

PROVIDENCE

MAIN WORLD BOOK



XID
CREATIVE

Patricio





PROVIDENCE

*The Hero can be Poet, Prophet, King or Priest or what you will,
according to the kind of world he finds himself born into.*

Thomas Carlyle 1795-1881

PROVIDENCE

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*This is dedicated to all the heroes.
Good deeds are immortal.*

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AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

Hi there. Welcome to Providence, a child of strange labour. When I was first approached to write this project, I was given carte blanche (and I do mean carte blanche!) to do anything that piqued my imagination. While interested, I had nothing to operate from as a base structure: no indication of preferred genre, subject matter, style, theme, mood, etc. I didn't even have rules for the system. It was a rather unusual beginning as far as I was concerned.

I approached this problem from the point of view of "what was lacking out there." There were companies that filled the horror niche quite nicely, and I thought the market was already saturated with the macabre anyway. A couple of companies dominated the science fiction angle, while another remained on the top of the fantasy hill like a corporate dragon, and I didn't have enough hit points to try and topple them. The one genre that struck a fond chord in my heart, however, was that of super heroes.

With this in mind, I stepped into the sparsely populated void. However, I didn't want to simply do super heroes; I wanted something unique for my world, something to separate it from every other universe out there. It didn't take long to find. The world of Providence, a mix of fantasy and the four-colour bravado of super heroes, was born from my friend Dan's advice and an old campaign idea of mine.

I will admit that initially Providence was an attempt to create a new genre for a super hero game, but it quickly evolved into something more (I promise not to be pretentious about this). The catalyst for this change was the four-part comic series **KINGDOM COME™** by Mark Waid and Alex Ross (big tip of the hat). It was the first comic I had picked up in years, and it reminded me what I missed about

the super hero genre. It talked about hope, the drive to pursue one's ideals and the potential for great deeds inspired by humanity without making a joke of it. Despite my interest in the increasing depression that current horror games seem to inspire, I realized what was missing from the gaming genre was not just super heroes, but intelligent and uplifting super heroes. I missed the kind of game that says "Yes, you can make a difference in the world" and "No, you aren't fighting a hopeless cause."

Our lives are filled with enough negative messages; when did gaming stop becoming escapism and start becoming an affirmation of our worst qualities? When did we stop becoming heroes? It is my hope that Providence becomes more than just a simple super hero game. I hope that it will be positive, intelligent, and most of all, fun. I don't believe that in order to make a product more accessible to adults, you have to make it violent and dark. I also don't believe you have to reach the younger readers through violence, by appealing to their hormones or by talking down to them.

My friends call me an optimist, a sick, twisted, and perverted optimist, but an optimist nonetheless. Maybe the time for the champion who stands by his code of honour is gone, though I seriously doubt it. The comic and gaming industry was started by individuals who believed that they could be heroes, and it is my hope that they, and you, still believe in that little grain of optimism. It is what forged **KINGDOM COME™** and Kurt Busiek's extremely well-written **ASTRO CITY™**. I welcome you to Providence, a place where you are the hero, in a world where you can make a difference.

Lucien Soulban



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PROVIDENCE

They tell us when we are young that we walk the difficult paths so that we might become stronger. They tell us that fear is empty. It is cast aside by the Pure so that challenges may be faced, overcome, and learned from. They tell us we are of the Eagle, strong, proud, perfect, and that there is nothing we will not face.

They lie.

We are a putrid people, afraid to face the darkness. We will disfigure our own spawn rather than face our own inadequacy. We will listen to our pleasant songs, and speak our hollow words of honour rather than look at the shadow places. We tell ourselves we are great so that we do not have to go into the Deep, where the canopy hides the light and where our wings made to soar are as nothing. We tell others we are the most blessed so that we do not have to hear the truthful voice that nags at us, and tells us there are greater things in the bowels of the world, in the howling void of our souls.

Do not misunderstand me. I am not weak like the others. I have taken words of desire, courage and a fate of greatness seriously. I have confronted what dwells below us and within us, and I have conquered. I am Jenobay, thrice blessed and thrice accursed and I yet live.

I lost my wing because they had found me out, the graceless worms with sweetened tongues who called themselves my friends. They had discovered that I was not afraid like they. I had turned the power of the Wird, so weak and inconsequential, into real and true power. I had mastered death, and it frightened them. That is what makes me laugh most heartily I think; they tried to kill me because they were afraid. But those of Troupial Eagle cannot be afraid, can they? That is why they wanted me dead. It was not because I practiced "forbidden" arts. It was because I, unlike any of the Pure or any other Caste, I alone was unafraid of the truth, and that shamed them.

Because of their discovery, they sent their Wylders to my door. They unleashed their forces upon my bedchamber, in hopes they might capture me in my sleep. For this they call me a coward and a dog. Of course, I fought. "Blight Crow!" they cried, "Villain!" "Murderer!" "Scoundrel!" For my part, I did not speak, but brought the power of the dark unto me as I had taught myself these many years. I wielded my brand, and the flesh it touched withered, wings it smote burned. A score or more I killed, but they overwhelmed me with impossible odds. Regent Jenobay, high lord of the Alliance of Kings, admired by all, and they brought me to the ground like some mindless Monstrosity. There were no challenges, no shows of honour, no words of arrest. And for this they called me treacherous.

Their trial did not deserve the name, my place of captivity an oubliette not worthy of the most murderous Wayfarer. In chains of iron, glyphs of power marked across my near naked body to prevent my escape, they marched me about Cry-Star like a freak for amusement, but it only went to further their shame. For the people who called themselves fearless were afraid of this bound man. It took a young Gargoyle to get them throwing stones. Before he began it, they all gaped at me in petrified silence, like they were the very wood of Bone-Wail itself come to watch my supposed defeat.

They imagined that they were safe now...safe from my wrath. How curious a thing courage is. It is fleeting when needed, but in the face of a caged beast, it redoubles itself. Their loathing for me was to their credit, their hatred strong, but surely not one of them would have dared assault me if they knew what I knew. I would not die; I would not be locked away in the highest spire of the most unspeakable tower. I would be free, and I would have my vengeance.



INTRODUCTION

PREFACE THE HERO'S WORD

Never forget. This simple statement is the creed of the world. Despite alignment, pursuit or endeavour, it is up to the individual to remember these two words and rely upon them as their impetus for being.

They are a reminder of the goals we strive to attain, and they are the words to sustain our actions when strength proves inadequate. To forget what we are, who we are or why we do what we do is to lose a valuable portion of ourselves. Dedication is made all the stronger through action. By not acting we lessen the men and women we could be.

This fact is what the world of Providence forces us to remember. It is a reminder that once we admired the heroes of our childhood. We respected them for their sense of honour, duty, conviction and valour, not their costume, the gleam of their gun or their misspelt name. The champions of

our imagination served to elevate our self-esteem, rather than debasing those noble qualities which we are now told we do not possess. It is for this reason that we have made Providence into a universe of four colours. While not limited by the stereotypes of black and white, neither is it burdened with the angst-ridden melancholy that currently grips so many games. The players can make a positive difference in this genre and can be counted among the elite heroes. There are no dark fates, only heroic sacrifices.

What you are about to read within the pages of this book is the cumulative effort of a group of people who shared the same dream and never forgot. We remember the day when heroes came to embody the best in humanity, not the worst. We remember when the world was a place where valiant effort and dedication were enough to weather the storm. For those of you who remember the same, we invite you to re-awaken the hero within you and keep the ideal alive. For those of you who have no memory of such things, allow us to introduce you to a new legacy; a world of myths, legends and, best of all, heroes.



