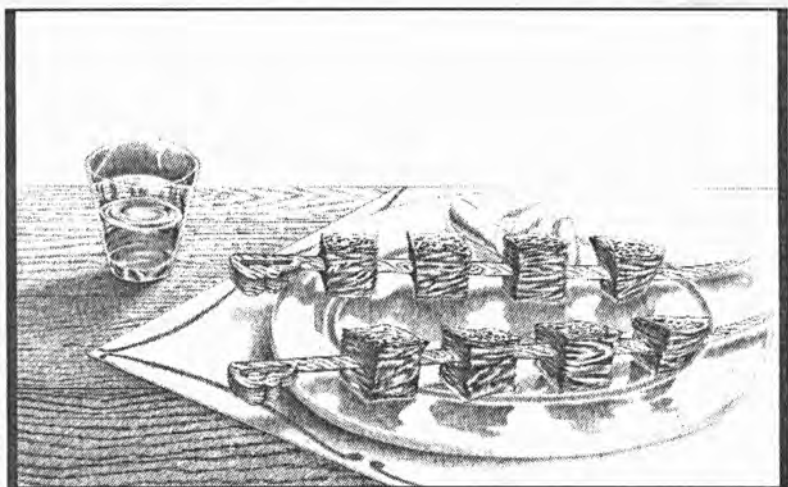
Scorpion Dragonflies are remarkably fast and agile fliers, allowing them to capture even nimble, airborne prey. One must also beware when attempting to hunt them. They frequent areas where the water is about three feet deep. This is because the Scorpion Dragonfly's larvae hatch in the waters of the swamp, feeding on anything that comes near them, regardless of size. I have heard of an expedition where almost everybody died because they happened upon a Scorpion Dragonfly spawning area. Reports indicated that the larvae, known as nymphs, attacked from under the water. It was just a matter of time before the injured members of the party slipped under the water's surface, unable to stand from the injuries to their legs. Nevertheless, these dangerous insects are succulent, savory feasts when you prepare them properly.

When you capture a Scorpion Dragonfly, you should remove the insect's wings. Though this isn't necessary, it does make the cooking easier. Place the dragonfly into boiling water while the insect is still alive – you will poison the meat if you do not do this. The Scorpion Dragonfly releases its poison into its body upon death so that predators who feed on it die or become violently ill. I have tried to remove the poison sacs near the stinger in the abdomen to eliminate this problem. Unfortunately, I discovered that the insect has three poison sacs: two are in the abdomen beside the stinger and the third is in the thorax of the insect. Sadly, removing any of the venom sacs is extremely difficult since it will usually kill the insect and taint the meat. As such, one should boil it alive when preparing the meal.

After boiling the dragonfly for about 10 minutes, remove it from the water. Cut off the thorax and the end of the abdomen. Place the abdomen back in the water for an additional 20 minutes. Serve it with melted garlic butter - a mixture of butter, olive oil, lemon juice and diced garlic heated over a low flame. I further recommend cutting down the back of the dragonfly's carapace and gently pulling the meat out of the abdomen. Spread a bit of the garlic butter on the meat and barbecue it lightly for an additional 10 minutes. The meal is excellent with white wine.



rock beetle teriyaki



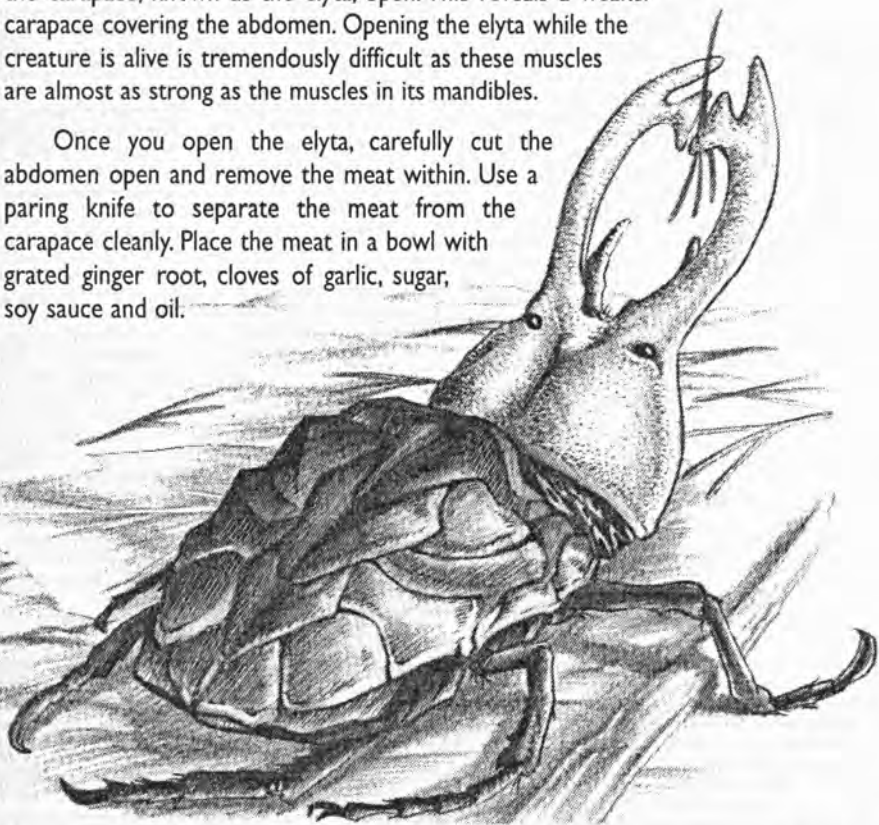
- 1 pound of Rock Beetle meat
(usually one beetle)
- 1 tablespoon of grated ginger root
- 2 cloves of garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons of sugar
- 1/2 cup of soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil

Rock Beetles live throughout the Exodus Plain. These large, slow-moving insects feed off dead vegetation and animals. An average Rock Beetle will measure around two to three feet long. One report indicates that Gnartooth, the leader of the Rock Crusher tribe of Troupial Gargoyle, wears a suit of armor made from a Rock Beetle's carapace. From the rumored size of the plates, I would suspect that the beetle was over five feet in length, a rare case indeed. The Rock Beetle's carapace is very strong, measuring half an inch thick. It is almost as strong as crystal and exceptionally light weight. As such, many warriors seek large Rock Beetles to turn them into suits of armor.

With the exception of mating season, these solitary beetles are generally quite passive and content to go about their lives without incident. During mating season the males become quite agitated and aggressive. They fight viciously for the right to mate with a particular female, using their large mandibles to grasp and crush their opponent. The resiliency of their carapace indicates the enormous strength of their mandibles. During this mating period, the Rock Beetle is quite likely to attack anything that startles it. It is capable of doing considerable damage with its powerful mandibles, biting through most types of armor and bone. Rock Beetles also will defend themselves if predators attack them.

Capturing these tough insects is not difficult. Killing them often requires a great deal of force to pierce the carapace. Once you kill the creature, spread the carapace, known as the elytra, open. This reveals a weaker carapace covering the abdomen. Opening the elytra while the creature is alive is tremendously difficult as these muscles are almost as strong as the muscles in its mandibles.

Once you open the elytra, carefully cut the abdomen open and remove the meat within. Use a paring knife to separate the meat from the carapace cleanly. Place the meat in a bowl with grated ginger root, cloves of garlic, sugar, soy sauce and oil.



Allow the meat to marinate for two days in a cool place, turning it occasionally. Afterwards, cut the meat into cubes and put onto wooden skewers. Grill the meat about four inches from the coals for about 15 minutes, basting it frequently with the marinade. Best served with red wine.

pepper trapdoor beetle on a half shell



Trapdoor Beetle
1 tablespoon of olive oil
4 tablespoons of pepper
1 teaspoon of salt

The Trapdoor Beetle is a dangerous beetle that can cause great damage to caravans or other travelers. The beetle itself is of little threat to most large animals, but because of how it traps its prey, it is capable of hobbling smaller animals such as Bawk'shi. These beetles measure around eight inches in length with short legs. Despite its size, however, the Trapdoor Beetle is quite robust.



The Trapdoor Beetle catches its prey by digging a hole in a well-traveled path, about eight to ten inches in diameter. It then secretes a glue-like substance from its mouth which it mixes with twigs, leaves and other material to build a camouflaged cover for its hole. After that, it waits quietly. When unsuspecting prey ventures near, the Trapdoor Beetle lunges out, pulls it into the hole, and begins to feed.

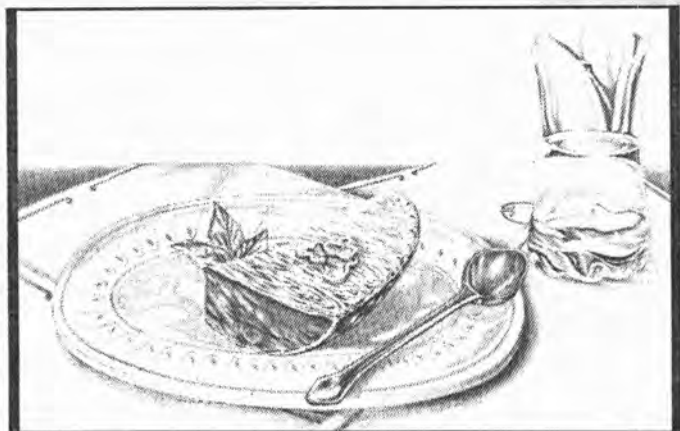
The Trapdoor Beetle does not attack people as they are too large. Bawk'shi and other pack animals, however, regularly step into these concealed holes, often breaking their leg. This can drastically hinder travelers with beasts of burden.

On the other hand, the Trapdoor Beetle has saved many travellers' lives because it is so easy to find and capture. Its meat is quite flavorful and does not require any cooking at all. Many travelers have survived on Trapdoor Beetles for extended periods of time. As such, most explorers view these insects with mixed emotion.

Even though they are edible raw, I don't recommend serving them that way. You will not experience the full flavor of the meat. Prepare them by removing the carapace covering their abdomen. Brush olive oil over the exposed meat and sprinkle first the salt and then the pepper. Place the Trapdoor Beetle on a grill for 20 minutes. The meat gains a great deal of its flavor from cooking in its own juices. Allow it to cool down as the carapace will be quite hot. Serve this dish in the beetle's shell with beer or mead.



thunder beetle



Thunder Beetles, though highly annoying, are edible and mildly tasty and live virtually everywhere. Thunder Beetles measure about two or three inches in length. They are especially common in the poorer sectors of the Alliance of Kings' cities, and near plantations.

These small insects generate extremely loud cracks by snapping both halves of their carapace together. Due to the shape of their elytra, or carapace, this creates a very loud noise. When a creature threatens them, the beetle generates a loud snap in an attempt to scare the predator away. Thunder Beetles also do this to attract potential mates.

All attempts at wiping out these insects have met with failure. They lay hundreds of thousands of eggs when they mate and thousands survive to adulthood.



Regardless of their annoying nocturnal cracking, the Thunder Beetles provide tasty meat. Many of the poorest peasants in our cities feed on these insects. Eaten raw, they are acceptable, though I highly recommend smoking them with herbs for half a day before eating. Smoked Thuder Beetles make a great meat pie. A few merchants of Haak San Bazaa sell smoked beetles along with other exotic meats. These merchants take great care, smoking the beetles in specially prepared smoke chambers to give the beetles a particular flavor. Although they are not a delicacy, they are tasty and readily available to virtually anyone. Simply try to go to sleep if you want to find Thunder Beetles.

flame moth

The Flame Moth is a highly inedible insect, but I'm discussing it because cooks use it in the preparation and enhancement of other meals. This moth lives in most of Providence's wooded regions. It is a highly dangerous insect that has been responsible for several major fires. In order to make itself distasteful to its predators, its body generates a chemical which no animal finds palatable. Not only is this liquid quite offensive to the taste buds, but it is also highly flammable.

Flame Moths behave like other moths – bright lights such as fires attract them. Once it touches the open flame, the moth explodes into a small ball of fire. While this ball of fire itself is not much of a threat, when several moths enter a fire simultaneously, the explosion can become quite large. More than a few homes have caught fire as a result of the Flame Moths' suicidal dives. I've heard that encounters with these moths can occur quite frequently in the jungles. It causes serious burns when torches explode in small balls of flame.

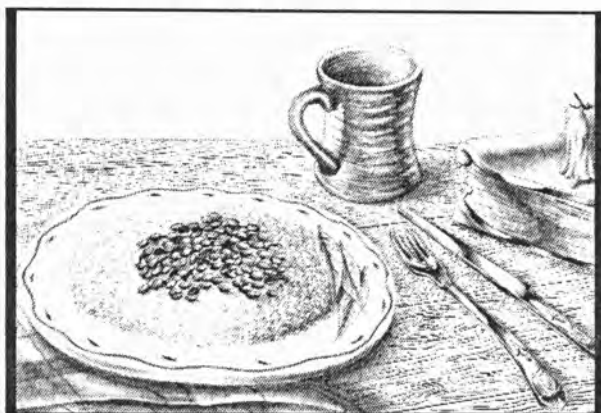
As I said, you can use these moths to enhance meals as they add a little extra flavor. When you barbecue red meat, throw a few Flame Moths into the fire. I highly recommend that you do this one at a time to avoid the risk of burning yourself severely. The moth-fed flame will add a mildly tangy, citrus flavor to red meats, depending on how many Flame Moths you use. Oddly, most white meats will gain an oily flavor. For this reason, I suggest using Flame Moths only on red meats.

WARNING

I cannot stress enough the extreme caution
needed when using Flame Moths while cooking.
Please be careful.



piquant desert ant



1 cup of tomato juice
1/4 cup of minced onion
1/4 cup of minced green pepper
1/4 cup of minced celery
1/4 cup of olive oil
1 tablespoon of vinegar
2 cloves of minced garlic
1 tablespoon of chili powder
dash of salt
2 pounds of Desert Ant abdomens

The five-inch long Desert Ants live exclusively in the Athrin Desert, where they feed on the abundant lichen. The Desert Ants make the largest hive of any insect in relation to their size. The Desert Ants inhabit a 100-mile area in Athrin's Desert. Within this region, their population is exceedingly high. Regardless, there is no conflict between separate groups of ants. Desert ants are extremely aggressive in the defense of their hive, attacking anything that stumbles near an entrance with frightening swiftness and efficiency. The exception to this rule is other Desert Ants which they always treat like members of the hive. This has led many scholars to the notion that there is one main Desert Ant queen and only one, truly enormous hive.

It is fortunate that these ants live in the desert as they can easily strip all the flesh from an errant Bawk'sha in less than a minute. Their mandibles excrete a mild acid that they use for cutting through the bedrock beneath the desert sand. This acid allows the Desert Ant's powerful mandibles to cut into even the thickest skin of any animal that disturbs its hive.

Unlike most hive insects, there does not appear to be a delineation between warrior and drone. All members of the colony seem to share both functions. The ants collect food, repair and expand the hive, and protect their homes when necessary.

The fascinating Desert Ants make an exceptionally rare dish. Unfortunately, few individuals wish to travel into the desert to deal with an angry hive. Thankfully, several tough and very resourceful trappers capture these furious ants. This spicy, delicious meal is well worth their effort. I have been unable to discover how they successfully capture the ants without serious harm. I have asked the trappers on numerous occasions without success – it is a secret they guard closely since they make a substantial profit from the sale of the ants.

When you get the Desert Ants, remove their abdomens. Always be careful when handling them. Contact with their mandibles will cause a rash from the residual acid. Also, their carapace has numerous tiny barbs which can cause superficial cuts. I suggest wearing gloves when removing the abdomens.

Once you remove them, carefully cut the abdomens in half. Remove the meat from the carapace, and place it in a dish. Combine the tomato juice, minced onion, green pepper, minced celery, olive oil, vinegar, minced garlic, chili powder and a dash of salt in a small saucepan, and slowly bring it to a boil. Cover and let it simmer for about 15 minutes, then remove from heat. Once cooled, place the Desert Ant meat in the marinade. Allow it to sit for several hours. Afterwards, grill the meat for 3-5 minutes on each side, basting with the marinade. I suggest using tied and washed parsley as a brush since it adds a little extra flavor. Best served with water.





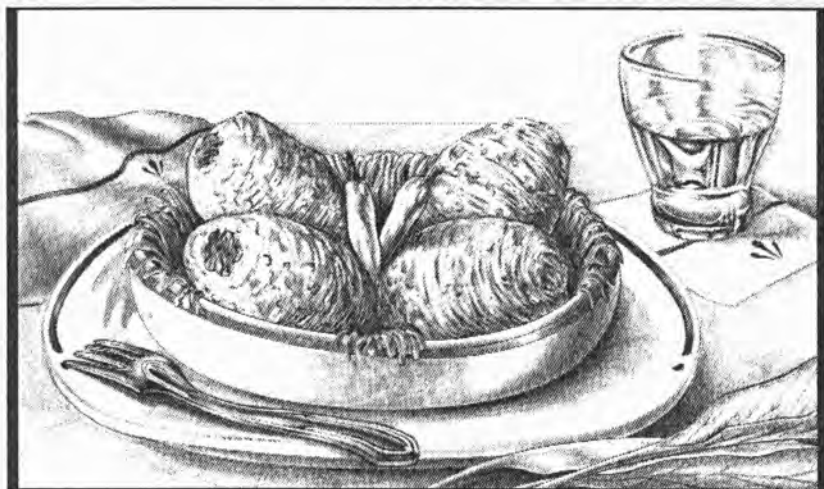
spiders

Spiders are a group of carnivorous arthropods that are part of the arachnid family. The word spider comes from the Old Yas'Wailian word "spinnan" meaning "to spin." Spiders also take their name from the mythological character Arachne. Arachne was a peasant girl who challenged the goddess Banti to a contest of weaving. Arachne equaled Banti's skill in the art of weaving, which infuriated Banti to no end. Arachne, despondent over Banti's reaction, hanged herself in shame as she had not wished to demean her goddess. Upset by her actions, Banti reincarnated Arachne as a spider, allowing her to retain her weaving skills.

These eight-legged arthropods have a different body structure than that of other insects. They only have two body parts, the cephalothorax and the abdomen. The cephalothorax bears the four pairs of legs as well as the fangs and eyes of the spider, essentially combining the head and thorax of the insect into one. A spider usually has four pairs of simple eyes for a total of eight. Their eyes rest at the top front of the cephalothorax, giving the spider an excellent field of vision. Its fangs are at the front bottom of the cephalothorax and all spiders have a venomous bite for killing or paralyzing their prey. This poison also liquefies their prey's muscles and organs, allowing the spiders to drink their food since they do not chew.

Another interesting development in the spiders' adaptation to nature is their ability to spin or weave a silken substance. The spinnerets that produce this webbing are at the rear of the abdomen. Spiders generally use the silk to entangle prey. They also use it to enwrap their prey. Certain spiders, however, prefer to hunt their victims down rather than waiting to ambush using their webs. Once these spiders catch their prey, they use their silk like a rope to tie them up and prevent them from escaping. The last use of the webbing is for travel. The spiders will anchor the silk and lower themselves down from one point to another. This webbing tends not to possess the sticky attribute. There are other functions for this webbing, but these differences appear in specific species rather than all spiders.

tandoori raft spider



- 4 Raft Spider abdomens
- 1/2 teaspoon of saffron threads
- 2 teaspoons of hot water
- 8 ounces of yogurt
- 1/4 cup of lime juice
- 1 crushed garlic clove
- 1 1/2 teaspoons of salt
- 1 teaspoon of ground ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon of turmeric
- 1/4 teaspoon of ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon of ground coriander
- 1/8 teaspoon of ground cayenne

The Raft Spider is an extremely interesting seaside hunter. Including their legs, Raft Spiders measure about 14 inches across. They live along the wooded coastal regions of the Crysarius Sea, most often where tree branches hang or have fallen into water. The Raft Spider is an agile and highly venomous spider. While it will feed on any small animal that comes near, it prefers to feed on fish. It will use its spinnerets to spin a ball of silk. From a vantage point over the water, usually a tree or rock, the spider will dangle its spun ball as a lure. When a fish or another aquatic animal comes to

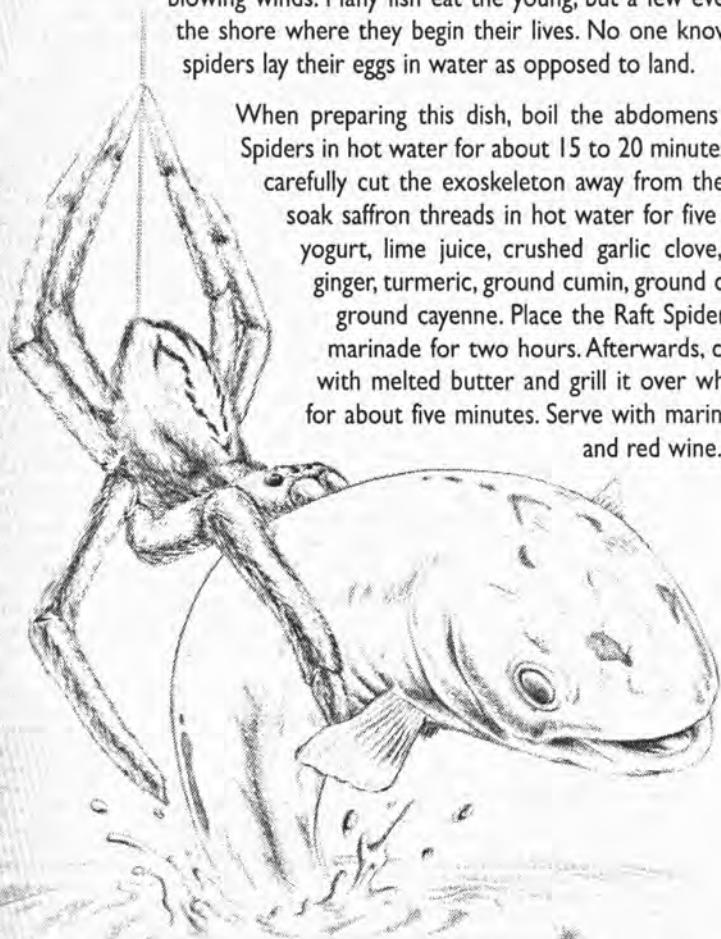


investigate the spider's lure, the spider quickly lashes out, grasping the fish with its front legs, biting it many times. Should the spider's venom fail to kill the fish immediately, the sticky ball of silk will remain in the fish's mouth. The spider can simply pull the fish in. Either way, the spider will pull its catch from the water, find a secluded spot, and feed in safety.

This spider has adapted well to the water environment. Its silk remains sticky even if it is wet. Also, the spider is capable of remaining under water for several hours before it must resurface for air.

When Raft Spiders mate, they lay their eggs under water. When their eggs hatch, the young float to the surface. They then drift in the direction of the blowing winds. Many fish eat the young, but a few eventually reach the shore where they begin their lives. No one knows why these spiders lay their eggs in water as opposed to land.

When preparing this dish, boil the abdomens of four Raft Spiders in hot water for about 15 to 20 minutes. Afterwards, carefully cut the exoskeleton away from the meat. Next, soak saffron threads in hot water for five minutes. Add yogurt, lime juice, crushed garlic clove, salt, ground ginger, turmeric, ground cumin, ground coriander, and ground cayenne. Place the Raft Spider meat in the marinade for two hours. Afterwards, coat the meat with melted butter and grill it over white hot coals for about five minutes. Serve with marinade, peppers, and red wine.



club spider creole



2 tablespoons of butter
3/4 cup of chopped onion
1/2 cup of chopped celery
1 chopped green pepper
1 small clove of minced garlic
8 ounces of tomato sauce
1/2 cup of water
1 teaspoon of parsley flakes
1/2 teaspoon of salt
dash of cayenne red pepper
1 bay leaf
8 Club Spider legs (one Club Spider)

The Club Spider is a large insect, measuring about 20 inches across. Its legs are almost three inches in diameter giving it substantial bulk for its size. The Club Spider hunts small and medium sized ground animals in the rocky terrain of Leviathan's Spine and the Great Bridge regions.

The spider's gray coloring allows it to hide well in mountainous regions, where it waits in ambush. When its prey appears, the Club Spider lunges over the rough terrain. A Club Spider will use its large and powerful legs to trip its target. It then leaps on top of its prey and uses its legs to pummel its victim, eventually knocking it unconscious. Since the Club Spider's venom is weak, it

uses it only when the prey is unconscious. Once it kills its prey, the Club Spider can carry it safely away to feed.

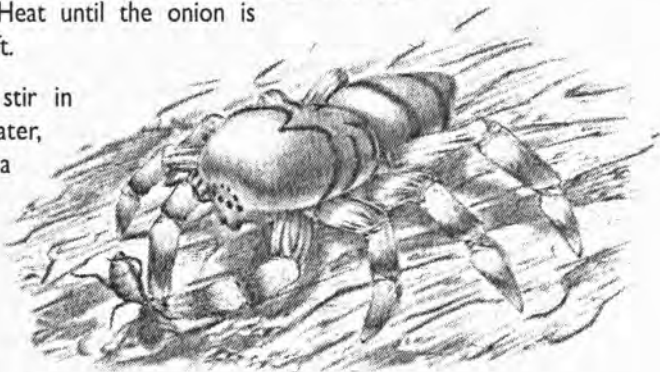
The Club Spider's web spinnerets are also very underdeveloped as it only uses its webbing, immediately after hatching from its eggs. The mother lays the eggs in a secluded spot within the rocky terrain and protects the egg clutch until it hatches. When the young are born, the small spiders release a length of silk into the air. They use the webbing like a kite, allowing the strong winds of the rocky area to lift them into the air. Eventually, the spider lands again when the winds die down. It then makes its nest wherever it lands. This allows the Club Spider to expand its territory and minimize any overlap with other spiders.

Club Spiders have attacked the odd traveler who ventures too close. In most cases, a traveler's armor is sufficient to protect them from the spider's attacks, but the rare traveler who is not wearing any armor could well be in danger.

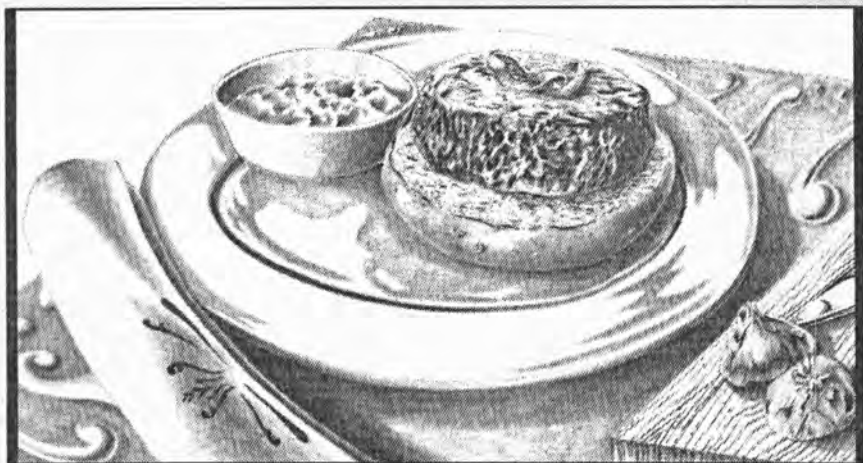
To prepare this spicy dish, remove the legs from a Club Spider and boil in hot water for about five minutes. Carefully cut away the shell to reveal the meat beneath. Slice the meat into small pieces, about one inch in size. Melt butter and stir in chopped onion, chopped celery, chopped green pepper, and minced garlic. Heat until the onion is translucent and soft.

At this point, stir in tomato sauce, water, parsley flakes, salt, a dash of cayenne red pepper and bay leaf. Simmer uncovered for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the Club Spider meat,

bring it to a boil, and stir continuously. Reduce the heat and cover it, allowing it to simmer for about 10 minutes. Cook the meat completely until it is white all the way through. Serve on a bed of hot rice with white wine.



swarm spider ground beef



Lynax meat
Equal weight of Swarm Spiders

The Swarm Spider, native to most of the Exodus Plain region, is very frightening to an arachnophobe. This is a pack spider that will attack anything that comes across its path. Generally, the area where Swarm Spiders live is devoid of small animal life. Thousands of spiders immediately attack any animal, that wanders into their territory, including Yas'Wailians.

Each spider is less than an inch from leg tip to leg tip. Most swarms consist of well over a thousand individual members. They drop from trees and rush across the ground to climb onto any prey they come across, biting it continuously. Each bite is a minor nuisance but the combined total of all the bites becomes very lethal to most animals. Eventually, their prey succumbs to the toxin and dies. At this point, the spiders begin to feed on the corpse and breed, laying tens of thousands of eggs. In most cases, it takes about a full month for the spiders to devour a Bawk'sha-sized animal. During this time, three generations of Swarm Spiders are born and die. They have a life span of about a week and a half.

While feeding on an animal, the size of the swarm will generally double or triple as young spiders are born. Afterward, until their next kill, the swarm will often shrink in size. If a new source of food does not appear within a week, the swarm begins to move into new territory to find food. Also, the young begin to cannibalize the older spiders in order to survive. Generally, however, they find another source of food before this occurs.

When attempting to capture Swarm Spiders, I advise extreme caution. The spiders' small size lulls many people into a false sense of security. They are some of the most lethal spiders in Providence. Once an attack begins, there is very little anyone can do. Avoiding Swarm Spiders altogether and leaving their capture to professionals is the best course of action.

Swarm Spiders are not a delicacy, although they are a ready source of protein. Many people find their meat a zesty addition to standard Lynax meat. Most markets sell the spiders under the name of spiced Lynax meat.

When preparing the Lynax meat, blend Swarm Spiders in equal weight (pound for pound). When the meat is cooked, the heat neutralizes the spider's venom. The Lynax meat's protein level increases drastically. As well, Swarm Spiders add a spicy flavor. You can use the meat just as normal ground Lynax, for hamburgers, meat loaf, and the like.



spitting spider vinegar

1 portion of Spitting Spider venom
1/2 portion of vinegar

The Spitting Spider, living in the forests of the Exodus Plain and the Deep, is a dangerous little hunter. This spider measures five inches from tip to tip and feeds on birds and other small canopy dwellers. The spider is nomadic, calling no region except the canopy its territory. During the day, the spider remains in hiding, resting and avoiding predators. At night, the spider travels the canopy in search of prey. When it finds its victims, it usually just crawls up and bites them, killing animals and Yas'Wailians before they awaken. If targets of the spider's attack are awake, the Spitting Spider blinds the victims by spitting venom in their eyes. Immediately afterwards, the spider rushes in to kill the helpless prey.

The Spitting Spider is able to project its venom through its fangs by flexing powerful muscles located around the venom sacs. The spider can accurately eject its liquid up to three feet, after which it becomes highly inaccurate.

Spitting Spider venom, should it contact the prey's eyes, is very powerful and causes immediate blindness in most animals. It is not a permanent condition, but it does last for almost one month in most

people. Yas'Wailians have an antidote that will flush the toxin out of their eyes.



This antidote, combined with a few days of bed rest, will restore sight completely. Without the antidote, Yas'Wailians suffer the same fate as other animals, temporarily losing their sight for a number of weeks.

Remarkably, the toxin is quite tasty if treated properly. One must boil the venom of many spiders to use it successfully. As the venom begins to boil, add one part of vinegar for two parts of venom. This completely neutralizes the poison. It will still cause blindness if it comes into contact with a person's eyes. The mixture makes a very tasty vinegar that can substitute for regular vinegar, adding a richer flavor to salad dressings.

scorpions

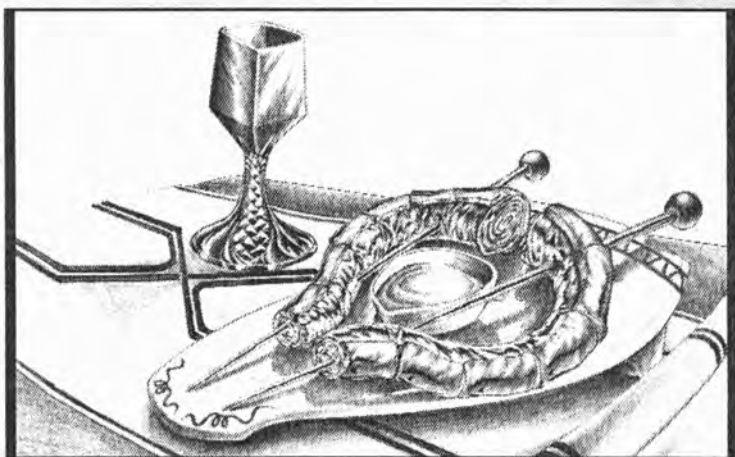
Another member of the arachnid family, the scorpion is the highly dangerous and predatory cousin of insects. These arthropods have four pairs of legs, much like spiders. In addition, they have a pair of arms ending in large claws called pedipalps. These claws capture and hold the scorpion's prey. The scorpion's abdomen is segmented, unlike other arthropods, into twelve flat sections. Seven of these sections make up the pre-abdomen where you will find most of the internal organs. The final five segments make up the tail. The tail curls over the scorpion's body, ending with a venomous stinger. The scorpion stings and bites its prey injecting the victim with a liquid similar to the spider's venom. This venom liquefies the prey's body, allowing the scorpion to drink the nutrients.

The scorpion's tail is not only used to sting its prey. Though the scorpion is a highly proficient killer and more than capable of defending itself from most predators, it is deathly afraid of fire. When surrounded by flame, the scorpion will commit suicide by stinging itself with its stinger. Nobody knows why these arthropods possess this quirk.

Scorpions are mostly nocturnal, only coming out at night to hunt their prey. During the day, the scorpion retreats into a secluded, dark place to rest. Often, in regions like the Deep and the Exodus Plain where scorpions are common,

they will hide into the footwear of Yas'Wailians. When people don their shoes, they receive a painful and potentially lethal sting. People traveling through these areas have learned to tip their boots over in the morning, ensuring that it is safe to wear them.

skewered aquatic scorpion with dip



- 4 Aquatic Scorpion tails
- 1/2 cup of vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons of soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon of minced onion
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1 teaspoon of dry mustard
- 1 teaspoon of ground ginger
- 1 clove of minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon of pepper
- 1 cup of catsup
- 3 tablespoons of mustard
- 1 tablespoon of horseradish
- 1/2 teaspoon of garlic powder



The Aquatic Scorpion is very similar to the lobster, another type of arthropod. It is, however, still a member of the arachnid family and a very lethal scorpion. Native to shallow, rocky regions of the Crysarius Sea, this 8 to 12-inch-long scorpion feeds on small aquatic animals and fish. It will lie upon the rocky bottom, waiting for a fish to venture too close to its claws.

When it attacks, it moves in a short but lightning quick burst of speed, grabbing its prey and stinging it repeatedly. Its prey is usually dead from the venom within a second of the ambush. It will then take its prey into a secluded area and feed off it at its leisure.

There are two reasons why this scorpion is so dangerous. First, because it hides among the rocks close to the shore, more than a few people have encountered a hidden Aquatic Scorpion while swimming. In self defense, the scorpion will sting a person several times before the victim can get away. Some people believe that the Aquatic Scorpion is able to deliver three to five stings in less than a second, injecting venom with each sting. This massive dosage of venom is more than sufficient to kill someone.

The second problem occurs for lobster trappers. The Aquatic Scorpion will often retreat into a lobster trap to eat the captured prey. This trap holds the scorpion just as it does a lobster. When the trappers retrieve their trap, they will encounter a very unhappy scorpion. Many people wear thick gloves when fishing to avoid accidents.

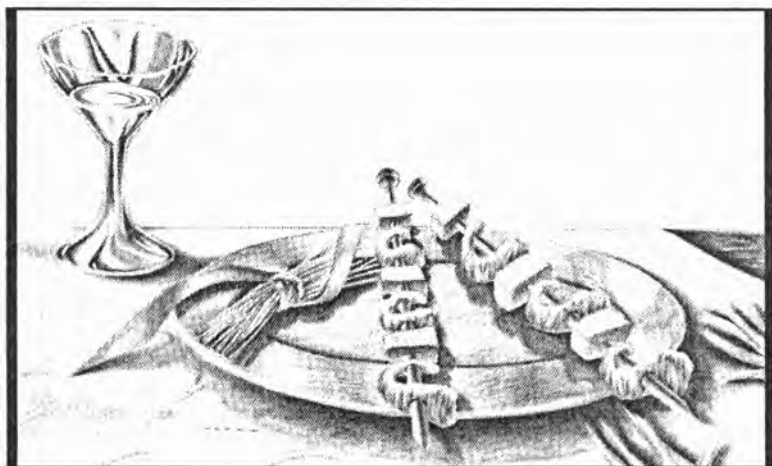
Victims of a scorpion's sting do not die instantly. Every breath they take is laboured and painful. Slowly and irrevocably, their heart and lungs begin to fail. Unless someone administers an antidote, or is able to purge the poison with Wird, victims of the Aquatic Scorpion's sting will die.

The Aquatic Scorpion lays its eggs simply by releasing a cloud of eggs into the water and allowing the currents to carry them to safety. This helps to ensure that the scorpion's territory is broad. Since the scorpion releases several thousand eggs at a time, the odds of a few reaching full maturity increases due to the sheer numbers involved. Some people find the Aquatic Scorpion's eggs quite tasty, though others find it a little acidic. Many serve them at social functions, though the eggs have not received the same praise as the caviar of the Vrolagh.

Cooks need four Aquatic Scorpion tails when preparing this dish; use the pre-abdomen and the abdomen, but not the last two segments which include the stinger and poison. Place them in boiling water for about 15 to 20 minutes. Then carefully remove the carapace from the meat. Mix the vegetable oil, soy sauce, minced onion, salt, dry mustard, ground ginger, minced garlic, and pepper and pour over the scorpion tails. Cover and place the meat in a cool place for about 4 hours. Afterwards, place the scorpion tails on skewers and grill over hot coals for about 10 minutes, basting regularly with the marinade. For the dip, mix the catsup, mustard, horseradish, garlic powder and freshly grated pepper. Chill the dip before serving. Best served with red wine.



exodus leaf scorpion kebabs



- 1 1/2 pound of Leaf Scorpion tails
(about 30 or 40 tails)
- 1 pound of pineapple chunks
- 2 tablespoons of soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon of cider vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon of ground ginger
- 2 tablespoons of chopped parsley
- 3 cups of rice

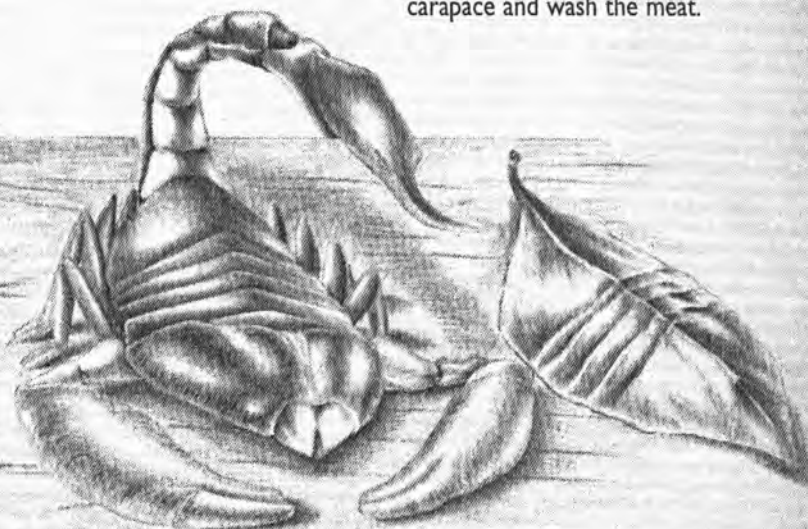
The Leaf Scorpion lives in virtually any forest region with a dense upper canopy. These scorpions spend their entire lives in the thick foliage of trees, feeding off small birds, insects, and other animals that live there.

This four-inch-long scorpion is a master of disguise. Its broad, flattened body looks almost identical to the leaves of the Picatom tree. Only upon close examination or when the scorpion moves does one notice the difference. By this point, it is usually too late. The Leaf Scorpion will remain motionless for several hours. When prey stumbles across the scorpion, the scorpion grabs it with its claws while its stinger delivers a potent venom. The venom of the Leaf Scorpion is not lethal to Yas'Wailians, unless they are allergic to it, but it will

cause a great deal of pain. For the scorpion's prey, which is much smaller, the poison is extremely lethal.

Another interesting facet to these small scorpions is their mating rituals. The female, after mating with and killing the male, will find a bird's nest in the canopy. It will enter the nest and, using its stinger, pierce one of the bird's eggs, laying its own eggs within it. The scorpion's eggs will then grow and develop within the bird's egg. When they hatch, they remain within the egg, feeding off the bird embryo contained within. The young scorpions will later break out of the egg, just before the other eggs within the nest hatch. If the parent bird is present when the scorpion's eggs hatch, the thousands of baby Leaf Scorpions will sting the bird, killing it instantly. The Leaf Scorpions will then feed on the body of the adult bird. Later, by the time they finish feasting on the parent bird, the other eggs within the nest will have begun hatching. The scorpions will then feast on the young birds before they move off into the canopy.

When preparing Exodus Leaf Scorpion kebabs, use the scorpion's tail, its pre-abdomen, and abdomen. Discard the last two segments that contain the stinger and venom sacs. Carefully remove the carapace and wash the meat.





Place the meat in a bowl with the pineapple chunks, soy sauce, cider vinegar, and ground ginger. Allow it to soak up the flavor for at least three hours. Afterwards, place the pineapple and scorpion tails onto a skewer, alternating between pineapple and tail. Grill the skewers for about 5 minutes, brushing them with the marinade periodically. Prepare the rice and add chopped parsley. Place the Leaf Scorpion kebabs on a bed of rice and serve hot. Best served with white wine.

centipedes and millipedes

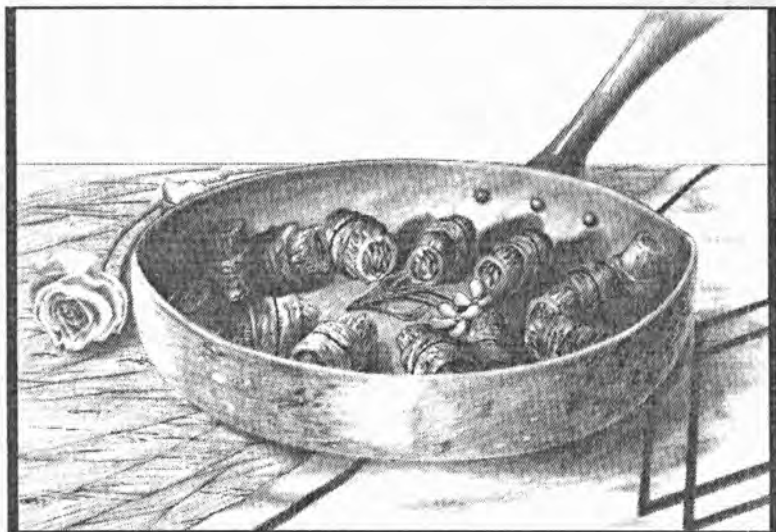
The centipede is another type of arthropod closely related to insects. The first and most obvious distinction is that centipedes have 15 to 50 pairs of legs, while insects only have three pairs. The next major difference is their body structure. The body of a centipede is made up of many parts, one segment for each pair of legs. Centipedes also lack an abdomen. Lastly, they never have wings. Centipedes do have antennae that, like insects, sense vibrations in their surroundings. They also have the same type of eyes as insects: simple and compound or mixtures of the two, depending on the specific centipede.

When moving, a centipede twists its body in an S shape. This moves one side of a set of legs forward. When it twists its body in the opposite S shape, it shifts the opposite side's legs forward. This allows the centipede to move very quickly, enabling it to chase down its prey. All centipedes are predators.

Millipedes are exactly like centipedes with one exception. They have several hundred pairs of legs, depending on their size. The largest millipede known, the Rope Millipede, has 18,000 pairs of legs along its 30-foot length, or about 50 pairs of legs per inch.

Millipedes advance by moving their legs forward in a wave-like motion. Both the right and left leg of a pair move as one, pulling the millipede forward. This type of movement is very slow but since the millipede is herbivorous, it does not need to chase down its food.

jumping centipede filets



1 Jumping Centipede
50 strips of bacon
Salt and pepper

The Jumping Centipede has startled more than a few hardy adventurers. The Jumping Centipede is a large insect, measuring about six inches in diameter and four or five feet in length. It lives in most deep forests of the Exodus Plain that have a relatively open underbrush and a dense canopy. It hunts small to medium sized animals that move along the ground.

Jumping Centipedes hunt by leaping from the canopy and silently floating down to land on their prey. Once they hit a target, they wrap around the creature, holding tightly with all of their legs and immediately begin to eat. Their bite secretes a mild poison that eventually incapacitates most creatures and weakens Yas'Wailians and large creatures. This allows the centipedes to eat in relative safety. The Jumping Centipede's legs are exceptionally flat and broad, like a glider membrane, allowing it to slow its descent and control its fall.

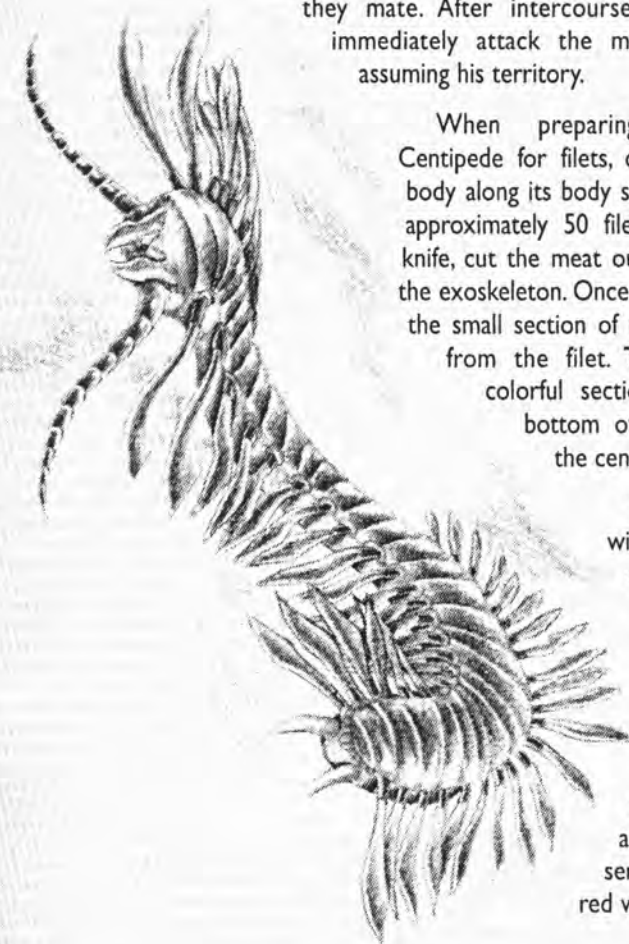


The Jumping Centipede is fiercely territorial and will kill any other centipede, jumping or otherwise, that enters its home. The centipede will often attack Yas'Wailians and other creatures. Its territory is usually a radius of about twenty to one hundred feet, though in some cases this can be smaller if the Jumping Centipede population is particularly dense.

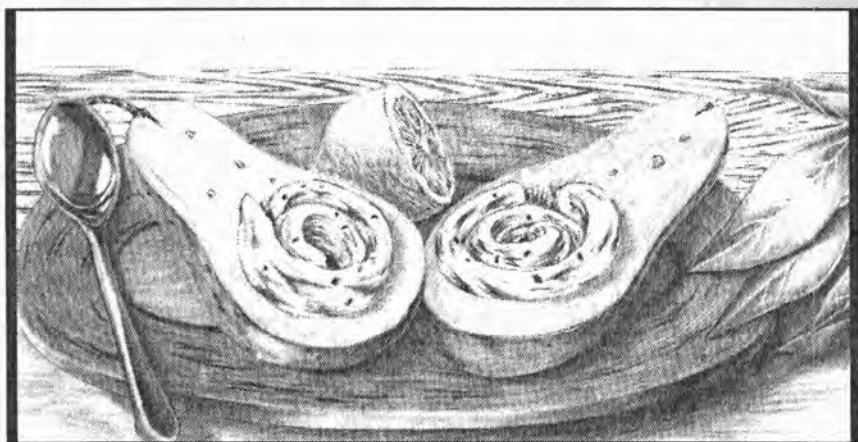
The only exception to this is when Jumping Centipedes mate. The male will allow the female to enter his territory. They will then begin a courtship dance after which, if the female finds the male acceptable, they mate. After intercourse, the female will immediately attack the male and eat him, assuming his territory.

When preparing the Jumping Centipede for filets, cut the centipede's body along its body segments, giving you approximately 50 filets. Using a paring knife, cut the meat out of the center of the exoskeleton. Once completed, cut out the small section of the internal organs from the filet. This is the small, colorful section that is at the bottom of each segment of the centipede.

Wrap each filet with a strip of bacon and secure it with a string. Cook the Centipede filets approximately 1/2 an hour at medium heat. Sprinkle the filets to taste with salt and pepper. Best served with a glass of red wine.



crab centipede pear salad



1 tablespoon of minced onion
1/2 teaspoon of soy sauce
dash of white pepper
1/4 cup of mayonnaise
2 Crab Centipede claws
1 pear

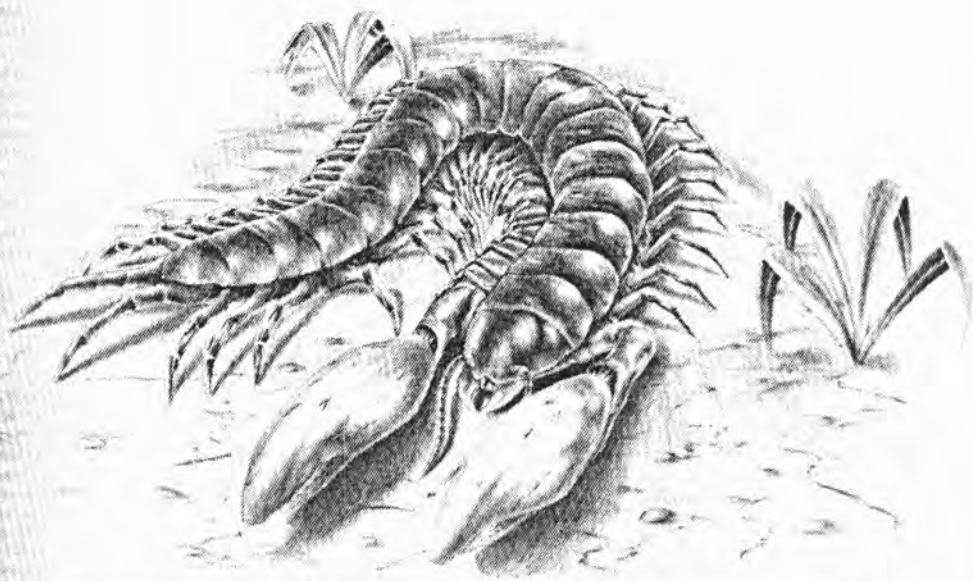
The Crab Centipede is an interesting creature. With a body measuring at just under two feet in length, this centipede is able to prey on animals much larger than itself. While most centipedes' front set of legs have developed into claws for holding their prey, the crab centipedes' claws have become quite large for their body size, measuring 8 to 10 inches in length. Attacking from beneath a pile of fallen leaves, the Crab Centipede uses these claws to grab hold of its prey, most often the wild Lynax. Its claws are incredibly strong allowing it to capture large prey.

The Crab Centipede lives in most cool, damp, and dark regions of the Deep. They usually live where wild Lynax roam in abundance, waiting in ambush under some ground foliage. One must always be careful when attempting to uncover these centipedes; larger animals do not scare them. They will use their

powerful claws to defend themselves. While the claws are not strong enough to do serious damage, they can easily sever a finger.

When preparing these centipedes for cooking, simply remove the claws from the centipede. Removing only one claw from the centipede will not kill it. This allows you to release it back into the wild. The Crab Centipede will regenerate its lost limb completely within a year. Place the claws in boiling water for approximately 15 to 20 minutes. Carefully remove the shell and place the meat in a cool place until chilled. Cut the meat into small pieces.

Mix the crab meat with finely chopped onion, soy sauce, a dash of white pepper, and mayonnaise. Then cut the pear in half along its length and remove the seeds. Brush each half with lemon juice and sprinkle with salt. Afterwards, place the Crab Centipede mixture into the pear halves and serve chilled. This makes a wonderful appetizer for any meal.



WIRD CREATURES



Aware of its speed, Jove could not afford to strike precisely. He began to swing madly at the creature, each flight of his sword passing through the Shadowsting as effortlessly as through the air. The Strider's attack did little but annoy the creature, which prepared to strike back.



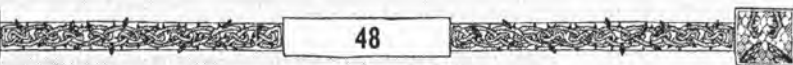
"Back again."

Jove muttered the words to himself, smiling as he approached the forest of petrified trees. The sight of the deathly trunks and bare, spindly branches presented a frightening and distressing vision. Even merchants who ventured through the area avoided gazing in the forest's direction, fearing that they would turn to stone.

Long ago, the trees had lost their power to inspire dread in Jove. The Horizon Strider was more than familiar with the Bone-Wail Forest. Jove smiled not because he cherished the sight of the city looming ahead, but because he could not help but think that the prison held an intangible power to draw him into its web. The Strider's amusement, though perhaps misplaced, was one of sober realization; a bitter acknowledgment of the futility of his struggle. Jove lost a part of himself long ago to that dark place. When he learned of the existence of the city as a boy and an apprentice Strider, he simply accepted that places like Bone-Wail existed. It was not until Jove became a Horizon Strider and witnessed the atrocities committed daily in its shielded walls that he knew he could not stand by and do nothing. Despite an oath he had taken not to interfere in political affairs, he immediately sacrificed his cherished calling and became a champion of freedom.

As a Slip Walker, Jove helped to free prisoners and slaves, shielding this affront from the eyes of the Wardens. Having chosen this duty above any other, Jove knew that he could no longer call himself a Horizon Strider and benefit from their privileges. Jove often envisioned - at times in dreams - that Bone-Wail laughed mockingly at his defiance. For every prisoner he freed, a hundred more were born to replace each lost slave, and millions more were trapped beyond Jove's reach. So many souls were confined that the loss of one, or even one-hundred, hardly mattered to the Wardens.

Jove looked ahead and could see the source of his latest quest. Unbeknownst to the Alliance of Kings, three Cartographers approached the city of Bone-Wail. The Horizon Strider had learned of the secret Cartographer delegation while visiting Cliff-Spider. Considering the rumors of their guild master's corruption, Jove thought it was essential that he investigate their activities. Though the Strider had begun his mission alone,





he had found an unlikely ally on the way to Bone-Wail. Jove looked at his companion. After their long journey, he finally decided to explain how the past days had led to their unlikely meeting and how he had come upon the trail of the Cartographers. Jove sat back and acknowledged that was the least he could do for someone who had saved his life.

the road to now

Jove had been visiting the city of Cliff-Spider, flying within the shielded caves of the Crysarius Bridge, and enjoying the sight of the masses of free people. Unfortunately, the Horizon Strider had left the War Citadel earlier than he would have liked. Jove had taken a Raven, who was herself from Bone-Wail, as a student to teach her the ways of Providence. Although he could not currently bear his title of Horizon Strider, Jove felt he could still train one pupil in their ways. Perhaps this was a way for Jove to atone for his failure to abide by the Striders' rules. Jove feared that his Raven pupil would choose the same path as his own, preventing her from becoming a true Horizon Strider. He warned her that she could not call herself a Strider if she chose a destiny of defiance and political interference. Since she knew first-hand the horrors in Bone-Wail, she understood, perhaps all too well, the importance of liberating Bone-Wail's slaves; yet, she hesitated. The same experience also made it difficult to return to her birthplace. The sight of the pale city's monoliths and palisades stirred feelings too powerful to recall. Jove had no doubt that time would heal the open wounds; however now was too soon for her to return.

News of the Guild of Cartographers captivated Jove. The once-precocious guild had birthed the Horizon Striders hundreds of years ago. Jove needed to know whether the rumors surrounding the Cartographers were true, and headed to the Boneyard to dig up information. The Boneyard was the one place even justice feared to invade. Few people could muster strength enough to acknowledge the Boneyard's dreadful



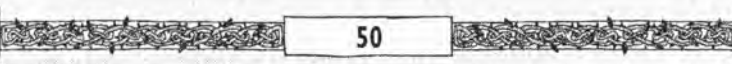
caves, let alone frequent them. The place was dank and completely sheltered from the sun. It had become the gathering spot for the hundreds of dangerous criminals who hid from Cliff-Spider's authorities.

Jove decided to visit an old Rat friend in the Boneyard. The Rat was an informant, and one to weave many tales, both delusive and muddled. Upon hearing him, one was inevitably compelled to believe that the diminutive fellow suffered from a malady of deceit. Jove learned to weed out the fabrications, however, and unveil the underlying truth. Jove understood the subtle body language of most Yas'Wailians. He had learned that the face, hands, posture, and most especially the eyes, sometimes revealed more than a speaker's words. Jove had unveiled a secret language, and discovered that he could read people's body language particularly well. The Rat was no exception.

Jove could never understand why his Rat friend told so many deceitful tales. Perhaps the storyteller's truths were so precious and so shocking to listeners that he was forced to frame them pleasantly, if not fantastically, to dampen their effects. Or perhaps the Rat had been blessed with precious knowledge which, if revealed to others, would be cursed with a parcel of deceitful words.

The Rat's latest tale was particularly captivating. Though as usual, the truth was well-hidden, the Rat had hinted that a group of Cartographers was heading towards Bone-Wail. For some reason, the old weaver of words had chosen Jove to impart many secrets in the past. This time was no different. After leaving his friend, Jove began investigating the Cartographers' mission. He had learned that no other guild was informed of their voyage to the Warden city.

Jove tried to think of a reason why the Cartographers would organize a secret mission to Bone-Wail. Perhaps because of the turmoil in the world. In the face of the threat from the Lost Tribes, the Alliance of Kings, headed by the stalwart Regent Caiylus, had reluctantly agreed to make peace with Bone-Wail; if only for the purpose of confronting their mutual enemy, as Caiylus had espoused continually. There was no possibility this truce would last. Bone-Wail was the most ancient Yas'Wailian prison settlement in Providence. The unyielding fortress held the descendants of rebels. The city's jailers were intent on enslaving the Alliance of Kings, which they





believed, contained nothing but escaped prisoners. This philosophical impasse prevented, and rightfully so, the Alliance from trusting their temporary allies.

Jove's opinion, shared by many, was that the Cartographers were no better than the Wardens. Perhaps the Cartographers sought to side with the Wardens. It was no secret that the guild was more interested in its own wealth and welfare than that of the Alliance. Few people trusted their leader, the mischievous Gargoyle Sirius Khohall. Jove long suspected that Sirius would, at any opportunity, betray his allies and join an enemy if it was to his own benefit. Perhaps this secret trek to Bone-Wail was all the evidence the Alliance needed to rid itself of its darkest thorn.

Jove considered revealing this to his Alliance allies. His only concern was that they had no evidence other than his word, which they would trust, but could not act upon. Jove knew that if he went to them now with what he knew, his words would just be part of many accusations made against the Cartographers. The guild could just as easily claim a valid reason for its unrevealed visit to Bone-Wail.

The Strider knew he needed proof of wrongdoing if he wanted to make any impact. As much as he wanted to tell his contacts, he knew he had to investigate further and without his Raven pupil. Jove decided his student should stay behind in the safety of the War Citadel, with reassurances that he would return to conclude their engagement.

an unfortunate intrusion

Tracking the Cartographers was not easy. Though the Horizon Striders justifiably claimed to be the greatest explorers in Providence, the Cartographers bore the title as well. Unfortunately, corruption was a problem within that guild's ranks. Furthermore, not all Cartographers possessed the necessary experience, or were talented enough to hide their tracks.



The group of three Cartographers had five hours' traveling time already accomplished. Jove learned of their departure by asking some friends who lived in Freetown. One advantage of people recognizing Jove as a Horizon Strider was that most eagerly divulged their secrets. Perhaps they did this hoping that he would transform the story into a grand tale, one recounted throughout the land. A Fallen woman, who had risen early, had noticed the departure of three shrouded figures. These strangers matched the descriptions of Cartographers the Rat had given Jove. The fact that the guild members were wrapped in cloaks to hide their faces only enhanced Jove's drive to uncover their mission. He felt young again, recalling his first years as a Horizon Strider fondly, when he was passionately curious for anything new and different.

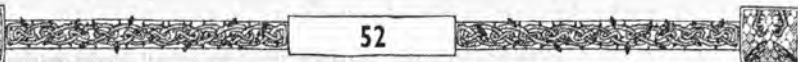
Jove had been trying to find the Cartographers since his departure from Cliff-Spider. All three were men, one a Hyena, one a Gargoyle, and the other an Eagle.

If the Horizon Strider was not familiar with the Cartographers' techniques, he might not have noticed the strokes of leafy branches in the sand - a common trick to hide one's footprints. With a little more effort and skill the two Cartographers could have used the branch's leaves successfully. Instead, they had used the sharp wooden ends, thus scraping the ground and leaving deep, perceptible grooves in the soil. He followed the scratches for a few minutes, and eventually found a broken Picatom branch tossed to the side of the path. Jove stared in disbelief at the Cartographers' recklessness.

"Stupid and careless," he muttered aloud.

Either the Cartographers had decided they no longer should bother trying to conceal their path, or they had chosen that speed was essential. A few yards from the discarded branch, the footprints of only two Cartographers were clear. If speed was on their minds, Jove would have to increase his own. At least the prints made it that much easier.

Jove kept following the straight path. He considered for a while that the missing prints of one Cartographer might indicate a trap. What if the guild members had deduced they were being followed, and had decided to separate to corner their tracker from the rear and the front? Jove would have to consider the possibility that the Cartographers were stalking him.





Darkness crept into the woods faster than Jove realized. Though he wanted to keep moving, common sense dictated that he should force himself to rest. The Strider moved to a place of comfort and unpacked his bedroll. He wished he could continue his tracking by flying above the thick cover of trees. Despite his great vision, however, that would be far too difficult, and would alert his prey that they had a pursuer. Every instinct told him he should fly. Unfortunately, the mass of branches and leaves blanketing the sky crushed any hope he had. Impossible in this thick web of trees, he thought.

An uneasiness accompanied every night in Providence's forests. So many dangers awoke at this time that one could scarcely afford a moment to relax. Though a blazing fire's wild flames dissuaded most predators, Jove feared that lighting a campfire could attract his quarry's attention. Jove decided, however, to risk lighting a torch at his feet in case a brazen predator hungered for him. He would have to rely on his senses and his ability to wake from sleep at a hint of a threat to warn him of any danger. Slowly, Jove's eyelids fell to the weight pressing upon them.

Stirrings in a tree broke Jove's sleep, which must have lasted but a minute. Perhaps the wind, Jove considered.

The Strider reached for the torch and directed it at the tree. Nothing moved. If the wind had shaken the tree's branches, the movement would not have died so quickly. His nerves bristled, Jove reached for his sword. As his fingers grasped the handle, Jove felt a gust of wind at the base of his skull. The sharp sting of talons raking his flesh accompanied the wind. Blood spurted onto a nearby tree, and the pain caused Jove to fall back upon the ground. Though he was rarely surprised, the speed of the attacker was far greater than his own.

Every single action Jove took seemed to take an eternity. He had yet to turn and face his assailant before another slash tore into his back. The assailant fell onto him, incapacitating his legs. Jove tried in vain to turn his head to stare at the invisible attacker, but could only see a hint of fluid movement.

Whatever the thing was, its weight was not so great as to prevent Jove from moving. As he did so, however, a hand, much smaller than his own yet possessing a strength that belied its size, took hold of his skull and ground



it into the earth. This forced bitter soil into Jove's mouth, and squeezed out any air his lungs contained. Jove could feel the thing behind him. Its warm, moist breath splashed against his spine, sending shivers along his neck and down to his toes. Jove felt powerless, but was not about to give up hope. It could not end like this, he cried as his sight faded with his last breath.

the savior

A stinging, wailing sound awoke Jove. The pressure forcing the Horizon Strider to the earth subsided and accompanied the thrust of air which began to refill his lungs. The sweet breath revitalized him. As Jove greedily swallowed another gust of air, the dirt in his mouth choked him. The Strider spat out the clay-like saliva and turned to stare at the creature.

A naked slender body, roughly Yas'Wailian in form, stood above Jove clasping each side of its head with its hands. The creature possessed translucent skin, which barely concealed its internal throbbing structure. An arrow, adorned with a wooden whistle, was planted deep into the tree near the pale, sexless thing. A second shaft flew furiously towards the creature, this time planting itself deep within its shoulder.

The slender form opened its mouth, yet no sound emerged. In the place of a scream, the creature's long arms and legs began to agitate furiously. Another arrow slit the still air. Although expecting this new attack, the nimble creature barely dodged the shaft.

Despite his discomfort and the painful sensation from his back, Jove reached for his sword and swung clumsily at his wingless opponent. Immediately, the creature regained interest in the weakened Jove, who was managing with great difficulty to lift himself from the ground.



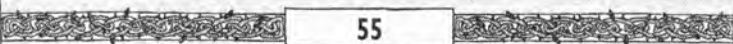
Jove's attempt to capture the creature's attention was successful. The Horizon Strider knew that in his current state, he could not hope to win a contest of skill and speed. Rather, the experienced tactician anticipated that his distraction would give his unknown savior ample opportunity to launch another arrow.

For a moment, Jove stared at the form crouched before him. Though he had not thought of the creature's nature during the attack, it occurred to him that his opponent was not a simple beast. Its soft, gray eyes conveyed a look of fear and confusion, approaching that of a lost child. Jove knew first-hand that its limbs, though frail in appearance, possessed remarkable strength and flexibility.

Jove noticed that the hairless creature lacked any clothing. It's expression calmed considerably as Jove's eyes met its own, each pair scanning the form before it. Jove was about to move back to indicate that he had no desire to challenge his attacker. Another arrow, which emitted the same stinging sound that had startled Jove to consciousness, grazed the thing's shoulder. Despite this wound, the creature did not scream, though its features displayed fury at this renewed assault.

No blood emerged from the creature's wound, which considering the strength and size of the shafts, suggested either that the creature possessed no such fluid, or had a great ability to shrug off attacks. Jove anticipated a new assault, but the thing crouched even lower to the ground, sprung into the air, and landed against a nearby tree. The being hugged the tree from behind, spreading its hands to cover a great area.

The tip of the thing's fingers widened, and its back, which lay against the tree, seemed to merge into the bark. Slowly the tree's bark began covering the thing's skin as if it were an invading army of Desert Ants. Soon the wood replaced the creature's skin entirely. Another whistle-adorned arrow streaked through the air, this time missing its target by a distance of a yard. The sound, although only bothersome to Jove, chased the thing away. Jove watched as it disappeared amid the thick cover of shrubs and trees.





the unlikely companion: an awkward introduction

Thankful for the assistance and relieved that the alien creature had departed, Jove lowered his sword and tried to ascertain the severity of his wounds. Simultaneously, the Strider scanned the surrounding vegetation, hoping to find the guardian archer and determine the creature's escape path. Jove reached for his sword instinctively as he heard a stir in a nearby bush. A tall, slender, dark-haired Hyena emerged from the leafy plant with a longbow in hand. The woman wore a sleeveless leather vest, laced at the top. Despite the cover it provided, Jove could see patches of black from her shoulders to her muscular forearms. Unaccustomed to trusting strangers, Jove would not have lowered his guard, if not for his savior's features, which revealed genuine compassion and concern. The woman's face, simple, yet possessing a handsome symmetry, displayed deep black eyes as dark as her long, thick hair. The color of the Hyena's lips nearly matched her tanned skin. The bow-woman looked at Jove and raised her weapon instinctively.

"Who are you?" she asked firmly.

Jove could not understand her aggressive stance. "I am Jove."

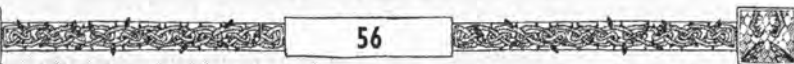
The Strider emerged from the leafy covers, the blood from his wound dripping slowly to the ground. Jove reached for the tree to stabilize his legs, which began to shake from the loss of fluid. The archer had not realized the gravity of Jove's injuries; the darkness from the leaves had covered his body.

"At the moment," continued Jove with great difficulty, "I am not sure I pose enough of a threat to incite your aggressive reception."

The woman smiled and lowered her bow. "I apologize," she said.

"No apologies, but a name would be appreciated."

"I'm sor..." The woman smiled again, brushing her long, dark hair from her face. "My name is Somit Fabrican. I am a Slaywind." That fact became obvious as Jove stared at the various arrows hanging from her quiver. As





she moved closer to the Strider, Somit examined Jove's face, which despite his efforts, reflected his pain clearly.

"Let me see your wounds," the Slaywind voiced gravely.

Jove turned slowly, keeping his hand against a tree to lessen the exertion.

"I'll be fine soon," Jove replied to discourage any further inquiries of his condition.

The blood had ceased to fall. After glancing at his back, Somit confronted Jove and stared at him in amazement.

"Your wounds...they are healing!"

Jove looked at her eyes, and peeled his hand away from the tree. "Yes, I certainly hope so."

"You're a Shard aren't you?" she asked.

"I have the good fortune of being one, yes." Jove reached for a cloak in his pack. The exertion sent a bolt of pain through his back, reminding him of his injuries. Somit could sense Jove's discomfort.

"You should not move, you could reopen the wounds."

"Yes," Jove replied. "And I could also lose my prey."

"In this state, you will be the prey," she added.

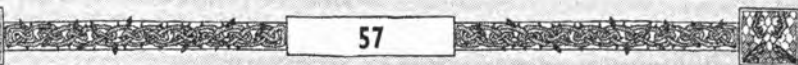
Jove rested for a while, and relented to let the Slaywind tend to his wounds.

"Simply amazing," Somit expressed. "I have never seen anyone with regenerative abilities."

Unsure of how to address her curiosity, Jove opted to alleviate his own. "What do you know about the creature that attacked me?"

"I... we encountered them very recently."

"What is a Slaywind doing so far from a commune?" Jove asked, remembering how infrequently the religious archers traveled in these parts.





"So many questions! Your wounds have not hampered your curiosity." The archer's curt reply suggested a hint of annoyance.

Somit rose from beside Jove; it was obvious to him that she wished to change the topic.

"Hunting yourself?" Jove asked, poking gently at her defenses.

Jove hoped to garner a reply. Somit stared at Jove for a moment.

"What, or should I say, who is your own quarry?" This time, there was no mistaking Somit's annoyance.

"Perhaps the same as yours," Jove replied, ignoring the archer's anger. Again, Somit looked into Jove's eyes. The Horizon Strider guessed that she was searching for a hint of his nature. She then shifted to his back, where she paused upon the year rings decorating his Pure wings - a mark that distinguished Jove as a Horizon Strider. Finally, Somit broke the uncomfortable silence.

"First things first. You are lucky to be alive. It could easily have torn a hole through your back."

"It is a strange creature is it not?" Jove commented, hoping to erase his past rudeness.

"A creature? I would hesitate to call it thus, for its wits match, if not surpass, our own. Our people call it the Inconnu."

The word seemed familiar to Jove, perhaps an ancient Slaywind term; whether it stood for stranger or intruder, Jove was unsure. Somit continued her tale.

"It is not from these parts, this much I know. We encountered a similar being near my commune, not long ago. Unfortunately the thing scared one of our children, causing an overprotective parent to shoot in its direction. It retaliated, but soon fled. It was clear to me then that fear motivated its actions. We also noticed that the thing seemed highly sensitive to certain sounds emitted by a Bat brother's Shard gifts."

Somit reached for one of her arrows, and pointed at the cylindrical whistle tied to the shaft.



"This whistle, which I have painstakingly fashioned, releases a sharp sound when launched through the air. It disturbs the Inconnu greatly."

Somit pulled at a string framing her lanky neck. After lifting the end of it from her breast, the archer revealed another similar wooden trinket attached to the rope.

"I can also use this one, which I can blow into should the Inconnu come in close quarters. I prefer using this instead of force, but at times, offense is the only defense. I hope you did not mind my interference," Somit added bitingly, remembering she had yet to hear gratitude for her timely intervention.

"I thank you for your interference, and your great offense," Jove smiled at Somit, who smiled in return.





The Slaywind quickly resumed her description, as if pressed for time.

"We believe the great Sunderlands flood may have displaced these beings, who must have lost their natural habitat. It is a tragedy."

"That would explain its aggression - a reaction to its forced displacement." Jove offered his opinion, remembering the look in the creature's eyes.

Somit nodded in agreement. "It certainly would not be the first time this occurred. I fear there may be more similar strange beings and creatures who have been forced to relocate."

Somit placed the arrow and her neck piece back to their resting places, and looked as if she was preparing to depart.

"Are you leaving?" Jove asked.

"Yes. I must tend to other things." Somit looked in the direction of Jove's path.

"I see that you are headed my way. Perhaps we can travel together," he suggested.

Somit seemed hesitant, then remembered Jove's wounds. "You're hardly in a condition to walk about, harmed as you are."

"Perhaps," Jove replied, "but I will walk nonetheless. In my condition though, it might be best to have a companion."

Jove's lips widened to a smile. Nonetheless, he noted her continued hesitation.

"Fine, you may follow, for now."

Jove packed hurriedly, matching the Slaywind's eagerness to depart.



a traveling tale

Jove had hoped to lead the way, not wanting to lose the Cartographers' trail. Somit, however, had been in the lead since their departure, heading in the direction of the tracks; for this reason Jove had contained his wish. The Horizon Strider still could not tell whether she was aware of the faint prints, or whether coincidence, perhaps even fate, Jove mused momentarily, led to the oneness of their path. How foolish a thought, Jove acknowledged silently to himself.

He wondered why the Slaywind's presence cheered him so. The Strider felt a strong compulsion to chat with his traveling companion, yet could not think of a topic of conversation. A discomforting silence prevailed.

"So, as you know, I am a Horizon Strider," Jove muttered awkwardly.

"Yes, I believe we've already established that," Somit said, mildly confused. She paused then resumed her pace.

Jove was determined to break the silence. "Then you also know I am a gatherer of tales."

Somit slowed her pace.

"And an orator of legends," she added, disarming Jove's poorly veiled attempt to extract a story.

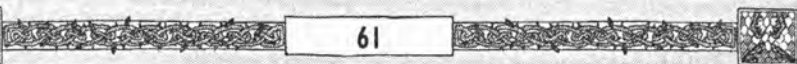
Jove persisted, not willing to acquiesce easily.

"You hinted that the being that assaulted me was not the first strange creature you have encountered."

Somit responded abruptly, "No, it is not."

"Did you confront another Yas'Wailian-shaped being?" Jove persisted.

"No." Exasperated, Somit sighed and surrendered her story.





the syphons

"I can only say what I have learned from my Slaywind brothers and sisters, for I seem to be immune to their attention."

Jove slowed his pace to match her own, listening intently to every word the Slaywind spoke.

"Let me explain," she continued.

"I accompanied my three Slaywind brothers and sister on a journey to gather some fruits and herbs. The gods had blessed one of us with the gift of Wird, while another was like yourself, a mighty Shard born with instinctual, often subconsciously wielded abilities. We walked a well-worn path three days from our home, which no doubt contributed to our ease of guard. We found fresh Uru fruit in a patch of tall grass. We marveled at the luck of such a discovery. These gifts were ripe and virtually unmarred by insect or bird. I remember thinking how strange it was that no one had plucked such a find of fresh fruit.

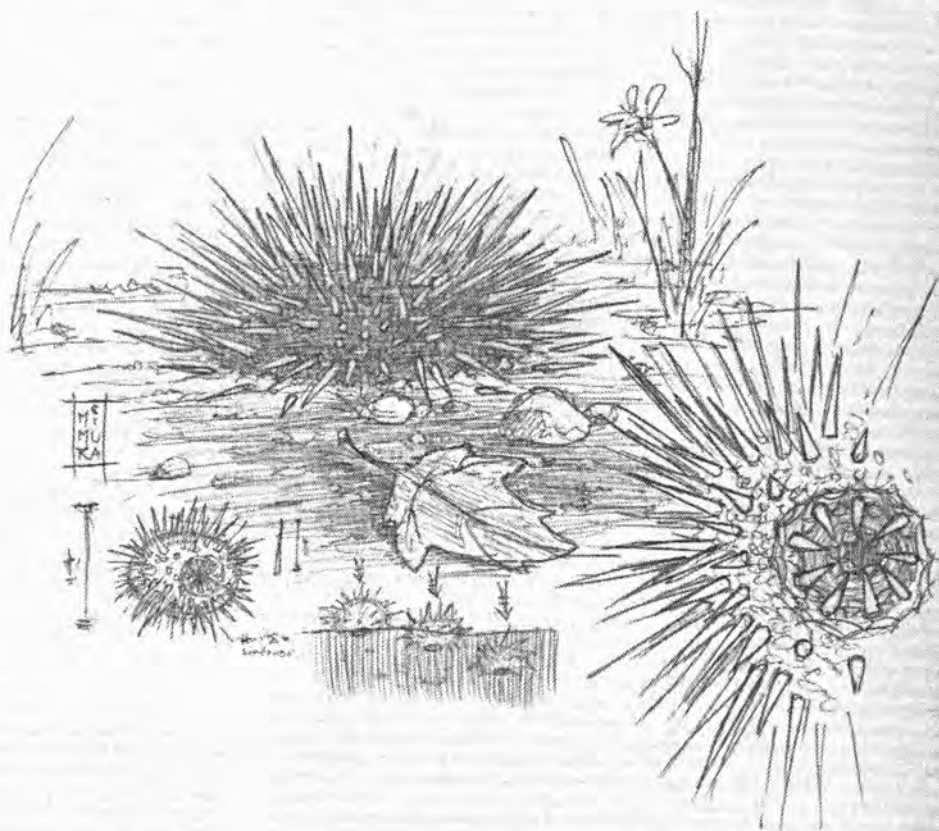
Eager to taste its pleasing flesh, brother Dalvon used his gift of Wird to lift himself and sister Jahna to a high branch. At that moment, I paused to reflect on the silence pervading the environment. No birds chirped or flew about, no animal tracks covered the ground, nor even fluttering insects, which always offered their persistent presence when least desired.

At that moment, brother Dalvon's screams shattered the tranquility. Our friend howled and fell like a stone from the tree. Almost simultaneously, our Shard sister's screams echoed Dalvon's. A third brother, who was as powerless as I but possessed wings, rushed to the rescue of our sister, who still hung in the massive tree. My concern was for Dalvon, who had yet to cease his screams. Frantic, I made my way through the tall, dense grass.

Finally reaching my friend, I discovered the origin of his affliction: a parcel of odd, moss shaped forms held onto him perniciously. These things, no larger than a Gargoyle's fist, possessed quill-like fur and no eyes that

were discernible. Only the existence of a large toothy aperture marked one of their rounded sides.

The things covered Dalvon's body. Blood poured generously from unseen wounds. Dalvon tried in vain to remove the creatures. I was unable to use my bow, which is like an extension of my limbs. Instead, I took hold of one thing while reaching for my sheathed blade. As I tried to pull one of the many things covering him, Dalvon's screams grew louder, matching in force my efforts to tear the things away.





Finally, drawing my weapon, I began to slash the thing. It immediately loosened its fangs from the deep, now visible wound. Fearing its bite, I began to stab the thing madly, the content of its feast spurting onto my leg. Dalvon's blood, when mixed with the creature's own juice, formed a particularly toxic combination. Its acidic touch ate my clothes and seared my flesh.

One by one, I slashed through the things, in time to pull my brother from the precipice of death. My third Slaywind companion had been equally successful in rescuing our sister. The strange things finally leapt away, submerging into the ground as easily as a fish in water. From this earth, I can only presume they were born. Thankfully, in time, our injured comrades recovered. The things failed to attack those of us who did not possess Wird-gifts; this despite our assault."

The Slaywind's tale had captivated Jove.

"Incredible," Jove said. "I have never heard of such creatures."

Somit's passionate depiction had hypnotized him.

"I presume you have learned of its origins since?" he added.

"Yes. Dalvon himself, having recovered from his wounds, traveled to Jastruen's Academy, where his friend resides. I accompanied him despite his wishes to travel alone, which I insisted was unwise in his weakened condition. There, a Wird Weaver of great knowledge informed us she had encountered the creatures near the Sky-Torrent bridge while investigating volcanic activity and its relationship to Retributions. She told us the things swarmed around her, and if not for her fleeing the scene immediately, she might well have lived her final days there. She also remarked that when she had begun casting a spell, the things became more frenzied, and attempted to overwhelm her with greater ferocity. This report matched another she gathered from a fellow Wird user months later; this was near the Sunderlands, investigating, like she had, the nature of Retributions. This same caster claimed to have faced these things in the region. He noted that the creatures became increasingly excited when he attempted to use his spells. Both he and Dalvon's friend concluded that the things are probably a creation of this world, in order to repair scars, known as Retributions, and to combat threats to the Tapestry and the ecology. If I remember correctly,



they dubbed the hideous things Syphons because of their ability."

Jove looked puzzled. "What do you mean?"

"The things have an ability to absorb Wird from people. It seems their victims are more appetizing if they manipulate Wird; perhaps due to the culpability of Wird casters, many scholars believe, in forming Retributions. As I understand it, Shards, followed naturally by those who have no Wird abilities whatsoever, have a lesser, if not insignificant, impact on the Tapestry. Perhaps this explains why the Syphons did not care to bother me."

Jove stared vacantly in Somit's direction. The Slaywind thought him bored by her tale. Though Somit had met many Striders in her time, she did not understand fully their skills and their great need to explore the world, recording accounts of its life.

What she perceived as disinterest was quite the opposite. Undoubtedly, Jove had deemed her words of great interest to himself and to others, since he had taken the time to print them in his memory. Annoyed that Jove had not made any comment, Somit returned abruptly to the task of leading the way.

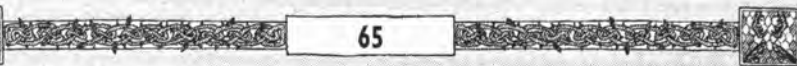
"Well, we should be on our way," Somit said as she began walking.

Having completed the task of recording her tale, Jove noted a hint of vexation in the tone of her voice. He wondered if she had interpreted his look of resignation as boredom, and forced himself to contain his amusement over her care to impress him. To ease the tension and to appease his companion, Jove decided to return her great favor.

"I must inform you now, of my duty, nay our great duty - that of each and every Horizon Strider - to impart willingly and eagerly upon others our great stories," Jove voiced haughtily, hoping to impress a sense of importance.

"How generous of spirit, and fortunate for those in your presence to benefit from this masterful instruction," Somit commented with an air of fabricated gravity.

Jove chose to ignore her remark, which was clearly intended to dissuade him. He began his tale, hoping to liven up the mood.





a mirthful affair

"Before I commence, I should warn you that you may find this tale amusing. However, you must not underestimate the threat this creature poses to the safety of our people, for dangers come in all shapes and sizes, and in all appearances."

Somit seemed unimpressed. Her disinterest did nothing to discourage the Strider, who began his tale immediately.

"One day as the boy..." Jove paused as if searching his memory. "I believe his name is Volun."

Jove resumed.

"Despite his heritage as a Dove, Little Volun was considerably smaller than usual for his kind. On this day, Volun walked back home from a day's work in the fields. The afternoon, like many before it, was sunny and possessed an air, both sweet and fresh. The peaceful beauty distracted little Volun, who diverged from his path, as he often did, to admire the birds and flowers. Those who knew him laughed heartily upon learning of his passion for these things, assuming that his attraction to life's beauty and gentility meant that he would never become a great warrior as they would.

Despite these slights, the young Volun endeavored to quench his curiosity and his love for the world's mysteries. He spent more and more time in seclusion, near a small golden pond he had come upon a short time earlier. Never had Volun witnessed similar creatures and flowers elsewhere. Each blade of grass and every mite that abided within this sheltered world shone of a rare and exquisite beauty. The greens were greener than the Deep, the hues of plumage upon the birds shone brighter than the shimmering sun at midday. The songs the beasts sung were more melodious and inspiring than even the Swan's lauded chants. This was truly the only place the boy felt at ease. Volun had spent many hours there studying the unique forms about him."

"After a particularly lengthy stay on this day, Volun rushed back home, realizing he was late. As he ran along the path, the same he took each and



every day, he noticed the tranquillity about him. Strange, he thought, but not unusual. He wondered as well why his inquisitive neighbor, always eager to meddle in his affairs, had failed to notice his late arrival. Further yet, Volun thought how queer it was that the village bully had not intercepted him, as he often did to dispense his usual cruelties. Volun, more than content with his good fortune, chose not to question his luck, and slyly entered his abode.

The need for silence was unnecessary, however, as his family was missing. He searched through each room but could not discover his father. Worried, he looked through the window and noticed his neighbors heading in haste to the tavern. Although his father forbade him to lounge there, Volun followed them.

Volun peeked cautiously through a window of the tavern. He saw his father along with the other villagers conversing gravely. The source of their worries was a strange creature they spoke about fearfully. The thing, one man said, was vicious. Its fangs and bones protruded everywhere and its limbs were as massive as a Gargoyle's. Another villager stood up and claimed the man's tale to be fallacious, describing instead the thing of dread with greater passion, and if possible, greater ferocity and savagery. One by one, the villagers tried to outdo each other's descriptions.

How horrible this thing must be, the boy thought. Yet in all his knowledge of the plants and beasts in this realm, Volun could not conjure an image as fearsome as that to which they hinted. After a moment's deliberation, however, the boy understood the nature of this great monstrosity.

Volun rushed into the tavern, shouting promises of a swift remedy for the village's ailment. The villagers' responding laughter stunned him like a mighty blow. The boy's father, perhaps due to the merriment his son had engendered, had forgotten that Volun should not have entered the tavern. He grabbed Volun lovingly, then ushered him outside.

Volun sat on the steps of the tavern, immobile, arms crossed in defiance. The sun had long ceased to glow, yet the tavern's occupants continued to discuss how best to proceed. The howl of a woman





unexpectedly shattered the eve's peace. Unlike most of the other villagers, she had remained at home. She now ran frantically towards the bar.

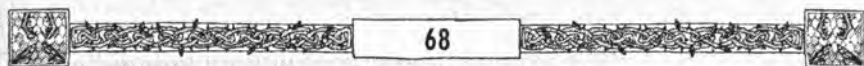
Immediately, the tavern's occupants rushed to her rescue, brandishing swords, axes, and hammers, ready for a confrontation. The villagers began to fight their foes, striking furiously about them. Volun could not see the beasts they fought so passionately. Some villagers were too spooked to confront this apparent danger. They ran indoors for cover, or fled the scene immediately. The village, it appeared, was now under siege.

One particularly brave lot took on a foe. Volun could not see a single creature. Regardless, he thought, the beast undoubtedly must be of astounding size considering the number of villagers needed to fell it. One of these warriors lifted a great mace above his head, readying to land it squarely upon his foe. As the weapon descended, its course deviated inexplicably. It landed upon a comrade's head rendering the man unconscious.

Another villager lashed out at an opponent, his blow seemingly bouncing on a form and returning back upon his own body with even greater force. The man then stumbled backwards into a nearby ally, foiling his ally's valiant preparations to swing his weapon. Thrown off-balance by his bumbling companion, the ally's weapon landed clumsily against another warrior's leg, toppling the warrior headfirst into the syrupy muck. The black slop, made up largely of the excretions of a great variety of traveling animals, splashed upon the faces of others, blinding the warriors and leaving them helpless to pursue their offense.

Volun watched in amazement for a while, but grew frustrated. He was determined to put an end to the villagers' plight. Despite his wounded ego, the boy rose from the ground and walked into the fray. His father, stunned by his son's bravery, tried in vain to reach him.

Finally, the boy arrived amidst the fight. He lifted himself upon his toes and stretched to his full height. Volun's father watched as the boy brushed the beast with the gentlest kiss. The result of this induced a faint chuckle from the beast. The laughter failed to match the beast's size. Both Volun and the creature began to laugh aloud and with all of their spirits. The thing







before the boy recessed to such a size, barely larger than a melon, that the villagers could not believe their eyes. The childlike thing, fragile and vaguely Yas'Wailian in appearance, fluttered about Volun, sporting three pairs of diminutive wings upon its back - these resembled those of a nimble insect. Thick, fair hair graced the flighty being's features, along with a look of mischief and trickery only the greatest pranksters possess. The little one returned Volun's favor, gently offering a peck onto his cheek, then flew rapidly into the dark. The villagers, still unable to discern reality from delusion, stared at Volun who turned and headed home."

Somit tried in vain to conceal her curiosity.

"So what was it?" she asked the Strider with a feigned casual air.

"What it calls itself I am unsure, though its victims have given it many names; Ghostmite and Dreammite seem to be the most common."

"So its true face was that of the small child-like form possessing the many wings?"

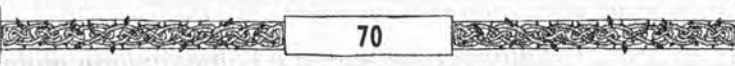
Jove was silent for a moment, then looked at Somit, pleased she apparently had enjoyed the tale.

"Who knows? Its abilities to create illusions are so vast that perhaps no one has ever seen its true face."

Somit could not believe Jove's tale. "You mean that this single, tiny creature was responsible for creating all the beasts the villagers could see?" she asked.

"It would seem so," he replied.