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PROPER GREETINGS

These are the days of Reckoning. That which was lost in a war of dreams is returning on the tide of a new dawn. I can remember the words passed from my mother unto me as a small child; each syllable carried the weight of the lost years; each sentence spoken from parent to offspring was a reminder of what must never be forgotten.

As I heard my mother speak, her once rich hair now spider-frail wisps of white that crowned her brow; her voice echoed the words she had heard on the deathbed of her father. And by whatever gods had abandoned us, I could hear my ancestors speak those very same words, demanding that the promise of the Reckoning be fulfilled.

And so it passed from the old to the young to carry the burden of knowledge of the world we were exiled from and the world we were exiled to. I pledged to pursue the Reckoning with the very same tears that begged my mother not to leave me. I grew up, believing that a time would come when I would demand the same promise of my own child and be free of the pledge, free to die on a world not my own.

I never dreamed I would be the one to carry the responsibility of those words. I never thought I would be the one to prepare for the Reckoning, or the years of strife that lay ahead.

***Introduction by Lady Correy Lassable,
Manor Lassable, Troupial Dragon.***

How else could you introduce the world except through the eyes of those who have lost blood upon her soil and profited from the grace of her branches? Providence can only be called home by those born under the grey rock of her sky, those first washed in the warm streams of her waters, and those whose first taste of food outside their mother's bosom was the mashed fruit of her trees. To those generations who first came here however, it was not a home but a prison. They were exiles sent to die in a bubble realm.

This is not the beginning of a story, but the middle of an epic adventure. The stage has been set, the curtains are rising and the music has been cued. The characters, played by the players and directed by the GM, are now the deciding factor in this struggle. Welcome to Providence.



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VISITOR'S PRIMER TO PROVIDENCE

Providence is a unique setting, filled with familiar concepts and ideals, but suffused with new sights, dangers and adventure. To the patient, all things will eventually be made clear. There are facts however, that must be touched upon beforehand to better prepare new visitors to the sights they will become a part of.

Before delving into the intricacies of history, geography and society which are presented in the next chapters, it is necessary to visualize the world in which the play is cast. Providence is markedly different from most settings in terms of populace, background and the surrounding environment. Everything is interconnected; all the various facets rely on one another because they are a product of interaction. It is therefore important to present a quick overview of each facet before covering them in detail later.

BASIC BACKGROUND

History does not begin with Providence, but with a world called Yas'Wail. The natives won an incredibly lengthy war against a creature called the Elothorin and its avatars. The monster wasn't defeated, but was eventually banished through a number of magical gates. Soon after this, a brutal caste system was set up. This regimented the society and effectively isolated sections of society from each other.

The caste system eventually served as the catalyst for a war between the forces of the status quo and reform. What began as civil unrest quickly degraded into a blood bath that swept the entire world along in its hellish wake. Even the gods took sides in the struggle, and sacrificed their lives for the ideals of their worshippers. Religion died that day on Yas'Wail as the gods were exposed simply as more powerful mortals. In the end, the old regime won.

The progenitors of the rebellion of ideals were exiled — via a series of magical gates — into a world that was meant to crush their spirit. There they were left under the jurisdiction of Warden Families who had been sent to ensure



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that the prisoners were properly punished. The world they ended up in came to be known as Providence.

The attempt to destroy them not only failed, but as a result, the losers' resolve was strengthened, as was their desire to try again to claim victory. Now isolated from their original home for two millennia, the descendants of these prisoners have achieved freedom from their wardens. They have established a society of city-states and rulership that is different from that of their ancestors. They have also been short-sighted enough to make some of the same mistakes as their ancestors.

At this point, events are reaching a critical stage. Geological instability is wracking the jungle world, flooding regions and dimming the sun behind thickening volcanic clouds. Ancient enemies known as the Lost Tribes threaten the current alliance of city-states with what can only become a brutal war, while preparations for the Reckoning are laid by the wayside in the wake of the two aforementioned concerns. The only escape from this place lies through the gates which nobody knows how to operate. It has become a time of peril, where the question must be asked: will the gates open before the world dies, or will Providence finally become the deathtrap it was meant to be?

SETTING

It must be stated over and over again, lest the magnitude of the image is forgotten. Providence is in a hollow world; a jungle realm spread across the interior of a bubble trapped in earth. The terrain is awash in a variety of rich colours, from the stoic grey of stone pillars that anchor one face of the world to the opposite hemispheres like monumental bridges, to the green of the verdant jungle and the blues of her two major bodies of water. Many large portions of the world remain unexplored. For the descendants of the prisoners, Providence has become home.

Once serving as penal colonies for the thousands of exiles imprisoned here, the various city-states that lay scattered across the valley floor have become immense communities, growing beyond the confines of their shameful past. The tribulations of the populace did not vanish with the liberation of the prison camps.

The floor of the jungle has cracked open, inundating the land with an ever-increasing deluge of water. The world is drowning. Communities and even one city have been uprooted in the wake of the encroaching flood. The unexplored jungle interior untouched by the watery plague is equally as perilous. Below the mile-thick canopy of leaves is a world of perpetual night called the Deep; very few people have returned from this place untouched.

SOCIETY

Before the exile, all people were winged and capable of dancing amongst the clouds. Since the exile, a growing number of individuals emerged who possessed no means of flight. Faced with a completely new phenomena, the rulers established a new social hierarchy to deal with this new "class," and to insure the purity of the bloodlines that still possessed wings. This initiated a caste system based on who possesses wings, glider membranes or Fallen, those with nothing at all. Many seemed to have forgotten that their ancestors had fought against another, different caste system.

Power is further confined by the use of Wird, the mystical forces of magic, and who is taught to use it. The nobility, those who possess fully functional wings are taught the use of this magic, while the lower populace is usually ignored, despite their potential for talent.

One unique strata within Providence's politics is filled with Shards, people born with natural abilities and powers. Shards don't possess the diversity of their mystical counterparts. This, however, does not make them any less powerful. In many situations, they can be more powerful.

Initially, their appearance nearly threw the caste system into disarray. A campaign to place many of them into Guilds based on shared ability however, proved to be quite successful, as well as lucrative for the aforementioned Guilds. Some have accepted this position, but others have taken to using their abilities as they see fit.

INDIVIDUALS

Each individual, by appearance alone, belongs to an extended family of sorts called a Troupial. For most, it is a racial mark dating back to different regions across Yas'Wail where an individual's ancestors hailed from. This designation is more than just a grouping based on appearance, it is a sense of history with past and present members; it is the manifestation of talents and abilities that are specific to each Troupial. Some of the major Troupials are Raven, mystics within their own right; Hawk, hunters and trackers; and Eagle, knights and other dedicated individuals.

Although the Troupials may have initially been the manner in which to define races from different regions, it became more than just that. With the forced exile, many groups formed around their Troupials as a manner of remembering their heritage, their shared birth lands and customs. In the early history of Providence, community was important for survival. Nowhere was this practiced more

than amongst the Troupials. They believed it was important that the subsequent generations never forget where their roots first sprouted. Eventually, the more powerful groups went on to form Households, in which other individuals of the same marking were welcome to pursue a shared agenda.

CURRENT STATUS OF THE WORLD

A few of the gates leading back to the old world had been discovered in the past. Those which still remain hidden are thought to be guarded by powerful avatars of the Elothorin. These creatures are capable of decimating entire settlements. To add insult to injury, the gates have refused all manners of manipulation to get them to open. They remain locked.

In the meanwhile, an ocean continues to inundate the jungle floor without a hint of mercy, geological upheaval has created a volcano within one of the spires that connect opposite sides of the world, the caste system is threatening to burst at the seams under the threat of violent revolt, and several of the city-states are at war. The action begins in the midst of all this ecological, sociological and political turmoil.