Jove smiled. His countenance did little to satiate Somit's curiosity. Somit was angry that she had succumbed far too easily to the Strider's charms. She decided not to ask the many other questions that lingered in her mind.





an unwelcome disturbance

As Jove's tale winded down, the two travelers took a pause to sip from their flasks. Jove sat on a stone while Somit stood nearby, apparently eager to resume her trek. The Strider was not so compelled.

Somit rose abruptly and began to walk away. Jove followed.

He tried to match Somit's stride, momentarily forgetting his injuries. The brisk movement resulted in a burning sensation. Somit immediately noticed Jove's discomfort and moved to his side. She reached out to support him. As she did so, her long strands of hair tickled his neck and cheeks. The scent of her hair, a mixture of musk and dew, permeated the air around her. Jove's momentary discomfort passed.

He looked at Somit and studied her face.

"I just... wanted to express my gratitude for your help," Jove said.

Before Somit could reply, a distant clank echoed. She turned away and headed for the disturbance, drawing her bow as she moved.

"Stay here," was all Jove heard as Somit's body disappeared behind a tree. Jove grabbed his sword and followed.

The noise of a struggle grew louder as Jove approached a clearing. Before he could pounce into the fray, the grasp of a familiar hand closed around his mouth and pulled him into cover. Jove turned and confronted its owner, Somit, who placed her index finger before her lips to suggest silence. She lifted her other hand from his mouth, one finger at a time, to prevent an accidental sound from emerging. Somit pointed to the source of strife. Beyond the branches and leaves, Jove could see several forms engaged in combat, three of them familiar: the Cartographers.



the effigea

Though he was glad for her action, Jove wondered why Somit wished to remain hidden. Remembering her timely intervention against the Inconnu, Jove thought that perhaps she liked to observe from afar before offering any support.

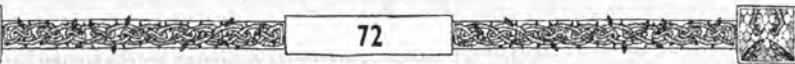
The Cartographers were engaged in a duel with a creature. Though this was but a single beast, its appearance suggested it was made up of more. The creature's features were twisted. A grin of pain was etched in its three eyes and two mouths. The thing, twice the size of the largest Cartographer, was riddled with powerful muscles across its arms and back. As the Cartographers moved around the creature, Jove noticed that it possessed four arms, and immediately remembered what it was.

Bone-Wail was the birthplace of many abominations. Many of them were called Degenerates, the shame of the mighty Wardens. Inbreeding among certain families resulted in mutant Degenerates, some more horrific than others.

Jove remembered hearing tales of one minor Dragon family, whose name is lost to time, and the changes they suffered. The story claimed that every member had changed so completely, they displayed but a hint of their once sharp intelligence. What they had lost in wits they had more than gained in power and strength. Their savagery had threatened Bone-Wail's security, so the Warden Senate had banished them from the city.

Everyone presumed they had perished, but years later, the Wardens discovered that they resided in Leviathan's Spine and the Exodus Plain, some distance from Bone-Wail. There the Dragons had evolved into near-mindless creatures, though their power had increased significantly. Jove had heard many tales of the former Dragons destroying caravans and slaughtering travelers, for no other purpose than propagating destruction.

The three Cartographers struggled with the creature which the Wardens called the Effigea. The only thing that prevented the great beast





from landing its blows firmly upon its foes was its cumbersome movements and the impressive agility of the Cartographers. Each time the thing struck the ground its anger intensified. The failed strikes engendered vibrations, resembling those of an earthquake, that reached to Jove and Somit's hiding place.

Despite its frustration, the creature had struck one of the guild members; his shredded clothes were soaked with blood, sweat, and dirt. Jove thought the Cartographers were fortunate that this Effigea appeared to be far weaker than most of its kind. Jove knew that if they had encountered its larger brethren, which were far more common, they would never have survived the encounter. Whenever he met them, Jove always chose to run. Luckily for the Cartographers, the Effigea were solitary creatures, even disliking their own kind.

Though one of the Cartographers was wounded, the creature was in a far worse state. Many cuts covered it and blood flowed profusely from its wounds. Despite this dire state, the Effigea fought on and managed to graze another Cartographer, who screamed loudly.

Sensing a momentary advantage, the beast prepared to slam its massive fists into the weakened man, who kneeled to the ground in pain. Before it could land the final blow, another Cartographer plunged his sword into the creature's back. Jove and Somit looked on as the Cartographer's blade protruded from the Effigea's chest. The attacker forced his sword deeper, moving it angrily in the wound. The thing stirred for a moment, causing blood to cascade onto the wounded Cartographer.

The Effigea had lost so much of its blood that the foul liquid began to flood the clearing. The sticky fluid's smell roused the wounded man, who ignored his pain and moved quickly to narrowly dodge the falling Effigea. To confirm his kill, the attacking Eagle Cartographer stabbed the still creature on the floor. All three Cartographers sighed, relieved that they had bested the fearsome beast.



revelations

Thus the combat ended. One of the Cartographers inspected the clearing thoroughly to reassure his companions that there were no other creatures. The Cartographer's inspections led him, quite by chance, to Jove and Somit's location. Both travelers remained motionless as the Cartographer passed nearby. Jove raised his weapon, convinced the Cartographer would discover them.

"Tobys!" one man shouted.

The inspecting Cartographer turned his attention to his companion.

"What is it?" he asked. His tone betrayed his annoyance.

"We must hurry or we shall be late!" one of them replied.

"I am aware of that."

The Cartographer moved away, looked back, and helped his guild-mates prepare. The Cartographers conversed, claiming they had to arrive in Bone-Wail at a due time or endanger the trade with the ambassador, a man they called Warden Balbyr Bhanes. This exchange involved, according to their words, tomes of precious value to the Cartographer libraries. How pleased their guild master would be, they claimed arrogantly.

Jove could not hear the rest of the conversation, the ruffle of leaves muffled their voices. Jove gathered that the exchange of these volumes would cement an agreement of some sort. Jove was hardly surprised that the guild was self-interested. However he had not thought that some of its members would ever betray the Alliance of Kings willingly: how wrong he had been. What else could the Cartographers be hiding from the Alliance?

After gathering their weapons, the guilders resumed their voyage. Any suspicions Jove had about the Slaywind's interests regarding the Cartographers were confirmed: she had been tracking them since before he had first met her.





Immediately after the Cartographers departed, Somit emerged from the cover and prepared to follow. Jove stood motionless. The Slaywind turned, noticing that he remained rooted to the ground.

"Well," she said, "are you not following?"

Jove fought hard to suppress a smile, confident he had uncovered her secret.

"Why should we? We are not still hurried for time are we?" he voiced confidently, placing his hands behind his head.

"No, we are not, but I am!" she shot back.

Somit was clearly not interested in entertaining Jove nor in participating in what she perceived correctly to be a game.

"Wait!" Jove said as he grabbed her arm.

"Let me go Jove, I have to leave!" she said, struggling to free her arm from his clutch.

"And do what?" Jove said, losing his playful countenance. "Stop the Cartographers?"

He still had not let go of her arm. Somit looked back at him, her struggle to free herself ended.

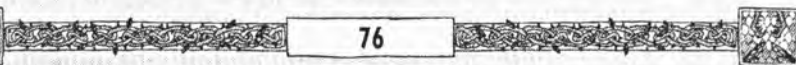
"How do you know they are Cartographers?"

"Do you forget that I am a Horizon Strider, and that long ago we were one with the guild?" he said sternly.

Somit was silent.

"Why were you following them and why do you now want to stop them?" Jove asked.

"Is it not sufficient to know that they are Cartographers and that they are headed towards the most wretched place in this realm? What possible business could they have there?" Somit's voice was raised in anger. "Now I know that they are planning a meeting with a warden. You heard them!" Somit shook her arm, and finally wrenched it free.





"Yes I did!" Jove shouted, then lowered his voice immediately. "But stop them now, and you lose any proof you think you have."

Somit paused. "What makes you think that we cannot get the information that we need from them now?" she asked, though she did not expect an answer.

"I am convinced in your abilities to do so, but we have followed them this far. Does it not make sense to follow them further, to their destination, and learn even more?" Jove pleaded. "Maybe we can capture them after they leave Bone-Wail and get the proof we need."

Somit pondered the idea for a moment.

"Very well, we will follow them to Bone-Wail."

back to now

The trip to Bone-Wail had been considerably less eventful than prior to the encounter with the Cartographers. A chill stood between the Slaywind and the Strider, no doubt because of their heated exchange. They stood upon the edge of the Bone-Wail forest. The Cartographers were still plainly in their sight.

To change the mood, Jove had decided to explain how he had come across the guild members. He recounted his meeting with the Rat in Cliff-Spider and his initial departure up until he had met Somit. While they took a pause to nourish themselves, Jove also remembered, for his own benefit, the journey of the last few days and how quickly he had learned to trust Somit.

The Slaywind was satisfied that Jove had recounted his journey, though she seemed surprised that he was dedicated to the pursuit of the Cartographers; so unlike a Horizon Strider to interfere in such matters, she thought. Somit remembered a friend telling her that all Horizon Striders took oaths not to interfere in politics. She wondered if he was really dedicated to the capture of the guild members. Regardless of his actions, Somit was determined to stop them.



Jove had hoped that revealing his secrets would encourage her to tell her tale, but she had yet to reveal anything. Why would a Slaywind care what the Cartographers do, he wondered? Jove hoped that his patience would eventually pay off, and that she would reveal her interest in the guild members.

Jove looked at the Cartographers. They had been waiting near a Warden outpost for nearly an hour and by the agitation in their movements it seemed clear they were losing patience. Perhaps they were worried that the Wardens would unleash their infamous and brutal War Dogs against them. Their bodies soon grew tense at the sight of a tall Dragon clad in armor. Two Ravagers accompanied him. They were tall, pale-skinned mutated Yas'Wailians who fanatically served Bone-Wail's Wardens.

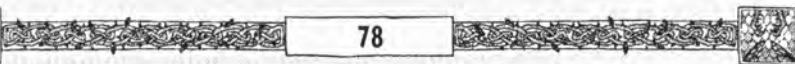
A thick mist surrounded everyone. They all stood still for a moment, and finally began to converse. After dispensing with the required protocol, the Cartographers followed the Dragon Warden and his guards beyond Bone-Wail's ghostly walls. Jove was confident that they would emerge again with the proof Jove and Somit needed. Somit was not as confident.

the waiting game

Despite, or perhaps because of his familiarity with the city, Jove felt exposed so near Bone-Wail's gates. Fearing that Ravagers would spot them, the Strider recommended they move to a nearby hill, sheltered from the view of guards; this would allow them to see clearly any traffic to and from the city, and to intercept the Cartographers on their way out of Bone-Wail.

"How can you be so sure they will emerge from the same place?" Somit asked.

"This passage, the Sieud Way, is the only route in and out of Bone-Wail. Well, the only way the Cartographers will be shown."





Somit accepted Jove's explanation, and wondered how he knew so much about this place. Jove and Somit climbed to a high and rocky platform overlooking the city of chains.

"It's obvious you have been here before, perhaps even many times," the Slaywind observed as she settled her things down.

"Yes, though you see a Horizon Strider before you," Jove revealed reluctantly, pointing to the year rings on his wings, "I... I also bear the title of Slip Walker."

Jove did not understand his motivation, but felt he should confess his crimes against the Striders.

Somit was unsure what this meant.

"Though my knowledge of the activities in this place is paltry," she said, "what I have heard from my elders is that the Walkers are freedom fighters. Is this true?"

"You are right. We are," Jove replied.

Somit stared at him.

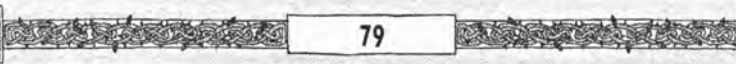
"But," she said, looking at his year rings.

Jove understood her puzzlement. He knew exactly what her next question would be. He spoke again before she could make the query.

"Yes, I know. This abolishes my right to be a Strider. I am aware of that, but I have made my choice and suffered the consequences."

Jove was amazed by how much Somit knew about the Horizon Striders. By the look on her face, she must have known about the Striders' codes never to interfere in the politics of city-states such as Bone-Wail. Any who do so, such as Jove, could not rightfully claim to be Horizon Striders.

"As you may know, Horizon Striders are welcome in the prison city, as long as they are willing to exchange their news of the world. I have committed a crime unbeknownst to my Strider brothers and sisters. If they knew, I am sure their anger would fuel many of them to pursue me, and rip





these precious circles from my wings." Jove pointed to them. He paused for a moment and reconsidered his harshness. "Perhaps I am overreacting, they might simply be content to defame me."

"What have you done? Becoming involved in politics is not heinous." Somit's compassion dissolved her stern demeanor.

"You do not understand."

"What?" she asked. "What is it?"

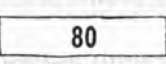
"I used the knowledge I gained as a Strider when visiting Bone-Wail years ago. I misrepresented my intentions. I told the Wardens that I was a Horizon Strider who had come to exchange news of the world. My real mission, however, was to uncover crevices in the city's foundations. These fissures have led to freedom for many prisoners. I made the choice then to mock the teachings of my mentor."

Somit approached Jove, who looked into the distance at Bone-Wail's frightening towers and walls.

"I think you are being far too hard on yourself." Somit hoped she could change Jove's mood. "What you did, what you choose to do, is noble in itself; despite what the Striders say!"

Somit wanted to say more, but she could not think of anything to ease his mind.

Both Somit and Jove surveyed the landscape below them for some time in silence. The prevailing mist, almost tangible to the touch, covered the whole region, preventing most of the sun's light from reaching Bone-Wail's forest. Hours passed, yet this enclosed stone platform grew only slightly darker than before, even though the day was almost over. Jove knew that this place of petrified trees, twisted and turned by time, was hardly a safe region for travelers. Though its dangers were considerable, the elevated terrace from which Jove chose to observe the city was tamer than most places in the region. At least the cliff's walls protected their perch. The stone hid them from patrols of soldiers, and thus from whatever other abominations the Wardens used to enforce their dictatorship.





After night had set in, utterly blanketing the region, Jove and his companion began to keep watch in shifts. Despite the thick darkness, Jove and Somit could still see the entrance to Bone-Wail. Two massive torches lit the city's entrance. Somit insisted that Jove take the first rest, emphasizing that his injuries would only heal completely after a full night's sleep. Jove crept into a corner, wrapped himself in a blanket, and slept like a child.

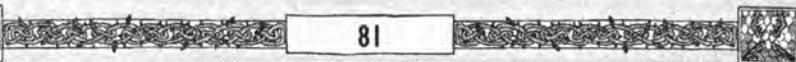
the shadowsting

Somit looked at the city below. Thankfully, heavy Wird torches, perpetually ablaze about the city, allowed the Slaywind to observe the passage of Wardens and all manner of strange creatures: things with wings, others more dog-like, but not a hint of the Cartographers.

Somit began to have second thoughts. She regretted not having attacked the Cartographers earlier when she had the chance. What if they never left the city? Or worse yet, what if she never escaped this cursed place alive?

Though she had chosen not to light a torch, fearing it would attract unwanted attention, Somit noticed that the darkness in the alcove grew more intense. This convinced Somit that the blackness was not natural. She turned her attention away from the gates of Bone-Wail. Slowly, a dark form moved from one of the stone walls, its shape only discernible because it was darker than the background. The thing possessed wide wings and the tail of a stinger - similar to that of a Scorpion, but thinner. The threatening form moved fluidly towards Somit.

The Slaywind began to draw her bow, but before she could launch an arrow, the shadow moved with astonishing speed. It whipped its tail effortlessly at the archer. Though Somit tried to dodge the attack, the thing's swift movement made her effort useless. The tail's stinger pierced





Somit's shoulder, cleanly piercing through the Slaywind's leather vest. Although the tip of the shadow-form's tail was planted within Somit's body, there was no sign of blood. Pain launched through her shoulder, preventing her from defending herself. The Slaywind tried to fight the pain, but began screaming.

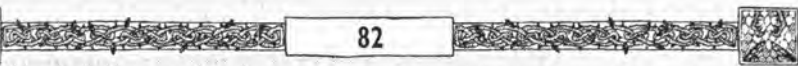
Remarkably, Jove had slept soundly for the first time in months; an indication of his trust in the Slaywind. Somit's screams, however, awoke the Strider. He instinctively reached for his blade. The shadow-form stood before Somit, who clutched her shoulder in a futile effort to ease her pain. Jove could not believe his carelessness. Immediately after noticing the creature, he cursed himself for failing to warn the Slaywind of Bone-Wail's many dangers.

This particular threat, known as the Shadowsting, festered in the prison city's petrified forest. Jove suspected that the taint of corrupted Wird permeating the woods attracted it to this area. Memories of Jove's childhood began to invade his mind; he recalled spending hours with his brother, who possessed great knowledge of Wird-casting. The Wird Weaver warned Jove that any dark place could contain the fearsome creatures. Jove's brother also said that corrupted Wird attracted the beasts. Though he did not know what this tainted Wird was, he knew that the Bone-Wail forest possessed great amounts.

Jove's brother also suspected that Shadowstings fed on this corrupt energy. Neither Jove nor his brother could uncover why the creature was utterly aggressive. Trying to understand a method to its mad ways was useless; Jove believed that it possessed no reason, merely a mindless hunger for destruction.

Furious, the Strider clasped his sword with both hands and launched himself at the Shadowsting. Jove, who had clashed with the creatures before, experienced no surprise after leaping through its intangible form; he was merely content to have distracted it.

The Shadowsting pulled its tail from Somit, who immediately collapsed to the floor. Aware of its speed, Jove could not afford to strike precisely. He began to swing madly at the creature, each flight of his sword passing





through the Shadowsting as effortlessly as through the air. The Strider's attack did little but annoy the creature who prepared to strike back. Somit had regained her composure, and prepared to launch an arrow.

Jove looked at Somit. "Fire!" he said, "Fire!"

Somit was puzzled. Could he not see that she was preparing to launch an arrow?

"I know, I know!" she said angrily.

Jove dodged the Shadowsting's tail narrowly.



"No!" he shouted. "Use fire!"

Somit quickly dropped her arrow. She reached for another one and struck a flint against a stone. She ignited the tip of the shaft and launched the flare arrow in the Shadowsting's direction.



"Duck!" Somit shouted, warning Jove to avoid her fiery missile.

The flaming arrow, cascading a frantic light, flew through the creature and shattered against a wall. Though the arrow's passage had been as swift as Jove's swinging blade, its effect was far more intense. The Shadowsting curved in on itself and expelled a loud wail which resounded in the enclosed area.

Jove, who had crouched to avoid Somit's attack, unfurled his wings and took flight. The Strider charged the confused Somit. Jove's speed stunned the Slaywind.

The Strider clutched her in his arms. Moving directly away from the stony ledge, Jove flew far into the sky, distancing himself from the Shadowsting's fury. The Shadowsting used its own powerful wings to follow.

"What are you doing!" Somit shouted and writhed.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you!" Jove remarked to the archer. He pointed to the ground, which was fading quickly.

"What?!"

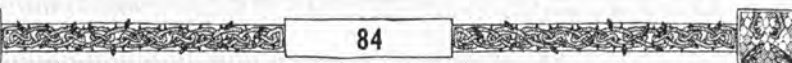
Somit was gripped by an overwhelming sense of discomfort. Her heart felt lodged within her throat. Jove took his ability to swoop through the skies for granted. He often forgot the effects a journey at these speeds could invoke.

Somit choked and closed her eyes tightly.

"Put me down!" she screamed.

The Slaywind's shriek matched the Shadowsting's own in anger. Its sound startled Jove, who stabilized his flight to calm his companion. Somit could still hear the creature gaining on the two companions. Fighting to regain control of her senses, she ceased struggling.

Jove increased his speed and gained some distance from the Shadowsting. Finally, the creature abandoned its pursuit. Somit stared at it in disbelief. Never had she seen anything like it. The Shadowsting was completely featureless, almost two-dimensional. The only thing that gave it a





shape was its outline, which resembled that of a bird with massive wings.

Reassured that the creature had left, Somit stared at the landscape below. The sight of Bone-Wail's towers, piercing and dispersing the thick mist, stunned Somit. The Slaywind stared in morbid fascination and marveled at the dual nature of the city. Somehow, the bleakness and cold, lifeless exterior of the city's stone walls resounded with a strange, silent beauty. The sight reminded Somit of a painting she had seen at her temple: a depiction of the month of Nedlurr, the legendary "month of frost" on the home world of Yas'Wail. Since Providence's climate was far too warm, she had never seen snow and ice. The brushstrokes of white paint, however, placed upon the dark background of lifeless branches and stone resurfaced in her mind. After dispelling the canvas from her thoughts, Somit turned her attention to Jove.

"What exactly did you think you were doing?" she shot at Jove. "Why did we leave so suddenly? At the very least you could have warned me that..."

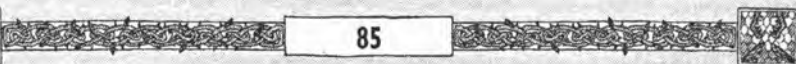
"The Cartographers," Jove interrupted. "They have left the city. I noticed their departure before lunging through the Shadowsting."

Somit was speechless. Though she understood his reasons, Somit was still angry that he had not warned her. She took the time to contain her anger.

"Where are they?" she finally asked.

"Up ahead. Soon it will be the perfect time to strike at them, especially if we wish to gain the advantage of surprise."

Despite her fascination with the city, Somit was pleased that Jove's flight path took them away from Bone-Wail. Finally, she could see two Cartographers moving away from the Warden city. Somit drew an arrow from her quiver and aimed at a guild member.





the confrontation

Somit launched a number of arrows with frightening ferocity and speed. As each shaft met its target, Jove was amazed to note her skill and accuracy. A Hyena Cartographer was pinned face first against a tree. Not a single arrow had grazed his skin; rather the wooden shafts had pierced the Cartographer's heavy clothing. Two arrows were near the man's shoulders, another by his leg, pinning him against the tree. The shaken Hyena tried in vain to pull the arrows and free himself.

Jove released Somit to the ground some distance from the Cartographer. If he struggled, she could plant more arrows in his clothes. Confident that the Slaywind had completely contained one guild member, Jove charged at another. The Cartographer began to run away from his companion, hiding a pouch under his arm.

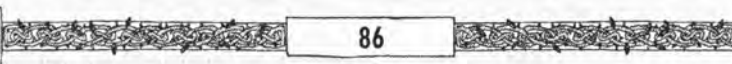
"How noble of you to abandon your friend," Jove shouted at the runaway, who turned to look at the Strider.

"In a hurry?" the Strider added.

The frightened Cartographer increased his speed, which surpassed Jove's own flight abilities. Jove was impressed, but quickly realized this was no doubt the guild member's Shard ability. In his panic, the Cartographer failed to notice his foot had become entwined in a mess of stringy vines. The Cartographer landed head first onto a stone, splitting his lip and shattering a tooth. A leather-bound package, along with a number of trinkets, slipped from the pouch the man had hugged so tightly. The package flew into the air and landed amid a pile of rocks, hidden to its owner. Despite his pain, the Cartographer tried to find his obviously prized possessions. He turned and faced the edge of a glistening blade. Jove stood above him.

...

Somit drew another shaft from her arsenal. The Cartographer struggled, twisting his limbs skillfully. The man had begun to wriggle out of his clothes.





Somit pulled back the bowstring near her cheek, aimed, and prepared to launch another shaft.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you," she shouted, her voice booming authoritatively. "You might just make me miss my shot."

The Cartographer turned his head, as far as he could in his position, toward his opponent. Somit waved her pinky, the only available finger she had, and smiled mischievously. The man stopped struggling.

...

Jove listened to the Cartographer's pleas. The man claimed his collision with the stone had sprained his neck.

"I can't get up!" he moaned incessantly.

Jove chose to help, not out of pity, but rather because of the whining man's pestering voice and its effect on the Strider's nerves.

"Very well."

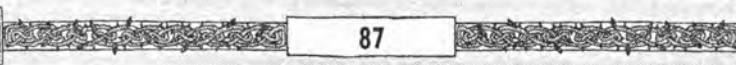
Jove lowered his sword. As he did, the Cartographer turned his leg with a grace that defied his current posture. The man landed a firm kick in Jove's groin. Jove collapsed to the floor. Despite the pain, more resounding and pronounced than the Inconnu's slashes, Jove lifted his head. He watched helplessly as the Cartographer gathered up some of his things and departed.

...

Somit sat on a rock, snacking on a fruit and awaiting the Horizon Strider's return. The other Cartographer was still pinned to the tree, but with far more shafts emerging from the tree than before; from a distance, the arrows looked like quills upon his back. Somit noted Jove returning from the woods. He had a great look of breathlessness upon his blushing face. His stature, not straight and proud as before, suggested resignation and frustration.

Somit rose and brushed the dust from her clothes. The archer approached the Strider mockingly. "Lost him, didn't you?"

Jove looked at his companion and said nothing.





the prize

Jove had recovered from the Cartographer's blow, which he considered to be cowardly, if not predictable. He held the Cartographer's discarded treasure, a large tome, which the guild member had unknowingly abandoned. Jove showed it to Somit, who fought to suppress her amusement.

Jove focused his anger on the restrained Hyena Cartographer. He handed the time-worn book to Somit.

"Where's your friend?" he shouted.

Somit looked at Jove and hesitated for a moment. "Eh... I asked him already... their leader is still in there." The Slaywind pointed in the direction of Bone-Wail.

The Hyena's eyes widened when viewing the book in Somit's possession.

Somit noticed his expression and moved to confront him. The man looked away after realizing that his features had betrayed him.

"This is it, isn't it?" Somit asked. "This is what you had to deliver to your guild master?"

Though she asked the question, Somit knew she could not expect an answer; she realized she did not need one.

"We should leave immediately," Somit suggested. Jove agreed.

Jove looked at the path ahead.

"It won't be long before the other Cartographer realizes that this book is missing, and he may return, perhaps with reinforcements. We should take a path other than the Cartographer's."

Jove looked at the Hyena who was still pinned against the tree.

"We'll bring him with us," he said. "Let the Alliance figure out what to do with him."



the book of things

Jove and Somit approached the Crysarius Sea. The sight of the capital city of Cry-Star looming ahead, coupled with the sea's cool breeze, revitalized them. Despite their distance, they could see the proud city standing resolute within the sea's waters. The waves crashing against Cry-Star's walls did nothing to shake the city.

Jove had taken charge of their prisoner, who was bound and gagged. Somit looked at the leather bound tome that would cement their accusations against the Cartographers. She opened its cover and glanced at the note within. Undoubtedly directed at a prominent Cartographer, the illuminating message was penned in gold ink.

This last piece should complete our exchange. Within its fold you will find the information you seek, both recent and remote, to complete your extensive records.

Below this note was a sigil of the Puradanium Dragon House, the rulers of Bone-Wail.

Somit was not surprised that the Cartographers sought records from the prison city - perhaps the only place in Providence to possess knowledge of the world that is beyond the guild's imaginings. The Slaywind wondered what the Cartographers had agreed to exchange in return for this volume. At least with this book, she would uncover part of the treasures the Wardens had promised the Cartographers.

Jove and Somit's walking speed had slowed considerably. Somit opened the tome carefully and momentarily lost herself within.





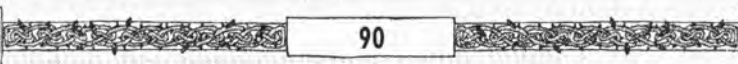
Carpa ded Nhumín: The Book of Things

*"To wonder at the great and to shrug at the plain is to see
the surface and ignore the depth."*

- Anonymous

This book contains a collection of entries of creatures and beings, exotic and familiar. Some are colorful and, at times, others are admittedly tedious. All are part of Providence's abundant and secret realm of Nhumín; an ancient Yas'Wailian term meaning, "things," or also "Wird Creatures." Scholars and philosophers used this term to describe anything, living or not, that did not fit within a specific category. On Providence, scholars use the term to describe creatures of Wird. Each one can wield Wird consciously or instinctively.

As readers will discover, the entries are both exhaustive and far too limited. Alas, such is the nature of a work of this scope. Despite the oftentimes rough and unpolished descriptions, the engaging nature of the subjects and the genuine efforts to record them compensate for this deficiency. The valiant efforts of the Puradanium, Coblaskan, and other explorers who uncovered the Wird Creatures cannot be overstated. *Carpa ded Nhumín* is a work of greatness to the Wardens; one which will secure their authority for generations. Readers should note that the entries, which include but are not limited to journals, diaries, letters, and transcribed oral accounts, are placed in chronological order, whenever possible, to facilitate the reading experience and maintain the authenticity of the records.





Mak Quine, Celebrated Adventurer

Entry 100234.a112

Time: 334 C.S.

Place: Pincer Swamps, Leviathan's Spine

Record Type: Personal letter and notes written by Mak Quine,
Hawk explorer for the Wardens of Bone-Wail.

Dear Zimbra,

I trust you are well. I had hoped to actually get a chance to talk to you before I left the city, but you are out of town and nobody seems to know when you will return. I am hopeful that your sojourn across Leviathan's Spine will be as fruitful as you were predicting. I will be heading towards Stone-Tree to see what lies in that part of the world. Although I have read of the discoveries of that city's explorers, I have to admit to not having a great deal of respect for the lot of them. You always theorized that you had received the greater share of our dear Swan mother's empathy, leaving me our father's arrogance. Perhaps you are correct, although that would only justify my argument that I should have been the Hawk and you the Swan.

Regardless, I have to leave tomorrow. I have left you a copy of some notes that I wrote to myself during my last fit of exploration. I hope that you will find them worthwhile; they certainly cost me enough in terms of effort! Still, I am not sure that they are a sufficient reward for a journey of just over half a year, which is why I am leaving so soon to uncover more secrets. I do not expect to be gone for nearly as long, probably only six weeks this time.

I will see you on my return. Enjoy your stay, and wish me luck.

Eternally yours,

Mak.



3 Farawad, 334 C.S.

COMPILER'S NOTES

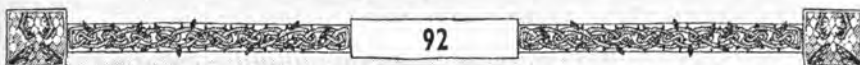
Mak Quine's father was a powerful Hawk. Mak's mother, however, was a Swan slave. Despite his heritage, Mak became one of Bone-Wail's legendary historical figures. Mak Quine was a great Swan Wird Caster and one of Bone-Wail's earliest authors. Almost every Warden has read about his travels.

Although he loved to make new discoveries, his exploits will reveal that he was more an occasional observer than a passionate explorer.

The time of these records dates from well over a millennium ago. Still, the descriptions of the creatures are accurate and hold true to this day. These notes, compiled for his brother Zimbira, are particularly interesting because they are raw; the tomes of adventures Mak eventually wrote were based largely on the accounts included here.

My journey has been very relaxing for most of this first week out of Bone-Wail. I had a slight problem with a couple of Rilbecs last evening, but one shot of lightning sent them scurrying. I left the area afterwards as I did not want to see who would come to investigate. I had not realized I was that close to the Pincer Swamps, but I suppose I was mistaken. It has been too long since I have traveled this path. The sounds of the swamp are more relaxing to me than any sound I could hear in the city. I suppose the less I have to deal with the prisoners, the better I feel. I confess to wondering occasionally why it is that we continue to follow the same patterns we've held since arriving in Providence. Since the Gates that brought us here are closed, it is obvious we're not going back to Yas'Wail.

There are many more wild and powerful things outside the prison camps than most people suspect. Although I have more knowledge about this than most, there are still things that surprise me almost on a daily basis, even while walking through the most civilized areas of the world. My curiosity for uncovering these things is what motivates me, despite any discomfort I put up with during my travels.





That is enough for now. The sun's pulse is already low and I still have to set up my wards before going to sleep.

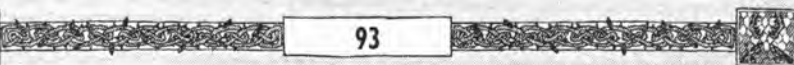
14 Farawad, 334 C.S.

I ran across something very odd today. I will have to check when I return to Bone-Wail, but I think that I have discovered a new species of lizards. I was walking through the swamp when I heard some very loud croaking. I decided to investigate. Perhaps I am excessively curious, but I like to understand all the creatures in an area. After walking for a short time, I came across a group of lizards. I had been attempting to walk quietly, but apparently failed since I startled the lizards. At that point, several of the lizards immediately began to grow in size!

I am not referring to the kind of increase some species demonstrate, for example, those who inhale a lot of air to intimidate their foes by making themselves bigger. No, these creatures grew from just under a foot long to over five feet in length! Discretion seemed to be the best idea at the time, so I slowly backed away when I discovered, to my horror, that a couple of the creatures had circled behind me. Following their maneuver, I immediately pushed a lizard away with a spell, which seemed to confuse the others somewhat. As I backed out of the area, I could see several of them relaxing and shrinking down to their normal size. Since I was already using Wird, I decided that I should at least get something out of it. I conjured a bolt of electricity, and launched it at the closest collection of the creatures. The others hopped away quickly.

My attack allowed me to get several bodies that I could examine at my leisure. I found some slightly drier ground on which to rest, and brought the dead lizards with me, which had returned to their original size. There is no question that these are magical creatures; I could see residual Wird. Besides, there is simply no other way to explain their spurt of growth.

The lizards are a light green in color, with a leathery skin and a few circular markings of dark green. A particularly flat head graces the top of their form, while their legs, in my opinion, are abnormally large. These allow the lizards to move rapidly, and to leap great distances. The lizards also have a great deal of excess skin, which folds in on





itself. I presume, this is a result of their growth ability: most peculiar looking creatures!

The last thing I have to report tonight is that the Kanimba Lizards, as I call them, do not scale the heights of culinary perfection. That is just my opinion, and I am far from the best cook. I'm sure that my brother would enjoy them, but then he has always had slightly odd tastes. My major concern is for the unsuspecting traveler. If caught unaware, a swamp explorer who encounters the lizards could be in grave danger. The creatures are cunning and they attack in great numbers; at least 10 of them had trapped me! If not for my Wird spells, I may not have ever seen the light of day. As I discovered by examining them further, their strength, when they grow, is remarkable. I would hate to have to face several at once. Finally, their leaping ability makes escaping them on foot highly improbable. It is best to avoid them entirely.

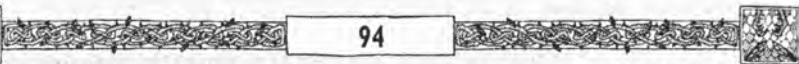
31 Farawad, 334 C.S.

I am now leaving the Pincer Swamps and heading towards the Great Bridge. There might be more interesting things to find here, and I do believe that I have seen a couple of new insect species. However, I could not find their colony, and I am more than sick of the constant dampness. I do not even know if Wird will make my boots usable again after this trip. I think I can repair them enough to keep them on my feet, but no reputable hostess would let me walk into her den with these on my feet.

My dreams have all been of dry ground these last three days. It is undoubtedly a sign that I should leave. I will throw a small party in the woods for myself and whichever insect species decides to join me once I am again on solid ground.

5 Tedler, 334 C.S.

Just as I was getting complacent about the creatures I have seen, I encountered something surprising: a small colony of rodents that exhibit Wird abilities. I came across them while hunting for food. I was traveling at a good clip when I spotted the colony from above. These



rodents noticed me in the air and started to disappear - straight down. When I landed, I immediately inspected for signs of their passage, such as holes, and was shocked to discover that there were none. Somehow, they had slid into the ground. This is an ability I envied; it would certainly be useful in many different situations I have experienced.

The rodents were just too interesting to leave alone. Curious, I decided to see what would happen if I left out some food and hid in a tree along the edge of the clearing. After about 10 minutes, they slowly returned; I could see clearly that they emerged from underground. It was as if they became as intangible as ghosts!

The creatures are small things, about the size of a rat, but without the loathsome odor that I have found generally accompanies them. While possessing a likeness to rodents, their faces are not that similar; the noses are short, while their eyes occupy a large portion of their face. Their fur color is a sandy brown, which blends with the color of the earth in the area. I think I shall stay here for a day or two and see what I can learn.

8 Tedler, 334
C.S.

I have decided to call the rodents Tunnel Rats. They seem to fear all other creatures, at least those bigger in size: every time a larger animal came towards the colony, they simply sank into the





ground. I was amazed to discover that they also have the ability to move through trees and other solid objects; even the very young ones have this ability. I would hate to see what they could do if someone brought them to a city. No grain storage or container would be safe from them. It is also a good thing that I do not carry much food around with me, choosing instead to hunt. I noticed that during my sleep, the rats had eaten all my supplies, although I had taken great care to bundle them tightly.

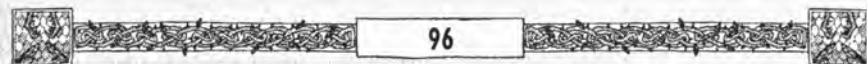
Their ability also discourages most predators. Only a diving predator captured one successfully. It did so before the Tunnel Rat realized it was there. I believe I counted twenty rats in the colony, although I can only guess at the number. There is simply no way to estimate how many are underground at any one time. Without question, there could be armies of these creatures in the wilderness and they would go unnoticed.

To examine the Tunnel Rat carefully, I had to kill the predator that had captured one, since the rodents evaded my every effort to trap them. Once I had my prize, I discovered that it had larger claws than I expected, but its teeth were nothing remarkable, possibly because the Tunnel Rats eat small berries and insects. Their hands were also quite developed. I quickly realized that they were able to grab objects with their nimble fingers. I assume they stole some of my gems and my writing implements. I cannot fathom for what purpose they would do so. Perhaps they are gatherers of many things, a trait not uncommon to other rodents. I tried in vain to find my possessions. I can only guess that the Tunnel Rats had taken them to their underground abode; I wonder what treasures these places hold. Alas, I fear I have lost my things forever!

As fascinating as these animals are, I think I have learned all that I am going to at the moment. I have more traveling I wish to do, so I shall take my leave of them tomorrow.

27 Tedler, 334 C.S.

I am getting near the Great Bridge, and have discovered a clearing before reaching the forest. The past few days have been the perfect tonic to cure boredom. As I have noticed before, the threat of





imminent death is a sure way to provoke interest in my surroundings and to cause my heart to beat at a much quicker pace. There are a number of creatures here that would be all too happy to consume my Yas'Wailian flesh. I have been dodging Modias Lizards on a regular basis, and just a few hours ago managed to avoid becoming the main course at a banquet for a small pack of Tiger-wolves. If those things had wings, I believe they would be the undisputed rulers of this world.

Perhaps I am overreacting, because I am sure that more terrifying things exist in Providence, but just this afternoon I saw something that astonished me. I was flying carefully, about 30 feet in the air and at a speed I knew I could maintain for a time, when I noticed a large, horned quadruped that I had never seen before. I hovered in the air to see if I could find some place where I could safely land and observe the creature. Before I did, I checked to see if there was anything nearby that I should be wary of. I immediately noticed a Modias Lizard creeping up near the creature. At that time, I believed that the Modias would devour it. This struck me as a shame, since I was curious to learn more about the quadruped.

I suppose that the new animal, which I am going to call a Cloud Charger, somehow noticed the Modias Lizard just before it struck. The predator must have been either very hungry or, like I, had never encountered one of these creatures before. In any case, it had very little time to realize the enormity of its error.

Once the Cloud Charger noticed its attacker, it gave a blood-curdling roar and charged the Modias Lizard. At the same time, an odious-looking cloud of green gas emerged from the Cloud Charger. I could see, and certainly hear, the impact when the Charger hit the Modias Lizard. The carnivore bounced back 10 feet. It tried to flee. Its own dreadful cough hindered it, undoubtedly a result of breathing some of the green cloud. The Cloud Charger turned around and hit the Modias a second time. This time it trampled the lizard into the ground, and I had no doubt the Modias was dead. This did not stop the Cloud Charger from trampling it one more time, and letting loose its horrifying yell.

This turn of events took me aback. I had intended to try to study this creature for some days, but found that it is both aggressive and territorial. The Chargers' manner of living made my studies far more





difficult. They live in herds which graze on vast territories. This herd was spread out over a radius of a mile, if not more. The greatest advantage of studying them is that I was safe from other predators, who dared not approach the Chargers. I, however, could not understand why they had not perceived me as a predator. Perhaps it is because I flew above them and did not challenge their territory. This would support my theory that the beasts are highly territorial: what else could explain the savagery which it displayed towards the Modias?

At eight feet high at the shoulder, the Cloud Chargers are about the same size as Bawk'shi herd beasts, but have tan, leathery skin rather than fur. They are stocky, with short back legs, long, powerful frontal legs, an immense torso, and a thick, sinewy neck. They have a very distinctive footprint, since they only have two, very large toes. Their most dangerous physical feature is their horn, which is large and pointed: a powerful weapon indeed! I wondered about the creature's sight. Perhaps the placement of its eyes, rather low on its face, prevented it from perceiving threats from above. I quickly realized the precise nature of their senses when I witnessed one of their rituals.

These creatures have a complex society. A large pack of Tiger-Wolves had entered their territory. One Cloud Charger had noticed a wolf and produced a cloud immediately. The other Chargers sensed the cloud, even those who were far away. I presume their sense of smell must be highly developed. Otherwise, I cannot explain how the other Chargers were able to detect the cloud. Regardless, all members of the herd gathered and charged towards the wolves, dispersing them in unison.

The green noxious cloud emerged from the Cloud Chargers when they sensed danger. I was able to analyze it and discovered that Wird permeated it. Within this cloud, the Chargers' senses were heightened greatly. One Tiger-Wolf had attempted to hide, but the cloud-covered Chargers found the wolf.

Finally, as to the effects of this cloud, its contents were toxic to most beasts. It was a potent poison, able to fell anything that breathed the fumes for long periods of time. A study of the Wird contents of the cloud revealed that it guarded the beasts from Wird spells. How this is possible I do not know. All I can confirm is that the cloud's manifestation matched my Wird protection spells. Truly fascinating!

It is a little-known fact that the jungle before the base of the Great Bridge is full of truly bothersome creatures. I had expected that the swamps held more insects, but that is not the case. In addition to the insect quandary, there are many other animals that can inconvenience a traveler. A group of Aloaks very nearly ambushed me the second day I was in the jungle. Only the fact that they feared fire enabled me to get away. The next time I see mother I shall have to thank her again for the staff she bought me three years ago; its ability to ignite on command has saved me several times.

Lately, I have had some experiences that I believe have made my life richer. I have discovered a community of animals that reminds me of how Yas'Wailians look at the world. I have decided to name them after Esseltes, the woman I lost, because it seems to me that they are closer to exhibiting her spirit than any person I have since met. These creatures are small, being merely a foot long, and seem to jump around more than run; if it is running that they do, it is the most ungainly form of it I have ever seen. Their rear legs are clearly larger than their forelegs, meaning that they lean forward while running. I presume that their hearing is their best sense, but that is just because their ears are quite large. They are not easy to spot in the jungle, as their fur, being a very dark green, provides a natural camouflage. They do not seem to have much in the way of natural weaponry; their claws are small and they have flat teeth. Truly nothing about the animals is threatening.

I saw a small pack of Rilbecs, creatures I am truly learning to despise, attack a colony of these creatures. The Rilbecs managed to kill several Esseltes before retreating. What I found amazing was that the Esseltes did not run from their superior foe. Every one of them attacked instead, battering the aggressors with their bodies, desperately attempting to force the Rilbecs to flee, even though it appeared suicidal to me.

I thought that I was above astonishment, but the small beasts humbled me. The Esseltes took stock of the carnage and were weeping. There were parents, I'm sure, mourning the loss of their children. The entire community seemed to lack the energy and vitality that it had mere moments before the assault. Aside from the ones the

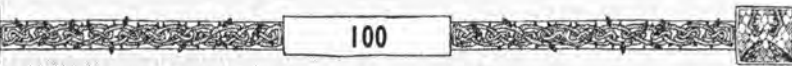


Rilbecs had killed, there were several lying grievously wounded. The uninjured Esseltes began to heal their wounded friends. Yes, I know how strange that sounds, but I witnessed it with my own eyes. These creatures were using Wird. It is an ability that many, if not all of them, shared. Within minutes, every single one of the wounded creatures was hopping around.

I stayed outside of their colony during my initial observations. I needed to rest for a while because the last few days had been very hard for me. The Esseltes have a highly structured social life; there was one Esselte who was the leader, but there were several who were involved in some of the decisions. It was much like watching the Warden Senate in action. The young ones seemed to spend most of their time playing, but the older ones would also take time to show them how to do different things, like where to dig burrows and which foods were good.

The last day I decided to try an experiment. I had noticed that, among other things, the Esseltes ate a form of tuber that I could easily find nearby. After digging some of the roots up, I slowly approached the community, preparing to flee if they attacked. I had no intention of hurting them. My approach caused quite a stir at first. I remained as calm as possible; I simply held out the food. It was the first time that I have ever regretted having selected the branch of knowledge I chose as a young man. If, instead of a Wylder, I had become a Wird Weaver, I could have used spells to integrate into their group temporarily without any problem. In any case, after remaining motionless for minutes, one of them, the leader I named Tryntin after an old teacher of mine, finally approached and quietly accepted the food. Once they were convinced that I was not going to attack their leader, several others came to investigate. It rather reminded me of the first social dance I ever went to, although the Esseltes were friendlier than Yas'Wailians during their observations. I ended up playing with them. I was also able to examine them. They in turn studied me carefully. Though I had not noticed it, I had cut my finger slightly while digging for a root. One of the Esseltes noticed this and immediately healed the wound. Their kindness, even to strangers, astounded me.

The small creatures continued to surprise me; when I cast a spell to see if I could learn more about how they heal, the entire group





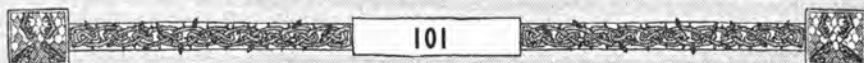
reacted. As far as I can tell, the creatures are sensitive to Wird. The fact that I could cast Wird seemed to make them even more comfortable around me.

In my lifetime, there have been few times that I have felt inadequate, but this was one. I am sure that these creatures are highly intelligent, but I simply lack the ability to prove it. I only managed to work out a very rudimentary sort of communication with them. Nonetheless, I am not sure that I want to bring anybody else to this area; given our tendency as a species to destroy virtually everything we get our hands on. I believe it would be much better for the Esseltes if they can remain hidden in the jungle.

31 Mantian, 334 C.S

I am just now recovering enough to write this next entry in my book. It would be much more impressive to say that I narrowly escaped an attack made against overwhelming odds, but the truth is that I slipped on a wet patch of ground and badly sprained my wrist. I could have taken a healing elixir, but I only have three left and I would prefer to keep them for a more serious injury, should it occur. The sprain has been quite annoying. Despite this hindrance, I have had some interesting experiences these last few days. I have passed the base of the Great Bridge and it is more impressive than I had expected, or have the ability to explain. It is one thing to see the bridges from afar, but on closer inspection, you wonder how these structures were formed. What phenomena would result in something that connects two sides of a world and measures over a hundred miles wide? Standing at the base, all you can see on either side is a stone cliff that reaches up endlessly to the sky. I think I will have to come back here sometime with my brother. Zimbira would appreciate this.

I have been moving slowly since the Great Bridge, mostly because the jungle is getting thicker the further away from Bone-Wail I travel. It also may be getting more dangerous; there are many Leurin around, and I have heard the howls of Tiger-Wolves more than once. In my opinion it is safer to hop from tree to tree since my wings are tiring





quickly. Walking on this ground would be foolish. That is exactly what I did for a while, when I was not flying above the tree-tops. Soaring the skies has become harder, because reaching the canopy from the ground is getting more difficult every day. I also fear attracting the attention of some of the flying predators around here. This seems like an excellent area for Dragoniers, and that is a confrontation I would prefer avoiding.

The strategy I have chosen appears popular in these woods. There is a tribe of rather foul-smelling, rude tree apes that I ran into a couple of days ago. As far as I can tell, the beasts never walk on the ground. These monkeys are not very large, no taller than three feet high, and the largest one among them cannot weigh more than 100 pounds. They have very flat faces, with ears that are rather large for their heads; their eyes are small and very dark. I do not doubt that the apes are strong despite their size, if only because they use their arms for traveling as much as their legs, and their body mass is concentrated mostly in their limbs.

Unless a predator can fly, there is no way that it could attack these apes. They have the ability, as I found out the hard way, to make any surface slippery. As you can imagine, any predator trying to reach them would be unable to climb the trees.

I was fluttering from branch to branch when I saw some of the creatures sitting in a nearby tree. I landed nearby, looked at them, and promptly fell out of the tree. From the whoops and hollers they expressed, my fumble must have been most amusing. I quickly recovered and flew back up to land on another branch. Just as I was turning to look at the apes, I lost my footing again. This time I nearly hit my head on a branch on the way down.

I had believed mistakenly that my audience would find the joke old, yet their reaction proved otherwise. Rather than land again, for I was beginning to find the situation odd, I hovered and took a closer look at my momentary companions. A couple of the creatures I dubbed Trickster Apes were pointing at me, expressing disappointment. Since I



suspected that the creatures possessed some innate ability, I cast a spell and found that my instincts were correct; the Trickster Apes all used Wird. The pranksters were making me fall! Their skillful ability to climb also makes me think that they can cling to surfaces, should they wish to, as easily as they can make others fall. Truthfully, I have never seen any creature look as comfortable climbing.

I must admit that I find the Trickster Apes to be truly annoying. At one point, when I was trying to rest, they persisted in trying to make me stumble. Since they refused to leave me alone, I was forced to scare them with a display of Wird. That was the last I saw of that particular group, which was perfectly fine with me.

4 Carapoth, 334 C.S.

I now understand why the Trickster Apes are so eager for laughter. Everything in this deep jungle is nightmarish. There are things that everyone should avoid. It has been three days since anything has attacked me, so I may have finally worked my way out of the apes' territory.

Looking at my writing, it seems to me that there are some things I should explain. First, I am now heading out of the jungle, as quickly as I can. I am not certain whether I am heading directly towards Bone-Wail or if my direction will lead me further up Leviathan's Spine, and at this point I do not care. Getting away from this area of deep jungle is what is truly important, for survival has been thrust foremost in my mind.

The newest creature I ran into a few days ago was something I have called a Dusk Devil, or rather, a couple of Dusk Devils. These creatures have the ability to alter their forms as they wish, which makes identifying them difficult. The fact that several different creatures of roughly the same size (if not the same shape), attacked me viciously leads me to believe that they were all the same beast. As well, they are very easy to pinpoint with Wird detection spells; I became very familiar with the Wird outline of the beasts.

I would rather not compliment such vicious animals, but they ambush skillfully. I have had to maintain my detection spells for much



too long. In the end I think the only thing that kept me alive were my protection spells. The Dusk Devils I encountered remained black in all forms, leading me to believe that this was the natural color of these monsters. It could be that they choose black because they cannot tell the difference between most colors.

I ran across the first Dusk Devil while still in the canopy. Actually, at that point, what I saw was a fairly large creature, just under four feet long, eating the remains of a small Horned Runner. It stopped eating to observe me. While we were still trying to understand each other, some other beast attacked me viciously from the rear. I had not even noticed anything else near me until the dark brute was tearing my flesh. In desperation, I flew into the air and tried to assault the one on my back with my flaming staff. I do not believe I hurt it, but the fire must have startled it; in any case, it leapt off.

My wounds were serious; I flew off and tried to find a safe place to rest. I had enough elixirs to stop most of the bleeding and managed to bind my wounds properly. After that experience, I knew I needed to rest, so I settled in for the evening. Fortunately, I had felt cautious before sleeping and had set up a series of wards. I had only been asleep for a short time when one of my warning signals woke me. I glanced up and saw, emerging from a cloud of darkness, a very dark beast. It was shaped like one of the Trickster Apes, with more fangs and a mischievous grin. Its obvious intention was to attack me. I managed to cast a spell to force it to sleep, but did not avoid the second devil attacking me. This creature looked more like a small version of a Gethryn, but I have no doubt it was one of the black beasts. I fought through the pain and thrust my burning staff into its back. With a scream nearly matching my own expression of pain, the monster fell from the branch, grew wings, and flew off, its dark fur still on fire. As far as I can tell, the beasts do not have a form of their own; their only common feature is their black color, and their vile smirks. The Dusk Devils are able to change into whatever form they can imagine. Since they do so with great skill, I assume they are highly intelligent.

I swallowed my last potion and flew off. It was some time before I stopped long enough to bind my leg. The next two days were a nightmare of constant terror, with few opportunities for sleep and some moments of combat. I do not know if I had just stumbled into an



area where the Dusk Devils lived, or if the two I had first encountered were particularly vindictive. I never felt like I was safe. Even now, I still catch myself glancing out of the corner of my eye, looking for a dark form.

17 Carapoth, 334 C.S.

I have been moving slowly across the light woods between the Great Bridge and Leviathan's Spine. I have spent the past couple of weeks recovering from the Dusk Devils' assault. In my time, many animals have tried to devour me. However, I have never felt so helpless and hunted before now. The Dusk Devils are in my past. I hope I never encounter them again.

This section of the world is among my favorites: filled with creatures, lots of interesting scenery, but without the stress that always accompanies unexplored territory. I like exploring; it is one of the few things that can occupy my mind completely. There is a limit, however, to how much of that pressure I can take, and I must admit that I have reached that limit.

After spending some relaxing moments, I realize that seeing familiar animals has lifted my spirits. I do not believe I will go back to Bone-Wail immediately. I have always liked the mountains, and there are plenty of places in Leviathan's Spine that Yas'Wailians have never seen. Perhaps I will reduce the number of unexplored spaces somewhat before I return home.

35 Carapoth, 334 C.S.

This trip to the mountains is my most productive to date, and I feel I could spend a lot of time here. The longer I stay, the clearer it is to me that there are many species that have not been catalogued. I do not doubt that we can learn from these creatures.



Despite the wealth of unique life forms I can uncover, there are an equal amount of brutish things that Yas'Wailians should avoid entirely. A perfect example is a creature I call the Vactum. This slender biped is taller than most mountain creatures and its shape is reminiscent of the typical Yas'Wailian form. Despite the superficial similarities, there are some very clear differences. The Vactum does not have teeth, but a sucker for a mouth. This monstrosity does not need teeth, however, since its prey is not usually in solid form by the time the Vactum is ready to eat. The beast's eyes are a very distinctive shade of yellow. Curiously, the Vactum does not have any visible ears. The creature possesses sharp claws, should it ever choose to fight face to face.

The Vactum lives among the crags in Leviathan's Spine. I have seen it trap other creatures and I, myself barely managed to escape one. The only thing that saved me was my knowledge of its entrapment techniques. The Vactum ensnares and attacks its victims. It makes the ground very sticky to trap animals. While its prey attempts to escape, the Vactum will spit acid onto the helpless creature. It does this to dissolve it, which is the only way it can consume victims.

It is very difficult to see a Vactum in the mountains because its coloring matches the sandy red texture of Leviathan's Spine. I eventually discovered the places where the creatures prefer trapping. I was lucky enough to uncover a Vactum's feeding ground. Generally, the Vactum likes to observe its victims from an elevated position. Watching a Vactum eat is the most nauseating thing I have ever witnessed.

One thing I will note, for anyone who should have the misfortune of encountering one, is that a spell of Wird protection is the only method I am aware of, save brute strength, of escaping the Vactum's traps. My own enchantment was not enough to negate the magic it was using completely, but it weakened it to the point that I could free myself. Another observation that might serve travelers is that the Vactum seems to dislike Yas'Wailians. On the other hand, perhaps it likes us too much: it was much more insistent on trying to eat me than any other creature I noticed it attacking. If I was not a Wylder, I have no doubt that it would have killed me. Fortunately, my casting was more than a match for its abilities. I think I finally convinced the Vactum that it should seek weaker prey.





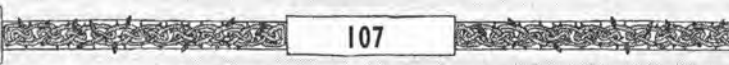
The Vactum resumed its efforts to entrap another creature. I tracked the beast to its nest. Within the putrid resting place of the foul beast I noticed an unfortunate creature I had never seen before. I took note of its markings while the Vactum fed on its ravaged remains. I managed to later find another beast of the same species to examine.

The creature is a large snake with a unique bite. Rather than excrete a poisonous substance from its fangs, the snake's bite freezes its victims. I was fortunate to witness the reptilian creature during a conflict. The snake, rather than harass smaller prey, brazenly streaked towards a Haired Runner with a remarkable speed. The mountainous mammal had little time to react. The thick snake coiled around its prey swiftly. Once it was assured of its meal, the snake slowed its efforts as if to savor the moment of victory. The attacker, which I have decided to call a Belmare Rock Snake after a legendary Yas'Wailian beast, tortured the Haired Runner with its fangs, then slowly released its venom, freezing its prey.

It waited for a while, then swallowed its frozen and brittle victim whole. Shivers overtook me. I heard the gruesome sound of the Runner's body shattering like a dry leaf within the snake's bloated belly. The sound of splintering bones horrified me.

Swallowing its victim did not pose a problem for the Belmare Rock Snake. Its body demonstrated a remarkable ability to expand which is not uncommon for snakes. In addition, its body reaches, I would guess, 20 feet. Undoubtedly, there are larger specimens that I did not run across. Despite the impressive size of the snakes, they are still not an easy target in the mountains of the region. They move very quietly and their markings, which are streaked and resemble grass from a distance, facilitate their ability to blend into the background. Their fangs, while noticeable, are not unusually large for an animal its size. As an interesting side note, they possess the ability to affect vegetation equally well; twice I observed a Belmare freezing a small tree in order to feast upon a hidden rodent. I am unaware of the limits of the snake's power, but I did observe that it had carved, perhaps with its freezing ability, a nest out of the mountainside itself.

My journey through the mountains has been quite invigorating, but I believe I will try to work my way back home. While the sounds of the



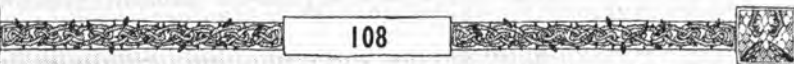


wilderness can be comforting, I find myself periodically fantasizing about a well-cooked meal, and the comforts of a warm, soft bed. I am not sure how high up Leviathan's Spine I have climbed, but I do not imagine that it will take me more than a few weeks to get back to Bone-Wail. I am pleased with my travels. I have discovered many things that should provide entertainment.

10 Erchoi, 334 C.S.

Bone-Wail is finally within my reach. I saw some signs of a foot patrol earlier this afternoon, so I should be able to get to the city sometime during tomorrow. While I will be glad to get back, I do not doubt that an irrepressible urge to explore Providence will drive me forth again. My father has told me several times that I will end up killing myself if I persist, and I have come to understand that he is quite correct. There simply is no way to encounter everything this endless realm contains and survive. Eventually, its wilderness will feast upon this delectable Swan, I fear. Perhaps I will concede to taking a partner or two the next time I venture forth. While my motivation to live is not always as strong as it should be, I have no particular desire to die. Zimbira might be willing to join me, and a few of his friends could make worthy companions. They would all understand the inherent beauty of some beasts, particularly the Esseltes, and doubtless they would increase my own understanding of the things I have found.

Still, all these speculations are best left for another day. Tomorrow I end this trip; it will be refreshing to see what the predators in Bone-Wail's society have to offer. I have to admit that the prospect of guarding my standing within society as opposed to my skin sounds quite enticing. I shall get up early tomorrow and surprise my mother before she leaves for court.





The Morph Creatures

Entry 086320.c002

Time: 1643 C.S.

Place: Tyon Expanse, volcanic eruption of the Sky-Torrent Spire.

Record Type: Excerpt from the diary of Warden Dehab Klonā, Wird Weaver.

Day 12 in month of Tedler

My observations of the volcano continues. Its link to a Retribution is likely, considering the intensity of the flames and the analysis of the Tapestry in this region. Though the journey thus far has offered few surprises, this day changes the nature of my visit. While approaching a crevice along the edge of a rock positioned near the base of the Sky-Torrent Bridge, I noticed strange movements from within which I initially attributed to the flow of lava, but quickly discovered was the result of a creature. Immediately after noticing the movement against a wall, I saw the thing. Its color matched the rock it stood on, which made it more difficult to perceive. If not for the current of lava which splashed against it, the creature may never have moved, thereby allowing me to see it.

A particularly large glob of lava splashed against the creature. This seemed to refresh rather than sear it. The shape of the thing changed from a rock to that of a man, not dissimilar to the tribal Serpenkine. The creature stood, I approximate, at near seven feet tall, and was chiseled as if from stone. Its musculature was thick, particularly in its legs, chest, and arms. The color of its gray skin changed to red as it moved through the lava as easily as we swim through water. Though I refer to it as skin, it was more akin to stone. The creature also possessed a tail and sharp protrusions along its back, which ran their course till they reached the head of the beast. After rising from the magma, the thing's feet grew large claws to grip the floor. Following this, its hands also produced wide claws which enabled the creature to climb the walls. Fearing that it would notice me, I made a hasty retreat.



Day 13, month of Tedler.

Once again, my insatiable curiosity guided me. I was compelled to approach the same breach that had led to my discovery of the creature. I dubbed it the Magma Chameleon last night in a moment of reverie.

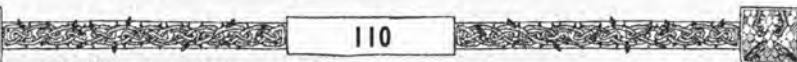
As I climbed the cliff cautiously, I wondered if each rock I stepped upon was not perhaps one of the chameleons in disguise. Every step I took was labored and calculated. As I approached the fissure, movement in the distance forced me to remain still. As I suspected, a creature stood some distance from the Sky-Torrent Bridge's volcano, apparently surveying the land. To my surprise and admitted fascination, another chameleon approached it, muttering in a foreign tongue of indiscernible grunts. One of the chameleons' hands had grown claws. After the two creatures conversed for a while, they began to distance themselves from the Sky-Torrent Bridge. I could not help but follow them, despite the time this might take away from my study of the volcano. These beings had captivated my attention. As the two Magma Chameleons moved away from the rock, their coloration changed to match the surrounding area, which was now more green than gray. I followed them closely, caution guiding my every step.

Day 15, month of Tedler

For the second day I followed the creatures. I only rested when they did, which was not very often. These creatures possessed an endurance that dwarfs that of our greatest work beasts. If not for a Wird weaving to alleviate my fatigue, I would never have been able to follow.

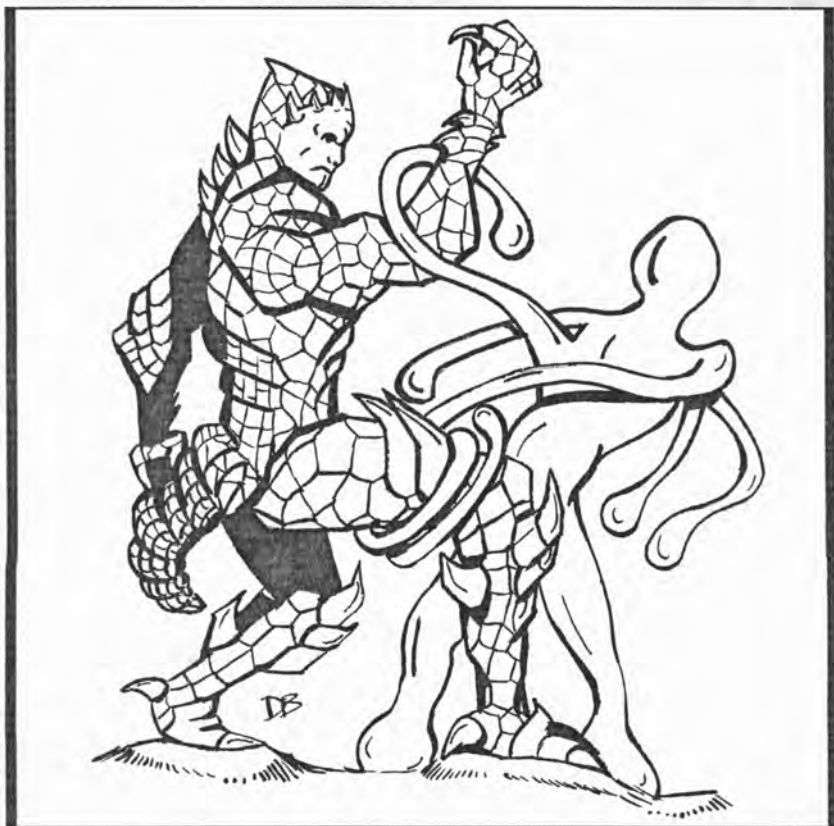
The Magma Chameleons finally stopped walking. They began to investigate the ground, as if searching for something precious. Finally they came upon a stony patch. I was astonished. They began to eat the stones on the ground. How strange and wonderful! As they opened their mouths, a viscous liquid was within. I can only presume it was lava. It dissolved the rocks upon contact. After their feast, they resumed their trek.

Again, the creatures paused. Their manner suggested that something unnerved them. Perhaps they were uncomfortable in the



terrain, which had changed considerably. The creatures increased their speed, and moved behind a mound of earth. I followed them cautiously.

As I approach their position, I heard sounds of conflict. As I peered from behind the mound of earth, I saw the Magma beasts dueling with other creatures. These other strange beings immediately drew my curiosity. Whereas the Chameleons possessed a rough exterior, with a rock-like hide, these new creatures were opposite in appearance. The slender beings were smooth and rounded; they did not appear to have skin. Instead their bodies were pale and bluish, like that of the Crysarius sea. They wore no clothing.





The bodies of the water beings were like the wingless Yas'Wailians. Their faces were as blank and featureless as their bodies. They possess neither eyes, nose nor mouth that I could see. The conflict between the creatures provided the noise I required to accomplish my stealthy approach. As I neared them, I was able to stare at the water-like beings. These new creature's seemed composed of a gelatinous liquid that belied their aqueous exterior.

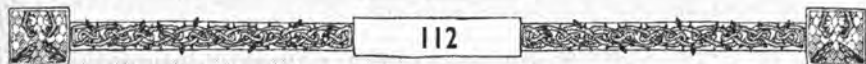
The conflict between the Magma Chameleons and the Aquamorphs, as I now call them, escalated into an intense fight. One of the Chameleons struck its enemy furiously. Though I had no doubt that its blow could fell even a Gargoyle, the water being's body simply flowed around the Chameleon's fist. Frustrated, the Magma Chameleon struck again. This time the force of its effort extended the Aquamorph beyond its capacity to stretch. The Chameleon eventually split the thing in two.

Meanwhile, the other Chameleon was engaged with an Aquamorph whose arms and legs were stretched and wrapped around it. The Aquamorph exerted pressure. The Chameleon's expression, and its resonating scream, stunned me. Despite its slight form, the Aquamorph was quite capable of injuring its armored opponent. The immobilized Chameleon, perhaps realizing the futility of its struggle, stood firm and ceased its efforts to pry the thing off. Suddenly the Chameleon ignited in flames. The Aquamorph released its grip, emitting a piercing sound; one strangely muffled and amplified at once. The liquid creature dropped to the floor, but not before releasing a burning acid that seared even the mighty rock-creature's hide.

Sensing its companion's pain, the other Chameleon ran towards it. To my amazement the Aquamorph which the Chameleon had rendered in two moments ago, continued to move. Both its halves

Compiler's Notes

This entry reminded me of a story told by a visiting Horizon Strider who claimed to have seen creatures almost identical to the Aquamorphs Warden Dehab Klona described. The Strider claimed that the creatures were friends of the Green People. If this is true, we may have a new enemy.





reshaped themselves into smaller versions of their former self. One of these beings extended its arms, at remarkable speed, and wrapped itself around its opponent's leg. It tripped the Chameleon and prevented it from reaching its friend. With matching speed, both Aquaforms swarmed over their foe, completely enveloping the Chameleon. After a short period of time, the grappled Chameleon burst into flames. A boiling sound emerged from the Aquaforms, who began to retreat. The Chameleon rose, its hands aflame. The retreating

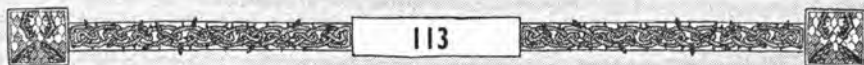
Author's Note

There are many myths about the existence of other Troupials in Providence. The following entries offer proof that some of these stories are true. I hope this record satisfy my Warden leaders.

Aquaforms screamed in unison. This cry reached their ally, who was reeling from its treatment at the hands of a Chameleon. It responded in kind and retreated at a great speed. Finally, the three Aquaforms merged and slid along the ground, retreating into the distance. The Chameleons gathered and left in an opposite direction. Fearing they would notice me, I decided to leave the area.

Day 17, month of Tedler

I returned to the sight of my initial study but could not see the Magma Chameleons. Since my duty was to analyze the volcano and since I had already spent too much time examining other things, I returned to the volcano. Before I did, I felt I should inform my superiors about the Aquamorphs. After departing from the Chameleons, I followed the path of the water creatures. I reached the Aquaforms in time to see them disappear, delving in a small lake I did not know existed. I left the area quickly and returned to my studies. Should I encounter either creature again after completing my work, I will focus my undivided attention on analyzing them.





Troupial Panther and Tiger

Entry 234001.b992

Time: 1916 C.S.

Place: The Pendulum Island Chain

Record Type: Records of Master of Lore Ket'kia Tylandra

Sent by: Commander Vackal Tysk'yl Coblaskan.

Grand Lord Warden,

I pen these words hastily in the hope they will reach you. I fear we have stumbled upon something which may claim our lives before we return to the grandeur of Bone-Wail. As per your orders, the 5th Scout Cadre under my command arrived at the Pendulum Island Chain. We failed to uncover the secret Chirurgeon base of which your informant spoke, though we found something I believe is equally important - the lost Sun-Spar colony. I am including Ket'kia Tylandra's notes with this message. They will explain our situation.

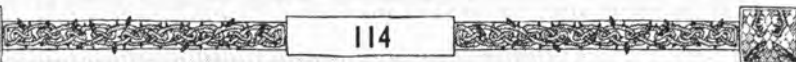
To ensure that you receive this information, my grand lord, I am sending this report with Aandie My'tal, my cadre's runner, who will have, if you read this, escaped this place. We remain behind to delay our pursuers. I beg your forgiveness for my failure and hope that my sacrifice redeems me in your exalted eyes.

Your willing and faithful servant,

Vackal Tysk'yl of the Royal Eagle House Coblaskan,

Commander of the 5th Scout Cadre

Personal Diary of Ket'kia Tylandra
of the Exalted Dragon House Puradanium,
Master of Lore





16 Tedlar, 1916 C.S.

The 1st hour of Day-Bright. Stytle's wound is worsening. The infection resists all my Wird and herbal remedies. I have taken samples of the plant which caused the infection for further study upon my return to Bone-Wail. I am curious to see the full range of effects this infection will have upon Stytle, for it is most interesting thus far - it appears to be altering his body, not just poisoning it. We may be able to employ this toxin in a war - we could use it to superb effect against the Alliance of Kings prisoners. Further study, however, is most certainly required.

The 15th hour of Day-Bright. We found a deep valley, almost a hole within Island #17. Upon cursory examination, it appears to measure close to 1000 meters across and almost 50 meters deep. We know the collapse of Leviathan's Spine millennia ago created the Pendulum Islands. As with all of Providence's spires, it is likely that Leviathan's Spine was full of caves and other hollows. This cavity is likely to be one such cave which collapsed centuries after the spire's fall. Using the vegetation as a gauge, it is clear the hole is merely a few hundred years old. Most of the island has several feet of soft earth; however, the land around the cavity's edge has barely a foot. In some areas, only a thin layer of moss and lichen covers the rock. It is interesting to see how the jungle moved in to cover the hole. Vines and trees stretch over much of the area. While sunlight penetrates the canopy, I am certain that from the air, the depression would be virtually invisible, appearing as nothing more than a shallow valley. I suspect this is why our maps fail to indicate the region - all scouts we have sent to this area surveyed it from the air.

The 19th hour of Day-Bright. After several hours investigating the area, Vackal is certain that the Chirurgeon outpost we are looking for is within the cavity. His men have found numerous signs of sentient life; namely the faint smell of smoke from the cavity's depths, indicating the potential of camp fires. We are preparing to investigate. Two scouts will remain behind with Stytle who is too sick to continue. While I wish to remain behind to continue observing the infection's effects, our quest is more important. I will, however, have to return to these islands to conduct further experiments..

17 Tedlar, 1916 C.S.

The 9th hour of Dark-Fall. The sun again shows signs of pulsing to life. Vackal found a place to his liking and we are now setting up camp, though





the lack of a fire is most annoying - this valley is quite cool. However, I am well aware that a fire would give away our location. Tedious work in a laboratory does have its comforts.

While searching for a campsite concealed from sight, we uncovered more signs of sentient life - traps and snares for small game, numerous fresh footprints, as well as ancient ruins. I believe we have possibly stumbled upon a lost colony. This would be a perfect location for the Chirurgeon laboratory we search for - well concealed and already possessing several structures that require minimal maintenance to be habitable. The surrounding area gives no clue as to the purpose of such a laboratory - should it even exist here. I have asked Vackal to send scouts to further investigate the ruins we have found so that I can verify if this is the location of a lost colony. I, however, am going to submit to fatigue and rest now.

The 6th hour of Day-Bright. We have just established a new camp. Vackal's scouts encountered a large group of warriors moving in the area surrounding our original camp. While our new location lacks the minimal comforts of our previous camp, we should avoid any unwanted notice.

The 21st hour of Day-Bright. I just returned from speaking with Vackal. His scouts came across a sizable party of Fallen warriors, apparently Ravens and Gargoyles. The descriptions, however, have me perplexed. The Gargoyles all bore the fiery pattern of the brutish beasts. While it is not impossible, I find it curious that all the Gargoyles in the group would be both Fallen and possess the fire skin patterns. This is something I will further investigate.

As for the Chirurgeon laboratory, I must agree with Vackal - I do not believe that we have found their secret base. It seems unlikely that the haughty, elitist Chirurgeons would employ Fallen guards to protect their most important laboratory. We may have found a lost colony, what I now believe to be the remains of Sun-Spar. Vackal and I spoke about it at length and we are in agreement, we will remain here to learn more before we move on to continue our search for the Chirurgeons' laboratory. This trip is quickly becoming more interesting than I originally expected.





18 Tedlar, 1916 C.S.

The 2nd hour of Dark-Fall. I now understand the confusion our scouts experienced yesterday. We have spent the day observing the inhabitants of the area. The need for stealth has limited our ability to learn as much as I would like; however, I feel I now understand what we are seeing. The supposed Fallen Ravens and Gargoyles are not, in fact, what we know of as Ravens and Gargoyles. The people we originally identified as Ravens are all lean and physically fit. Their build is more akin to the physique of a Hawk rather than the slight build of Ravens. Also, we noticed they possess retractable claws, furthering their similarity to Hawks - though they have four fingers and a thumb. Their skin coloring, however, is purely that of the Ravens - deep indigo black. I will now call this apparent new race Panther, a reference to the fierce jungle cats from our days back on Yas'Wail.

The scouts appear also to have identified incorrectly a second race as Gargoyles. While this new Troupial is as large as the barbaric Gargoyles, their facial features suggest more cunning. They have no bone protrusions like the Gargoyles in Bone-Wail, though they do have pronounced incisors. These fangs are the only fierce element to their face. Their skin coloring is similar to the fire pattern seen on numerous Gargoyles. However, unlike Gargoyles, we have seen no other pattern - there does not appear to be any member of this race with the earth, air, or water skin colorings. While I could clearly see their Gargoyle heritage, it took some time for me to identify attributes common to our people. I finally realized it when, in idle thought, my eyes came to rest on the face of Morte Den'nal, an Eagle in our group. The angles and pronounced features of his face mirrored this new Troupial. I now call this race Troupial Tiger, an obvious reference to the colorful, enormous Yas'Wailian predators.

I am not certain how, but I believe Troupial Panther and Tiger to be a flawless mix of Raven and Hawk, and Eagle and Gargoyle respectively. While a mixing among Troupials does occur, I find it astonishing that, in this area, the assimilation has become so prominent and specific as to result in new races. Why have we not seen this sort of thing in other Yas'Wailian communities? At first I theorized it was something about Providence and the abundant Wird found here. However, if this were the case, we would see mutations of this sort in other areas as well. Why has it been limited to this lost colony?

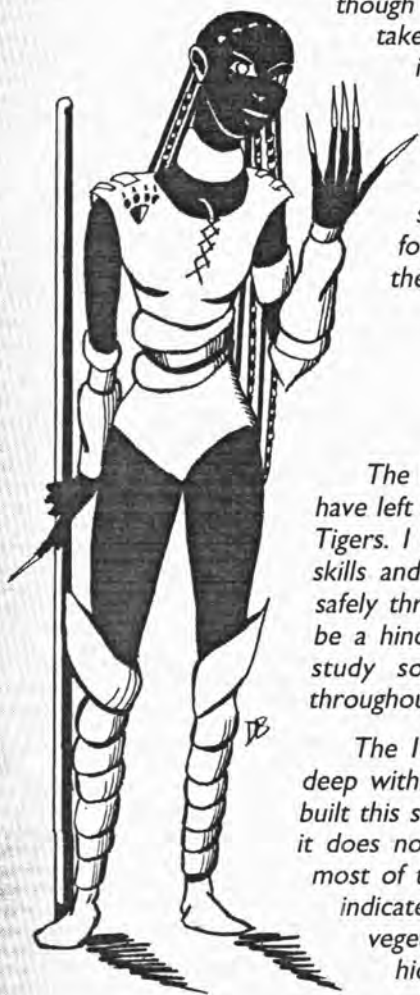
I believe I know the answer, though it is only a theory; one I will test when time permits. I believe that the infections and diseases the unique plant life in the area have brought on, such as the one which now ravages through Styllé's body, has something to do with these new Troupials. In the short time that I was able to observe the infection's effects, I noticed a number of physiological changes in Styllé. I originally viewed the changes as minor though now, with this new discovery, they take on a whole new significance. The illness could well explain the focused Troupial blending that we are observing.

Tomorrow, Vackal is going to send scouts to investigate the city we found today. We hope to learn more of the daily lives of these new Troupials.

19 Tedlar, 1916 C.S.

The 1st hour of Day-Bright. Vackal's scouts have left for the settlement of the Panthers and Tigers. I have decided not to join them. Their skills and abilities should allow them to move safely through the city - my presence will only be a hindrance. I will take this opportunity to study some of the ruins we have found throughout the area.

The 16th hour of Day-Bright. I am currently deep within an abandoned temple. Clearly, they built this structure after the collapse of the area; it does not show the signs of damage found in most of the structures we have seen. Evidence indicates it was abandoned centuries ago - the vegetation covering the structure virtually hid it from sight. Inside the structure,





however, the darkness has held the vegetation at bay. Within, there are a number of statues of Fallen Eagles and Gargoyles, with pictograph carvings covering many of the walls. The building is reminiscent of illustrations depicting religious temples from Yas'Wail, which indicates a religion.

I spent the day translating some of the carvings upon the walls. They bear similarities to our present language, as well as various dialects of Old Yas'Wailian. This allowed me to make a very rough translation, though it will take months to fully understand the writings. My rough translation indicates that these people were attempting to hide from what they refer to as the "Ghulam-Karariyah." I believe the first part of this term stems from the old Yas'Wailian terms Galam, meaning ancient, or more accurately "of yore." I am guessing that the second part of this term comes from the name Kariu. Kariu was a warrior-priest who betrayed the rebels in the final days of the prisoner revolution on Yas'Wail. Among the rebels, his name became synonymous with evil or tyranny. If my memory of history serves correctly, the ruling elite rewarded Kariu with the title Grand Warden of a prison camp in Providence. I will have to investigate Bone-Wail's ledgers to see if he ruled Sun-Spar.

The 3rd hour of Dark-Fall. I have just returned from a long meeting with Vackal and his scouts. They have provided an interesting picture of life in this valley. The community is small, roughly 75 000 to 100 000 people. It is made up primarily of Troupials Tiger and Panther with a few Eagles, Hawks, Ravens, and Gargoyles in evidence - all wingless. Reports indicate a Pure birth has not occurred here for many generations - they designed the structures for ground dwellers. Troupials Tiger and Panther are by far the most populous races, constituting roughly 40% and 35% of the population respectively. Eagles, Hawks, Ravens, and Gargoyles make up the remaining 25% at roughly equal proportions. Where Eagles and Hawks tend to lead most Yas'Wailian societies, it seems here that Troupial Tiger has assumed that mantle. It is difficult to ascertain if that condition reaches the highest ranks of society based on one day's scouting. Troupial Panther appears to possess psychological traits of both its parent Troupials - they are either scholars or warrior-scouts. The other Troupials do not seem to be any different from what one would expect. They do, however, work together in harmony - there is no racial segregation as



is seen in most Yas'Wailian communities. This peaceful co-existence is a common trait seen among the Fallen in the Alliance of Kings.

There are Wird casters as well as Shards present, though the former appears more common than the latter. Of the Wird casters seen, evidence indicates that they are either Wylders or Wird Weavers. If other distinctions are present, there is no evidence of them.

The community is close to nature - the structures exist in harmony with the surroundings. It seems they endeavored to integrate their settlement into the forest, possibly an extension of their desire to hide from Ghulam-Karariyah. I suspect if one were to see this area from the air, they would still fail to notice the village. It blends into the forest quite well.

Their lifestyle appears to represent quite a dichotomy. On one side, they seem to be very peaceful - taking from the land only what they need and living contentedly with each other (mixed couples were not an uncommon sight). In contrast, most of them appear to be warriors or at least possess training in the arts of war. Several of Vackal's scouts reported watching exercises throughout the day. I suspect these people, particularly members of Troupial Tiger and Panther, are fearsome warriors in battle. I believe these opposing facets in their philosophy further reinforces my original belief.

I believe that this island collapsed upon itself many centuries ago, taking the Lost Colony of Sun-Spar with it. This disastrous event would have claimed the lives of most of the population. Since a large percentage of the population was prisoners, it is likely that the few wardens who survived the catastrophe were unable to hold the rebels down and died for their efforts. The surviving rebels remained here and, like cowards, hid from the outside world. They did not, however, forget their days as our prisoners. While they rebuilt their lives, they also prepared for the day we would return to reclaim them as our slaves. We are the Ghulam-Karariya they hide from.

One question, however, plagues me still. This society trains for war yet they have not ventured beyond their valley home. Why not? Though they do not have any flyers, they could easily climb beyond the valley's confines. Why have they not? Is it to remain hidden from Ghulam-Karariyah? This would seem odd, for even the most cowardly of



people tend to peek from their safe hide-away to examine their enemy. For several hundred years these people have remained hidden. Perhaps the writings in the abandoned temple will provide an answer. Tomorrow I will return to get a scratching of the carvings so that I may study them further at a later date. There clearly are more questions that beg for answers. For now, however, I will rest.

20 Tedlar, 1916 C.S.

7th hour of Night-Fall. It appears Vackal's scouts were not as secretive as they should have been. A scouting party of Panthers descended upon our camp. Vackal's men fought fiercely though three fell quickly to the Panthers' swords and claws. Vackal hoped to eliminate the scouts before they could raise an alarm, but a female Panther escaped despite his best efforts. She will surely bring reinforcements. We now break camp, preparing to leave quickly. I cannot write any longer. We must move now. They are coming.

Troupial Oriole

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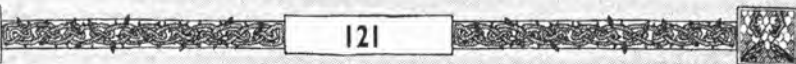
Time: 1903 C.S.

Record Type: Report of Keeper Kunan Tor Coblaskan,
exploration of Athrin's Desert.

History

I thank Inhan, Oriole elder, for the information he provided willingly.

Like many other factions, the Orioles of Yas'Wail chose the side of rebellion during the Great Revolution. Unlike their Hawk, Eagle, and other cousins, the Orioles were far fewer in number. When the rulers of Yas'Wail finally pronounced the Exile of the rebels, they withheld their judgment on the Orioles, who were arguably the greatest weavers of Wird in the land. They feared that the Orioles would find ways to escape amidst





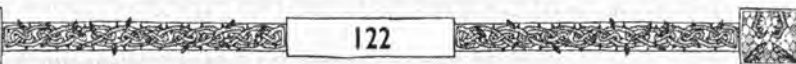
the chaos, since there were so few of them left to punish, and they could hide easily. The rulers knew that they could not allow the Orioles to remain on Yas'Wail, particularly if they wished to have the people's respect. Just weeks after the Exile, they finally chose to send the Oriole to Providence. Unlike their cousins though, the Orioles were forced to live like true exiles, away from their shackled Yas'Wailian brethren. An emissary was sent to each Warden camp to inform the leaders of this decree. If the Wardens encountered the Orioles, they were to turn them away. Their punishment was to become Providence's pariahs.

The Orioles accepted their fate and lived in a hidden valley within the mountainous regions of Athrin's Desert, in one of the Teasing Oases. These are sheltered regions hidden high atop mountains. Traveling to and from this particular nest, a place they called Solemn-Shield, proved a near impossibility. The clouds provided a thick cover, masking the community from outsiders. If not for encountering and befriending Mata Inhan, meaning Inhan the Elder, in the desert, I would probably never have discovered the home of the Orioles.

My guide informed me that his people had accepted their fate. Initially, they struggled to survive. Many of them perished at the hands of hostile creatures, preventing their group from growing in number. During the Sky-Spite cataclysm, in the year of 1091 E.MD., the Orioles observed the massacre from afar. Their great leader at the time, who the Orioles call the Ten-Mata, chose to abolish their self-imposed exile from other Yas'Wailians. He decided to become involved in the affairs of Providence. He felt the Orioles could not survive forever in exile. The Oriole's new mission was to seek out the world's evils.

Eventually, they encountered the White Crow; the people they believe to be the greatest tyrants in the world. They prepared for countless years for a confrontation, and eventually launched an offensive in the Deep, the homeland of the Crow. It was then that their people discovered the city of Aerie. Unfortunately, their offensive proved to be insignificant in the face of the shadow-wielding armies of the Crow. The Orioles were decimated and the few that returned home tended to their wounds. Though others might have given up hope, the Orioles were renewed. They saw their place in the world as the proponents of good and trained themselves to confront the Crow and other similar evils.

Through the years, the numbers of the Orioles have grown somewhat, but not significantly. All their numbers are made of the





Wylder-like Wird users they call the Bright Orioles. Only fifty or so Orioles, the eldest, the young, and some caretakers, remain in Solemn-Shield throughout the year. The other Orioles travel throughout Providence as knights to defend the helpless and confront evils. To my knowledge, these lonely warriors, who number no more than a hundred, spend most of their time out of Solemn-Shield. Since this life is rife with peril, many Orioles pass on early in age.

During my short stay in Solemn-Shield, Mata Inhan told me that the Orioles have begun training other disciples, those of other Troupials, in the ways of the Bright Orioles to further their crusade. Though these few warriors do not match the abilities of the Orioles, they may some day replace them altogether.

Though their goals seem opposed to the existence of the Wardens, we need not fear their intervention in our practices. They respect the existence of the prison-camps, in accordance with the decrees of the ancient rulers of Yas'Wail. Despite their role in the opposition of our forefathers, the Oriole are not interested in interfering with the Wardens.

Physical Appearance

The Orioles are slender and attractive. The males stand between 5'6 and 6'1 in height while the females are 5'4 to 5'8. The males weigh an average of 160 lbs while the females are approximately 120lbs. The Orioles also claim that none of their people have been born with glider membranes or without wings, and their wings are always strong enough to fly, if not as large and graceful as some.

The Orioles are mesmerizing. Though they are attractive, it is not their physical beauty which stuns onlookers, but rather their plumage which is golden and lends them an aura of importance. Their facial coloration is gold while their torsos, arms and legs range from a deep, earthen yellow to a soft orange. The eyes of the Orioles are of a stunning yellow, far brighter than the tone of their skin; their hair, which is coarse and stands spiked above their heads, is always deep black, but turns gray when they age. Finally, Oriole males often possess slender black lines that begin near their eyes, and extend till they reach their ears.

Generally, the Orioles dislike bulky clothing, preferring to wear as little as possible. Most of their cloth tends to be form-fitting. The



Orioles also dislike jewelry, but females may wear neck pieces. The Orioles tend to avoid wearing anything that might hamper them during combat.

Nature

The Orioles are a meditative people who often ponder the meaning of their existence and their role in the world. The Orioles have keen perception and senses, particularly their smell and sight, which surpasses most of the other Troupials. The Orioles also have perfect control over their emotions and are particularly stable individuals. They like to express themselves artistically and perform exercises to hone their senses. The Orioles enjoy anything that pleases their senses, music-listening, sightseeing, food-tasting, the smell of sweet aromas; such things will easily distract them. Furthermore, the Orioles are the most Wird-proficient Yas'Wailians in Providence, since each possesses Wird gifts enabling them to become Bright Orioles.

The Orioles practice fascinating rituals and customs. They do not bear family titles. They believe that such social strictures no longer hold meaning. Strangely enough, the Orioles have never suffered the plagues of inbreeding. Orioles only mate with other Orioles, and do so only for the purposes of procreation. They believe that it is no longer possible for them to commit themselves to one individual. They find such customs limiting, as they claim to love each Oriole equally.

The selection process for determining who may couple with another is arduous and may take years. They use their senses, which they claim are enhanced by their rituals, to determine who can and cannot mate. They usually do this before one becomes a warrior and leaves. Perhaps this explains why the Orioles have never suffered from inbreeding. Their Wird skills may prevent this tragedy altogether.