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ROLE-PLAYING IN PROVIDENCE

"So you wish to learn more about my world, and perhaps through it, gain an understanding of my people and through us, yourself. Rest assured that we share a great deal in common; the fulfilment of an infallible ideology; the belief that there is inherent good in everything around us; the pursuit of valour; the drive to excel and bring about more than just personal change; and the desire to help the world through our actions. To live is to be about trial, struggle and triumph. It is all about being a hero."

THEME

"It is all about being a hero." Those words epitomize the heart of Providence, perhaps even capturing its determined soul. They are the *raison d'être* for the world you are about to glimpse, signalling a return to the belief that humanity is made of chivalric fibre and our intentions can be noble. In a society where people have begun believing that there are no positive virtues left to extol, Providence is a work of fiction meant to challenge that notion. Words have power, and rather than falling into the hopeless, angst-ridden and "blame-the-other-guy" mentality that current fiction seems to emulate and perpetuate, we strive to inspire and bring out the potential in all of us.

Secondary, but no less paramount, is the notion that struggle is necessary. There is no belief worth the name if it cannot withstand the rigors of trial. Any philosophy or personal ideology that dies under the pressing thumb of adversity is nothing more than a passing whim. Being a hero entails pursuing a view or a value despite the hardships that may arise. Any supposed hero who does not have an unfaltering belief in themselves or their cause is a villain waiting to happen. The world of Providence offers conflict on a variety of levels that pits individual versus individual, versus nature, and versus society. Just because the world is built on the spectrum of four colours does not mean that it is two-dimensional in its approach.

Finally, a tertiary, but extremely important theme is one of remembrance. The inhabitants of Providence are the descendants of exiles from a just, but failed revolution. They remember with emphatic clarity the hardships of their ancestors. Family history and lineage is a very important aspect to the world. It is an anchor in the maelstrom of the

present and serves as a sense of identity. Those from Providence, no matter how isolated they may be, share in a communal sense of history that makes them part of a huge family.

MOOD

This is the domain of the Game Master (GM). Just because the game is four-colour, does not mean it is limited to four-colours. The players should be the heroes of the world, and they should have to work for this title. Other than that, the overall mood should be determined by the game's host, and refined through role-playing and interaction.

THE JOB OF THE GAME MASTER/MISTRESS

It has been said that even a solitary candle is enough to light the darkness. This holds true within Providence most of all. In this world, there is no battle fought in futility and no ideal that can be shattered like common rock. Despite the crushing sense of adversity, there is always hope; there must be. Out of this optimistic sense, the people of Providence emulate a natural nobility through their actions.

The GM must remind players of this optimism as they play. Regardless of the overwhelming odds, there must always be a path to victory, no matter how obscure. The players, through the tribulations of their characters, are the heroes of this world. Neither they nor the GM must ever forget this. The joy of being the hero is tremendous, the cost of falling away from one's ideals is profoundly tragic.

DEATH IN THE WORLD

If the heroes are meant to have significant impact upon the direction of their world, then how does the GM handle the premature death of a character? Obviously, this is the domain of the GM, but here are several suggestions in dealing with the issue of death.

BLAZE OF GLORY

The death of the character may serve as the inspiration that drives others to greater things. In this manner, the GM could delay someone's death, allowing the character to live for a few months longer until they can find a heroic situation where their death serves to bring their name into legend.

NOT UNTIL I SAY SO

An option available only if the GM and the players are comfortable with it, is that nobody dies unless the player wants their character to perish. While this does mean fudging die rolls to accommodate this style of play, it can add to the grand heroic nature of the game when characters are trying to pull off the wildest stunts that only movie heroes seem to have luck with.

With this option, the GM should be aware of the fact that game immortality does not mean the characters can't be captured, physically incapacitated, maimed, tortured, etc. As an added twist, if the player characters have access to this benefit, then the GM should allow the same privilege for certain pivotal villains in the story.

IN MEMORY

More than one classical work of fiction, theatre or film has been based on this concept. The character has proven to be such a positive or negative influence on the world that when she dies, somebody else assumes her persona. Using this suggestion, the player would be allowed to continue on with her character, but as portrayed by somebody else. This would add an interesting element to role-playing.

MAKING THE HERO

If death is a difficult thing to deal with, how much more so is making the players into heroes? In a world steeped in magic, where the political forces have already been at play for generations and war for far longer, how can the player be introduced into the scheme of things without being a pawn or cannon fodder? Well, that depends on the style of campaign being run.

POLITICAL GAMES

Providence is a world of station, caste and social hierarchy. Having an opinion automatically means going against somebody else's agenda. How this can work for or against the players all depends on the dynamics of the situation, but here are a few generic suggestions.

THE CASTES

The need to protect the purity of the bloodlines is a fallacy, because the birth of the Fallen is a process of natural evolution. With so many generations being born unable to fly due to centuries of incarceration, some people were born with the ability to survive better on land or in water than in

the air. They are not "stricken," merely different. Unfortunately, the current nobility does not believe that the Fallen are anything else but cursed. Why else would they be robbed of the basic joy of flight?

The players, on the other hand, know the truth, or at least they believe that everyone has the right to equal representation. As heroes it is up to them to rectify this error, whether through forceful action or through political manoeuvring. In either case, the actions of the players to restore equality within society should begin at a small level, perhaps even within their own group. As matters progress, their influence and endeavours should begin affecting regional opinions, and spread out from there. Even if the players do not change the world, or the city in which they live, they should at least be the galvanizing force that encourages others to rally to their cause.

THE GUILDS

Having been created to place powered individuals within the constraints of the caste system, the Guilds can successfully challenge the ruling nobility of most city-states due to their financial and political backing. Unfortunately, the Guilds are using their resources and allies to attack one another through political intrigue. They are blinding themselves to the dangers that surround everyone.

Players who are members of the Guilds must try to open the eyes of their Guild Masters to the dangers around them. While the courts of the nobility become a staging ground for political squabbling, precious resources are being squandered. Worst of all, time is running out. Forced into this position, the players walk a delicate tightrope between Guild loyalties and Guild directive. They must find a way to convince the Guilds not to move against one another until Providence is safe, or the populace has left this world behind. It is necessary that the Guilds stop, and important for the players to convince their superiors of this. Again, this requires currying a great deal of favours and promises, and wisely using them at the right times.

THE JOB OF HEROES

Outside the political arena, there are plenty of places to play the hero. With the population falling into greater danger, there is no better time for the emergence of valiant deeds. This category calls for the more adventurous hero, the stalwart defender who risks life and limb in the pursuit of lofty ideals. This forces the player's character to face a wide range of adversity in order to save people's lives. That, however, is what being a hero entails.



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The world of Providence has become a complicated place. The upper echelons of society are protected by a myriad of organizations simply because they can afford to pay for such services. Most of the populace does not have this luxury, and it is because of this that People's Knights exist. They endeavour to help the less fortunate simply because they can and it is the right thing to do.

PEOPLE'S KNIGHTS

People's Knights is a designation for any individual willing to risk life and limb in order to help others. Essentially they are the archetypal heroes. These characters usually keep their identities private and don't pay much attention to the caste system.

While People's Knights always existed, it is only recently that they have been gaining the increased support of the mundane population. With the militia unable to protect them against the increasing crime rate and acts of violence that have become common in everyday life, the People's Knights have filled that gap by doing what they can. Although this may not seem significant compared to the problems beleaguering Providence, the action of saving one life or a million is essentially of equal merit. The needs of the many is not a sacrifice the innocent should make, but one made by the heroes.

EXPLORERS

The world is still an enigma wrapped in a casing of poisoned thorns. At one time, exploration of the world was halted in light of the hostility facing the city-states. The nobility of the various cities decided that further exploration of Providence was unprofitable. The populace is now paying for that short-sighted decision. As a result, exploration of the world is more vital than ever.

Two of the most immediate problems facing the populace of Providence are the floods and the threat of war with the races of people known collectively as the Lost Tribes. Both situations have caused a refugee exodus into the cities for better protection against either event. The city-states have been forced to divert militia manpower to help with the civil defense of the cities and with the evacuation of endangered areas.

The world is currently flooding through a land-breach called the Sunderlands. As it brings thousands of tons of water into Providence daily, the city-states are threatened with the prospect of drowning in their enclosed realm. The need to escape this world has become paramount. While the method of escape is known, the manner in which to use it is not.

When the exiles first arrived in Providence, they did so via a series of spatial gates. Over time, the gates as well as



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the way to activate them have been lost. A century ago, following an event known as the Lost Wars (which is discussed in the History chapter), three gates were uncovered. Unfortunately, that was less than half of them, and even if all of them were discovered, the means of how to reactivate the gates is unknown. These portals represent the only means of escaping this world and returning back to Yas'Wail to fulfil the promise known as the Reckoning.

The explorers of Providence come in many forms, from the mysterious Horizon Striders to the Guild of Messengers. Despite their differing titles or the reasoning behind their actions, they are pursuing the same goal: explore the world so that all may be revealed. While this seems like a tall task, it is pushed by a sense of urgency. The gates need to be rediscovered, or else the return to Yas'Wail will be all the more difficult for the millions waiting to return. That brings about the second reason for exploration, to find the means to reactivate the gates. This is much more difficult, because nobody has any real clue what they're looking for. The explorers who discover the means to use them will not only become heroes to the entire world, but will be immortalized in legends and folklore.

THE ALLIANCES

Apart from the tribes of Fallen who live within the Deep and the independent city-states, the two primary camps are the Wardens and the Alliance of Kings. The former rule the penal colonies of Bone-Wail and Green-Deep. The Wardens never lost control of their prison camps, and still serve the function delegated to their ancestors so many centuries past. The Alliance of Kings contains those city-states liberated generations ago, and they remain united in the face of the Wardens. The political climate between the two powers has improved over the years, but it remains bitter enough to cause a war at the turn of a single incident.

Rather than bringing these two camps together, the players must be ever vigilant for the machinations of the Wardens. They too seek to return back to Yas'Wail, but there is little doubt that their intention is to warn their ancient brethren and unite with them in destroying the exiles. The Wardens are not an adversary that can be easily defeated. They possess an army of altered creatures known as Ward Dogs and Ravagers that can easily challenge any Alliance army, and they know the location of one of the gates.

The second alliance of enemies that the heroes must be vigilant against are the Lost Tribes. Centuries ago, four new races were discovered in the course of exploring the jungle. They were the Green People, a race of beings who had

achieved a symbiotic relationship with the flora around them; the Swarm Dancers, hybrid insect-humans; the Serpenkine, reptilian humanoids; and the White Crow, an albino Troupial well versed in the arts of Shadow-Wird. Originally, these four tribes proved hostile towards the city-states.

This culminated in the Lost War where the Green People and White Crow attacked the Alliance of Kings and the Wardens. Surprisingly, the Serpenkine and Swarm Dancers acted as the mediators for the peaceful resolution of the conflict, establishing a limited alliance with the city-states.

In recent times, hostilities on the part of the White Crow, Green People and half the Serpenkine have increased, threatening to instigate a second Lost War. The Swarm Dancers have sided with the Alliance of Kings as have the remaining half of the Serpenkine. With the threat of conflict emerging to the fore once more, spies and other skilled individuals are needed to keep track of hostile Lost Tribes' activities. Their assessment of field situations could be the only early-warning system the Alliance and Wardens possess against an all-out attack.

SURVIVAL GUIDE

The following section deals with the aspects of the world which are often taken for granted. These include the use of resources, tools and the monetary base of society. Because Wird, or magic, has been used to fulfil the general needs of the populace, it has also limited their scientific advancement. Why invent something when spells can fulfil the wants of an individual? It is this mentality that has created different mediums for the manufacture of goods that Yas'Wailians view as essential or valuable.

THE TOOLS OF THE WORLD

Despite the fact that Yas'Wailian society had been in existence for several millennia prior to the Grand Rebellion, it is not as advanced as people would expect. This is partly because the exile dropped the standards of living back a few centuries, but it is mostly due to Wird.



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One of the prime examples of this is metallurgy. Mining and forging techniques have been nearly forgotten since the exile began, because Wird offered an acceptable substitute. Why learn how to forge steel when spells can turn a piece of wood or tree resin into something equally as strong within a shorter period of time? This mode of thought alters the appearance of weapons, tools and armour for the player who may be expecting the classic look of knights and fighters.

While Wird can be used to alter almost any medium in order to fashion objects and strengthen them, certain elements have innate drawbacks or limitations that dictate the maximum degree of manipulation. Common items such as wood and stone can be manipulated and are durable, but are limited in terms of what can be done to change their make-up. Altered tree resins are considered higher-end objects, but because of their light weight, their function is often reserved for jewellery. Crystals known as Harbinger Stones are the rarest medium to be manipulated or altered, hence their hefty price, but are the best in terms of quality and durability.

WOOD & STONE

These two items are the most common elements used to fashion mundane weapons and tools. Simple Wird spells can be used to alter the shape, strength and even resiliency of either medium to form items. It is therefore not uncommon to find the lower echelons of society using armour made out of shaped tree bark for example, or for typical weapons to include stone hammers, wood staves and polished rock daggers.

Wood's primary drawback is that despite Wird, it is still not a durable medium. Of all the types of weapons, it is the most likely to break, warp or simply disintegrate over time. Oddly enough, the use of spells to increase its resiliency is the very cause of its short-lived life span. Enchanted wood can be made to be as strong as steel, but the effect does not last for very long. Wood's availability, however, more than compensates for the limited duration.

Stone, on the other hand, seems to store Wird with less detriment to its form. Unfortunately, its drawback is one of weight. The larger the stone item being created, the more difficulty there is in alleviating its weight. Small items that fit within the palm of the hand can be made extremely lightweight and durable, but items the size of a horse and up, are barely-halved. This makes weapons of this nature better used by ground-locked individuals or by strong flyers.

One of the most unusual types of throwing weapons is made from wide palm leaves cut into triangular wedges with serrated edges. Like wood, they can be enchanted to have the durability of steel, the cutting edge of a knife and the proper

weight to be thrown, but they rarely last outside a year before becoming unusable. Nearly a dozen can be empowered at the same time, cutting down on the casting of Wird, and allowing for the mass production of these weapons.

TREE RESIN

Certain trees within Providence, especially the Jacabo tree, secrete a milky-white to amber coloured resin. Using moulds to form the shape of weapons and objects, resin is an excellent medium to manipulate and strengthen through Wird. Unfortunately, it is not generally conducive for creating sharp-edged weapons or hefty clubs. Lightweight armour, arrows, staves, throwing spheres, amulets, broaches and a myriad of other types of jewellery are often created using the resin.

One technique to make an item or weapon heavier is to fill the mould with stones while the resin is still in a liquid state. Once it hardens and is enchanted, the stones lend the article a good weight to swing with. Other variants of this technique include using exposed chiselled rock pieces to give resin weapons an edge, filling resin jewellery with precious stones and gems to enhance their beauty, and using animal skulls and bones inside resin armour to improve their look.

The major assets of resin are that it seems to hold an enchantment nearly indefinitely, and that it remains easy to manipulate because it is light. Unfortunately, while it is considered a higher-end medium than simple rock or wood, resin is not the best choice for fashioning weapons. Armour and household items are more practical applications.