Since the Orioles have no family lines, they have a number of titles given to their people, most of which are a reflection of one's age and wisdom. The most significant titles are, in order of importance, the Ten-Mata, which is their great elder and leader, the Mata, which are the elders, the Hawato, the warriors of the Orioles, and the Juvon, which are the immature Orioles. Orioles always address each other first by their titles and then by their names. Lastly, though everyone in the community is responsible for the rearing of children, it is the Mata who are the caregivers.



Advantage

The Orioles are a stable people who are perhaps the most effective warrior-Wird casters in Providence. They have the ability to cast powerful spells and can stand in combat against great martial artists. The Orioles are unique because they have partially circumvented the drawback of spell casting in combat, which is typically slow. Because they are natural warriors and casters, they are able to shorten the casting time of their spells. This allows them to be more effective in combat than other Wird casters. Furthermore, they possess senses that allow them to perceive things that many others would miss. The Orioles make formidable opponents and valuable allies.

Drawback

Though they are great warriors, the Orioles are often loners. Due to their nature and their need to seek out evil, they have a hard time making long-lasting allies. Their seclusion from the world for countless years has hampered their familiarity with the intricate customs of their Yas'Wailian cousins.

Bright Orioles and Blight Crows

Bright Orioles view Blight Crows as abominations because of their ability to drain Wird from victims. They believe it is as important to stop the Blight Crows as the White Crow.

As of yet, however, the Bright Orioles are not aware of the existence of Blight Crows in Bone-Wail.

Furthermore, they do not know that the Chief Warden is a Blight Crow. If the Orioles were to discover this, they could choose to oppose the Wardens, despite their vows not to interfere with the prison camp.





the end of now

Jove succeeded in gaining an audience with the Cry-Star Council, represented, as usual, by the elder Hawk member Lord Trexon Danlinon. Luckily for Jove and Somit, the Dragon Council Head Wyn'dahl Karistikant was present. Though Wyn'dahl could not interfere in the Council's proceedings, he reported directly to the city's King.

Somit was Fallen, and generally, the wingless were not tolerated among the Pure. Jove warned Somit that he should do the talking in the Council's chambers. Jove spoke with the Council for hours, each minute a frustrating exercise in forced reserve for Somit. She watched silently in a corner, fighting back every urge to voice her opinion. Jove recounted his journey and his and Somit's discovery of the tome the Cartographer had dropped. Though the members seemed to pay attention to him, Jove doubted his words had the impact he had hoped for.

Somit listened to the mumbling of the members, who spoke of assessments and careful studies of the matter. She thought of the man who had asked her to keep an eye on the Cartographers. She became angry that she had not approached him before the Council. She never doubted that he would find this matter most intriguing. His hatred of Sirus Khohall, Guild Master of the Cartographers, would no doubt compound his interest.

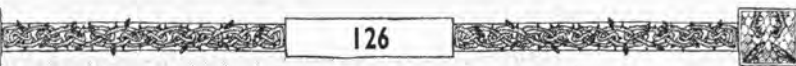
The air grew thick with frustration; Jove sensed what Somit did - that the Council would wait to act. Before she could offer her opinion, the golden doors of the chamber swung open. A tall Eagle woman, accompanied by several assistants, stepped through. Although Somit did not recognize her the others did, each one bowing in turn to acknowledge her.

"Regent Caiylus!" one man said excitedly.

Jove smiled and bowed.

"What is this I hear of the Cartographers?" she asked, foregoing any protocol while addressing the Council. Jove could tell by the unspoken words in the Karistikant Dragon's eyes that he had slipped her the news of Jove's arrival in Cry-Star.

Before Lord Danlinon could reply to Caiylus's request, Jove spoke up.





"I will tell you all you wish to know Regent. For it is I, no we, who have uncovered the treachery of the Cartographers." Jove pointed to Somit, who was startled by the attention.

A cloud of objection overtook the chamber, drowning out Jove.

"Enough!" Caiylus shouted. "I will hear the Strider." Silence dominated the room.

...

Jove and Somit left the Council's chambers. Though Somit seemed perplexed, Jove bounced with exhilaration.

"What makes you so happy?" Somit asked, the Strider's unusual state bewildering her. "She is not going to disband the Cartographers!"

Jove's jubilation subsided. "Of course not! If that is what you expected... surely that explains your demeanor!"

"Why not disband them? Is it foolish to expect nothing less? The Cartographers held a secret meeting with the Wardens of Bone-Wail and they exchanged information! Is that not a sign of treachery?"

"Yes, and that is enough to damage the guild, but not to remove all the poison from its veins. If Caiylus acts now, she may be able to extinguish some of the guild's corruption, but do you doubt that the architect of this evil would emerge unscathed. The Regent does not want scapegoats, she wants Sirius Khohall."

"So what are we to do?" Somit expelled, frustrated that their efforts were not more effective.

"We? We do nothing; nothing but watch for now. Regent Caiylus will hold the Cartographer we brought back as a prisoner. Undoubtedly, Sirius will wonder what happened to his Cartographer; he may even worry that his captured underling will divulge secrets. Sooner or later, Sirius will fumble and Caiylus will be prepared and armed with the information we gave her today."

Somit looked at Jove, but said nothing. The two adventurers walked together along a peaceful street where children and parents walked about and glided in the air. Jove then remembered a question that nagged him.





"Somit," he touched her arm, suggesting they take a rest. "I know you have the right to your secrets, but you have never told me why you were tracking the Cartographers."

"Jove, I..." Somit looked at her feet and kicked a stone. "I know you expect answers. It is not that I wanted to keep anything from you, but I was simply protecting someone I care about and who entrusted me with information."

For a moment Jove felt uncomfortable. He wondered whether she had a lover. He quickly dispelled the thought from his mind.

"I needed to make sure that I could trust you," she said. Somit looked at Jove, whose smile reassured her that he was not offended.

"I understand," he said. "I know that trust has to be earned and I..."

"No Jove," she interrupted, "I do trust you...now."

Somit sat by the side of the alley. "It's Terracine Gulliver, the Guild Master of the Messengers. He is a friend of mine. I met him years ago when he approached my village. It was then he told me his sad tale and asked me to follow the movements of the deceptive Cartographers. I have been tracking several parties of travelers to and from Bone-Wail for a period of time. It is only recently that I discovered that Terracine's suspicions were well-founded, and that the Cartographers had planned a secret meeting with the Wardens of Bone-Wail."

Jove fought to try to suppress a wave of muddled images; he wondered what her relationship to Terracine was. He wanted to ask her, but felt this would expose his feelings. Somit rose and started walking. Jove placed his hand in his pocket and looked up in the bright midday sky over the city. The shapes of the Cry-Star's monolithical structures shimmered in the distance.

"I think we have done a good job," he said.

Somit looked at him and nodded approvingly. "Yes, we did."

Jove knew he would have to return to Cliff-Spider soon, and that Somit's life as a Slaywind would force her to depart. He hoped that their paths would cross again.



PLANTS



The Lust Flower has the ability to evoke deep feelings. Emotions that have been kept in check for years, particularly those that have been suppressed or forgotten, will burst to the surface. Most frequently, these repressed feelings are love or sorrow, though the plant can also evoke anger and rage.



introduction

Two-thousand years ago, a failed rebellion ravaged the planet Yas'Wail. The world's rulers decreed an exile, sending millions of shackled rebels to Providence. The arrival of these rebels transformed the prison world's ecology drastically. Along with their strange ideologies, the exiles brought food, animals, and most significantly, plants. For centuries, the prisoners built encampments and evolved with little regard for the life that already existed. Only recently have city dwellers begun to realize that their millennia of existence has scarred the world, perhaps irreparably.

Providence's ecology is no longer observing silently the changes the Yas'Wailians' physical transformations and Wird manipulations have wrought. The world has begun to assert itself with frequent and violent manifestations, threatening to engulf everyone in Providence. Although Yas'Wailians have already experienced the flooding of the Sunderlands and the rash of volcanoes that have mercilessly reshaped the landscape, they have yet to experience the unbridled power of plant life.

With the animosity that has existed amongst Yas'Wailians for an immeasurable past, it is easy to ignore the silent, slow conflicts of Providence's plant life. Since their arrival, Yas'Wailians have reshaped the landscape. The prisoners brought their seeds and crops, clearing the land and replacing the native flora with their own plants. In the opening chapter of this tale, Yas'Wailian crops prevailed over Providence's plants. In some areas, these new life forms caused native plant life to recede; some even died. The sites of prison camps were particularly fragile. The exiles had raped the area of virtually all native vegetation, forever scarring the land. The world, like a retreating army, resigned itself to the situation and abandoned the cleared zones near the prison cities.

The growth in population and its mobility brought further conflicts with the ecology. Providence could no longer ignore the Yas'Wailian invaders. Slowly, the world adapted by evolving the plant life and immunizing it against the brutal assaults of Yas'Wailians. Several agents of Providence, particularly the Green People, who were once themselves Yas'Wailian, have





even taken an aggressive stance against the intruders. Although Yas'Wailians are aware of the threat the Green People pose, few understand the full extent of their abilities and the full brunt of their aggression.

yas'wailian plants

During the initial journey to Providence, the Wardens decided to carry samples of many plants across the gates. Because Providence's climate was far more temperate than that of Yas'Wail, farmers predicted that the plants would have no problem adapting. Contrary to their beliefs, and to the dismay of the Wardens, the majority of Yas'Wailian plants failed to acclimatize. As a result, over 95% of the samples brought over from Yas'Wail died. Before their food stocks ran out, the Wardens ordered an investigation into this horrifying loss. They demanded that Wird casters find a solution. The Wardens' agents, using Wird manipulations and keen observations, discovered the answer to their dilemma and furthered their knowledge of plant reproduction. Their plants had been carefully interconnected with Yas'Wail. Each living organism was linked in a complex tripartite symbiosis including Yas'Wail's climate, flora, and fauna. The thread strengthening this bond was Wird. By removing the plants from their environment, this fragile link had also been severed, resulting in the demise of most plants. The investigation also revealed the dependence of Yas'Wailian plants on insects and animals for reproduction. Visiting insects and animals often brought male seeds in contact with a plant's female buds. Since these animals had not traveled along with Yas'Wailians, the link had been broken. Although the wind also proved to be a pollinating agent, it was insufficient for the pollination of most Yas'Wailian vegetation.

To compensate for the lack of this essential ingredient in plant reproduction, the Wardens demanded that their agents find a substitute - their solution was Wird. Wird Weavers thus concocted spells helping the flow of pollen to their pre-destined locations. Unfortunately, to the dismay of the Wardens, most of the plants had already withered. Wird Weavers were thus forced to strengthen the plants that survived, and create new



ones from the seeds of the old. In time, and after the death of many prisoners from starvation, the plants the Warden Wird casters created eventually prospered. Today, they provide the colonies' primary source of food. Recently, however, the artificial environment the Yas'Wailians created has begun to break down. Crops are producing a weaker yield, and authorities have begun searching for alternatives.

providence flora

Providence's native vegetation is vastly different from Yas'Wail's plant life. It does not approximate the same processes of growth and reproduction. No doubt, this is due to Providence's relentless, tropical heat and its weather patterns which, unlike Yas'Wail, do not experience seasonal changes. Providence's climate is humid and the plants are accustomed to the crippling heat. The specimens that require less heat and sunlight find shelter in the depths of Providence's jungles.

Although some plants depend upon a process of pollination similar to that on Yas'Wail, many plants are self-pollinating or sexless. Some plants are both plant and pollen in one - a result of Providence's rapid evolution. Providence has contributed to the creation of plant forms that are exceedingly self-sufficient in comparison with Yas'Wailian vegetation. Despite this outcome, many plants are still dependent on other creatures for propagation.

Yas'Wailians have succeeded in cultivating only a few of Providence's plants. An example is the family of sap trees, which has provided Yas'Wailians with resin, a product that has become indispensable. Any attempt the Yas'Wailians have made to remodel existing plants to their needs has failed; the best they have accomplished is to alter their basic shape. Even the most powerful Wird casters have been unable to control or alter Providence's stubborn plants.



anodynes and plants

Anodynes have the greatest knowledge of plants among Yas'Wailians. The herbalists are able to concoct a wide variety of plant-based potions, poisons, and antidotes. Furthermore, their ability to use plants is so great that they are able to use both Yas'Wailian and Providence plants equally well. In this respect, their ability surpasses the Wird Weavers who have great difficulty in manipulating Providence-born plants.

the green people

The Green People share a singular bond with Providence's plant life. Millennia of intense interaction with the ecology has enabled the Green People to develop a unique sensitivity. Initially, the Green People were Yas'Wailian intruders who lacked any implements to survive. They became dependent on native plant life, however, and inadvertently formed an intrinsic symbiosis with them. The Green People's peaceable respect for Providence's plant life eventually grew to reverence. Correspondingly, the weakest plants formed a bond with the visitors.

The Green People have formed an intimate partnership with many life forms in Providence. Although most observers claim that the Green People consciously developed this relationship with the plant realm, in reality, the transformations occurred through natural evolution. The integration progressed rapidly over several millennia. When the Green People were first introduced to Providence, they regarded the world with a mixture of awe and respect. Unlike later visitors to Providence, they had no desire to tame the world or remake it to suit their needs. Despite this wish to integrate within the world, most of Providence's life forms were indifferent to their arrival. The plant forms that responded to the presence of the strangers, however, were in danger of extinction. They were reproductively



less aggressive than most plants. These plants welcomed the visitors as new pollinating animals, helping them reach a new evolutionary stage.

The Green People became aware of the changes that were taking place among some plants. Some of these became stronger because of their contact with Green People; consequently the Green People grew increasingly dependent on them. Since the Green People relied on many plants for clothing, shelter, and food, they welcomed this unexpected change.

The Green People became fascinated with the life cycle of plants. They carefully studied their existence and developed a near veneration for Providence's vegetation. Correspondingly, more plants welcomed the arrival of the Green People. Eventually, this partnership of convenience became a union of choice. Many plants began to biologically fuse themselves to the Green People, and the Green People became their seeding grounds. A symbiosis of mind and body took place. This integration was so extreme that each life form was dependent on the other for their reproductive and survival requirements. The plants' sexual patterns mixed with the Green People's own cycle. In fact, the Green People became driven to mate during the reproductive period of the plants. In this way, the Green People were one with the vegetation. As with several other life forms on Providence, they became fully integrated with the plants and thereby self-sufficient entities, forever losing their link to Yas'Wail.

During their evolution with Providence's plants, the Green People discovered the communicative universe of the plant world. They became masterful participants in this universe and were eventually able to share both their physical bodies and their minds.

crops & foodstuffs

Upon their arrival to Providence, the Yas'Wailian Wardens knew little of the world. To ensure that they would survive, they took cultivators on the journey, along with seeds and plants that could provide food in case of hardship.



As they had predicted, the newcomers could only successfully cultivate a few indigenous plants. To survive, they had to use their samples from Yas'Wail. The prisoners began a long process of clearing and re-seeding. Only after decades of hard work were the plants able to survive on Providence. For what seems like an eternity now, farmers have been successfully cultivating the crops originally brought from Yas'Wail.

The pressure to accommodate the growing population has recently caused cultivators to increase production and grow crops beyond the borders they initially cleared. This second major attempt at seeding Providence with Yas'Wailian crops has been disastrous. Not only has the new batch of crops failed to produce significant results, but the effort to ensure the success of these new plantations has been at the expense of the older fields. In their cultivation diaries, some workers have reported the transformations that have stormed through Providence's plant world and forced them to turn to new methods of producing successful crops.

the invisible enemy

Excerpts from:
Journal of Bowla Hunt:
Head Cultivator of the Clear-Field Free-Keep,
2nd Domain of House Gyark

Day 33 of cultivation cycle: This day has proven my worst fears. Though the Alliance of Kings worries about the Lost Tribes, my problems are, in my eyes, far graver. Intemperate weather cannot explain the miserable failure of this year's crops. The seeds have yet to reach the stage of development they normally should have this late in the year. The few seeds that have taken root and begun to grow are nowhere near the size and vitality of the previous decades. I begin to share my colleagues' belief that we are in a downward spiral. Let us hope that the leaders find a solution for this malady.



THE NEW CROPS

Yas'Wailians recently used a new fertilizer. Its successes have been significant, but it has caused a mutation in the new Yas'Wailian crops. The plants have become more resistant to Wird, similar to some of Providence's native plants.

These mutations are worrisome. Since the Green People have the ability to manipulate Providence's plants, many Free-Keep owners and farmers have theorized that the new crops could come under the influence of the Green People. They believe the new crops are slowly transforming into Providence plants.

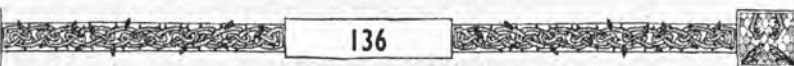
If this were to occur, the Green People could potentially control the Yas'Wailians' source of food. Many farmers are urging the leaders of the Alliance of Kings to prevent such a tragedy. Wird scholars, however, are at a loss to find a solution. Yas'Wailians may simply have to learn to become dependent on Providence and its plant forms.

Day 43: Despite my reservations, I have agreed to make use of the Stohne Free-Keep fertilizer for some of my crops that are likely to perish. I was told it is found near the edges of the jungles, some distance from Cliff-Spider. I wonder why the rulers would trust this "miracle" compost, which is made up of strange decaying plants.

Day 51: It is still too early to determine the success of the new crops. The old fields have partially recuperated. The losses will resemble that of last year's. Approximately 21% of the fields will report inferior production, still devastatingly low.

Day 53: The leaves and flowers of the Picatoms lack the lush green and vibrant hues of purple which bring a gleeful smile to the faces of children. The workers, usually anticipating joyfully the fruits of their labor, are poor of spirit and energy. They know we will have to cut back their yearly allotted intake of harvest again this year. Morale is low.

Day 60: Wondrous! The new crops are faring better than ever anticipated - even, dare I say it, better than the old! Unlike the mature pastures, the new crops look stronger. The leaves are vibrant with life,





not droopy like the others. This harvest should surpass even the best crops of last year. Finally, some time to rejoice!

Day 65: It seems that the only explanation for the success of the new crops is the use of the new fertilizer. I must admit that I was wrong about its use. I was against it from the beginning because I feared it might bring repercussions in the form of the Green People. It cannot be wise to have to rely on fertilizer found in the jungle that is the domain of these fierce beings. I am still reluctant to make use of the fertilizer on the older crops, but the decision is not my own. We will wait and see what the rulers proclaim.

the picatom

The Picatom tree is a thick and sturdy plant usually measuring from 10 feet to a maximum of 30 feet tall. It extends in a complicated and awkward delineation of branches and leaves. The body of the plant is a drab grayish-brown. The foliage is more vibrant in color ranging from olive-green to deep-green.

PICATOM SEEDS

Although most people discard the seeds after eating the fruit, brewers have used Picatom seeds in a variety of ways. The most notable use of the seeds has been to make Dusk Broth by boiling large quantities in water. Some traders have begun dealing in in this highly potent alcoholic beverage which the Alliance of Kings' Trade Council and most drinking establishments have banned. The dark brew is highly addictive.

In addition, some people have used the seeds as a poison. Although the preparation of this toxin is a well-guarded secret, it is likely that a large number of seeds would be required for the creation of a single vial. This realization has led many Anodynes to the following discovery: the daily ingestion of Picatom seeds is highly detrimental to one's health, possibly leading to blindness or a permanent reduction in cognitive functions.





Some people find the Picatom to be the least aesthetically pleasing Yas'Wailian plant. Regardless, the tree is a basic source of food for the world's inhabitants. It provides a perfectly round fruit. Its skin is pulpy and purple-red, while its flesh is firm and ochre at its ripest.

The Picatom is the most common and valuable staple in Providence, having become a fixture in most people's diets. Unlike many other fruits, the Picatom has survived the cross-world journey remarkably well. This is partially due to the rugged body of this ancient plant. Its roots are rough and require less water than many other trees. In addition, the plant is highly resistant to extreme temperatures, including the harsh heat of Providence's tropical climate. Although some dislike its sharp taste, people can eat it when it is freshly picked. The Picatom fruit is also used in the preparation of several dishes as well as the creation of ales. Because of its versatility, most farmers choose to plant several acres of this product.

the dragonfoot

The Dragonfoot is a legendary Yas'Wailian tree. Its complex shape and its origin, which remain a mystery, have fascinated gardeners since before recorded time. People call the plant the Dragonfoot because its roots resemble the shapely feet of dragons. Its intricate root system produces thick scale-like covered roots that begin above-ground. On Yas'Wail, avid gardeners grew the plant, usually keeping it for its aesthetic value. Since that time, the Dragonfoot has become the most highly valued plant on Providence.

The Dragonfoot is a plant of remarkable beauty. It is a miniature tree that has a complex and large root structure. The base of the plant resembles a clawed hand or foot with a multitude of spindly, wrinkled fingers. The plant's roots or "fingers," which are half-way aboveground, are dark in color, almost black depending on the Dragonfoot's age. The small scales that cover a Dragonfoot are renewed monthly; a single plant can shed hundreds of scales a year. These scales extend up the tree until it begins to branch off. The branches themselves are of a soft grayish tone.



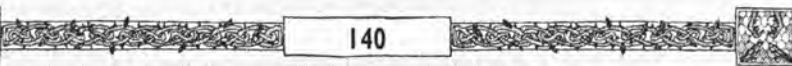
The leaves are extraordinarily beautiful because of the abundant rich jade-green leaves and the complexity of detail found on each of these offshoots. At its largest, the tree reaches two feet in height. The Dragonfoot possesses an incredible amount of fine branches and a spectacular, thick foliage. Mature trees often grow up to five times their height in width.

Beyond its rarity and its aesthetic value, people also desire the Dragonfoot for its medicinal properties. Its leaves are so potent that laying one on an open wound will speed the healing process considerably. Grinding the leaves and applying the paste to a laceration will help close the wound. The paste can also be used on scars. If treated over a long period of time, most scars will fade completely.

Several people claim that the leaves can also be ingested. According to legend, the benefits of doing so include a prolonged life span and healthier living. There are historical accounts of rulers, such as Cry-Star's Tontar Danlinon, who ate too many leaves and became intoxicated and addicted. Many of these nobles became delusional and were killed or committed suicide as a result. For years, some Anodynes have claimed that if taken in proper doses, patients will experience the regenerative effects without the negative properties.

The Dragonfoot grows scales rapidly and discards them equally fast. Once they have fallen to the ground and dried, Anodynes use the scales in a variety of potions; one is a powerful elixir inducing a deep sleep. A different mixture, in combination with water or other drinks, weakens one's resolve. If ingested, the effected person becomes highly susceptible to suggestion. If brewed differently, the potion becomes a powerful poison that will kill instantly once it comes in contact with a victim's blood. Because of its properties, only the most trusted gardeners and Anodynes have handled the plants. However, there has been a market for the scales and the potions for several years. Some people in charge of discarding the scales have been secretly supplying customers who pay handsomely for the treasure.

The most sought-after aspect of the Dragonfoot is the part of the root that lays above-ground. The root has several uses. Some women used to keep a root tied to their necks around a chain or leather string, believing it would enhance fertility. Other people thought it made them invincible. Noble warriors wore the root or kept it at their side. King Gunther of Cry-Star wears one at all times. It is a family heirloom.





When initially cut from its body, the root, under compression, releases a golden oil. This oil, when ingested in small quantities, gives the beneficiary additional strength and endurance. The duration depends on the quantity. In addition, it is possible to curb sleeping for several days, even weeks, without any ill effects. When Anodynes mix it with distilled water, the oil becomes a powerful healing potion helping the injured recover from wounds and illnesses.

The Dragonfoot's last and perhaps greatest property is the ability of mature trees (aged of two-hundred to three-hundred years of age) to produce the Dragonfoot stone. It is a translucent gem of frost-white beauty that grows at the tip of the Dragonfoot claw. Rarely, the stone can also be found in ash color.

The gems are made from the sap of the tree, hardened through some unknown process. No one has yet discovered how to stimulate the growth of the stone. It is the gem of preference for nobility - a symbol of an unshakable union. Not surprisingly, Yas'Wailians use the stone in marriage ceremonies, passing it down from generation to generation. In addition, the Dragonfoot gem is an excellent stone for containing enchantments, and many Wird Weavers and alchemists prefer using the gem for expensive and complex magical items.

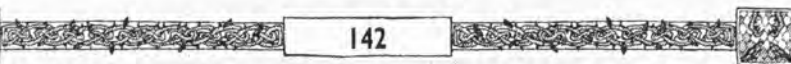


AN ANODYNE'S COUNSEL

Many owners of the Dragonfoot have attempted for years to reap the benefits of the plant on their own, perhaps fearing to inform anyone of their prized possession. Generally, only experienced Anodynes, or others with equal knowledge of flora, can use the Dragonfoot safely, and administer the proper dosage. Anodynes are the most experienced brewers of potions based heavily on plants. It would be foolish for anyone who lacks the proper skills to produce any kind of plant-based, as opposed to Wird-based, elixir. Anodyne shops in Cliff-Spider, Cry-Star, Water-Sister, and the Merchant Bands cities are the best places to locate plant-based potions.

The Dragonfoot grows in a very particular environment. Because of Providence's heat, none could survive for long in the wild. During its formative years, Anodynes and gardeners must keep the sapling at a stable temperature. For this reason, they must nurture the Dragonfoot under very controlled conditions. Furthermore, the plant requires vast amounts of nutrients.

Generations after the Exile, many scholars believed the plant to be extinct. A few years ago, historians discovered that the Andracka family had kept a secret garden where several plants grew. Until the revelation that Cry-Star's royal House held many trees in its palace, most people were unaware of its existence in that city. There are still many who think that the plant is a myth. The current rulers, the Kladshea Eagle family, do not wish its existence to become common knowledge. According to rumors, as many as two dozen plants are growing in the King's gardens. Other rumors claim that during the inauguration of Cliff-Spider's new ruler, King Gunther Alexi Kladshea awarded a few Dragonfoot specimens to the new King, Raldowin Tura, as a symbol of their unity and friendship. If these do, in fact, exist they are likely to grow in the city's Royal Gardens Cavern, or in Raldowin's own private garden. Regardless, if Cliff-Spider does possess the Dragonfoot, each tree is undoubtedly well-guarded.





Recently, Cry-Star's royal family quietly purchased the services of "investigators," perhaps Kestrels and Recognizers, to recover what House Kladshea claims are "stolen Dragonfoot bulbs and plants." If this is true, and if the plants and bulbs survived the removal from their carefully monitored surroundings, several people could now have access to the Dragonfoot and its many wondrous features. It is already known that some Anodynes of great repute also have access to the plant's scales. It is possible that one or several Anodynes possess Dragonfoot trees and are supplying the plant's products to other Anodynes. Only they have the knowledge to grow the plant and to produce its many potions. King Gunther believes that the thieves who stole the plant may try to find an Anodyne to tend the stolen Dragonfoot specimens.

the lillipa

The Lillipa is an unusual plant. Until recently, no one was aware of its existence, although it was already present in large quantities in most cities.

The Lillipa is a miniature, almost microscopic plant. Because of its size, some Anodynes would hesitate to classify it as a plant. Before Wird Weavers and Anodynes correctly identified it, they thought that the Lillipa was pollen originating from another source. In 1489 E.M.D., Cry-Star's officials, followed shortly by Bastion's, ordered its divisions of Anodynes to locate and eliminate the plant originating this "bothersome pollen." Frustrated workers eventually discovered that there was no pollen-creating plant.

Insects, animals, and the wind carry the pollen of most Yas'Wailian plants. The diminutive Lillipa does not produce pollen; rather, it performs the function itself - it is both a plant and a single pollen grain.

The Lillipa rarely stays in one place. It has no roots that allow it to anchor itself within soil. Instead, the plant has microscopic hooks that help



THE GREEN PEOPLE'S EYES

Yas'Wailains are well aware that the Green People have an arsenal of lethal plants at their disposal. If Yas'Wailians understood completely the plants the Green People control they would undoubtedly shiver at the thought of confronting the Green People again.

Although the Green People cajole plants that can spit acid, crumble walls, and scatter Yas'Wailian troops, their most useful tool is undoubtedly the Lillipa. Despite its tiny size, the Lillipa is one of Providence's most complex plants: it possesses over-developed senses which enable it to see.

The Green People and the Lillipa share a mutually beneficial relationship. Having sensed the struggles of the Lillipa eons ago, the Green People used their skills to nurture the minute plant.

In turn, the symbiotic sympathy it shares with the Green People allows the plant to function as their eyes from afar. Once a cloud of Lillipa moves in unison, Green People scouts are able to tap into the field of fluttering plants and observe the world through the eyes of the Lillipa.

Though this vision is cloudy and dependent on a drove of Lillipa to function properly, the Green People possess an invaluable tool against their enemies. During a conflict against the Alliance of Kings, the Wardens, and the Merchant Bands, the Green People can count on their near-invisible allies to inform them of the movements of enemy armies. What makes this more devastating is that Yas'Wailians are completely unaware of this unique relationship.

it grapple onto certain surfaces. Lillipa plants generally prefer flat surfaces where little vegetation exists. It is drawn to large open grass fields because it can hold on to the grass easily. Because the hooks are minuscule, the Lillipa can only grasp soft surfaces or small plants. This explains why the Lillipa can easily become entangled in fabric or Yas'Wailian hair, feathers, and fur. Like a patient insect, the Lillipa draws moisture from the air and from other plants and things that anchor it.

Wind gusts carry the plant to areas where it can propagate. If the wind carries the Lillipa to a region that is suitable for its existence, the plant will remain on the ground, not penetrating the earth until it dies. The plant

reproduces asexually, becoming activated once it dies and becomes brittle. Because of its size, the oppressive sun's golden rays quickly dry the Lillipa. The shards of the crumpled, dried plant are then spread in the wind and grow to become new Lillipa plants once there is sufficient moisture to give the plant life. Thus the Lillipa's fragility contributes to its propagation: it can produce over one hundred microscopic offspring. However, because of the limitations of its habitat range, the Lillipa cannot take full advantage of its ability to reproduce in mass quantities. Furthermore, because it is mostly dependent on the wind to carry it to the grass fields, the Lillipa is bound by



the vagaries of the air currents. More often than not, the wind blows the plant into the midst of the jungles' battlegrounds, where the struggle for life is most competitive. The mighty creatures and plants therein absorb or squash the frail, stunted Lillipa.



Since Providence's population has grown considerably, and the clear cutting of jungles has begun, the Lillipa has been far more successful than ever before. Dense patches of Lillipa litter the crowded city streets. During warm, damp, and windy days, droves of Lillipa blanket whole cities. Clouds of Lillipa hover over neighborhoods for days. Once it lands, this pest-like plant mingles in food, clothes, and homes. Since authorities in Cry-Star and Bastion have begun to understand the plant's nature, they have taken measures to reduce the amount of Lillipa within their cities. Before the time of highest seasonal activity (being the mid period of the month of Tedler), workers will often set open fields ablaze. Officials hope that the minute plants will perish before they have a chance to reproduce en masse.

According to grumbling city dwellers, the Lillipa is the single most useless organism. Its only purpose is to cause anxiety to farmers, shopkeepers, and street cleaners. The plant has caused such headaches in the past that Cry-Star's Royal Court has approved a law that penalizes people if they fail to rid themselves of the pests. Besides littering streets and penetrating every available space, the Lillipa also plagues a significant proportion of the population with allergies. The resulting side effects are inflamed eyes and excessive sneezing.

The Lillipa is a most remarkable life form. Despite its diminutive size, it is one of the most complex and sophisticated plants in Providence. At its largest, the Lillipa measures no more than a sixth of an inch in length. The Lillipa is shaped much like a thorn. The lowest part of the plant has a pointed edge. From the bottom, it begins to widen until it reaches its extremity. There, the Lillipa's light-assimilating organ is located. This roundish form resembles an eye. Although most plants have an ability to perceive and "seek out" light, the Lillipa's own ability is greatly enhanced because it is concentrated in one area.

Immediately below the "eye", the Lillipa has three to four, grappling leaves that are often as lengthy as the body of the whole plant. They provide the plant's only available navigation. These leaves are a light shade of green, while the Lillipa's body and crown are gray. Because of its dull color, the Lillipa easily blends into most environments.

the lust flower

Not the gentle caress of a lover, or the tenderness and innocence of his newborn child, or the serene beauty of the rising sun could halt the unquenchable fires of fury that flared within his soul.

His sword thrashed without mercy or remorse through beast, man, woman, and child. None could match the cold brutality of his skill in war. He never gave pause to his bloodshed until he stumbled in a field and beheld its beauty. He was forever transformed and devoured by its spell.

- Tales Before Time:
A Study of Ancient Folklore

The Lust flower gained its name because of its sheer beauty and the passion it evokes in all who gaze upon it. Legends tell of a great, savage warrior who lost his will for battle after encountering the mystic flower for the first time.

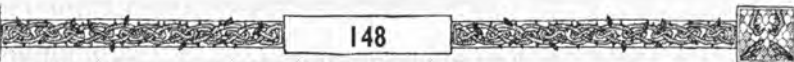


There are two versions of this tale. In one, the warrior-prince exchanges his lust for battle for the long-denied love that fills his heart. Soon afterwards, he is defeated in battle and perishes alone in the fields he had once littered with corpses. In another version, he becomes slave to the charms of the flower and retires and knows peace for the first time in his life.

Both versions of this tale are valid representations of the Lust Flower's attributes. The sweet, intoxicating smell of the plant stimulates emotional responses among Yas'Wailians. The Yas'Wailian plant has the ability to evoke deep feelings. Emotions that have been kept in check for years, particularly those that have been suppressed or forgotten, will burst to the surface. Most frequently, these repressed feelings are love or sorrow, though the plant can also evoke anger and rage. After the feelings emerge, the "victim" usually experiences a sense of great peace.

The Lust Flower does not affect everyone. It rarely distracts individuals who are more expressive and have few repressed feelings. The duration of the experience depends on how deeply a person has kept their feelings submerged. The outburst can last for several hours.

The Lust Flower is remarkably graceful. Its petals are frost white and reflect a subtle shade of pink when the morning sun's rays caress its shape. For a single moment at dawn, as the sharp, reflective light settles on its form, a patient observer can catch a pink mist echoing from the heart of the blossom. Unless a gardener carefully forces its flowering patiently for months, the plant usually flowers once a year for one week at a time. Because of Providence's unrelenting heat, the Lust Flower does not normally fare well in full light, preferring instead the cover of trees.





the annihilator (or root-tree)

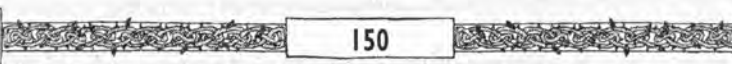
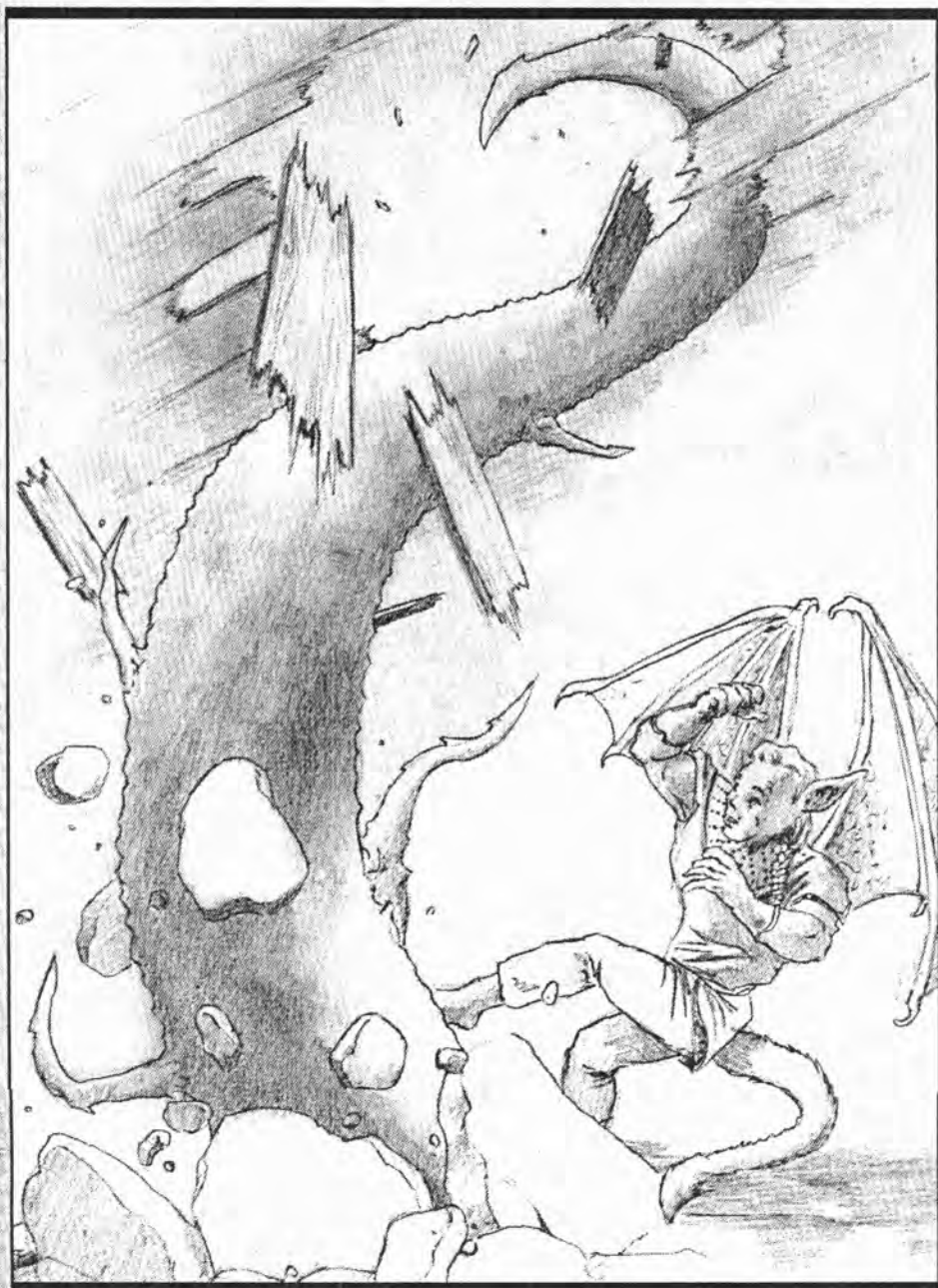
The aptly-named Annihilator is the single most aggressive plant in Providence. It destroys everything in its path, regardless of whether it is plant, animal, or stone. No one has yet identified the base of the plant, only the deadly effects of its outgrowth. Just one colony to date has been spared the devastation of this ravager. The Annihilator has a germination process unlike any other known plant. Contrary to most plants, the Annihilator expands primarily (if not entirely) underground through its root system. The roots are so powerful and invasive that some scholars believe they can grow miles from the location of the originating plant. Because only the plant's roots have been seen, some believe that it does not have an external outgrowth. If that is the case, its primary source of nourishment is unknown.

Regardless, once the Annihilator reaches maturity, it is capable of leveling anything in its path. Because a sea surrounds Cry-Star, the plant has never reached the capital city. Other cities, however, have suffered considerable losses, most notably Sun Guard, then named Leaf-Roof. As records indicate, in 43 E.M.D. Leaf-Roof lost a fourth of its population and a third of its infrastructure when roots began to sprout violently and without warning from the ground.

The roots of the Annihilator, which measure up to 20 feet in width, penetrate anything in their way. Fissures and weaknesses in the fabric of structures and soil easily cave to the pressure of the powerful roots. Normally the plant burrows deep in the earth, but occasionally, the roots will begin to surface. When this occurs, the plant continues to grow near the surface on a destructive path. This usually happens later in the plant's life cycle when it has reached such depths that it can no longer expand below the earth.

Military officials who have encountered the plant say that it behaves like a sentient creature. They claim, "the roots almost seem to seek out Yas'Wailian settlements with the volition to destroy and wreak havoc." This has caused speculation among some officials who attribute the plant's







almost calculated efforts at destruction to the Green People. Others claim it is simply coincidence.

Wird studies conducted on remnants of the roots reveal that the Root-Tree reproduces by breaking off sections of its roots, or having the roots broken off by other forces. This usually occurs when the plant has exhausted all possible avenues for progress, or is simply incapable of growing any longer. The plant seems to have an extremely slow growth process. It is believed that the plant can take as much as a hundred years to reach maturity. If the plants were to have a faster growing ability, they could conceivably wipe out almost all other life in Providence.

The roots of the plant are so massive that outright physical attacks against the Annihilator have been rather ineffective. Short of hacking away at the roots until they are cut into pieces, there is little most people can do to defend themselves. Unless they are Shards or are proficient in the use of Wird, their best hope for survival is to flee. Fortunately for cities, the Root-Tree, unlike most other Providence-born plants, has proven highly vulnerable to Wird defenses and Wird attacks. Bone-Wail, a city highly fortified by its Wird defenses, has been spared from all but the largest of the roots of these giant life forms. The problem, however, with erecting Wird defenses is that this method of protection will only succeed in temporarily halting the advance of the plant. The roots continue to move along or dig through the earth, they simply find an easier path in which to emerge.

To date, Wird is still the most effective way for cities to deal with the threat of the Root-Tree. As Providence's population continues to expand, further encounters with the Annihilators are likely to occur.



the rainbow grass

The Rainbow grass is the most fantastic discovery ever made in Providence's plant world.

- The Journals of Tal Kariff: Seer, Herbalist, Traveler, 1384 to 1410 E.M.D.

Truly, the Rainbow Grass is unlike any other plant Yas'Wailians have encountered. It is the living embodiment of Providence and a perfect symbol for the world. The plant, which is superficially similar to woodland grass in appearance, is found in the depths of Providence's jungles.

The explorer Tal Kariff named it Rainbow Grass. He discovered it entirely by accident on a journey to Cliff-Spider. Initially, the multicolored leaves of the plant fascinated him. He began testing the plant and first thought it was resistant to Wird. Upon closer examination he discovered that the plant responded to Wird and especially to the four elements. Once he returned to Cliff-Spider, he began testing each component of the plant and discovered that the multicolored leaves had entirely different functions; however, when combined in the plant, the leaves served to protect it against Providence's harsh elements.

Kariff surmised that because of its function and what ultimately represents sophisticated defenses, the plant must have been one of the first life forms to have evolved in this world. Kariff theorized that during Providence's formation, the plant adapted itself to nature's eruptions, be they earth, fire, water, or air. Each leaf was capable of providing protection to the whole plant by absorbing the particular element that was challenging the survival of the whole body. For example, Kariff theorized that during Providence's creation, the plant resisted the extreme temperatures that lava eruptions caused. It absorbed the heat, and if necessary the flames, and stored them for energy, the same way other plants store the sun's rays.

Tal believed that the Rainbow Grass must have been Providence's most common plant. However, once the world obtained its current shape, nature's violent manifestations were less frequent. As a result, the plant's

source of energy was reduced and it was less able to compete with other flora. Tal hypothesized that the plant was likely to become extinct, but the recent violent manifestations in the environment, namely Retributions, probably have increased its chances of survival. With the arrival of Yas'Wailians, and their manipulations of the natural environment, the plant



has been able to capitalize on this change and prosper.

Once the Alliance of Kings discovered that the leaves of the plant are capable of absorbing nature's four elements, attempts were made to grow



Rainbow Grass within city parameters in artificially created "jungle" conditions. All efforts were futile. The plant was incapable of surviving or growing elsewhere than the jungles. Today, explorers or parties of workers scour the jungles to carefully retrieve the plant. The four classes of leaves, almost entities unto themselves, are then used in the creation of Anodyne potions and elixirs. The plant itself does not respond well in tests using more than one element at a time against its defenses. Although attempts have been made to use several types of leaves in a single brew, the result is that each effect is canceled out.

Aside from its varied coloration, the Rainbow Grass resembles typical forest shrubs or woodland grasses. The plant usually has 6 to 15 leaves shaped like elongated blades of grass. The only difference in composition is that the leaves are far thicker than ordinary grass. The shell of the plant contains a syrupy golden-yellow liquid, the base used in the creation of potions. The sides of the leaves are covered with thorns that allow the plant to adhere to different surfaces ranging from porous rocks to the hard bark of jungle trees. The colors of each leaf cover an impressive array of shades. No two leaves are quite identical. They usually range in hue from four basic color groups; green, blue-green, brown, and rust.