CRYSTALS

Crystals are perhaps the most valued medium for weapons and even armour. Possession of a crystal object can often be viewed as a mark of someone's social or financial standing in life. It is also an indication of the individual's skill in using whatever weapon he possesses since crystals are too expensive to simply buy on a whim.

Also known as Harbinger Stones and God's Tears, crystal seeds were originally smuggled over from Yas'Wail by the D'Shau Monks, and cared for until the time was right to reveal them. Their presence bolstered morale greatly, for crystal weapons and armour had been the legacy of noble knights and ruling kings and queens before the exile. Their reintroduction into society somehow completed the circle of liberation; it made the Reckoning and return back to Yas'Wail seem all the more closer.

The D'Shau Monks have kept their secrets well, for only they know how to grow and enchant the crystals. Each monastery has an Orchard-Tender, one monk whose responsibility it is to care for the God's Tears, and three

acolytes who are undergoing training. They tend the grove by planting the Harbinger Stones and helping them grow. Exactly how the crystal seeds blossom is unknown, but it is believed that singing at certain pitches does it, a practice the Orchard-Tender follows everyday for four hours minimum.

The seeds eventually break the surface of the ground in the form of crystal rods that measure from two inches to three feet in length. At this point they are ready to be enchanted by the Orchard-Tender who is versed in a rare branch of Wird Weaver spells dealing with crystals. The spells to empower the crystals fall under one (or more) category out of the four tiers mentioned below. Unlike wood, Wird will not rob these crystals of their lifespan, or limit their use. As a matter of fact, Harbinger Stones seem to be excellent receptacles for spells, hence their high cost. They are also well weighted for whatever task they are grown for.

BASIC SPELLS

One of the first enchantments laid upon a new crystal alters it into a specific shape. It can be flattened out to serve as a blade of varying length, thinned to the point where it can be used as a javelin or lance, turned into a shield, fashioned into breastplate, made into an arm-guard with claws, etc. Another enchantment emblazons the House-crest of the individual who purchased or commissioned the crystal weapon, forever identifying it.

INTERMEDIATE SPELLS

In natural form, Harbinger Stones are fragile and therefore useless outside works of art or jewellery. It is for this reason that this enchantment is made, increasing its strength and preventing the object from shattering unless exposed to exceedingly high pressures. The final step of this process is to enchant the weapons so that they possess a permanent cutting edge. Another spell is slightly more expensive, but prevents the usage of the item by anyone else but the owner. This anti-theft measure can range from spikes erupting from the pommel if a correct keyword is not spoken to the item shattering if incorrectly handled. It is not uncommon for knights or other high-ranking officers to request these two forms of enchantment.

ADVANCED SPELLS

This degree of enchantment is one often found in the possession of combat flyers from Troupial Hawk, Dove and Eagle. It allows the crystal to hold two different forms, one innocent and unobtrusive, the other decidedly deadlier.

The first form is normally used for convenience when travelling. The crystal is smaller in size and lacks its cutting edge. Shapes can range from simple rods of varying lengths and thicknesses, to arm-bracers, belt buckles and other body

jewellery; the item can be up to half the normal size of the weapon. Once it is activated through a gesture or one-word command, the item assumes its second, more deadlier form. Rods can grow into swords or spears, an arm bracer can suddenly become sharp along the edges, shields will have spikes, belt-buckles will change to punch-daggers, etc.

The shape of either object must be somewhat related to the other, although more expensive enchantments can be used to make either smaller by half.

ARTIFACT SPELLS

This level of enchantment is exceedingly expensive and scarce, but powerful nonetheless; almost no one aside from a rare king or queen possesses an artifact crystal. Items of this calibre are usually receptacles for a variety of Wird spells. They possess all the previous enchantments listed.

Monarch's Sceptre

The most famous Artifact Crystal, known as the Monarch's Sceptre, is currently in possession of Regent Caiylus, the head for the Alliance of Kings. It was commissioned during the Crucible, an event centuries ago that brought various city-states together as the Alliance of Kings. Since then, it has been in the possession of each regent for the Alliance as a mark of their power and status.

The Monarch's Sceptre is powerful because it is a symbol of office and freedom, but what makes it even more potent are the Wird spells inside it. It was said that the Wylder who enchanted it was so over-exuberant, even he forgot about half the spells which remain dormant inside it now. Thus far, however, it has been able to do the following:

- Heal Self 3x a day (16 points)*
- Heal Others 2x a day (16 points)*
- Air Elemental (as Level 2 Spell)*
- Analyze Wird*
- Sleep*
- Bolt of Flame*
- Earth Armour (Level 3 protection)*
- Magic Resistance (Level 4 protection)*
- Lightning Bolt (Level 4)*

Weapons of Providence

Providence has its share of common weapons including: swords, knives, daggers, hammers, spears, javelins, arrows, light lances, darts, nets, clubs, maces, flails, whips, bolos and pole-arms. Because of her history, however, there are some weapons that are indigenous to winged combat. They tend to be light and quick, easily carried and quite deadly. Here is a sampling of some. The stats for these weapons can be found on pages 210 & 211.

HAWK'S CLAWS

There are a variety of claw-style weapons that aerial combatants enjoy using. Some are simple claws attached to a hand grip that allow the blades to emerge from between the fingers. Others are retractable claws which are bidden within an arm-sheath, or are attached to a wrist-brace. The appearance of the object is somewhat superfluous; the point of it is to give the flyer a fast, slashing weapon that can be drawn in a matter of seconds.

SHRED-GUARDS

A rather nasty item used during fights in the air, Shred-Guards are arm and shin pads studded with sharp rock, broken glass or even crystal shards. Their purpose is to allow quickly-moving aerialists to injure opponents when flying by them, without slowing down greatly. Adept fighters have even learned how to block using these weapons.

Hawk knights are known to use crystal Shred-Guards, while Dragons have a tail variant of them.

THROW-GLOBES

The distance weapon of choice for some flyers is a simple item called a Throw-Globe. They are especially popular with flyers who find bows and arrows too cumbersome in aerial combat, but need something to close the distance between them and an adversary. These weapons are simple two-inch diameter spheres made of solid stone which can be thrown or used in conjunction with a sling.

When flying above an opponent, combatants prefer to throw their globes, allowing gravity to work for rather than against them. If the distance between two fighters is too great, the globes are used in conjunction with a sling. Many aerialists prefer to fly towards an adversary, then suddenly change direction as they release the globe from its sling, thereby allowing momentum to add to the sphere's velocity.

RAM-BUCKLERS

An item normally worn by Hawk aerialists, Ram-Bucklers are small shields affixed to the forearms. They allow the attacker to dive-bomb another flyer, with the buckler acting as a ram plate that absorbs the brunt of the impact. Naturally, this item is mostly effective against other aerialists, and not against ground targets.

REAR NETS

Rear nets are a defensive item used by flyers from Troupial Raven, Bat and Dove against other pursuers during a dive. The net is folded into a backpack which is designed to open up when a belt is pulled. In a dive, the weighted net immediately catches the wind and opens up behind the user as it sails out. Anyone following catches the net and becomes entangled in it.

The same manoeuvre can also be used when two combatants fly by one another, but this is rather difficult to accomplish since gravity drags the net down almost immediately. Timing in this situation is crucial.

METALS

Metals are not popular for several reasons. They are too heavy to be wielded by the winged members of society and they are difficult to harvest. As well, almost all the materials used in Providence are natural and easily found, with the exception of Harbinger Stones. Metals, on the other hand, need to be unearthed and manipulated through more potent spells than normal just to purify and shape them. After that, enchanting them is still a difficult process.

This is why metallic items, weapons and armour are so rare. The amount of Wird needed to fashion them is too time-consuming and expensive. This is not to say they do not exist, however.

Apart for rare artifacts which survived from Yas'Wail, some noblemen are known to contract Wird practitioners to create special items for them. Metals that have completed the process of purification, shaping and enchantment have proven to be far more resilient to punishment and the passage of time than even crystals. Such items are as light as their crystalline counterparts, but even more durable during combat. Possession of any refined metal object in Providence is a statement of wealth, if not eccentricity.

Recently, the Fallen have rediscovered techniques for mining and processing small quantities of metal. Unlike their airborne counterparts, they are not hampered by using heavier metallic objects. Because they cannot afford to enchant wood and stone, they are beginning to rely on metals to bridge the resources gap between them and the upper castes.

MONEY

In Providence the only standard of currency used is the Sovereign Task, which comes in a variety of shapes. Anyone who is dealing in sanctioned business (which means mostly those of the Fortuned and up), is allowed to deal in currency. The lower castes are relegated to bartering for their needs.

Until recently, the Alliance relied on using simple metal Tasks because the process to mine and purify the ore proved to be beyond the task of most people. When it was learned that some Fallen outlaws were adept at crafting metal, and may be counterfeiting Sovereign Tasks, the Alliance began marking their currency with the royal emblem. Although this is not expected to slow counterfeiters down for long, the Alliance is looking into the possibility of enchanting their money in some capacity so that it is immediately recognizable.



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The Merchant Cities have a different mark on their currency, although they are generally happy to use Alliance coins. On the rare occasions that Bone-Wail trades, they barter.

Here is a breakdown of the currency system and approximate costs. It should be noted that Tasks are normally carried on a chain, and can be broken off to pay things when needed.

Providence Coins

Coin	Metal	Value	Appearance
Melian Task	Copper	base	3" circular rods
Ener Task	Bronze	5 copper	3" rectangular rod
Natlaw Task	Iron	10 bronze	Spherical beads
Ferida Task	Silver	20 iron	Tiny ring
Audra Task	Gold	10 silver	Circular talisman

BARTER

A tricky business this haggling; what one person considers a treasure beyond measure, others regard as trash. Barter is a system of trading items and favours. In a world where money is the domain of the upper castes, the most popular alternative is something everyone has done as a child, trade for it. Obviously barter is based on what items are up for trade and how valuable they are to the other person. An enchanted resin dagger would be greatly coveted by a member of the Fallen. It would be beneath an Eagle knight. So how does one go about detailing what the item's value is to the trader?

A general rule of thumb is this: "What you have to gain should at least be equal, if not greater, than what you have to lose."

The chart below is a simple example of what certain people would find valuable and what they would do for it. On the chart below there is a hierarchy of boons or favours that people would be willing to fulfil in order to obtain the example item listed.

Hierarchy of Boons

Barter

Throwing wedge
Herbal pack
Possible client information
Fresh meat
Location of Wayfarer rebel
Location of a Wayfarer cell
Location of a Blight Crow
Caravan supply route
Invitation to court function
Crystal Weapon
Audience with ruler of the city

Fallen Fortuned Pure

Minor Nothing Nothing
Medium Small Nothing
Small Large Minor
Large Small Nothing
Small Medium Medium
Small Medium Large
Medium Large Major
Nothing Small Nothing
Nothing Major Small
Major Major Large
Minor Major Large

NOTHING

"You want to sell me what? Look at the sign above your head child, I not only sell that same material, I have a hundred more varieties than you do. Now get outta my face before I teach you a lesson."

MINOR BOON

"Interesting. But I get the impression that you need this barter more than I do. What else can you do for me?"

SMALL BOON

"Alright, it's a nice piece, just the one I'm looking for too, but I ain't gonna raid a Green People encampment for this thing; not unless it can sing, dance, feed me and give me good sex all at the same time!"

MEDIUM BOON

"I've been watching this domicile for two months and now you tell me it was the wrong place? No, wait, I didn't mean to get angry. I still want your trade. I guess another few months of spying isn't too high a prize."

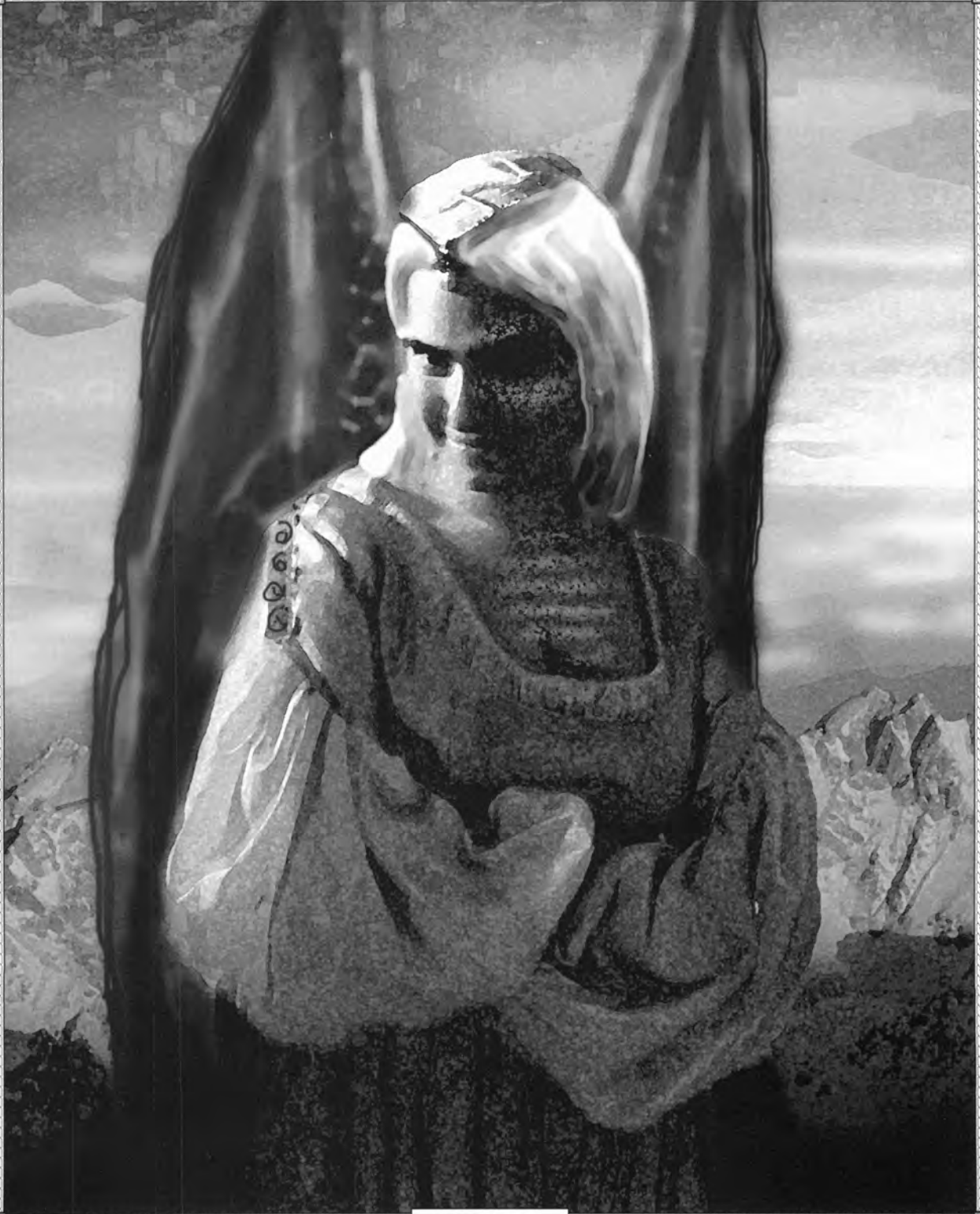
LARGE BOON

"As long as I don't have to go up against the White Crow, I'll trade anything else you want for this prize....What? Burn down a monastery? Well...Alright, but only because it's you."