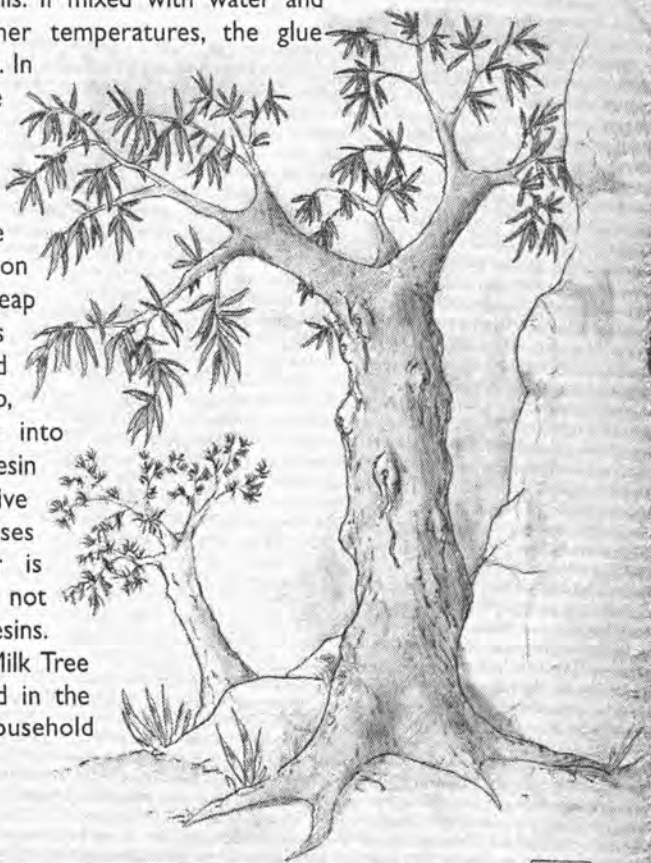
resin and sap trees

Resin has become a valuable commodity on Providence. It is used in a considerable number of products of not only cosmetic, but also essential purposes. The most important uses of resin have been in the manufacture of weapons, in the creation of domestic objects, and in the construction of homes.

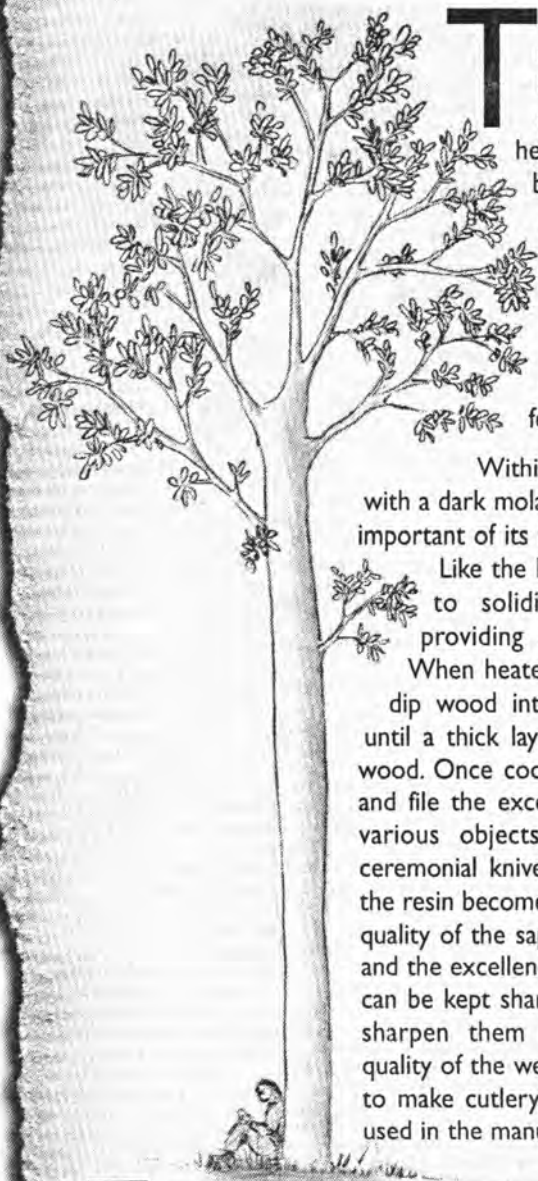
There are a variety of trees that provide different kinds of sap. The sap derived from these plants is boiled and hardened into resin. The most common of the sap trees is the Jacabo.

the jacabo (milk-tree)

The Jacabo tree, or the Milk-Tree, was given its name when explorers encountered it in abundance near the jungles surrounding Cliff-Spider. They noticed protrusions on the surface of the tree that slowly emitted a sticky, milky-white liquid. In its purest, unprocessed form, the sap is used as a mild glue. When heated until it thickens, the glue becomes harder and is used as a durable adhesive in the construction of homes. In addition, archers place the paste at the tip of their arrows. When fired, the arrow sticks to any surface and can withstand considerable weight. Thieves also use the paste on gloves to allow them to climb the side of walls. If mixed with water and heated to even higher temperatures, the glue becomes a clear solid. In this form, people use the sap to make windows. Dyes are often added to the mixture to create tinted windows. Weapon smiths dunk cheap weapons such as wooden knives and arrows into hot sap, which then hardens into resin. Although the resin creates a protective layer which increases durability, this layer is somewhat brittle and not as durable as other resins. The sap which the Milk Tree produces is also used in the production of household utensils.



the stratyte



The Stratyte produces the second-most commonly used sap in Providence. It is a large tree measuring up to 15 meters in height. Unlike the Milk Tree, which is bulky and thick, the Stratyte is a graceful and elegant tree. Its branches and trunk are fine, despite its considerable height. The leaves are small and pale. Although the branches are rough, the bark at the base is smooth and featureless.

Within its sleek shape, the tree courses with a dark molasses-like sap that is the single most important of its type in the production of weapons.

Like the Milk Tree, the Stratyte resin is used to solidify otherwise fragile wood by providing an exterior strengthening layer.

When heated, the sap liquefies. Weapon smiths dip wood into the boiling liquid several times until a thick layer of sticky sap forms around the wood. Once cooled and hardened slightly, they cut and file the excess resin, eventually shaping it into various objects ranging from broadswords to ceremonial knives. After a cooling period of a day, the resin becomes highly resilient. Depending on the quality of the sap, the degree to which it is heated, and the excellence of the weapon smith, the objects can be kept sharp for a long time, and owners can sharpen them regularly without damaging the quality of the weapon. Although the Stratyte is used to make cutlery for the higher castes, it is mostly used in the manufacture of weaponry.

the rubywood

Spellcasters use the Rubywood resin in the manufacture of Wird-enhanced objects. The tree produces a sap that is far more malleable than others, yet is still surprisingly strong and sharp. Interestingly, the material is accepting of Wird and seems to absorb it easily in its composition.

In addition to the manufacture of Wird objects and weaponry, officials in several cities have found an alarming amount of Rubywood resin assassination knives. These weapons are made entirely of resin.

Weapon smiths pour boiling Rubywood sap into molds. Once cooled, carvers hollow out the blade. Assassins love the weapon because they can fill the blade with poison, which is released once a killer slashes a victim with the knife. As of yet, officials are unable to determine where such weapons are produced.

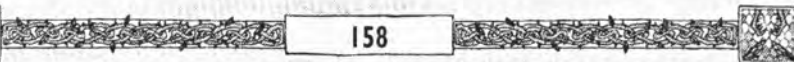




the stranglers

As legends tell, a group of Horizon Striders, while searching for lost colonies of Yas'Wailains in the jungles, unimaginatively named this Providence-born plant "the Strangler." This unremarkable looking plant gained its name because of its ability to grip on to other living organisms.

Most other plant forms have roots which provide a foundation to draw water and nutrients





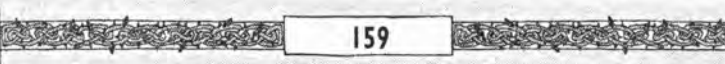
from the soil and to counter the effects of gravity. The plant is rare in that it lacks an anchor in the form of a developed root system to encourage its growth. As a result of this deficiency, the plant has adapted and avoided extinction by using other life forms as a support. The Stranglers evolved so that they could use plants for purposes other than merely anchorage. They can steal the nutrients of their hosts. Once a Strangler "takes root" on another plant, it can continue to grow for years. In some cases it will grow to such an extent that it will strangle the life from its hosts. Once this occurs, the Strangler seeks out another plant.

The Strangler's mobile, rubbery leaves generate a pressure that is sufficient to pierce through the hardest bark of thick jungle trees. The plant usually dies once it grows to such a size that it can no longer find a host large enough to sustain its body.

Although the Strangler usually holds on to other plant forms, it has been known to take hold of sleeping animals during the night. If it is large enough, the plant is capable of suffocating a slumbering creature with its dense foliage. The oral history of Horizon Striders reveals that when a group of travelers first encountered the plant in the Deep's jungles, the party lost two of its members during the night. Hadept Link, a young Strider, will occasionally recount the fantastic tale his grandfather told him in the darkest, hidden corners of Cry-Star.

Warning Signs

There are many clues that suggest Strangers are near; an unusual number of dead shrubs in the middle of teeming life is usually an indication. Other clear signs are the presence of dead trees, especially if their trunks are curiously-warped and covered with slashes. As one man noticed, "the trees almost look like they are screaming in pain. Every branch is desperately curved up to the sky." Because Strangers resemble many other harmless plants, people have learned to look out for signs of Strangler activity rather than the plants themselves.





the strider's tale

Standing on a wooden platform in the back of the warm inn, Hadept Link began to attract the attention of patrons, who were hungry for amusement.

The Strider began his tale. "I remember my grandfather telling me of fantastic creatures and exotic plants that match the wonder and beauty of the wealthiest kingly courts. On one journey in particular, my grandfather was in charge of finding a party of soldiers. They had been missing for three days after entering Providence's unforgiving jungles."

" 'For five infuriating days we searched,' my grandfather told me passionately."

The young Strider spoke anxiously, removing his leather hat and wiping away the strings of blond hair teasing his brow. The Strider deepened his voice fluidly, undoubtedly attempting to emulate his grandfather's sounds. Patrons who had not listened turned to see whether someone new had begun speaking; Hadept had captured their attention.

"Out of desperation and exhaustion, we decided to rest in a clearing that seemed inviting to weary travelers. Our sore feet and noisy stomachs welcomed the chance to pause and feed. What had drawn us to the clearing was the lack of life. All around us for days there was nothing but life. We knew that our senses were becoming overwhelmed by all the blinding and deafening sights and sounds. We thought it best to rest, and at the time, the lack of activity in the clearing seemed ideal."

Hadept reclaimed his own voice. "Had they not been so tired at the time, the worn travelers might have asked themselves why a clearing existed in the center of jungle activity. Upon reflection, my grandfather told me, they should have known better."

Betraying his own anxiety and the events about to unfold, the young, inexperienced man sat awkwardly on a wooden bench and began to fiddle with his hat.

"So they decided to rest for a few hours." Hadept paused, cleared his throat, and re-assumed his grandfather's persona.



"Initially we decided not to rest for longer than several hours. However, the men were so tired that we could not help but let our guard down. Our bedtime chatter reminded us so profoundly of home that we eventually fell in a fantasy-filled slumber. I was sleeping deeper than I ever had."

"I guess the lack of sleep for several days made them all very tired!" Hadept said in his own voice, releasing a faint, nervous smile.

"So, they all slept very soundly. My grandfather told me he was dreaming of his wife and of home. In particular he said, 'I was dreaming of comfort and relaxation. For me, at the time, that meant home and the warmth of my bed. This dream became so vivid. I could see, smell and touch the woolen sheets covering my body and wrapping my legs as I stirred in my sleep. Comfort slowly turned to pain. It began at my feet and spread like a disease through my legs. I awoke to the sound of screaming. I lit a torch and gazed at my partner laying next to me. My eyes swelled with horror after noticing the plant-covered body next to mine. I recoiled in panic but was unable to lift myself up from the moving floor. I flashed the torch near my legs and could see my own limbs trapped in a blanket of green. I realized that the ground was not moving, but the thing at my legs was climbing up at a remarkable speed. Tentacles the size of snakes were slithering up to my waist. I screamed and threw the torch at the growing threat.'"

Link paused and sipped from his half-filled glass of ale. He swallowed, wiped the beads of sweat from his face and neck, and resumed.

"After the torch had fallen, the thick leathery cables slowed their ascent. Having thrown the torch carelessly, it rolled off my legs and fell to the dried, shrub-covered ground. Fire spread quickly from below and engulfed the thing at my feet. Eventually, I pulled myself away, but not before flames had spread to my trousers. I tried to roll but my legs were still numb. I screamed again and other men from the party arrived and doused the agonizing fire. Even though I was semiconscious I could smell the stench of my burning flesh."

The storyteller leapt from his stool startling the attentive audience.

"My grandfather later learned that two other men besides his friend had perished. Never again had he paused in the jungle at night. He lived



with the scars and carried them till the day he died."

"Since hearing this tale, I have avoided all peaceful-looking clearings in the jungle . . . so should you!"

• • •

When word initially spread that two men had lost their lives during an expedition in the jungles, people believed that there were carnivorous plants in Providence's forests. This spread panic in some regions. Explorers left the comforts of their villages to examine the phenomenon closer. Others advocated the burning of jungles near settlements to prevent an attack from man-hungry plants. Naturally, the reports of the plant's activities were highly exaggerated and authorities quickly realized that hearsay had fueled the panicked actions of too many people.

The Strangler is an unimpressive looking plant. This marauding plant resembles a typical household fern. It has a dense and leathery foliage. Despite their thickness and resiliency, the leaves are capable of remarkable movement and flexibility. It is upon these features the plant depends. At the early stages in its development, the plant also relies on wind currents to carry it to other life forms so that it can find adequate support.

The leaves and stalk of the Strangler range in color from an earthen gray to a dull shade of green. The leaves also have small incisive thorns that border each side. The Strangler's thorns are useful when it initially attaches itself to another plant or organism. Generally, the plants range from ten to fifteen feet in diameter when they are fully mature. According to some reports however, the plants can attain a size considerably larger than initially reported. Some claim to have seen Stranglers measuring over thirty feet in height and width; such plants, if the reports can be corroborated, are exceptions. It seems unlikely that a Strangler of that size could survive for very long.

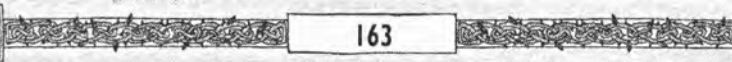
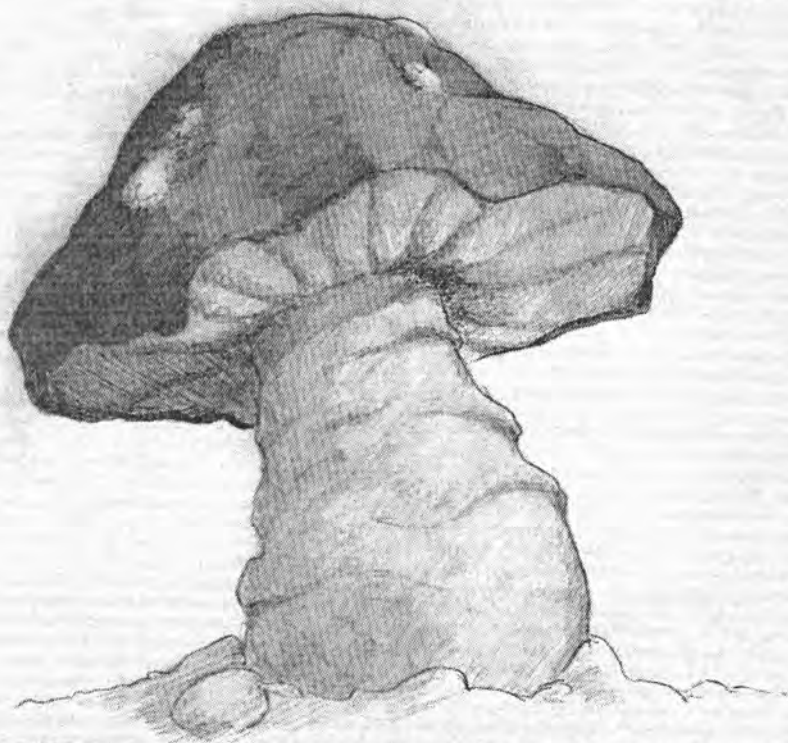
Recently, reports from Cliff-Spider's surrounding plantations, known as Free-Keeps, have emerged. Workers claim to have seen small Stranglers of three to four feet long infesting their plants and destroying several acres of crops. These reports would, in part, explain some of the devastating losses growers have suffered during the last few years. At the request of Cliff-



Spider's king, Anodynes and Wird Weavers revealed that some of the crops did appear to have been strangled and sapped of life and moisture. If the reports are true, it seems unusual for the Strangers to cause massive damage to so many crops overnight. It is also possible that a new plant form attacked the crops. Further investigations will hopefully reveal the cause of these bizarre happenings.

fungi

Well, I'm the guy you should be talking to. So you want to know about fungi? I'll tell you everything, probably more than you want to know. Been in the business for 15 years now. Pardon me? What business? Well, the fungus market. That's what we call it. Welcome to the world of mildew.





So you see, there are different kinds of mold. There are urban fungi; there's more of that kind than you know, if you understand me. But I digress. So, there are basic domestic fungi, and there are the real exotic varieties, what we call the tropical fungi.

So... pardon me? What is it that I do? Well, I'm responsible for removing all the stuff in the city, but I'm basically a merchant. Cliff-Spider's government pays me to take care of these undesirables. Since this whole place is built in caves, there are a million varieties that thrive, and the smell of the little critters in confined spaces... well, let's just say that it can be unpleasant. I've been to many other places, but let me tell you, mold like this is extraordinary! Though most people find it an annoyance, it's like a crystal grove for merchants like myself.

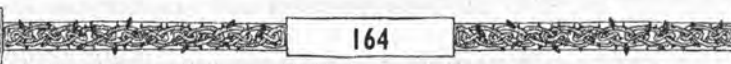
Yes, I know it might seem surprising to you, but I do have competition. Quite a number, too! But I don't worry too much about it, I know I'm the best.

It might surprise you to learn that you can do many things with fungi, if you treat them properly. I believe it will help your understanding if I classify the fungi in two categories. It's not a problem, I assure you. After all, I'm here to serve you. So let us begin with the city fungi.

black moss

The most common fungus in fields and cities, particularly Cliff-Spider, is the Black Moss. In these caves, it grows in abundance. Most of my work involves removing this stuff from the homes of nobles. Little do they know, it has many uses.

What? How do I use Black Moss? Well, you have to know which ones to pick. Usually only the large types are useful. When their shape turns black and puffy - full of spirit - then they're ripe for the picking. Still, it's not an easy task. If you pick them when they're ripe, you can't take full advantage of their... qualities. You have to painstakingly peel away the thick exterior crust.





You should be careful though, sometimes nasty bugs, like Swarm Spiders, live in there. These insects use them as a nest, and if you find one within, it will not hesitate to attack you. A spider bit a friend of mine and he has not been the same since, if you understand my meaning.

I apologize, where was I... Black Moss, yes. So I break the outer shell, mix the liquid with water, and use the stuff to kill other fungi. I spread it in homes and I can assure my patrons that nothing is going to grow there for a while. I should warn you that you have to be careful not to leave the stuff lying around: it's lethal. One dose of the Black Moss and your insides are charred! You'll never need to worry about moss again. Or anything else, for that matter!

Is that all that it does? Well, no, but it's all I can do. As I understand it, Anodynes are able to use the extract to the great benefit of their patients. Somehow, they stir the Black Moss extract with other liquids, some claim Bawk'sha milk, and produce an antidote for poisons. Remarkable, isn't it?

bronze-dust

What about the other fungi? Do you mean the caves? Well, there are great varieties, unfortunately, most of them are bothersome and they have little use. I'll probably bore you to sleep. Well, now that I think about it, there is one in particular. But I would not want to paint the wrong image of me. I don't deal in that...variety.

What's it called? Well, it holds many names, but its best known is the Bronze-Dust. It isn't the fungus itself, but rather what comes from it that some people value. The husk is brown and velvety. It's quite pleasing to the eye, for fungus that is.

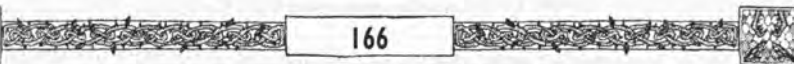
The Bronze-Dust fungus usually grows near rocks, where it can absorb the dampness. When you travel into the depths of caves, it is



possible to find the little treasures. Of course, I don't, but if you deal in the dust certain caves are ideal. Regardless, the fungi are star-shaped and have four or five appendages. One must employ caution while gathering them, picking and lifting them by the roots. As I've heard, the Bronze-Dust fungus can burst into a powdery cloud. The dust is so potent in its purest form that it can render one unconscious...perhaps even kill!

I've heard that if you pick one carefully, all you have to do is make an incision at the tip of each tentacle. You must then slowly squeeze in one fluid motion from the center of the fungus to the edge, releasing the powder in a resin container. Some are brave enough to inhale the dust as it is, but I would not recommend such a foolish act. I've heard it can give a sense-splitting experience. Some people prefer to use it with a dash of water. They mix it into a paste and chew on it, or set it ablaze, inhaling the fumes.

Since you seem interested, I can arrange to secure the product for you. But be





careful, it can become an expensive habit. You should also be aware that if the city's guards catch you with the Bronze-Dust, they'll make your life miserable. They'll hound you till you inform them which merchant provided you with the powder.

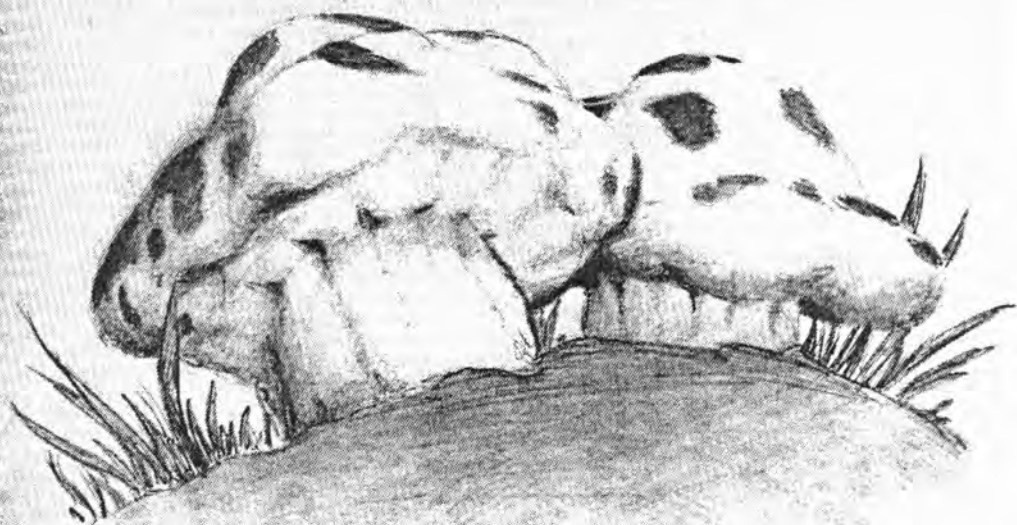
Some fungi merchants trade only in Bronze-Dust. I for one like to diversify. Remember though, that I myself don't trade the dust. I have enough business just taking care of the other fungi, and selling it of course.

So I should probably begin the second category, which I've called tropical fungi. I know you don't have the time to hear about all the stuff that is in the wilderness, so let me condense this instruction. Most fungi aren't found within the city. Fungi grow in abundance in the jungles. It's rather strange if you consider that I spend most of my time getting rid of fungi in the city, while other people pay me to track down the exotic variety in the jungles. The Anodynes require a great deal of fungi. I think they've learned better than anyone else how to use them for medicines. Even I do not understand the full extent of the benefits of fungi.

the insaete mushroom

The most common fungus Adonynes require is the Insaete Mushroom. The mushrooms are renowned for their numbing effect. I've heard that a group of wandering explorers, who were lost in the jungles, discovered the fungus. They became so desperate for food that they started eating anything that seemed edible. Some say they even started to eat those who had starved to death, but that's another story entirely. The survivors noticed that after eating the mushroom, they were no longer hungry. Not only that, but the party's injured members felt remarkably at ease, their pain having subsided.

Amazing isn't it? Since Anodynes have discovered that the mushroom blots out pain, it's been used for a variety of elixirs. What's

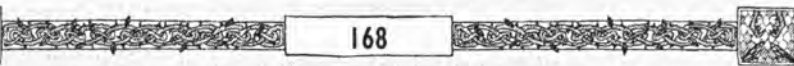


even more amazing is that, unlike other plants and potions, the Insaete does not impair in any way; patients remain coherent and sober. Unfortunately, some people have used the mushroom's properties for questionable purposes.

Many militias believed it would be a good idea to give the Insaete to troops. As you can probably guess, it actually made a difference. The soldiers were far more effective in combat. I don't want to provide you with gruesome details, but there are stories of soldiers who fought relentlessly under the mushroom's effects, even though they were missing arms and legs. They felt no pain at all!

The militias' healers also discovered that using the mushroom helped reduce the loss of blood from injuries. Regardless, many people started to object to the use of the mushroom, and as you may be aware, most cities have banned its use. I think only Bone-Wail may still use it, although officially, they've denounced it as well.

To Anodynes, renouncing its use completely was wasteful. They've been using the Insaete to help patients deal with pain for years, and because of its medicinal uses, the authorities have not objected.





Hmmm... I'm not sure if you have heard, but at this point I might as well just tell you. In the depths of Cry-Star, people organize gladiator matches. They force their contestants to eat the stuff and send them to fight other warriors. The gladiators tear at each other until one of them is left for dead. Barbaric? Yes, I think it is; though it does make for one brutally-charged fight. There's lots of money involved as well.

Where do you find them? The fights or the mushrooms? Oh, I see. Well, virtually anywhere in Providence's jungles. Although it grows easily in damp soil, it can be hard to find because of its size. It's about three inches high and wide. It's fortunate, though, that it's so vibrant. The Insaete's bright, white flesh with deep, brown stains stands out against the stark green of the jungles.

the fire sponge

Are you leaving already? There's so much more I can tell you. Before you depart, there's another variety of fungi I forgot to tell you about. It's called the Fire Sponge. I'm sure you've seen it before. It grows like wildfire in the cities. I think we brought it over with us from Yas'Wail. It grows in pretty much every corner that's sheltered from the sun. It's aggressive and it'll obliterate other species of fungi, even the Providence variety, if it should encounter them. Anodynes and Chirurgeons use the Fire Sponge to soak up poisons, or to seal a bleeding wound.

The Fire Sponges are about the size of nuts, but when they soak up liquid, they swell considerably. They can contain about twenty times their size in fluid. Anodynes have been using them for centuries to help victims of infections. The miraculous little sponge also absorbs and neutralizes the harmful effects of most juices and liquids. It's best to use them after they have dried in the sun for a couple of hours.

What? How did they get their name? Well, believe it or not, they also absorb fire. Well, to be truthful, I'm not quite sure if they absorb it, but they at least halt its progress. Long ago, Yas'Wailians discovered that houses that held lots of these fungi were always less damaged by

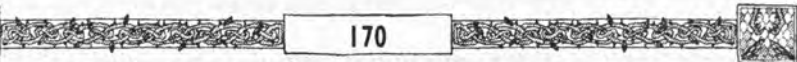


the relentless power of flames. Interesting, isn't it? I bet you never believed my work could be so exciting, did you?

So you never told me why you want to understand fungi. It's not that I really care, so long as you pay me.

What? You're writing a book? Hmm, interesting. Perhaps it's something I should consider myself.

I still have more to tell you, but we can leave that for another time.



AFTERMATH: THE AUTOPSY OF SKY-SPITE



We landed on Sky-Spite's flank, two dozen feet away from the head, adjacent to a massive wound. A crack, four feet wide, broke the scaly hide to reveal a jutting, broken rib and graying vital organs. A swarm of Corpse Flies buzzed about the wound, feeding on the dead meat and laying their eggs.

- from the memoirs of Korarath



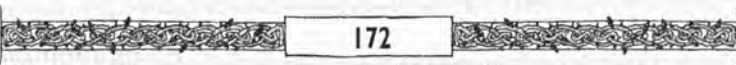
I remember those grim months well. Misery loves whittling its sentiment upon the soul with cruel precision; not even twenty years can fade this script from memory. An advantage of possessing perfect recall? No, a curse I'd wager. Enough of sorrow, however. A tale never gets told on sorrow.

Day's end approached in a slow march, and the preceding hours had passed in torpid measure. So much death in the few seconds it took to count one breath; for the second time in her struggling history, Haak San Bazaa lay in ruins. The aftermath of one battle, though only a few hours, felt a millennium slow in time.

Elothorin Avatar Sky-Spite, testament that the world contained more bite than balm, emerged to reaffirm its maleficent presence. A long, black serpent measuring over 200 yards in length, it spiraled, looped and spun in the sky, appearing to knot itself up, but gracefully avoiding any such discomposure. The populace far from appreciated its dance, however, for every ripple of its scale-covered muscles was a prelude to a new attack. Each deadly twist released a bolt of pure Wird against the city below, decimating Haak San Bazaa's giant platforms in splintered explosions. Half the city drowned beneath the swamp. The other half burned to a flame that delighted in eluding fire brigades.

Winged Wird casters, gnats like myself, flew around Sky-Spite, unleashing a library's repertoire of spells against it — all seemingly for naught. And at the battle's most crucial hour, when all seemed lost, the first Shards appeared, their presence a prophesy unfurling. Everyone looked heavenward when the mortal sun Enoval Sahar smoldered and reflected light across the cut crystal-form of Cliff-Spider's Lady Amariss. I admit I felt jealous that it was not I who blazed like the sun or gleamed brighter than the jewels of a queen's private coffers.

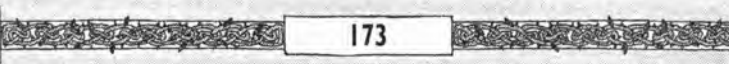
The tide of battle veered in our favor; the two Shards mounted a counter assault against the seemingly indomitable Sky-Spite, launching weapons, power, and determination against the flanks of the weakening Avatar. Then a fateful moment in our history; Lady Amariss, sheathed in purple crystal, flew into the beast's mouth and allowed Sky-Spite to shatter





her in one thunderous bite. Like a million daggers, her fragments cut through the beast and sliced its vitals into ribbons of flesh, muscle and lining. It fell from the sky like the star that burns brightest before extinguishing forever, leaving embers of Wird in its wake.

I remember twenty years ago with perfect clarity.





Although night had slipped in unnoticed, the ruins of Haak San Bazaa remained lit through spells and wildfires. With the battle won, we tended to the many injured. Sky-Spite's death trail still seared the sky, dwindling ever so slowly, but bright enough to bathe the landscape in orange and green hues. It was a rain of shockingly vibrant color.

Having my fill of broken bodies and wailing victims, I took to the sky and distanced myself from the ghastly drama sprawled out below me. I was old even then, and the battle did nothing but speed me closer to a tired death. A middle-aged man of Hawk lineage, I stood at 5'9" and wore a bright blue tunic and gray pantaloons that were as prematurely worn as I. Furrowed wrinkles, deep enough to gather shadows, cut their mark into my grizzled face. Friends said the wrinkles accentuated my gray eyes which often glistened with dedicated intent — whatever that meant — but tonight I was too tired for words. I was among the few Wylders who had survived the battle against Sky-Spite. Pure luck, I assure you.

How, I know not, but I continued drifting on exhausted wings, using the winds to my advantage when I could. I was numb and did not fathom the magnitude of the destruction below; snapped platforms drowned in dark waters; dozens of barges ferried the injured upon their decks; and a thousand fires devoured the dry portions of the wooden city. I continued into the blessed darkness of the swamplands, toward the faint orange nimbus encompassing Sky-Spite's half-submerged carcass.

Making my way to the beast's head, I skimmed over Sky-Spite's twisted and winding corpse (a frightening prospect for someone who spent a harrowing combat avoiding the creature). Fractured ribs jutted out like broken teeth from the cracked light brown and red hide. Streaks of tiger-yellow scales raced along the side of the felled serpent and blurred into solid lines as I swooped by. The corpse, no longer black like the night, was growing lighter in hue and I knew not why.

To my right, a mane of thick spines, three feet long apiece, covered the spinal column. I tried ignoring the image of my ally, Lady Jaza, impaled on the spines at the height of the battle, but the thought persisted morbidly. Why I survived when far more skilled Wylders fell like children is not a question I can answer comfortably...aside from sometimes, skill means nothing.



Sky-Spite had fallen in the Pateryn Swamps, a dismal vista covered in three things: water, trees and more water. The Avatar had collapsed on a nest of trees, shattering them on impact. Its head, half-submerged and lolled on its side, oozed a viscous, gray liquid that mixed with the surrounding water and set into a thick syrup. Above the beast's head, perched on a stout branch, was a Raven scholar whom I knew well. His name was Shanto Di'Maille and he examined Sky Spite with scholastic reverence. I folded my wings and landed on the same branch; it appeared strong enough to support us both.

Shanto was of Troupial Raven. He had tucked his black robes into his gray boots and kept his prized ledger at his side. At 6'1" he was lanky and tall, an unusual combination for the otherwise unassuming Ravens. His skin was deep black with reflections of blue; white spirals made from tree sap marked his face. They lent the scholar a primitive air that conflicted with his schooled heritage. He enjoyed being a contradiction in appearance, action, and principle.

"Look at its eye," Shanto remarked while I made myself comfortable on the branch. "It's withered, almost vestigial. If we could turn it over, we could study the other eye."

"And fondest regards to you as well my Raven friend," I returned with a smirk. "Have the Gargoyles so dulled your sense of decorum as to dispense with common civility?"

Shanto shook his head, "Have I offended you recently Korarath?"

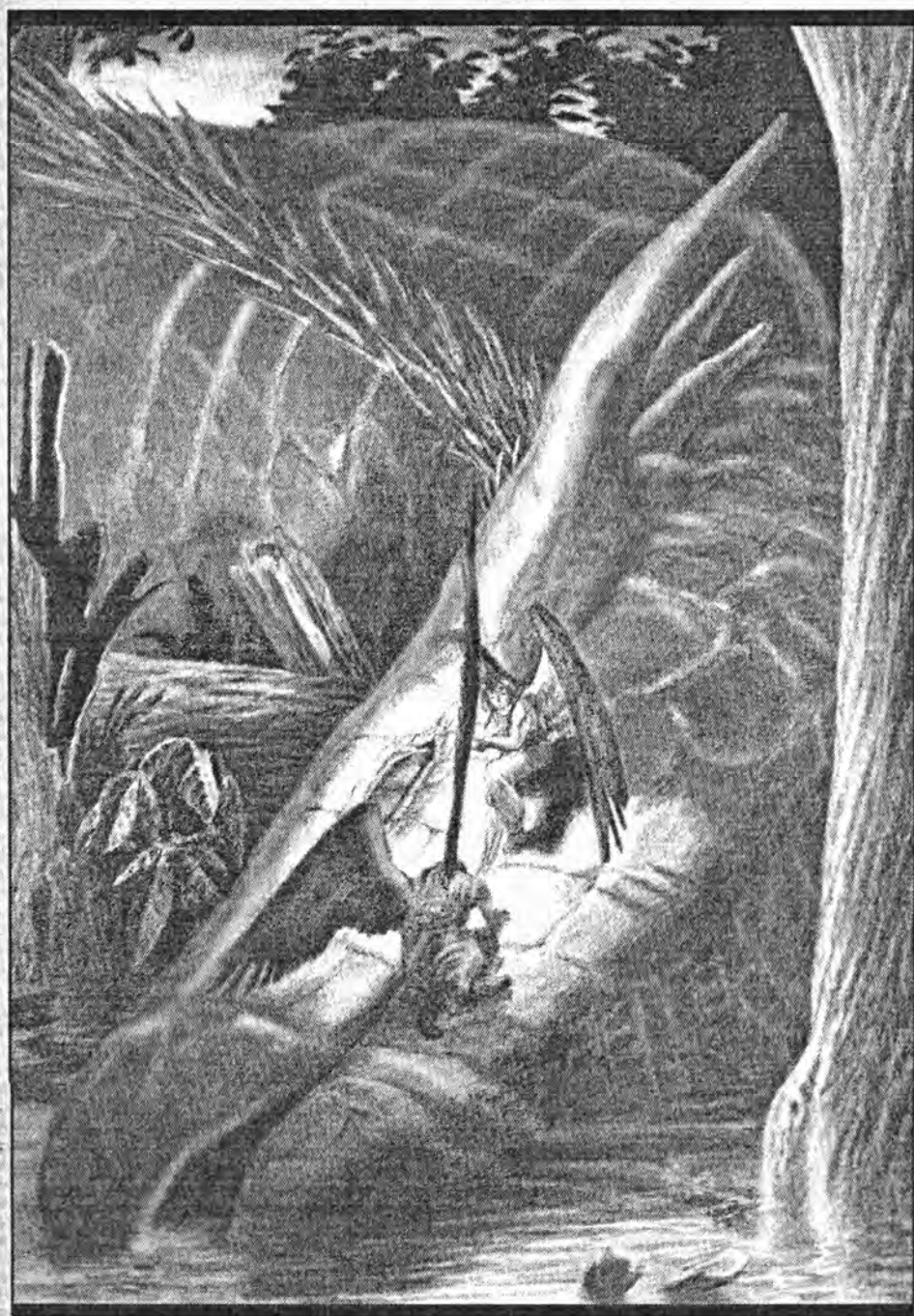
"No."

"Then," Shanto continued, "why wouldn't you have anything but my fondest regards?"

"Because," I laughed wearily, "we're an insecure people. We need others to reaffirm our status in their lives through greetings and fond farewells."

"Now I remember why I enjoy the company of Gargoyles," he replied dourly. "There is no need for formal civility; there's only the present."







Essentially, the passage of time is irrelevant to a friendship. Once Gargoyles call you an ally or tell you they love you, they will not repeat it until the relationship changes."

I shook my head; I never understood Shanto's preoccupation with Gargoyles. "I do not like them," I reflected, perhaps arrogantly. "Their stubbornness hinders them from adapting to or understanding other points of view."

"Not true," Shanto protested. "They understand certain philosophies. They may not condone them, but they will accept them if they value the other person's friendship. We, on the other hand, are far more deceitful. We claim to accept difference, but we actively hurt or destroy whatever is outside our understanding."

"But I will admit," Shanto continued, motioning to Sky-Spite, "that I neither understand nor accept this creature."

"At least that is one point we both share," I sighed. I studied the Elothorin's exposed eye; it was damaged, like a half-dried grape. "Two points actually; the eye is withered." I hesitated in mentioning a thought, but continued. "You know, Sky-Spite never looked directly at any opponent when attacking, did it?"

"Not true in Enoval's case."

"The man shone with a brilliance I'd be hard pressed to match in words. Try and ignore that. I had trouble looking away myself. Most peculiar," I mumbled, "most peculiar."

"Huzzah!" Shanto cheered. "A third point upon which we agree."

"What do you think happened with Enoval and Amariss?" I asked.

"At the moment, I'm trying not to think about it. Enoval is still with us, but this carcass may not be for much longer."

"Why do you say that?"

"That growing pool," Shanto remarked, pointing at the congealing gray slime. "It is not blood. I think the Avatar is decomposing rapidly."



"Curses!" I muttered. "This means we have to examine the creature here. I was hoping to dissect the beast in a proper forum." Unsupervised environments always corrupted the integrity of any examination. I would take what little opportunity I had, however.

Shanto smiled and dropped onto Sky-Spite's head. He reached into his robes and pulled out a curved metal blade. "Another advantage," Shanto boasted while turning the dagger over in his hand, "of working with Gargoyles. Few know how to craft metal this well."

I dropped down beside my ally; we both stood on Sky-Spite's jaw, appreciating our fallen adversary's dimensions. Shanto then knelt down on the cheekbone, just below the eye socket. I concentrated, summoning a globe of light into my hand that stretched the neighboring shadows to their snapping point.

"By appearances," Shanto began by removing his gloves, "Sky-Spite was a snake before the Avatar inhabited it. A burrowing Seritassis Spitter by all indications."

"I don't know much about snakes," I remarked with feigned humility, "but I assume that's why its upper lip curves into an arrogant sneer."

"To help in burrowing and shoveling dirt," Shanto confirmed. "The body is cylindrical for the same reason; surface snakes are oval and flat along the bottom to expedite ground movement. The scale patterns are also that of the Seritassis."

"I've been meaning to ask you about that. Why is it shifting colors? Was it not black before?"

"It is not uncommon for snakes to change hue. Some grow lighter at night and darker during the day according to the absorption or loss of heat. Female snakes are known to darken during pregnancy."

"By the King," I quipped, "let's hope this is a case of sunlight and not pregnancy."

Shanto ignored my pathetic attempt at humor and continued. "I'm not finished yet. The Seritassis is not one to change its colors."



"Then perhaps it isn't a Seritassis?" I said, instantly realizing I should have remained silent. Shanto was obviously indignant at the accusation of misclassifying Sky-Spite.

"I doubt it," he grumbled, "but there is one way to be sure." Shanto dropped to Sky-Spite's stomach and pushed his arm into the corner of the Avatar's slightly agape mouth. Feeling around blindly, he was shoulder deep in its maw when I grabbed him with my unlit hand.

"I believe you, it's a Seritassis. Now remove your arm before something happens."

Shanto shook his head. "It isn't a matter of bravado. I'm looking for... Aha!" he exclaimed with some satisfaction.

"What?" I asked.

Shanto lifted himself to his knees and pulled a foot long fang point from the side of Sky-Spite's mouth. He pushed and swiveled the tooth to the front.

"Did you break its tooth?" I asked, staring at the yellowed fang now jutting out like a tusk.

"No," Shanto grinned, "this was my quarry. The Seritassis has a set of four fangs attached to the maxilla bone. I could feel them in there. The maxilla, prefrontal, and frontal bones connect in a unique fashion." Shanto interlocked his wet fingers to illustrate the point. "This allows the maxilla to swivel out to the side and forward where the fangs can stab prey. Few snakes have this, but those that do are burrowing snakes," he said with some emphasis.

"Why only burrowing?"

"Adaptation I suppose. The confines of a hole makes it difficult to hunt normally. A snake may not have the room to open its mouth and bite its prey in tunnels. This allows it to stab and inject its venom rather than bite."

"Amazing. But if it has double fangs, where are the other ones?"

"The other set are replacements. They aren't fully developed, so



they're still inside the mouth." Shanto dried his hands on his gown, then touched Sky-Spite's exposed eye. It was clouded white and wrinkled below the surface lens. Shanto considered cutting into the eye, then decided against it. "Dry," he remarked. "The eye appears vestigial."

"It doesn't appear to be battle-damage," I observed.

"I agree. This level of atrophy suggests a Blight Crow spell, but it's too localized to be such an effect. Besides, the brille is still intact." Shanto paused and sighed when he realized I looked confused. "All right then," he continued, "the brille is a clear scale covering the eye. It serves as a surrogate eyelid that snakes shed occasionally when they grow. In our case here, I surmise we're dealing with slow decomposition or atrophy over extended periods."

"If true, then how did Sky-Spite see?" I wondered. Then it hit me, "Extra senses," I proclaimed, "but what would they be?"

"I saw no heat pits about the head, which is perfectly normal for a burrowing snake, so we know it doesn't see through light or heat patterns. We also know that Sky-Spite never looked directly at any of us when attacking."

"That's right. It was too busy spinning around..." I trailed off with realization elating my flagging intellect. Shanto met my gaze with similar enthusiasm.

"It wasn't spinning around to cast spells," Shanto exclaimed.

"It was spiraling about to see," I concluded.

Immediately, we both took to the air and hovered. Bobbing lightly against our flapping wings, we surveyed the length of Sky-Spite. I pointed; Shanto nodded and followed me down.

We landed on Sky-Spite's flank, two dozen feet away from the head, adjacent to a massive wound. A crack, four feet wide, broke the scaly hide to reveal a jutting, broken rib and graying vital organs. A swarm of Corpse Flies buzzed about the wound, feeding on the dead meat and laying their eggs. Shanto spread his hands in front of him, palms up. Tiny granules of light appeared above his fingers and scattered languidly in different directions.



The Corpse Flies gave chase to the embers, leaving their treasure behind.

"You're far too kind," I huffed with some disgust. "I would have destroyed them."

Shanto ignored me and studied the injury. The stench from the organs reached through our nostrils, grabbing our throats and threatening to pull our innards out in one nauseating jerk. Still, we maintained composure.

"We begin here," Shanto decided. He unraveled a strip of black cloth. He scattered red petals on it and crushed them into the fabric with his thumb; the light mint scent of Zaphron Roses touched the air. Shanto covered his mouth and nose with the makeshift mask; Zaphron would protect him against the stench.

Bare-fisted, Shanto knelt beside the gaping wound and examined the scales, interior lining, musculature, and organs. Although muffled, he spoke clearly enough for me to understand. "The scales are vibrant, much more colorful, but far less iridescent than that of a Seritassis Spitter." Shanto brought out his metal blade and poked at the palm-size scales around the wound.

"I don't know if it is the girth of the...beast," Shanto grunted while pulling on a scale, "but they appear denser than average... even at this size."

Astonished, I asked, "What are you doing? You can't pull out a scale, they're hardened portions of the..."