MAJOR BOON

"Forget friends, forget family. Damn heaven and embrace hell, that's what I say. All the laws in the world are panes of glass ready to be shattered in the pursuit of this bauble. Command me, my life is a mere cherry pit until I get this trade."

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With angry words, and sterner stones, the people of my home greeted me. It was not my first parade in the streets of Cry-Star, but it was certainly the most violent. It was not possible for me to go, bound and scorned, through the streets of my city without recalling the words of Ko'rin:

*His warlike ways hath made him King, in honoured arms, he'll march the ring,
From gleaming spire to lesser keep, all glory's riches his to reap.
When peace hath come and warlike ways are relics of forgotten days,
They'll break his crown and cast him out, their fearful King now but a lout.*

His words could not have been truer, and I was unable to contain myself. As the people who once called me Regent and lord throw rocks and insults at me, I laughed. The mad roar of my voice caused some to skitter and hide, though they saw the chains that held me fast. Ko'rin wrote that poem for me, I realized then. Though I had recited it sadly with many fellow warriors over the years, drink in hand, I had thought its meaning only figurative. The King is forgotten and left behind, but surely, he is not actually cast down, I thought. Oh, but he is. With ignominy and basest rancour, they bid their fearful King farewell. It is not a figure of speech, nor a metaphor to warn of trusting too completely in the glamour of armaments and honour. It is a fact; when the cowards who cannot fight need the fighters no more, they will be rid of them for their sins.

They processed me through the city, bringing me to the central square where they would perform the first part of my execution; they would brand my face with the mark of exile and chop off my wings, sealing the wounds with pitch and vinegar.

I was hoisted from my platform onto the Vindicator's dais. He loomed tall before me, his black hood keeping his identity "secret," though I knew him well. It was I who had commissioned him years before. He was accused of murder, and faced the ultimate punishment himself when I offered him the post. I don't suppose he ever thanked me for saving his life, but thought me in fact wicked and terrible for putting him in such a dreadful position. It did not matter. Either way, he would end my life today...or so he thought.

The crowd cheered as he and his assistants marked me with a ward of fire. It was a searing pain, but I would not cry out. The Vindicator raised his blade and swiftly removed my left wing, spraying my blood on some in the crowd. They cried out in disgust and dismay, but still I was silent.

I knew what they did not. I had that very thing which will help a man to endure any torment - hope. I knew that my allies were soon to come, and that was all I needed to resist the urge to give them the joy of my cries. It was as the Vindicator was lifting his blade to remove my second wing that my salvation arrived. Those of the White Crow, disguised using Wird, suddenly appeared in the crowd hewing down those about them. One cleaved the Vindicator's head, felling him instantly.

I was weak, bleeding, and in need of speed, but a demonstration was necessary. I told one of my saviours to break the Glyph marking my right shoulder. I knew it to be the knot that held much of the captivating Wird in place. When he broke it, I called my power to me, breaking the other

Glyphs on my body and wreathing myself in black fire. On my own legs, I rose, speaking in a voice like thunder. "I curse you, the people of Cry-Star! Ten Score of your women shall bear fruitless seed, their children dead within their wombs! For a year and a day no child of the Pure shall be born to this city! All shall die, or be fallen! So say I, Jenobay!" With that, I hid myself with the shadow Wird and fled, nevermore to be seen in the land of my birth.





HISTORY OF PROVIDENCE

It should be remembered that Providence has an interior sun that pulses through cycles of night and day. While this is all right for marking the passage of days, there is no real method for marking either the hours, since the sun does

not travel across the horizon, or the months, since there are no seasons. The timekeeping methods used on Yas'Wail are vaguely remembered, although the significance behind the seasonal months no longer possesses any importance. This all helps in maintaining a correct time line on Providence. This is something that cannot truly be accomplished since the time within the original camps was not measured accurately.

The chronology of the history is imperfect at best, but accepted. It has been approximately two millennia since the exile began on Providence, although this value could be off by as much as a century. Since the liberation of the prison camps,

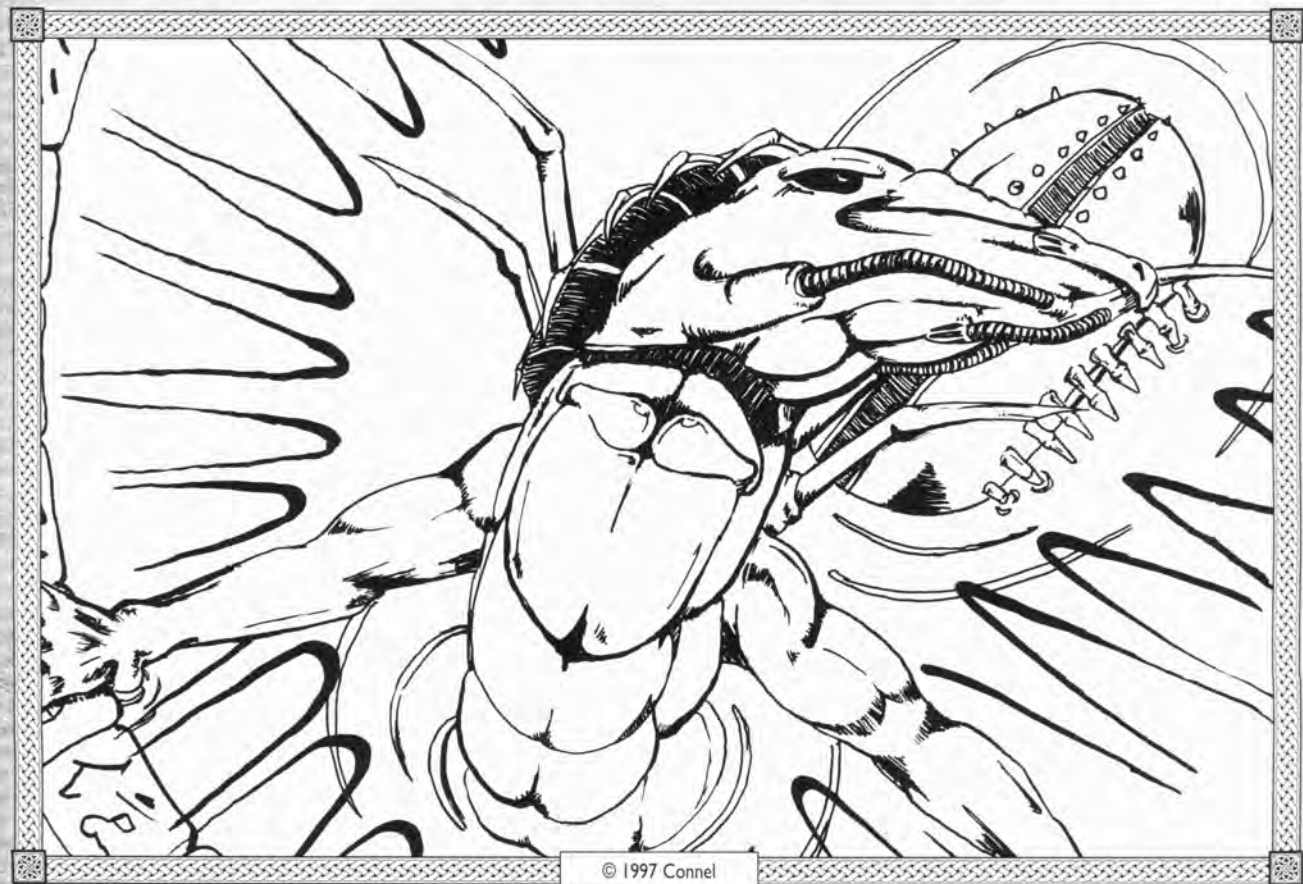
a more accurate measurement of the days has been made, and with the formation of the Alliance of the Kings, most cities operate using the same system. Only the Warden-run cities of Green-Deep and Bone-Wail use the old system, even though their chronology is believed to be equally flawed.