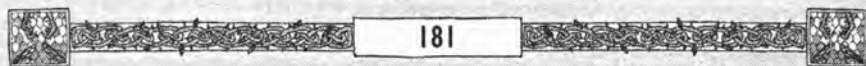
"Skin," Shanto interrupted. "Yes, I know. I'm not trying to obtain a scale. I'm trying to stretch out the skin." He grunted again. "I can't do it. It's too tight."

"Ahhh, I think I understand. You want to examine the interstitial tissue between the scales."

"Correct," Shanto huffed, trying to regain his breath. "I want to see if the interstitial tissue contains any unusual nerve endings."

"For the extrasensory organs?" I asked.

Shanto nodded. "The scales contain what appear to be flecks of metal."





I'll have to bring some scrapings to my forging friends; perhaps they can tell me what type. There does not appear to be any exposed nerves or unaccounted organs beneath the scales. I doubt this is where the sensory organs are."

"Shanto?" I interrupted. "Is it possible the bristles on the mane act as the senses?"

Shanto paused, then smiled, pleased with my observation. "I hadn't considered that, but you may be right. Let's finish here first." Shanto continued studying the injury where a shattered rib thrust out beyond the lip of the wound. Some connecting tendons had snapped, leaving the muscle strands hanging limply. The rib had also cleaved overlying surface muscles with its serrated bone-edge, revealing a detailed cross-section of the thick, rope-like bundles.

"The Seritassis has over four hundred ribs; a series of muscles and the vertebrae along the spine connects the ribs, creating a unique system of movement. Oh yes, could you remind me to look at the spine when we examine the mane Korarath?"

"Of course, but what are we looking for?"

Distracted, Shanto responded, "I'll let you know when I find it." He rolled up his sleeves, dropped to his stomach and separated the muscle strands. With a deep breath, he pushed his arms inside the wound until he was elbow deep in gore. I tried ignoring the wet "shuck" sound that followed, and averted my gaze while displaced red ooze spilled over Shanto's arms in a thick rush. My autopsies were rarely this sickening.

"That was pleasant," Shanto grunted sarcastically. "I have to remember that the larger ones are far messier than their smaller counterparts." He pulled his arms free, got up and shook loose the red clumps of matter sticking to him. Blood coated his entire front. "As I suspected. The crystal shards completely lacerated the interior; all I felt were strips of organ lining. Besides bone, I doubt the crystals left anything whole."

"Shanto..." I whispered, "look." I pointed to where Shanto had lain down. The scales caught within the wash of my light were a subtle red, while those Shanto's prone form covered momentarily were a lighter orange. His





silhouette appeared in the scales. Fascinated, I brought my glowing hand closer to the scales. As I approached, they went from orange to red, then darkened to a reddish-brown. I finally touched the light to a large scale, expecting it to go black. The light vanished, however; its Wird drained away with ease. The swamp's darkness rushed in like cold water.

"What in my ancestor's sweet memory was that?" Shanto muttered.

Panicked, I swiftly uttered a second spell, summoning another globe of light. The scale was pitch black. We both stared at it for a long minute before I could ask, "Did it steal my spell?"

Shanto looked at me, his eyes widened. "Can you cast another spell?" he asked urgently.

"What kind?"

"Doesn't matter, any kind, but focus it on another scale."

I concentrated for a moment, then brought my left hand out. A tiny ice pebble appeared in my palm while silver sigils painted the air and shifted into fluid patterns around my hand. The pebble fell, striking a scale. The familiar sound of cracking ice unexpectedly died away, however. The pebble vanished, leaving behind a second, pitch-black scale.

"The scales aren't light sensitive," I realized.

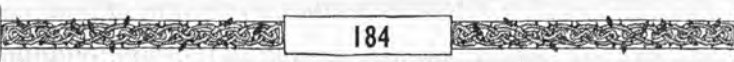
"They're sensitive to Wird." Shanto concluded. "That's how this creature compensates for its blindness."

We remained there a few moments, contemplating silently our unsettling discovery. Suddenly, Sky-Spite moved, nearly knocking us off balance.

"Sweet Ancestors!" I yelled, somewhat undignified. "We've stirred it from its sleep."

The movement stopped. We stood there, waiting for the assumed inevitable to happen.

"No," Shanto finally whispered. "It's still dead. The body is settling deeper in the swamp. The decomposition must be affecting the entire structure. We have to move quickly." Shanto ran up the sloped body to the





mane, which was now the highest point along Sky-Spite's frame.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"We need to find an exposed portion of the spine. I wish to see something." We sprinted alongside the hedge of quills before taking flight. Less than ten feet above the mane we flew the length of Sky-Spite's body, finally landing on its tail. There were no wounds along the spine.

"This won't do," Shanto hissed.

"For the last time, what are we looking for?" I asked.

"I need to see the spine," Shanto answered impatiently. "Snakes are flexible, but not to the degree of Sky-Spite. I want to see what changes affected the vertebrae."

"I hate to upset you further, but the spine isn't exposed."

Shanto fished out his metal knife. "Then we'll have to cut open a section."

"Even if that blade's enchanted, you're not getting through that thick hide."

Shanto sighed and sheathed his prize. "Of course you're right. I just wish we had something sharp enough to do the trick."

"We do have something sharp enough," I responded after some thought and hesitation. "We just have to retrieve it."

"What would that be?" Shanto asked.

"A shard. A crystal shard, one of many mind you, that sliced through Sky-Spite."

Shocked, Shanto asked, "Lady Amariss? Don't you think that's... macabre?"

"This coming from a man who plunges his arms into visceral gore and is still caked in its filth?"

"That's different. You're talking about defiling the body of a heroine who saved all our lives, including yours."





"Lady Amariss was a Wird Weaver like you," I snapped back. "If understanding this creature meant saving others in the future, it would be a sacrifice she'd be willing to make. By the Reckoning, it was a sacrifice she made. You of all people understand the opportunity we have here. If we allow it to escape, we would be a disgrace to our Distinctions and to Lady Amariss' memory." Sky-Spite's body shifted again and sank a foot deep. The gray mass around the corpse grew larger. "Please Shanto," I pleaded, "you yourself said we have little time. We can't allow this opportunity to elude us. If you feel uncomfortable with handling a shard from Lady Amariss' body, then I'll do it for you. Just help me find one splinter."

Shanto shook his head. "I'll help," he growled. "Gods curse my soul, but I'll help."

"Excellent. Where do we begin?"

Shanto looked around. "The anal tract," he concluded. "It should be nearby."

"The...anal...tract?" I asked cautiously. I was suddenly less exuberant about the entire process.

"Correct," Shanto stated. He turned and walked away, leaving me to race after him.

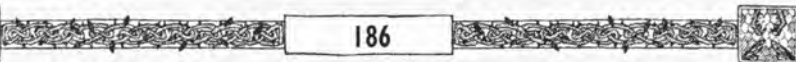
"Why the anal tract?"

"Because. The crystals that lacerated Sky-Spite destroyed its interior lining. The rectum is the last pathway through this portion of the body following the kidneys and intestines. I hope some crystal shards followed the path of least resistance through the body."

"They couldn't have traveled this far down? Could they?" I asked hopefully

"Possibly not," Shanto replied, "but Sky-Spite may have made the mistake of swallowing when it bit Lady Amariss. The throat and esophagus muscles of snakes are extremely strong. Since the tongue is not used in swallowing, the muscles are responsible for pushing food down into the stomach."

"I follow you so far, but couldn't the crystals be lodged within the





stomach or throat even?"

"The wound I explored back there was the liver. It was in ribbons, and it's somewhat adjacent to the stomach. The crystals journeyed deeper than that." Shanto looked at me and sighed, "Very well, you don't have to accompany me, but make yourself useful."

I nodded emphatically, visibly relieved. "I'll look at the mane," I volunteered.

"Fine," Shanto replied, waving me away. I turned to the hedge-like mane and immediately regretted my offer when images of impaled Lady Jeza filled my thoughts. There was no turning back, however. Shanto was rarely so understanding and I was not one to discredit favors. I advanced to the mane and prayed I would not find blood on the spines. Thankfully, I did not.

The mane extended the length of Sky-Spite and consisted of a thick brush of painfully long spines. Their surface was abrasive, and upon further examination, I realized they were serrated; they could scrap off skin with ease. Pulling on the spines, I discovered they were also flexible, like the limb of a sapling. While they wouldn't break under my admittedly weak grip, they did bend. I studied the mane, until finally, I came across a broken thorn. It was hollow.

Having learnt all I could from the mane, I went to find Shanto. He was not in sight. After searching and calling out his name, I took to the air and flew Sky-Spite's length. I finally encountered him returning from the head.

"There you are," I exhaled, relieved that my friend was unhurt. "I wondered where you'd gone." We landed on Sky-Spite's flank.

"I found nothing in the anal tract."

I grimaced at the thought. "You...you did clean your hands afterwards?" I asked.

Shanto grinned, his teeth a slash of white across an otherwise dark face. "As I was saying, I found nothing there, but I realized that some shards may be in the roof of Sky-Spite's mouth."

"Didn't you feel them when you were searching the mouth before?"



"No. I must have just missed them." Shanto brought up his right hand, revealing a blood-soaked strip of cloth across his palm. "I found a crystal this time, however."

"Are you all right?"

"I'll live, but let's just say that Lady Amariss has exacted her toll for defiling her body."

"You're a Wird Weaver, can't you heal yourself?" I asked.

"That's something we have to discuss, but after we finish this last errand." Shanto walked to the mane and retrieved a wrapped cloth from his cloak pocket. I stood by his side, watching while he carefully extracted a purple crystal. It reflected light cleanly along its honed edge; pure, and precise. "It's sharp," Shanto warned. "We have to hold it very carefully and lightly."

Shanto touched the crystal to the scaled skin, just below the mane's roots. A wound appeared, like split skin on overripe fruit. Shanto drew the crystal against the surface, cutting an easy line parallel to the spine. After making a twelve foot long incision, he sheared the mane's thorns at the roots and made two incisions parallel to each other, across the spine itself. With three cuts, he had created a skin-flap. It took several minutes to pull the flap up and cut away the connective tissues and muscles. We eventually exposed the spine.

Satisfied, Shanto examined the bare spine with some relish. The three-foot long vertebrae looked like a dinner chicken with four small protrusions emerging from the central bone. From the center of each vertebra, a square fin rose a foot into the air. The limbs outcropping appeared worn and fractured. I watched silently, waiting for Shanto to speak.

"The vertebrae connect to one another like a ball-and-socket." Shanto illustrated by cupping his clenched fist. "This allows for a wide range of movement. Normally, these arms," Shanto pointed at the chicken-like limbs, "interlock with the arms of the adjoining vertebrae, preventing the spine from twisting the spinal column completely out. Essentially, the rear wings





of one vertebra slid under the front set of the next link. The same holds for these fins which are normally larger and mushroom outwards into a buffer crest. The crests, by coming in contact with one another, stop the snake from arching its back into severe contortions. They prevent excessive movement from popping the ball of one vertebra out of the groove of another."

"With Sky-Spite," Shanto continued, "the arms are worn into nubs, practically useless, as are the fins. This is what allowed it to spin and move in any direction. What had me curious was why this didn't affect the nerve clusters inside the spinal column. The spine's movement should have twisted and wrung them."

"And?" I asked, enraptured by Shanto's tutorial.

"A lubricated, flexible 'pipe' sheathes the inside of the spinal column. It's made from the same material as those thorns along the mane. I believe this pipe spins around easily within the vertebrae, rarely twisting or contorting the nerve clusters."

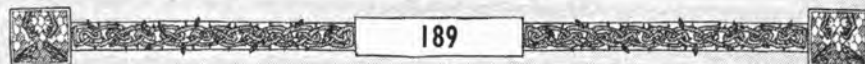
"Incredible. Despite its destructiveness, it is still an amazing feat of construction," I observed. Shanto stopped smiling when I made my comment. He appeared pensive, as if considering an unspoken dilemma. I noticed the sudden silence, but said nothing. I knew Shanto had something to add, but I could not goad him into saying it.

"We have a problem," Shanto finally remarked. I remained silent, allowing him to continue. "From the tales of the Grand War, we know that the Elothorin itself could separate its souls into smaller avatars and that Sky-Spite was one such servitor. What happens when an avatar's host body dies?"

"It rejoins the Elothorin."

"During the Grand War on Yas'Wail, yes, this was true. But what about here? We know the Elothorin is not in Providence, but its avatars are. Lady Amariss defeated Sky-Spite, so, where did its soul go?"

I shrugged weakly, unwilling to reach a conclusion I already suspected.





"I don't know," I finally whispered.

Shanto shook his head sadly. "I'm afraid I do." With that Shanto held up the crystal shard that was once part of Lady Amariss.

"Are...are you sure?" I stammered, feeling timid and drained. "How can you be certain?"

"Remember when you asked me why I didn't heal myself? I tried, but the crystal absorbed the spell in the same fashion as the scale earlier. I can feel a malevolence within the shard Korarath. It's sleeping, but it is there."

"What do we do?"

"We wait for Sky-Spite to decompose. Afterwards we retrieve the remainder of the shards from the swamp floor."

"And after that?"

"We take them to Cry-Star since Sky-Spite damaged the Grand Repository in Haak San Bazaa. Then we pray to whatever gods we've forgotten that the shards never awaken."



historical epilogue

By Touliar, Recorder for Regent Caiylus, Troupial Raven.

Korath, esteemed sage of my Distinction, died centuries ago. Although his memoirs are complete, I feel events following Sky-Spite's autopsy need further historical remark. Indeed, even what I add offers no closure, for the cycle is not yet complete.

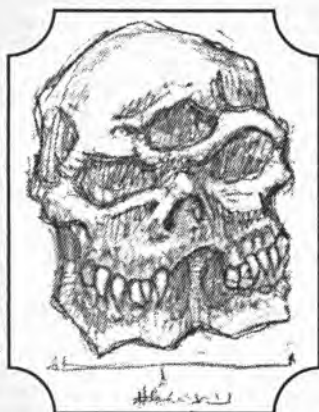
The events following the autopsy are many and deserving of their own book. On the advisement of later-venerated Korath — of Hawk — and learned Shanto Di'Maille — of Raven — most of the crystal shards were taken to Cry-Star where Wird Weavers confirmed they harbored the dormant soul of Sky-Spite. The royal castes silenced the matter to stem panic. They left the splinters in the custody of Cry-Star's ruling Alodawn House. When Alodawn collapsed, the Regent of the Alliance assumed custodianship of the impregnated crystals. Later, Regent Jenobay reported the crystals stolen; only following the regent's trial and spectacular flight did the Alliance realize it was Jenobay who had them.

Regent Caiylus has sanctioned the creation of a secret group of Shards known as Justifiers to track down the crystals. Their second mandate is the assassination of Jenobay. Only the ruling body of the Alliance knows this, and I am breaking all protocol by committing this knowledge to script.

While the crystal fragments have been inactive for the last several centuries, the Alliance lives in fear of them. In addition to his powers as a Blight Crow, Jenobay holds the loyalty of Krydalia, a female D'Shau Monk whom he corrupted. This worshipper of Veckull is a former Orchard Tender, and knows the Wird necessary to grow crystals. In her hands, and under Jenobay's direction, she can forge nothing less than the weapon of our demise.

ADVENTURING IN THE ECOLOGY

The following examples are ideas for designing adventures using the creatures, plants, and insects listed in this source book. Game Masters can also use any of these adventure seeds to add flavor to their campaigns or temporarily distract their characters.



THE PLAGUED MERCHANT

A merchant is looking for mercenaries. Budar Tallwind has a travel route through the mountainous region of Leviathan's Spine, near the Warden city of Bone-Wail. A terrifying creature, known as the Effigea, has been plaguing his caravan for weeks. He is seeking adventurers who are willing to dispose of the Effigea. He is willing to compensate the adventurers for their troubles.

Strangely, the merchant will ask the characters what they wish to have, stating that he can get them objects of value. He will not offer money. If the characters insist on obtaining cash, he will try to convince the characters to ask for precious items instead (gems, cloth, weapons, etc...), but will eventually acquiesce if the players insist. It will take Budar several days to obtain cash. He will claim that his supply of coins is low due to the effects of the Effigea on his trade.

In truth, Budar Tallwind is Dallawand Connix. The Warden is in charge of a small outpost on the outskirts of Bone-Wail's territory. In his charge, Warden Dallawand Connix has 5 Dove guards, 10 War Dogs, and 2 Ravagers (he keeps the War Dogs and Ravagers away from the characters at all times). Only the Dove guards accompany him, because he does not want the players to discover that he is a Warden.

Dallawand is seeking the aid of mercenaries because he has not been able to defeat the Effigea with his own troops. He does not want to ask for more Ravagers, War Dogs, and guards because he fears that the Warden Senate will view him as an incompetent fool.



One of the reasons that the Warden has had difficulty killing the Effigea is that there are actually two of the Degenerates. The Warden has already lost 2 Ravagers and several guards, and he does not wish to lose more.

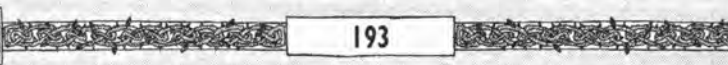
The characters may discover that the "merchant" is in fact a Warden. There are several clues. For example, Dallawand knows very little about the outside world and he will claim to be from a small town outside of Bastion. If characters ask the name of this town, he will create a fictional place. Characters with Area Knowledge of Bastion can roll against a TN of 11 to uncover his lies.

The Warden has two Dove guards who are always by his side, though the characters may not view this strangely. Perceptive characters can, however, overhear the guards calling him master. Finally, the fact that Dallawand wishes to pay the characters with goods is another clue; Bone-Wail does not have currency, and obtaining coins is going to be more difficult for a Warden.

If Warden Dallawand discovers that the players have uncovered his true identity, he will turn against them and try to enslave them. Out of all of his guards, only one is a spell caster (level 2), while the others are all average fighters. Should the characters discover the truth, they may try to confront the Warden. There is very little they can do under the authority of the Alliance of Kings, however, since the Wardens and the Alliance recently signed a treaty. If the characters choose to ignore that the merchant is a Warden, or if they do not uncover Dallawand's secret, they will receive payment for their work - if they get rid of the two Effigea creatures.

THE STRIDER'S FINAL MESSAGE

A group of characters encounters a dying Horizon Strider near the Sunderlands. As they help the Hawk woman named Shella Jokol, she informs them that she has been investigating strange creatures in the Sunderlands. She will tell the adventurers that the creatures, called Aquamorphs, are originally from the Algerra Sea. They moved into the Sunderlands after the area was flooded.



What is distressing is that the Aquamorphs are allies of the Green People, and that they have agreed to join the Lost Tribe in a conflict against Yas'Wailians. "It seems," Shella will say, "that the Green People have convinced the Aquamorphs that we should be extinguished." With her last breath, she will inform the characters that the Alliance of Kings is unaware of this threat. "It is imperative that all Yas'Wailians be informed," she will finally say.

Even if they can heal Shella, the Strider's injuries are too severe. Healing her will only stall her inevitable death. If she is temporarily healed, however, Shella will also tell the characters that a group of 4 Aquamorphs attacked her. Shella was able to flee, but she will also tell them that the creatures are roaming the area, searching for her.

"Run!" she will scream. "Leave before they get you!" The characters should leave immediately. Their quest will be to warn the Alliance of Kings and anyone else they choose. Of course, the journey home will be difficult. The heroes are likely to encounter many dangers. One such danger is the Strangler (see page 158). The party of adventurers can encounter them at night as they are sleeping. Finally, the group of Aquamorphs will stalk the heroes and try to kill them. Will the characters make it home alive? See pgs 110-112 for details on the Aquamorph



ANNIHILATED VILLAGE

Cool-Web, a member village of the Alliance of Kings, is a peaceful town on the outskirts of the Exodus Plain. The small town of 500 farmers, mostly redeemed and Fallen workers, normally live in relative simplicity and peace. Recently, however, the town has been devastated.

The villagers initially believed that an earthquake had hit their town. After several days, the tremors returned with greater furor. The villagers discovered that the source of the devastation was not an earthquake, but a gigantic root. The villagers feared that the destructive Annihilator would return. They sent a messenger to Cliff-Spider to ask for assistance.

On the way to the War Citadel, the messenger will run into the adventurers. Upon seeing them, it will become obvious to the villager that the characters are noble heroes. The messenger will ask the characters for help.

Game Masters can also arrange an encounter in a city, either Cliff-Spider or Cry-Star, if it is more convenient for their campaigns. The Alliance of Kings can also ask the characters to intervene on their behalf, since the Alliance's armies are busy preparing for war and defending the city-states. Once the characters arrive in the village, they will discover that another attack has occurred, and more people are injured. An Anodyne or Chirurgeon should accompany the party if there is no healer among the players. The characters will have to rescue victims trapped under rubble and help to rebuild the town. Finally, the characters will have to destroy the Annihilator. Two Annihilator roots are beneath the village. If the characters destroy both of them, the village will be saved. See page 149 for details on the Root-Tree.

THE BEETLE THIEF

A wealthy merchant approaches a group of characters to hire them. The merchant informs the group that he is a breeder of rare and highly valuable Perfume Beetles. Recently, one of his prize beetles was stolen. He wants the characters to find out who stole the beetle and retrieve it, for a handsome reward of 250 Natlaw Tasks.

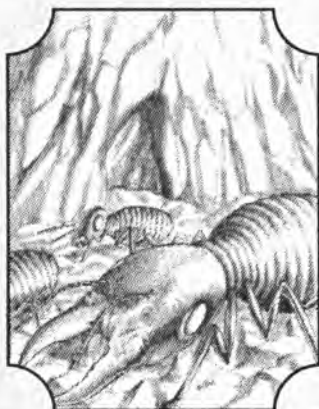


If there is a Rat character present in the group, the merchant provides the character with a piece of cloth which has the scent of the beetle, a very unique scent (and pungent one at that, in the mind of the Rat) that can help the characters track down the stolen beetle. He also provides the characters with a detailed description of the patterns on the beetle's carapace as each Perfume Beetle is unique.

The characters must use any skills they possess to find the location of the beetle. GMs may wish to have a rival merchant possess the stolen beetle, determined to use it to breed his own line of expensive beetles. A Pure noble

may have stolen it, intent on being the only one to possess the scent. The beetle may have simply escaped by itself and wandered off.

This adventure is perfect for forcing characters to utilize other skills than just their abilities to fight. Also, this sort of adventure often allows certain characters who are normally overshadowed in combat oriented games to shine as their abilities in stealth, observation, and other non-combat abilities become important. Furthermore, an adventure such as this is a perfect way to launch a more political sort of game - what sort of secrets will the characters stumble across in their search for a simple beetle? Often, these other secrets lead to more exciting things. See page 12 for details on the Perfume Beetle.



THE TERMITE THREAT

A town contacts the characters, requesting their aid. The town is located on the fringe of the Deep, far from the major city-states. Therefore, the villagers cannot call upon the Alliance of Kings for assistance.

A villager informs the characters that a Spire Termite queen has established a hive about half a mile north of the city. Initially, there were no problems but as the hive has grown in size, it has expanded its territory. Warrior Spire

Termites regularly attack the town. The villagers ask the characters to destroy the hive and its queen.

The characters will have a difficult task ahead of them as the hive, though small, is now well established with a large number of warriors. If the hive is attacked, the termites will all defend the hive viciously. Furthermore, if the hive is attacked, Swarm Dancers in the area will come to the defense of the insects, making the task all the more difficult.

This seemingly straightforward adventure will create a situation where the characters must proceed with caution. While the Spire Termites present a serious threat, the involvement of the Swarm Dancers will quickly complicate matters - if the characters get into a fight with the Swarm Dancers, it could create a diplomatic disaster which could threaten the peace between the Lost



Tribe and the Yas'Wailians. This adventure is one that must be solved with diplomacy and intellect, not brawn.

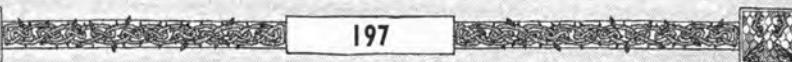
rites of passage

Rites of passage are an important part of Yas'Wailian culture. For example, Gargoyles often force their children to pass rigorous rights before the tribe accepts them as mature Gargoyles. Other races also follow this practice.

Rites of passage represents a good opportunity to play a session with one character. To be accepted into an organization or secret cult, a character may be asked to capture a dangerous creature. Furthermore, a character can also be asked to retrieve a rare plant, which involves journeying through treacherous territory.

This practice provides GMs with an excellent opportunity to do some initial role-playing with a player before the full game gets under way, or to play out a flashback to the character's youth. These rights of passage are often fraught with danger. They're also an excellent opportunity to pit a character against strange and powerful creatures.

To play this scenario, the GM needs to determine why a character has to undergo a rite of passage. Perhaps this is something the character must do to be accepted into a group, or perhaps it is a tradition among a Pure noble family. Regardless of the reasons, it allows the GM and individual players to add depth to their characters and experience the creatures and plants that are presented in this source book.





PROVIDENCE GAME INFORMATION

NEW ABILITIES

ALTER SKIN

This ability allows characters to change the composition of their skin by touching any surface.

Area: Self

Range: Contact

Power Type: Control/Effect/Elemental

By touching any surface, for example, a rock or a tree, a character gains its protective properties. The higher the Tier, the greater the protection one obtains. To gain this armor, the GM must determine the BPV of the object one touches. The Tier of the power, as listed under the Wird Effect column, determines the maximum level of protection one can obtain. In addition, characters gain the properties of the surface they touch. If they touch a sharp rock, their skin will also become sharp. If a plant excretes poison, then the character's skin will do the same. This means that characters will gain a bonus to damage up to the number listed under the Wird Effect column, to their damage roll, in combat.

e.g. An Inconnu touches a thorny plant. The BPV of the plant is only 3. Even though the Inconnu has the ability at Tier 5, which allows a maximum of 15 points to armor, it only gains 3 points of protection. Since the plant possesses thorns, the Inconnu's skin becomes riddled with large thorns. GMs should determine the damage of these thorns, and award it to the Inconnu. The rating cannot, however, surpass the Tier rating as listed under the Wird Effect column.

If the same Inconnu had touched a stone with a BPV of 30, whose surface was smooth, then it would not gain any bonus to damage. Even though the object it touched has a BPV of 30, the Inconnu can only gain a protection of 15 points, the maximum for its Tier 5 ability.



ADDENDUM TO THE ECOLOGY

The following are corrections to statistics from the first Ecology:

Keshtria

The Keshtria's Combat Maneuver - Strike is at level 4 and not 2.

Rilbecs

The Rilbecs' CM - Dodge is at level 4, instead of level 2, while its CM - Strike is at level 6 instead of level 4.

ELONGATION

This ability allows characters to stretch their body, or part of their body, to perform actions at a distance.

Area: Self

Range: N/A

Power Type: Control/Action/Elemental

Characters with Elongation can stretch their limbs up to a distance (in yards) corresponding to the Tier listing under the Wird Effect column of the Power Chart. The speed at which characters can stretch their limbs also corresponds to the same number in yards per second.

As with range powers, the distance for the power is considered short distance. The medium distance is double the short distance (including a -1 die penalty to all actions). The long distance is double the medium distance (including a -2 die penalty to all actions). Finally, the extreme distance is double the long distance (incurring a -4 die penalty to all actions).



SPLIT FORM

This ability allows characters to split their bodies into one or several other forms.

Area: Self

Range: N/A

Power Type: Control/Effect/Elemental

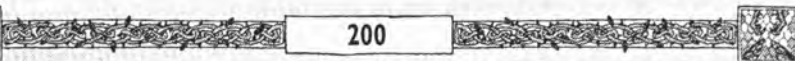
Characters with this power have the ability to create new forms from their own bodies. These forms can be duplicates of the original body, or they can take any other shape. The appearance of the split forms should be determined during character creation. The manner in which these forms are created is up to the GM and the player. These can emerge when characters are struck, or simply when the player wishes to create them.

Characters with Split Form can create a number of duplicates corresponding to their Tier listing under the Wird Effect column of the Power Chart (i.e. Tier 4 = 10 duplicates). Each round, characters creating the duplicates must pay the Wird cost for maintaining them. Furthermore, the duplicates also lose the same number of Wird as the creator. When the Wird expires, the creator and the duplicates take 1 point of Soft Damage per round until the creator dispels the duplicates.

Like other powers, the character has the option of using Split Form at lower Tiers.

Split forms have none of the Wird abilities of their originator (Shard abilities or Wird spells). They do, however, possess any innate or racial ability, for example Wings or a Bat's sonar. Furthermore, they possess the same skills and Characteristics as the originator.

Characters with Split Form cannot see through their duplicates' eyes, nor do they possess a psychic link with the duplicates or forms. Nevertheless, characters experience physical pain if their duplicates are harmed. They will gain any wound modifiers, though these are not cumulative with the wounds of other duplicates, or those of the characters.





e.g. A character with Split Form at Tier 6 has created 3 duplicates. Each one suffered a Slight wound, which hampers them with a -1 die penalty to all actions. The originator will also suffer the -1 die penalty (not -3) until the forms are dispelled.

Characters whose split forms have been killed will suffer 1 point of Hard damage, regardless of protection, for each form that is "killed." This damage is healed normally.

POISONS & POTIONS

Poisons have a variety of effects. They can wound, kill, or force victims to experience different effects such as blindness or sleep. In the Creative System, poisons and potions either cause damage (Hard or Soft), or have an Esoteric effect.

Lethal poisons cause damage over a period of time; therefore they each have a frequency and a duration. The frequency is how often the victim takes damage and the duration is how long the poison continues to affect the victim.

e.g. Aloak poison does 5 points of damage. This poison's frequency is every minute and the duration is 20 minutes. Anyone suffering from this poison will take 5 points of damage every minute for 20 minutes.

Victims of Esoteric poisons and potions have to make a Characteristic roll, most often with Constitution, against a specified Target Number (TN). The base TN is 7, although many poisons and potions are more or less potent. Characters who fail their roll experience the effect(s). The effects are listed under each specified poison or potion.



OPTIONAL RULE - GRADED EFFECT

Game Masters seeking an alternative can use the Graded Effect optional rule. The effect of an Esoteric poison or potion (including duration and penalties) alters based on the range of a failed Characteristic roll.

FAILURE RANGE	EFFECT
-1 to -5	1/2 effect
-6 to -14	Full effect
-15 or more	Double effect

e.g. An Esoteric sleep potion causes victims to sleep for two hours. If characters fail their Constitution roll by 3, they will sleep for an hour. If they fail by 7, they will sleep for two hours. If they fail by 17, they will sleep for four hours.

GMs can determine the half and double effects for different poisons.

e.g. GMs may decide that the half effect of a sleep potion causes the victim drowsiness instead of sleep, assigning a dice penalty to a character's actions.

DOSAGE:

Every increase in the dosage of a poison will increase the damage accordingly. Each dose of an Esoteric potion or poison increases the Target Number by 1.

e.g. If a poison does 3 points of damage per round, a double dose will cause 6 points of damage per round. A triple dose will do 9 points per round. If the poison is Esoteric, each extra dose will increase the TN by 1.

SWARM ATTACKS

Certain small creatures may be inoffensive in single numbers, but when grouped in large quantity, can become a very real threat. Swarm is generally reserved for creatures who are very small (a Body of n/a). The abilities of a swarm are described using a Tier. The Tier represents the size of the swarm, the damage it inflicts, and an opponent's ability to dispel the swarm.

DAMAGE

Swarms inflict damage equal to their Tier listed under the Wird effect column of the Power Chart (see the Providence Main Rule Book). Some swarms have additional attacks. This damage is added to the Tier of the swarm.

e.g. Desert Ants have swarm at Tier 3. They also cause 2 points of acid damage. Swarms attacking characters will cause 6 points of damage (Tier 3), plus an additional 2 points of acid damage during a combat round.

EFFECT OF ARMOR VS. A SWARM

Swarms ignore armors unless they are sealed, elemental or derived from Shard abilities. Targets possessing 1 point of any such armor are immune to





swarm's attacks. Swarms with acid attacks affect all armored characters normally.

MULTIPLE TARGETS

Swarms can attack multiple targets provided they are within the swarm's area of effect. In this case, the damage is divided (rounded down, minimum one) between the available targets.

BODY OF A SWARM

The Body of a swarm is equivalent to twice its Tier rating (Tier 1 = Body 2). The damage swarms inflict reduces as they take damage. When the swarm's Body is reduced to the level of another Tier, then its damage changes accordingly.

e.g. A group of heroes is attacking a Tier 3 swarm with a Body of 6. They inflict 7 points of damage doing a Grave wound, reducing the swarm's Body to 4. The swarm is now a Tier 2 swarm (Body divided by 2 = Tier). It now inflicts 3 points of damage instead of 6.

SWARM SIZE

A swarm covers an area equal to its Body in square yards. The swarm can attack any character within the area it covers. Swarms larger than their Tier are possible, but they do not cause more damage.

ATTACKING A SWARM

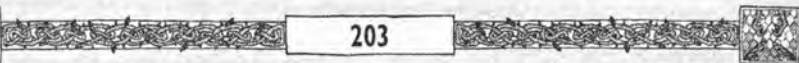
Swarms do not take damage normally. Swarms are immune to all edged or piercing attacks. Blunt attacks do one point of damage each time they strike the swarm, regardless of their standard damage. Shard and Wird spell attacks (such as flame blast), do only 10% of their total damage (rounded up). Damage from these attacks is only forces the swarm to dissipate. Swarms reform at the rate of one Body per minute. A swarm whose Body is reduced to zero will reform only within an hour.

e.g. Skor Taran blasts a Tier 2 swarm with his flame blast. Skor normally causes 36 points of damage. To attack the swarm, however, he must divide the damage by 10, rounding fractions up. Skor causes 4 points of damage to the swarm (Slight wound), reducing its Body from 4 to 3.

DESTROYING A SWARM

The only effective way to destroy a swarm is to use an area attack. A character can reduce permanently 1 point of a swarm's Body for every 1 yard the attack covers.

e.g. A Tier 4 swarm of killer bees attacks Dieve Dinkan. The swarm covers an area of 8 yards and has a Body of 8. Dinkan casts Fire Ball, a level 3 Spell that covers a 2 yard area. This attack permanently reduces the swarm's Body by two. The swarm now attack at Tier 3.





ECOLOGY COMPANION STATISTICS

IMPORTANT NOTE: All Skills and attacks (i.e. claws and bite) include Characteristic dice and bonuses when applicable. For example, if a creature has the Skill CM - Dodge at level 4, and a Coordination of 2, its Skill already includes the 2 dice from its Characteristic. In addition, if a creature has a Strength of 4 and a claw attack of 14 points of damage, GMs should not add 8 points of damage (Strength 4 gives 8 points of damage), to the claw attack since the bonus is already included.

A NOTE ABOUT SECONDARY SKILLS

Some creatures in the Ecology may have the ability to use secondary skills. In this case, make sure to subtract the Characteristic score from the secondary skill so as not to include it twice.

e.g. A creature with Hand to Hand at level 2 may wish to use another of its skills, for example, CM - Strike at level 2, as a secondary. If the Coordination of the creature is 1, then the GM should count the CM - Strike secondary skill at level one since the Characteristic of Coordination has already been added to the skill.

BODY FOR SMALL CREATURES

Certain creatures are so small that their Body Characteristic is below -3. These creatures have a Body Characteristic of n/a rather than a lower number. Assume that any successful hit against them is an automatic kill.

WIRD CREATURES



AQUAMORPH

4 Coordination
0 Intelligence
0 Appearance
2 Aura
39 Wird

5 Strength
0 Willpower
0 Charisma
13 Body

3 Constitution
1 Psyche
1 Perception
28 Endurance

SKILLS

2 Awareness
8 Swimming

6 CM - Dodge
2 Multiple Strike

8 CM - Grapple
6 SP - Control

ABILITIES

Acid Touch - 3 points of Hard damage for 2 rounds.
Elongation - Tier 4
Liquid Form, permanent, no penalty to Strength - Tier 5
Regeneration, in water only - Tier 3
Split Form - Tier 2
Swimming, permanent - Tier 6
Movement (out of water) 1/3/5/7

TRAITS

Abnormal Appearance (-5)
Contact - Green People (+4)

Enhanced Sense - Hearing (+5)

DESCRIPTION

Size 5 feet tall, 130 lbs.

Aquamorphs, who are believed to be indigenous to Providence, inhabit the Algerra Sea. They sometimes venture out of their habitat if they feel that their home is threatened. Aquamorphs have befriended the Green People, though it is uncertain what they will do in the coming months should a war erupt between the Lost Tribes and the Yas'Wailians. Some Horizon Striders claim they have seen Aquamorphs in the Sunderlands. These reports have yet to be confirmed however. See page 110 for more information.

BELMARE ROCK SNAKE

0 Coordination
-4 Intelligence
0 Appearance
2 Aura
36 Wird

7 Strength
-1 Willpower
-1 Charisma
14 Body

2 Constitution
0 Psyche
1 Perception
24 Endurance

SKILLS

3 Awareness
1 CM - Dodge
3 Stealth

5 Camouflage
10 CM - Grapple
1 AK - Leviathan's Spine

1 Climbing
4 CM - Strike

ABILITIES

Fang: 10 point attack, Hard damage
Freeze object, no Range - Tier 6
Movement: 1/3/6/7

TRAITS

Behavior - Predator
Double-jointed
Light Sleep

Combat Reflexes
Enhanced Sense, Smell (+5)

DESCRIPTION

Size: between 7 and 14 feet long, up to 1200 lbs.

The Belmare Rock Snake lives in Leviathan's Spine. Despite its size, it is not really a constrictor, although it can certainly squeeze a victim. Rather, this creature will freeze a target solid, until it dies. Once this happens, it swallows victims whole. Belmare Rock Snakes do not seem to share the same territory; it is possible that they only meet to breed. While Yas'Wailians do not know much about them, it is possible that the Serpenkine possess more knowledge. See page 106 for more information.

CLOUD CHARGER

-1 Coordination	12 Strength	10 Constitution
-2 Intelligence	0 Willpower	1 Psyche
0 Appearance	1 Charisma	2 Perception
3 Aura	23 Body	56 Endurance
63 Wird		

SKILLS

4 Awareness	4 CM - Charge	4 CM - Strike
5 Intimidation	3 Swimming	
2 AK - Bone-Wail Forest		

ABILITIES

Running - Tier 5
Horn - 28 point attack, Hard Damage
Darkness, Increased Area, Linked to Poison - Tier 2
Poison, linked to Darkness, see below
Increased Senses, Linked to Darkness - Tier 4
Increased Sense, Hearing - Tier 3

TRAITS

Behavior: Territorial	Behavior: Aggressive
Enhanced Sense - Hearing (+5)	Impaired Sense - Sight (-5)

DESCRIPTION

Size: 10 feet long, 8 feet high, 3000 lbs.

The Cloud Charger is a large quadruped that lives in the plains just outside of the Bone-Wail forest. These ornery, territorial herd beasts are a problem for virtually any form of life that exists in the same area. Their strength, ramming damage, and ability to take punishment make killing one a difficult chore for most predators.

Cloud Charger poison simply adds to the difficulty in capturing or killing one of these creatures. It billows out in a cloud around them, making it more difficult to see. The poison itself does 7 points of Soft damage per round, for three rounds. See page 97 for more information.



DREAMMITE

3 Coordination
0 Intelligence
1 Appearance
1 Aura
24 Wird

-2 Strength
1 Willpower
1 Charisma
6 Body

-1 Constitution
2 Psyche
2 Perception
12 Endurance

SKILLS

4 Acting
5 Flight
5 SP - Sound Control

5 Awareness
4 Intimidation
5 Stealth

3 Charm
6 SP - Light Control
5 SP - Control

ABILITIES

Invisibility, reduced Wird cost - Tier 5
Light Control, reduced Wird cost - Tier 8
Sound Control, reduced Wird cost - Tier 5
Wings - Tier 3

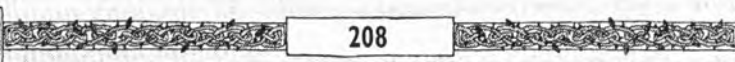
TRAITS

Behavior - Likes children Behavior, Ext. - Playful
Good Flyer

DESCRIPTION

Size: 2 feet high, 45 lbs.

Dreammites, sometimes known as Ghostmites, are mischievous little beings who enjoy scaring Yas'Wailians. Victims of the Dreammite often never know they have encountered one since few people are ever truly able to see them. For some unknown reason, Dreammites will only ever reveal themselves to children, or people who are fearless. They have such fine control over their illusions that they can choose who can see through their creations. Generally, Dreammites prefer to live near Yas'Wailians in the Exodus Plain, though they dislike crowds and shy away from large settlements. See pages 66-70 for more information.





DUSK DEVIL

2 Coordination	2 Strength	1 Constitution
-1 Intelligence	2 Willpower	-1 Psyche
-3 Appearance	2 Charisma	2 Perception
3 Aura	8 Body	20 Endurance
36 Wird		

SKILLS

6 Acrobatics	4 Awareness	4 Body Language
3 Camouflage	4 Climbing	5 CM - Dodge
4 CM - Grapple	6 CM - Strike	4 Imitation
2 Running	4 Stealth	2 Swimming
4 Tracking	2 AK - The Deep	

ABILITIES

Change Shape, reduced Wird - Tier 4

Natural Body Attacks, Permanent - Tier 4

Create Darkness - Tier 3

Altered/Inhuman Sense, Infrared vision, Permanent - Tier 4

TRAITS

Ambidexterity	Behavior - Cautious
Behavior - Predator	Behavior - Social
Behavior - Vindictive	Combat Reflexes

DESCRIPTION

Size: Four feet long, 200 lbs.

Dusk Devils are usually four-legged creatures with black fur. Due to their abilities, they are difficult to identify. The Dusk Devils like to travel in groups of two to four. If these animals have a home base, it has never been found. Dusk Devils are extremely vicious and like to surprise their prey; however, they will break and run if it seems their foe is reasonably tough. If they sense weakness, they will try to exploit it. See page 103 for more information.



EFFIGEA

0 Coordination
-3 Intelligence
-4 Appearance
-1 Aura
51 Wield

24 Strength
-1 Willpower
-3 Charisma
34 Body

10 Constitution
-2 Psyche
0 Perception
56 Endurance

SKILLS

2 CM - Charge
6 Multiple Strike

3 CM - Strike
2 Survival

ABILITIES

Armor - Tier 2
Increased Sense, Smell - Tier 2
Change Shape, Permanent, Only extra arms - Tier 4
Wings - Tier 3
Movement 0/1/2/3

TRAITS

Abnormal Appearance (-5) Behavior, Ext. - Aggressive

DESCRIPTION

Size: 8 feet tall, 425 lbs.

The Effigea are fearless and aggressive beasts that travel the area bordering the Alliance of Kings and the Bone-Wail Warden territory. Stories claim that the Effigea are Warden Degenerates that were once a vassal Dragon House to the Puradanium rulers of Bone-Wail. Inbreeding was so prevalent within this family's ranks that every member of the Dragons mutated horribly. Though the Wardens have tried numerous times to rid themselves of this threat, the Effigea continue to plague them. See pages 72-74 for more information.



ESSELTES

0 Coordination
0 Intelligence
1 Appearance
3 Aura
30 Wird

-3 Strength
0 Willpower
1 Charisma
5 Body

-1 Constitution
1 Psyche
3 Perception
12 Endurance

SKILLS

6 Awareness
2 CM - Dodge
4 Stealth

4 Camouflage
2 Intimidation
2 Teaching

3 CM - Charge
3 Scavenging

ABILITIES

Heal Others - Tier 5

Movement 1/3/8/12

Charge Attack - 3 point attack, Soft damage

TRAITS

Behavior - Curious

Behavior - Social animals

High Pain Threshold

Wird Sensitive

Behavior - Friendly

Enhanced Sense, Hearing (+5)

Social Responsibility - Protect others (-3)

DESCRIPTION

Size: 12 inches long, 20 lb.

Esseltes are an enigma. Members of a group of Esseltes will do anything to ensure the survival of their own kind. This behavior might be a result of their intelligence. The Esseltes cannot heal themselves, but can heal other members of their group in a remarkably short time. Although they are small, the Esseltes are tougher than the eye would suggest, and can do more damage with a charge than with other attacks. The latter might be a result of their powerful legs, which propel them through the air at good speeds. A group of Esseltes can drive off larger animals, and will do so whatever the personal cost. See page 99 for more information.



KANIMBA LIZARDS

0 Coordination
-5 Intelligence
-1 Appearance
2 Aura
33 Wird

-6 (9) Strength
1 Willpower
1 Charisma
3 (18) Body

1 Constitution
-1 Psyche
2 Perception
20 Endurance

SKILLS

2 Awareness
4 Intimidation

3 Climbing
2 AK - Pincer Swamps

2 CM - Charge

ABILITIES

Increase Size - Tier 5

Swimming, Reduced Wird - Tier 4

TRAITS

Behavior - Territorial

Enhanced Sense - Hearing (+5)

Behavior - Social Animal

Phobia - Fear of Fire (-2)

DESCRIPTION

Size: 1 foot long, 15 lbs.

Found in the Pincer Swamps, the Kanimba Lizard is a territorial animal. The creatures are generally found in groups of up to 15. They will try to scare away foes before attacking them. They can grow from 1 foot long to just over 5 feet long, and they become much stronger in this state. Kanimba Lizards will attack in groups if that becomes necessary. See page 93 for more information.





INCONNU

4 Coordination
0 Intelligence
-1 Appearance
1 Aura
30 Wird

1 Strength
1 Willpower
-2 Charisma
8 Body

1 Constitution
1 Psyche
2 Perception
20 Endurance

SKILLS

5 Acrobatics
5 CM - Grapple
5 Running
6 Multiple Strike

4 Awareness
6 CM - Strike
5 Sprinting
5 SP - Control

6 CM - Dodge
6 Jumping
8 Stealth
3 Survival

ABILITIES

Alter Skin, reduced Wird cost - Tier 5

Altered/Inhuman Sense, Infrared Sight - Tier 2

Bite - 6 point attack, Hard damage.

Claws - 8 point attack, Hard damage.

Leaping - Tier 4

Movement 0/1/3/4

Sensitivity - Dislike high-pitched sounds, -1 die to all actions.

TRAITS

Abnormal Appearance(-5)

Behavior - Aggressive

Behavior - Fearful of others

DESCRIPTION

Size: 41/2 feet high, 95 lbs.

The Inconnu are a race of diminutive humanoids that once lived in the dark regions that have now become the Sunderlands. The flooding in the area forced the Inconnu to relocate. The Inconnu are still searching for a new home and are fearful of anyone who is not of their own kind. See pages 51-60 for more information.





TRICKSTER APES

2 Coordination
-1 Intelligence
0 Appearance
2 Aura
36 Wird

3 Strength
0 Willpower
0 Charisma
10 Body

2 Constitution
1 Psyche
2 Perception
24 Endurance

SKILLS

5 Acrobatics
4 Camouflage
4 CM - Grapple
4 Breakfall

5 Awareness
6 Climbing
4 CM - Strike
2 AK - The Deep

3 Body Language
5 CM - Dodge
2 Intimidation

ABILITIES

Adhesion, reduced Wird Drain - Tier 5
Reduce Friction, Increased Range - Tier 5

TRAITS

Behavior - Social Animals	Behavior - Practical Jokers
Combat Reflexes	Double-jointed
Enhanced Sense smell (+2)	Light Sleep

DESCRIPTION

Size: 3 feet tall, 155 lbs.

The Trickster Apes are tree-dwellers who live on the outskirts of the Deep. They are a social species that bands together in self-defense against the many predators in the area. Thanks to their ability to control friction, they can remain safe from all but aerial predators. Trickster Apes are among the most maneuverable creatures known to live in the canopy of the Deep. They do not spend much, if any, time on the ground. See pages 101-102 for more information.





MAGMA CHAMELEON

1 Coordination
0 Intelligence
-1 Appearance
0 Aura
54 Wield

8 Strength
0 Willpower
-1 Charisma
20 Body

10 Constitution
0 Psyche
0 Perception
56 Endurance

SKILLS

1 Awareness
5 Climbing
2 Survival

2 CM - parry
2 Scavenging

3 CM - Strike
2 Hand to Hand

ABILITIES

Altered/Inhuman Sense, Infrared sight - Tier 3
Armor - Tier 4
Claws - 22 point attack, Hard damage
Flame Armor, only damage, no protection - Tier 5
Invisibility, permanent - Tier 1
Magma saliva - 6 points of Hard damage for 2 rounds.
Resist Flame/Heat - Tier 10
Tail: 12 point attack, Hard damage
Movement 0/1/2/3

TRAITS

Abnormal Appearance Behavior - Curious
High Pain Threshold

DESCRIPTION

Size: 7 feet tall, 500 lbs.

The Magma Chameleons live within the Sky-Torrent Bridge. No one is sure of their origins, but Yas'Wailians who have encountered them presume that they are indigenous to Providence, and have lived within the volcanic spire for millennia. When the volcano erupted at one of the Bridge's ends, the Magma Chameleons began to explore the world. See pages 110-112 for more information.



TUNNEL RATS

1 Coordination
-3 Intelligence
-1 Appearance
2 Aura
21 Wird

-5 Strength
-1 Willpower
-2 Charisma
2 Body

-3 Constitution
0 Psyche
2 Perception
4 Endurance

SKILLS

4 Awareness
3 CM - Dodge

2 Camouflage

1 Climbing

ABILITIES

Earthswim, linked to Gaseous Form - Tier 6

Gaseous Form, linked to Earthswim (no movement penalties apply) - Tier 3
Movement 1/4/8/11

TRAITS

Absolute Sense of Direction
Behavior, Ext. - Curious

Behavior - Social animal

DESCRIPTION

Size: 8 inches long, 1 lb.

Tunnel Rats are small creatures that live along the jungle floor. They form colonies, part of which may be underground. Tunnel Rats have the ability to move through objects at will, which forms their major defensive ability. These rats seem to eat mostly insects and carrion. Whether there are other species of Tunnel Rats that live in other areas of the world is unknown. See pages 94-96 for more information.



VACTUM

2 Coordination	-2 Strength	0 Constitution
-1 Intelligence	0 Willpower	1 Psyche
-1 Appearance	-1 Charisma	1 Perception
2 Aura	6 Body	16 Endurance
30 Wird		

SKILLS

3 Athletics	4 Awareness	4 Camouflage
4 Climbing	4 CM - Dodge	3 Scavenging
5 Stealth	3 Survival	4 Trapping
2 AK - Leviathan's Spine		

ABILITIES

Adhesion, Reduced Wird Drain, surfaces only (x2) - Tier 4

Acid Attack - 6 points of damage for 2 rounds at a range of 10 yards.

Running - Tier 3

Claws - 3 points of Hard damage

TRAITS

Ambidexterity

Behavior - Dislikes Yas'Wailians

Enhanced Sense, Smell (+5)

Behavior - Cautious

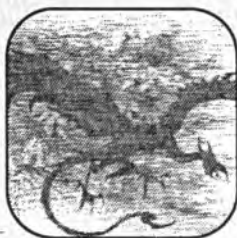
Behavior - Solitary

Light Sleep

DESCRIPTION

Size: 5 feet tall, 125 lbs.

Vactums live in the many crags of Leviathan's Spine. These creatures are difficult to spot, as their skin color matches the reddish brown of the area. Their favorite tactic is to find a path and trap their prey. Usually hidden out of sight, the Vactum will then attempt to dissolve the prey into a form that can be more easily consumed. Vactums do not have teeth, but a sucker-like mouth. See page 105 for more information.



SHADOWSTING

2 Coordination
-3 Intelligence
-2 Appearance
0 Aura
24 Wird

-2 Strength
-1 Willpower
-3 Charisma
4 Body

0 Constitution
-1 Psyche
1 Perception
16 Endurance

SKILLS

5 CM - Strike

5 Stealth

ABILITIES

Intangibility - Tier 5

Intangibility provides the Shadowsting with the ability to pass through virtually any surface. The power functions exactly like Earthswim for the purposes of determining the speed of the creature passing through solid objects such as walls. In addition, Intangibility provides protection against attacks at the Tier of the power as indicated under the Defenses column of the Power Chart. The protection drops by two Tiers if someone uses light or fire-based attacks against the creature.

Tail Stinger - Tier 3

The Shadowsting possesses a tail with a stinger that ignores most armors. The damage of the stinger is the Tier of the power listed under the Wird Effect column of the Power Chart. In addition, the weapon ignores the same number of points in armor that a target may possess. The only exceptions are light and fire-based armors, which reduce the effect by two Tiers.

Wings - Tier 4

TRAITS

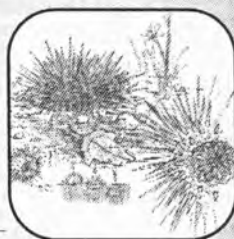
Behavior - Aggressive

DESCRIPTION

Size: 5 feet tall.

The Shadowsting is made entirely of shadows. This creature will attack anyone on sight. The Shadowsting is known to inhabit the Bone-Wail forest, and other areas that are said to possess high levels of corrupt Wird, or Shadow Wird - the magical energies the Blight Crow and White Crow manipulate. Some scholars have speculated that the Shadowstings are creations of the White Crow. See page 81 for more information.





SYPHON

2 Coordination
-6 Intelligence
-3 Appearance
0 Aura
18 Wird

-2 Strength
0 Willpower
-3 Charisma
3 Body

-2 Constitution
-1 Psyche
2 Perception
8 Endurance

SKILLS

4 CM - Strike

ABILITIES

Acid Blood - 1 point of damage (soft), per round for 2 rounds on contact.

Bite - 5 point attack, Hard damage.

Earthswim - Tier 5

Vampiric Touch, cannot regenerate or increase Characteristics - Tier 3

Movement 0/1/2/3

TRAITS

Abnormal Appearance (-5)

Behavior, Ext. - Hates Yas'Wailian Wird spell casters

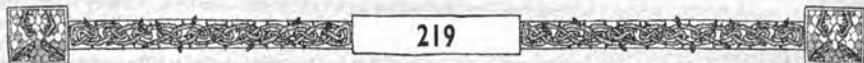
Behavior, Ext. - Become aggressive when Wird is used

Wird Sensitive

DESCRIPTION

Size: 1 foot high, 10 lbs.

Yas'Wailians first encountered the Syphons near ruptures in the Tapestry of Wird, known as Retributions. Wird scholars believe that Providence created these creatures to repair the damage to the Tapestry, and to eliminate threats to the safety of the world. Since the spells Yas'Wailian spell casters weave damage the Tapestry, the Syphons will be particularly aggressive to characters who are spell users. Other manipulators of Wird may also face the wrath of the Syphons, though they are far less likely to encounter them. In a group of adventurers, Syphons will always attack spell casters. There are no reports of Syphons attacking non-Wird users. Syphons usually travel underground in packs of 6 to 12. See page 62 for more information.





TROUPIAL ORIOLE

Note: Players and Game Masters who do not own the Book of Wird can treat Bright Orioles as Wylders.

Perception - 2 points

Willpower - 1 point

Aura - 4 points

SKILLS

Awareness - 1 point

Intimidation - 1 point

ABILITIES

Increased Sense Hearing - Tier 1

Increased Sense Sight - Tier 2

Increased Sense Smell - Tier 2

Wings - Tier 2

(optional)

Arasswa'il, Hummingbird Mind: -2 time units.

(see The Book of Wird for more details, otherwise, simply decrease the casting time of spells the Oriole use)

TRAITS

Behavior, Ext. - Oppose evil

Behavior, Ext. - Mate only with other Orioles

See page 121 for more information.



TROUPIAL PANTHER

Coordination - 2 points
Willpower - 1 point

Constitution - 1 point
Psyche - 2 points

Intelligence - 1 point

SKILLS

Hand to Hand - 1 point
Melee - 1 point
Language: Sun-Spar *

ABILITIES

Claws - 3 point attack, Hard damage
Increased Sense, Sight - Tier 1

TRAITS

Behavior - Curious
Caste - Fallen **

See page 113 for more information.





TROUPIAL TIGER

Strength - 2 points Constitution - 2 points Willpower - 2 points

SKILLS

Hand to Hand - 1 point

Intimidation - 3 points

Melee - 1 point

Language - Sun-Spar *

ABILITIES

Armor - Tier I

Bite - 3 point attack, Hard damage

Increased Sense, Sight - Tier I

TRAITS

Behavior - Honorable

Caste - Fallen **

* The native language for characters from Sun-Spar is Language - Sun-Spar. As such, they do not need to spend any points on this skill. They will, however, have to spend points in Language - Yas'Wailian if they wish to converse clearly in that language. Also, after 1500 years of separation, the language spoken by members of Troupial Tiger and Panther as well as the other Troupials found in Sun-Spar is different from that spoken by other Yas'Wailians. Their spoken language is still relatively similar to the base Yas'Wailian language and, as such, is treated as an Innate skill. This means that characters without Language - Sun-Spar (spoken) as a skill can still understand the language by making an Intelligence roll against a target number based on the difficulty of what is being said (see Main Rule Book, page 76). Think of a conversation between an American and someone with a thick Scottish accent - the two can converse, but the different dialects and accents will sometimes make understanding each other difficult. The Sun-Spar written language, however, is considered a Learned skill since it exhibits many more differences. Since few of the prisoners of Sun-Spar were literate, they had to create a new written language. There are some residual similarities to the base Yas'Wailian written language, but they are very difficult to recognize and often require hours of study to notice.

** The Caste - Fallen is ignored when Tiger and Panther characters are in Sun-Spar. Sun-Spar does not recognize the caste system and members of Troupial Tiger and Panther are obviously native to Sun-Spar. It is only when in Alliance or Merchant Band cities that this trait has any effect. See page 113 for more information.

INSECTS



AQUATIC SCORPION

0 Coordination
-6 Intelligence
-3 Appearance
-2 Aura
18 Wird

-2 Strength
-2 Willpower
0 Charisma
3 Body

-1 Constitution
-2 Psyche
0 Perception
12 Endurance

SKILLS

5 Camouflage
3 Stealth

2 Climbing
6 Multiple Strike

3 CM - Strike

ABILITIES

Armor - Tier 1

Enhanced Sense, Sight - Tier 2

Sting - 1 point attack, Hard damage

Swimming - Tier 2

Venom - 6 points of Soft damage per minute for 5 minutes
(with successful Sting attack)

Movement 1/2/3/4

TRAITS

None

DESCRIPTION

Size: 10 inches long

This scorpion lives along the bottom of bodies of water, where it hides to hunt its prey. The venom of the Aquatic Scorpion can be lethal, and people who suffer multiple stings will have to receive medical attention quickly. See page 37 for more information.



CLUB SPIDER

2 Coordination	0 Strength	1 Constitution
-6 Intelligence	-2 Willpower	-2 Psyche
-3 Appearance	1 Charisma	0 Perception
-2 Aura	5 Body	20 Endurance
21 Wield		

SKILLS

5 Camouflage	5 Climbing	4 CM - Strike
6 Multiple Strike		

ABILITIES

Armor - Tier 2

Bite - 2 point attack, Hard damage

Enhanced Sense, Sight - Tier 2

Skin Coloring: +5 dice to Camouflage

Venom - 1 point of Hard damage per minute for 3 minutes
(with successful bite)

Movement 1/2/3/6

TRAITS

Behavior - Predator

DESCRIPTION

Size: 20 inches across

Club Spiders are hunters that live in mountainous regions. They ambush their prey, clubbing them with their legs until they fall unconscious. These gray spiders usually ignore large prey, but attacks against Yas'Wailians have been known to occur. See page 31 for more information.





CRAB CENTIPEDE

1 Coordination
-6 Intelligence
-1 Appearance
-2 Aura
18 Wield

1 Strength
-2 Willpower
0 Charisma
5 Body

0 Constitution
-2 Psyche
0 Perception
16 Endurance

SKILLS

5 Camouflage
2 Stealth

4 CM - Grapple 3 CM - Strike

ABILITIES

Armor - Tier 1
Bite - 1 point attack, Hard damage
Claws - 4 point attack, Hard damage
Enhanced Sense, Sight - Tier 2
Skin Coloration: +4 dice to Camouflage
Movement 1/2/3/4

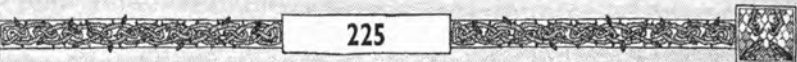
TRAITS

Behavior - Predator

DESCRIPTION

Size: 20 inches long

Crab Centipedes hide along the forest floor. The centipedes use their large claws to hold onto victims while they begin feasting on their flesh. See page 45 for more information.





DESERT ANT

N/A Coordination

-6 Intelligence

-4 Appearance

-3 Aura

N/A Wird

N/A Strength

-2 Willpower

0 Charisma

N/A Body

N/A Constitution

-2 Psyche

0 Perception

N/A Endurance

SKILLS

2 Climbing

ABILITIES

Enhanced Sense, Sight - Tier 2

Acid - Desert Ants secrete a mild acid. This acid inflicts one point of damage per round per Tier level of the swarm. Characters suffer acid damage so long as they are in combat with the swarm. Acid affects armors, and the damage they take on their BPV is cumulative. Shard powers are also affected by this acid except for Air Armor, Flame Armor and Water Armor. Characters with natural body armor (i.e. tough skin), who have their armor reduced will heal the lost protection as if it were a slight wound (it will return to normal after a day of rest).

Swarm - Tier 3 to Tier 6, depending on how many ants are in the area and how close they are to their hive (more ants will appear close to their hive).

Movement 1/2/3/5

TRAITS

Behavior - Hive Insect

DESCRIPTION

Size: 5 inches long

Desert Ants are found only in Athrin's Desert. These insects are very territorial, swarming over anything that wanders too close to a hive entrance. Some scholars believe that there is only one hive, which covers an area of over 100 miles. See page 26 for more information.





FLAME MOTH

-1 Coordination
-8 Intelligence
-2 Appearance
-2 Aura
6 Willd

-8 Strength
-2 Willpower
0 Charisma
-2 Body

-4 Constitution
-2 Psyche
0 Perception
4 Endurance

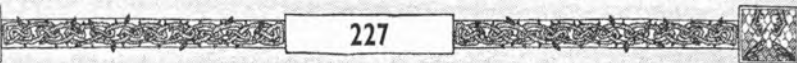
SKILLS
None

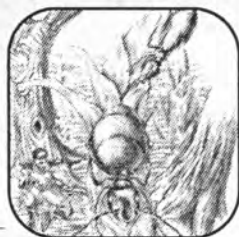
ABILITIES
Enhanced Sense, Sight - Tier 2
Explosive Burst - (See DESCRIPTION below)
Wings - Tier 2
Movement 1/2/3/4

TRAITS
Behavior, ext. - Attracted to Flame

DESCRIPTION
Size: 1 inch long

These moths have the unfortunate property of exploding upon entering a flame. People within a yard of the fire will suffer 1 point of damage. Every additional two moths increases the damage by 1 point. See page 24 for more information.





HONEY ANT

N/A Coordination
-7 Intelligence
-2 Appearance
-3 Aura
N/A Wird

N/A Strength
-2 Willpower
-2 Charisma
N/A Body

N/A Constitution
-2 Psyche
0 Perception
N/A Endurance

SKILLS
None

ABILITIES

Enhanced Sense, Sight - Tier 2

Swarm - Tier 1 to Tier 2, depending on how many ants are in the area and how close they are to their hive (more ants will appear close to their hive). In exception/ally large hives, the swarm size may increase to Tier 3.

Movement 0/0/1/1

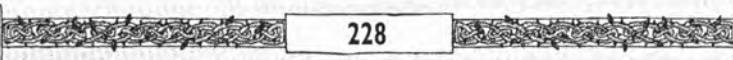
TRAITS

Behavior - Hive insect

DESCRIPTION

Size: 1/2 inch

Honey Ants gained their name because they store honey in their abdomen. Their hives can contain over a million ants. Individually, their bite does not produce more than mild discomfort – when they attack in a swarm, however, their attacks can become quite painful. See page 9 for more information.





JUMPING CENTIPEDE

1 Coordination
-5 Intelligence
-2 Appearance
-2 Aura
21 Wield

1 Strength
-2 Willpower
0 Charisma
5 Body

1 Constitution
-2 Psyche
0 Perception
20 Endurance

SKILLS

5 Camouflage
3 CM- Strike

6 Climbing
4 Stealth

5 CM - Grapple

ABILITIES

Armor - Tier 1

Bite - 2 point attack, Hard damage

Enhanced Sense, Sight - Tier 2

Glider Membrane - Tier 1

Jumping Centipedes do not have glider membranes.

Their broad, flat legs simulate glider membranes.

Venom - 1 point of Hard damage per round, for 2 rounds (with successful bite)

Movement 1/2/3/5

TRAITS

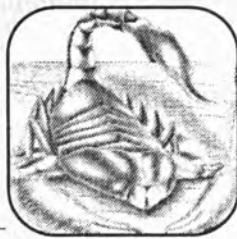
Behavior - Predator

DESCRIPTION

Size: 4 1/2 feet long

Jumping Centipedes hide in the jungle canopy and drop down on their prey. The centipedes grapple their victims, biting them several times. They also deliver venom with each bite. See page 43 for more information.





LEAF SCORPION

1 Coordination
-5 Intelligence
-1 Appearance
-2 Aura
12 Wield

-4 Strength
-2 Willpower
0 Charisma
1 Body

-2 Constitution
-2 Psyche
0 Perception
8 Endurance

SKILLS

4 Camouflage

2 CM - Strike

3 Stealth

ABILITIES

Enhanced Sense, Sight - Tier 2

Leaf Body: +13 dice to Camouflage

Poison - 3 points of Soft damage per round, for 3 rounds (with successful sting)

Sting - 2 point attack, Hard damage

Movement 1/2/3/4

TRAITS

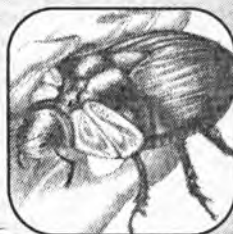
None

DESCRIPTION

Size: 4 inches long

Leaf Scorpions look like the leaves of the Picatom tree, making it very difficult to spot them within the tree's foliage. They ambush their prey, killing them quickly with their poison. See page 40 for more information.





PERFUME BEETLE

-1 Coordination
-6 Intelligence
2 Appearance
-1 Aura
21 Wird

-8 Strength
-2 Willpower
0 Charisma
1 Body

0 Constitution
-2 Psyche
0 Perception
16 Endurance

SKILLS
None

ABILITIES

Enhanced Sense, Sight - Tier 2

Odor: Perfume beetles, as a defense against predators, give off a spray of pheromones when threatened. Most animals find this smell offensive and leave the beetle alone. Animals make a Perception (with any bonuses from Increased Sense - Smell added) against a Target Number of 7. If they make this roll, they have noticed the odor; otherwise they fail to smell it and can act normally. If they smell the odor, they must make a Willpower roll against a Target Number of 7 plus their margin of success from their Perception roll (the more one smells the odor, the harder it is to ignore). If they fail this roll, they are repelled by the scent and attempt to get away from it - otherwise, they may act as they choose. Yas'Wailians (except Rats), however, find this smell quite pleasing. Therefore, they use the scent as a perfume. They gain a +1 die modifier on any Charisma-based roll for the remainder of the day. This bonus increases to +2 dice when dealing with someone who is potentially attracted to the character. Rats, however, must make the same Perception and Willpower roll as animals. Furthermore, should characters encounter animals at any point during the day, they perform all actions with these animals at -1 die.

Movement 0/1/1/1

TRAITS None

DESCRIPTION

Size: 4 inches long

These very colorful beetles are popular because they give off an odor which most Yas'Wailians like. Many members of the Pure and Blessed castes like to keep Perfume Beetles in their homes. The Perfume Beetles are rare and exotic, and many nobles are willing to pay a handsome reward for obtaining a live specimen. See page 12 for more information.



RAFT SPIDER

1 Coordination
-5 Intelligence
-4 Appearance
-2 Aura
15 Wield

-2 Strength
-2 Willpower
0 Charisma
3 Body

-1 Constitution
-2 Psyche
1 Perception
12 Endurance

SKILLS

5 Climbing

3 CM - Strike

4 Trapping

ABILITIES

Armor - Tier 1

Bite - 3 point attack, Hard damage

Enhanced Sense, Sight - Tier 2

Swimming - Tier 1

Movement 1/3/4/6

TRAITS

None

DESCRIPTION

Size: 14 inches long

Raft Spiders live alongside water and use their silk to catch fish. They are strong enough to capture fish weighing up to several pounds. See page 29 for more information.





ROCK BEETLE

0 Coordination
-6 Intelligence
-1 Appearance
-2 Aura
30 Wird

4 Strength
-2 Willpower
2 Charisma
11 Body

4 Constitution
-2 Psyche
0 Perception
32 Endurance

SKILLS

3 CM - Grapple

2 CM - Strike

6 Climbing

ABILITIES

Armor - Tier 4

Bite - 12 point attack, Hard damage

Enhanced Sense, Sight - Tier 2

Wings - Tier 1

Movement 1/2/3/5

TRAITS

Behavior - Passive

DESCRIPTION

Size: 2 1/2 feet long

Rock Beetles are large, rocky gray beetles whose carapace is incredibly tough. They are quiet, passive creatures most of the year. During mating season, however, male Rock Beetles become aggressive, often attacking anything around them. See page 19 for more information.





SCORPION DRAGONFLY

2 Coordination
-6 Intelligence
-1 Appearance
-2 Aura
18 Will

1 Strength
-2 Willpower
1 Charisma
6 Body

0 Constitution
-2 Psyche
0 Perception
16 Endurance

SKILLS

3 CM - Strike

6 Flight

ABILITIES

Armor - Tier 1

Claws - 7 point attack, Hard damage

Enhanced Sense, Sight - Tier 2

Poison - 2 points of Soft damage per round for 4 rounds (with successful sting)

Stinger - 6 point attack, Hard damage

Wings - Tier 4

TRAITS

Behavior - Solitary

DESCRIPTION

Size: 4 feet long, 8-foot wingspan

These large insects gained their name from their scorpion-like claws. *Scorpion Dragonflies* also have large stingers, shaped like a bee's, which they use to inject their poison. See page 17 for more information.





SPIRE TERMITE (WARRIORS)

-1 Coordination
-6 Intelligence
-4 Appearance
-2 Aura
21 Wield

1 Strength
-2 Willpower
1 Charisma
6 Body

1 Constitution
-2 Psyche
0 Perception
20 Endurance

SKILLS

3 CM - Strike

ABILITIES

Armor - Tier 2

Bite - 8 point attack, Hard damage

Enhanced Sense, Sight - Tier 2

Movement 1/3/4/7

TRAITS

Behavior - Hive Insects

DESCRIPTION

Size: 1 foot (drone), 3 feet warrior or king, 15 feet (queen)

Spire Termite hives are large, massive, spire-like constructs measuring over a hundred feet high. These hives can contain up to 100,000 insects, 15 percent of which will be warriors. See page 14 for more information.





SPITTING SPIDER

3 Coordination
-6 Intelligence
-4 Appearance
-2 Aura
15 Wield

-5 Strength
-2 Willpower
0 Charisma
0 Body

-1 Constitution
-2 Psyche
0 Perception
12 Endurance

SKILLS

4 CM - Strike
4 WS - Spitting Venom

5 Stealth

ABILITIES

Bite - 1 point attack, Hard damage

Enhanced Sense, Sight - Tier 2

Venom - The Spitting Spider's poison does 1 points of Hard damage per round for three rounds. The poison takes effect if the spider successfully causes damage with its bite. The spider is also capable of spitting its venom at a range of 3 feet (short range). Spitting Spiders attempt to spit the venom into the eyes of their targets, thereby blinding them. In this case, the poison's effect becomes esoteric. Characters who are hit must make a Constitution roll against a TN of 11 or become blinded. Such characters receive a -4 dice penalty to all actions involving their sight. Every 32 hours, a victim can make another Constitution roll to dispel the blindness. An Anodyne antidote for the venom exists. With it, victims immediately regain partial sight (-1 die to all actions). After 3 days rest, their sight is restored completely. Without the antidote, victims remain blind for nearly 1 month.

Movement 1/2/3/4

TRAITS

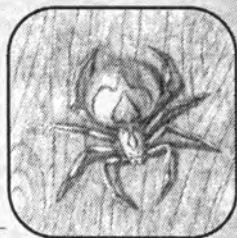
None

DESCRIPTION

Size: 5 inches long

The Spitting Spider hunts at night, when most of its prey is asleep. It will try to sneak up and bite whatever it is hunting. If that fails, it will try to blind its victim by spitting poison into its eyes. See page 35 for more information.





SWARM SPIDER

N/A Coordination
-6 Intelligence
-4 Appearance
-3 Aura
N/A Wird

N/A Strength
-2 Willpower
0 Charisma
N/A Body

N/A Constitution
-2 Psyche
0 Perception
N/A Endurance

SKILLS

5 Climbing

ABILITIES

Enhanced Sense, Sight - Tier 2

Poison - 1 point of Soft damage per minute for 4 minutes. The poison only takes effect if the spiders cause damage with their swarm attack.

Swarm Attack - The swarms range in size from Tier 2 to Tier 5. The swarm is larger when the spiders have fed recently.

Movement 1/2/3/4

TRAITS

Behavior - Aggressive

Behavior - Swarm Animal

DESCRIPTION

Size: 1 inch long

Swarm Spiders are very small poisonous creatures that live in various areas within the Exodus Plain. Thousands of these creatures will attack at the same time. See page 33 for more information.





THUNDER BEETLE

-1 Coordination
-8 Intelligence
-2 Appearance
-3 Aura
9 Wird

-8 Strength
-2 Willpower
-2 Charisma
-1 Body

-2 Constitution
-2 Psyche
0 Perception
8 Endurance

SKILLS
None

ABILITIES

Enhanced Sense, Sight - Tier 2

Sound Control - Tier 4

This ability only allows Thunder Beetles to generate bothersome noises. Characters within the area of this noise (10 yards) receive a penalty to all hearing-based Perception rolls, as per the power Sound Control.

Wings - Tier 1

Movement 0/0/1/2

TRAITS
None

DESCRIPTION

Size: 2 inches long

Thunder Beetles are considered annoying for the loud snapping noises they make with their wings. These creatures breed in large numbers and have avoided every attempt to clear them from the cities. See page 23 for more information.





TRAPDOOR BEETLE

0 Coordination
-6 Intelligence
-4 Appearance
-2 Aura
18 Wield

-4 Strength
-2 Willpower
0 Charisma
3 Body

0 Constitution
-2 Psyche
0 Perception
16 Endurance

SKILLS

5 Camouflage

2 CM - Grapple

2 CM - Strike

ABILITIES

Bite - 1 point attack, Hard damage

Enhanced Sense, Sight - Tier 2

Wings - Tier 1

Movement 0/0/1/2

TRAITS

None

DESCRIPTION

Size: 8 inches long

Trapdoor Beetles are brown-colored insects. They are dangerous because they dig holes to trap their prey. These holes are large enough for pack animals to step in, often resulting in a broken leg or other serious injury. See page 21 for more information.





PLANT LIFE

Plants, like all living things, contain Wird. Generally, however, plants have far fewer Wird than animals. Some plants have a Wird rating, which usually represents the total Wird for a single specimen. Game Masters should note that any plant without a Wird rating simply indicates that each specimen has a negligible amount of Wird (less than 1 point).

ANODYNES AND PLANTS

Generally, Anodynes are able to use plants better than any other character. The following are Anodyne skills and specializations.

BIOLOGY - FLORA

This skill is common to many player characters and Anodynes. Anodyne herbalists, however, have perfected Biology - Flora, and are able to use the following skills:

BIOLOGY - PROVIDENCE FLORA

This skill enables Anodynes to know specific information about typical Providence plants. A standard roll (TN of 11) allows Anodynes to know the names and basic properties of these plants. The more exotic the plant and its properties are, the higher the Target Number. Typical Providence plants include the variety of fungi listed in this source book, and the resin trees.

BIOLOGY - EXOTIC FLORA

This skill gives Anodynes a great understanding of exotic and rare plants. Examples are the Annihilator, Stranglers, and the Rainbow Grass.

BIOLOGY - DRAGONFOOT

The Dragonfoot plant is the most complex plant Anodynes have ever come across. It is possible for herbalists to purchase the skill Biology - Dragonfoot. This simply means that they have dedicated themselves to the study of this exotic plant. Characters with Biology - Exotic Flora can attempt to uncover information about the Dragonfoot plant. Their Target Numbers for knowing any of the plant's properties, however, should be higher. Any basic information regarding the plant, for example how to keep it alive, requires a roll against a TN of 13. Someone with the skill Biology - Dragonfoot only needs to roll 11, the standard Target Number.





CHEMISTRY - BIOLOGICAL

Anodynes can purchase this skill to create plant-based potions. The more complex the potion is, the higher the Target Number. A typical roll (TN of 11) allows Anodynes to create a simple healing potion, one that provides 1 point of healing "damage."

BREWING

Brewing is a skill reserved for Anodynes. Brewing is required for creating any of the potions listed in this source book. Furthermore, it allows Anodynes to create unique potions using a wide variety of plants and herbs. The effect of these potions can vary drastically. Only the Anodyne's imagination, coupled with the GM's approval, limits a creative Anodyne. Furthermore, Anodynes can also mimic a great variety of spells with potions. Generally, however, Anodynes should not be able to create potions that mimic spells of greater than level 3. The following is a list of sample spells that can be mimicked with potions.

Note: Most of these potions use the Rainbow Grass or the Dragonfoot as their base. Since these plants are rare, however, one can substitute them with others. In this case, the GM can choose to increase the Target Number. Generally, however, any plant that possesses large amounts of Wird can be used as a base.

LEVEL ONE: TARGET NUMBER 13

Acidic Touch, Blur, Breath of life, Heal Self, Hearing of the Bat, Hundred Day March, Infravision, Leap of the Frog, Night Vision, Resist Cold, Resist Heat, Resist Pain Self, Revive Self, Slow Disease Self, Strength of a Tuscani, Sustenance, and Vision of the Eagle.

LEVEL TWO: TARGET NUMBER 17

Disguise Self, Distill Liquid, Flight, Freedom of a Vrolagh, Grand Feast, Magic Resistance, Mirror Image, Mould Plant, Protection from Flames, Reflexes of the Rilbec, Scent of the Wind, Speed of the Fox, Vision of the Bat, Voice of a Torradar, and Wilder-beast's Skin.

LEVEL THREE: TARGET NUMBER 25

Alter Body - Self, Animate Plant, Cure Disease Self, Giant's Growth, Heal Self, Pack Member, Size of the Mite, Strength of a Bawk'sha, and Vigour of a Bawk'sha.

Any other spells (including those presented in the Book of Wird) are only available for creation if the Game Master approves. The Target Numbers are also subject to change if a character lacks the appropriate ingredients, or if other circumstances (i.e. increase duration beyond that of spell level) affect the creation of a potion. It is also possible for Anodynes to create potions that have effects that are not similar to any spell. In this case, the GM should award a TN.



BLACK MOSS POISON: TARGET NUMBER 11

Exterminators use the Black Moss to create a powerful disinfectant. The liquid can also be used as a poison. The only way to halt the poison's deadly effect is to use Wird such as the third level spells Cure Disease Self/Others.

POISON:

3 points of Soft damage per round for three rounds, followed by 1 point of Soft damage per hour for three hours.

See page 164 for more information.

BRONZE-DUST - ESOTERIC

Constitution roll against a TN of 9.

Effect: Ingesting the Bronze-Dust produces the same effects as the skill Meditation (See Providence Main Rule Book page 87), although no roll is required to obtain the benefits.



If characters take the Bronze-Dust daily for a week, they must make a Psyche roll against a TN of 11 or become addicted. Addicts have to take the drug once per day or suffer a -2 penalty to all their actions. The addiction will subside once a character stops using the dust for a period of 40 consecutive days (1 Yas'Wailian month). See page 165 for more information.

DRAGONFOOT

Wird: 30

Anodynes use the Dragonfoot as a base for a wide variety of potions and elixirs.



LEAVES

Laying a leaf on a wound will reduce the severity of the injury. The leaf causes 8 points of healing "damage." If someone ingests leaves regularly (once per day over a period of a month), a character will gain 1 point in a random Characteristic. For every increase, the character also gains a negative Behavior Trait. This effect lasts approximately one month, at which point the negative Trait and the increase in Characteristic are lost. If the person continues to ingest leaves after the gain, the Characteristic increase and the negative Trait become permanent, and the Behavior becomes an Extreme Trait. The GM determines the negative Behavior Trait. The Traits can also be substituted with Phobias (-5). Note that characters cannot increase their characteristics by more than 3 dice while using the Dragonfoot leaves. Characters cannot increase their characteristics beyond level 3.

DRAGONFOOT PASTE: TARGET NUMBER 13

The paste inflicts 12 points of healing "damage." It also reduces the time necessary to heal by one half (see Main Rule Book page 228), and removes scars if the character applying the paste makes a successful Medicine roll against a TN of 11.

SCALES

DRAGONFOOT SLEEP POTION - ESOTERIC: TARGET NUMBER 17

Constitution roll with TN of 5 to resist effects

Effect: Induced sleep for 4 hours.

If victims of the potion are awakened from their sleep, they will still suffer a -2 die penalty to all actions for the duration of the potion.

DRAGONFOOT SCALE POISON - ESOTERIC: TARGET NUMBER 17

Willpower roll versus TN of 7 to resist effects

Victims become highly suggestible and will follow most orders, unless they cause harm to themselves or close friend, or the suggestions run counter to the Behaviors of victims.

DRAGONROOT VENOM: TARGET NUMBER 13

In a more concentrated form, the poison causes 3 points of Soft Damage every hour for 32 hours unless treated. Anodynes or other healers must make a Medicine roll against a TN of 17 to successfully negate the effect of the poison.

DRAGONFOOT ROOT

The root itself brings good luck to all who wear it. The GM can award +1 to any die roll once per day. The root's liquid also grants the benefactor added Strength and Endurance. Four points are allocated randomly per each dose. One dose lasts for 32 hours. In addition, the person needs to sleep for only 1 hour during that day. If distilled in water, the dose will cause 10 points of healing "damage." See page 139 for more information.

FIRE SPONGE

The Fire sponge has the ability to soak up liquids, including blood and poisons. The effect of a poison can be neutralized if it is soaked up within the sponge. In effect, the sponge acts as the third level spell Cure Disease Self/Other. In addition, if someone with First Aid, Medicine, or Surgery is treating a victim, the Target Number to succeed any roll should be reduced by 2. The sponge can also soak up other liquids. Travelers often prefer using a sponge rather than a gourd to carry water.

The sponge is also able to absorb fire. Each Fire Sponge provides 2 points of protection from flames. See page 169 for more information.



INSAETE MUSHROOM - ESOTERIC

Wird: 8

Characters who eat 1 mushroom a day become more resistant to pain and injuries.

Constitution roll against a TN of 13 to avoid effects.

Effect: Ignore 1 die of injury penalties.

Note: Characters who eat over 5 mushrooms a day will ignore all wound penalties unless they successfully roll their Constitution against a TN of 15. Characters only die if they take Overkill damage. See page 167 for more information.



LILLIPA

The Lillipa plant is known to cause allergic reactions among a percentage of the Yas'Wailian population. Game Masters can award the Trait of Allergy - Lillipa if they wish to add it to their campaigns.

Allergy - Lillipa
Cost: -2 or -5



Characters with the Trait Allergy receive a -1 die penalty to all their actions when they are in the presence of the allergen in question. At a cost of -5 character creation points, a character's allergy is more severe, causing -2 die to all actions. The most common type of allergy is to pollen.

As an option, GMs can choose to award a more severe allergy (-10 points). In this case, if characters ingest something they are allergic to, for example nuts, they will be poisoned. The GM can determine the effect, but a good example is to say that the allergic reaction causes 1 point of Hard Damage every fifteen minutes for 1 hour. In this case, a spell such as Cure Disease will halt the progression of the allergic reaction.

The penalties incurred from the allergy are not cumulative. See page 143 for more information.

LUST FLOWER - ESOTERIC

Wird: 10

Anyone within 10 feet of a Lust Flower will begin behaving irrationally. Any suppressed emotion will come to the surface. The effects of the flower last for 2 days.

Psyche roll versus TN of 11 to avoid effects

Effect: -1 die penalty to all actions due to Behavior becoming all-consuming; -2 die penalty if the Behavior is Extreme. See page 147 for more information.



JACABO TREE

Adhesive paste

Characters can use the paste on gloves. It provides the equivalent of the Adhesion power at Tier 4 (Strength 3, +10 dice to Climbing). Other objects can also be held to surfaces with a Strength of 3 (Tier 4 Adhesion). See page 155 for more information.



PICATOM SEEDS

Dusk Broth - Esoteric: Target Number 11

Characters who take Dusk Broth daily for a period of two weeks become addicted. If they fail to take the Broth every day, they must successfully roll their constitution against a TN of 7. If characters fail, they suffer the following effect:

Effect: -2 die penalty to all actions all day

To avoid drinking Dusk Broth every day after becoming addicted, characters must make a Willpower roll versus a TN of 5. After a month, the addiction will subside.



PICATOM TOXIN: TARGET NUMBER 13

3 points of Soft Damage per round for 3 rounds.

The Picatom Toxin is a powerful liquid brewed from thousands of seeds.

PICATOM SEEDS - ESOTERIC

Constitution Roll against TN of 9 to avoid effects

Effect: -1 die to Intelligence or Perception, permanent

It takes the consumption of 500 seeds to make up a dose.

See page 137 for more information.

ANNIHILATOR (ROOT-TREE)

Wird: 10

Every 30 feet of the Root-Tree possesses the following characteristics:

25 Strength 30 Body

It also has an Armor of 10. Root-Trees strike as an area attack of three yards. Anything in this area suffers damage.

The thickest Root-Trees have a Body of 50, Armor of 12, and destroy anything in their path with a Strength of 30. Root-Trees move at speeds of 9 yards per second or 20 mph.

See page 149 for more information.



RAINBOW GRASS

Wird: (one plant) 24

Anodynes use the Rainbow Grass as a base for a variety of potions and elixirs.



POTION OF ELEMENTAL PROTECTION - ESOTERIC: TARGET NUMBER 17

Anodynes have the ability to create a potion that protects against one element at a time. There are four such potions: one for the element of water; one for air; one for fire; and one for earth. These miraculous potions protect a character from damage originating from a Shard elemental-based attack. They provide 15 points of Armor for a period of 32 hours, after which the effect vanishes. Taking two potions with different protection will reduce each armor to 7 points.

e.g. A character ingests a Potion of Elemental Protection - Fire, and gains 15 points of armor against fire-based attacks. She decides to drink another vial, one Potion of Elemental Protection - Water. In this case the character gains 7 points of protection against water-based attacks, while her protection against fire reduces to 7. Taking three different Potions of Elemental Protection cancels all the effects.



The Potions of Elemental Protection are also effective against Wird spells. One potion grants a drinker with 9 points of protection against spells that have an effect that is of the same elemental-base as the potion. For example, a Potion of Elemental Protection - Air, will protect someone from spells like Air Bolt. In addition, users of these potions will gain +2 to all their die rolls to resist any spell, regardless of element. The effect lasts for 32 hours. Taking two potions of different elemental bases cancels any protection against spells.

e.g. A character drinks a Potion of Elemental Protection - Air. He gains +2 die to resist when a Wird Weaver uses the spell Sleep.

If another character drinks a Potion of Elemental Protection - Fire, he does not gain protection against Sonic Blast, but does get 9 points of protection against the spell Fire Ball.

Potion of Wird Renewal - Esoteric: Target Number 25

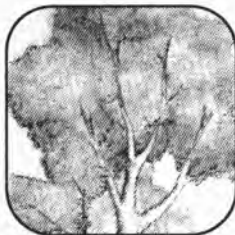
A Potion of Wird Renewal provides a character with 8 points of Wird. The potion only renews exhausted Wird, and cannot bring the Wird total of characters beyond their maximum. In addition, characters can only replenish up to their maximum Wird in a 32 hour period. If they take more than their maximum, then the potions have no effect. See page 152 for more information.

RUBYWOOD

Wird: 8

Rubywood provides the strongest resin available for the creation of light-weight weapons and other objects. The BPV for weapons is greater than the standard resin covered weapons (See the Providence Weapons Chart in the Main World Book for the standard weapon profiles).

The BPV for such weapons is increased by 10% to 20% depending on the quality of craftsmanship. These weapons are also sharper, adding 10% to the damage value of edged weapons. This damage value should not surpass crystal weapons, however. The Target Number required to successfully create a simple weapon is 17 using the Weapon Smith skill. Weapon smiths will create sharper and stronger weapons depending on the margin of success they achieve. Rubywood sap is also ideal for the creation of magical weapons since Wird spells and magical enhancements are easily absorbed in the composition of the material. See page 157 for more information.



STRANGLER

Wird: 6

Most Stranglers are approximately 1 to 3 yards in diameter. Such plants have the following characteristics:

4 Stealth	6 Strength	15 Body
3 CM - Grapple		



It is possible for larger Stranglers to exist, but they rarely have a Body greater than 20 and a Strength greater than 8. All Stranglers move at a pace of 2 yards per second. See page 158 for more information.

STRATYTE

Weapon smiths and manufacturers frequently use the Stratyte resin to strengthen wooden utensils or weapons. These weapons are listed in the Providence Weapons Chart as the standard weapon types. For example, there are four Daggers listed, one simple dagger, one for wood, one for stone, and one for crystal. The Stratyte resin dagger would be the simple dagger listing.



Weaponsmiths also use the sap to create objects, although they tend to be weaker than resin-enforced objects and weapons. See page 248 of the Providence Main Rule Book for rules on BPV. For additional information on the Stratyte tree, See page 156 for more information.

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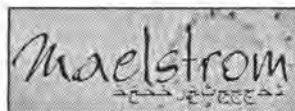
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