The time periods of this history are separated into three different eras: Beladane, the years on Yas'Wail; Carpothus Sieud, the period of imprisonment on Providence; and Etho Me'Dan, the years following the liberation. The Wardens are still set on the Carpothus Sieud calendar.

THE GRAND WAR

BELADANE, 10TH MILLENNIA BEFORE THE EXILE

The history of one world begins within the domain of another. In a distant place called Yas'Wail, the populace was involved in a terrible war. A race of creatures calling themselves the Elothorin came from the very heavens and began claiming the world as their own. While they marauded and destroyed with great abandon, annihilating cities, lands and entire kingdoms with their powers, the kings and queens



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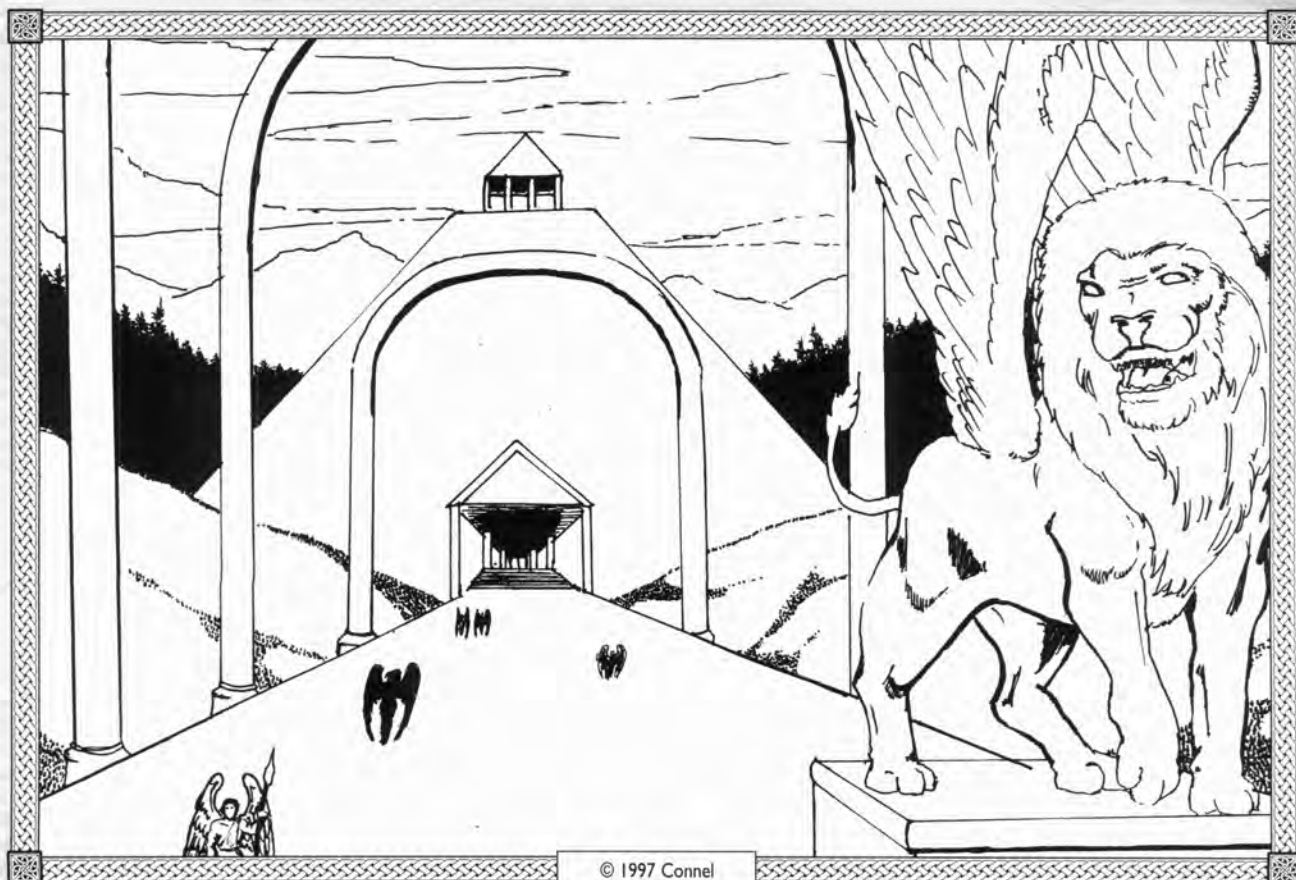
of Yas'Wail were not without their own resources. They manipulated the magic of the four elements known as the Wird, and though it was a paltry gift compared to the might of the Elothorin, it was still one that blunted the potential for outright massacre.

Near the end of the devastating invasion, when the darkest hours had settled upon Yas'Wail, only a few hundred thousand survivors remained to defend the destroyed cities. Several million had already perished, taking with them the last members of Troupial Falcon, Vulture, Condor, Owl and Peacock. The remaining survivors were the strongest and most powerful members of society.

During the war against the Elothorin, it was discovered that "they" were in fact one creature that possessed the ability to shatter its soul into a multitude of facets and bequeath its power to lesser creatures. With this discovery came the realization that every avatar death merely released the soul back to another creature. Every victory against the Elothorin was in fact concentrating its power. The war would have to be fought in a different fashion, in a more roundabout way.

The remaining spell casters of the world, known as Blight Crows, Wird Weavers and Wylders, devised a plan. They created several stable gateways, one-way portals to another world. They reasoned that rather than destroy their enemies, which in fact did nothing, they could scatter the avatars through the various gates, weakening the Elothorin itself. The plan proved successful. Avatars were lured through the portals, and vanished to another world far from the whole, while the remainder showed increasing signs of weakness and lethargy. The Yas'Wailians pushed onward, trapping the smaller, easier prey and eroding the power base of the larger creatures.

The population of Yas'Wail had dropped down to a few thousand, lessened in number, but growing in spirit. Eventually, they succeeded in trapping some of the more powerful avatars, called Beast-Gods, nearly weakening the Elothorin to ruin. It had no choice but to enter the portals in order to secure its wayward shards, and it did not reemerge. The last of the Elothorin's avatars vanished that victorious morning.



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REBUILDING THE WORLD

BELADANE, 9TH - 0 MILLENNIA BEFORE THE EXILE

Wars are the birthing grounds of legends, but unfortunately, they also breed tyrants. The Wird-casters who survived to see the end of the war were regarded as gods. In fact, early legends tell of their ascension into divinity as they took the place of the old deities. Wird did not make them immortal, merely long-lived. Wird did not make them gods, merely more powerful than anyone else dreamed possible. In any event, they came to be regarded as the rightful rulers of the world they saved. The populace built Temple-cities in their honour and bred children to create more worshippers for the divine ones.

To further protect themselves, all of Yas'Wail's monsters were tossed through the portals to share the exiled fate of the Elothorin. As a matter of fact, all those found guilty of crimes against the ruling gods were similarly punished. The portals and the mysterious world beyond it became Yas'Wail's version of hell, a dumping ground of living refuse. The populace was frightened into compliance.

As Yas'Wail climbed out from the pit of war, her people multiplied over the next several millennia. While the gods remained in power, they secluded themselves away from the populace and delegated king-priests to rule in their stead. The holy royalty were taught Wird, while the regular populace was guided and ruled like a race of children.

Wird was the sword of the kings and the yolk of the peasantry. From the first sentient thought to the day of the Great Revolution, Wird had been the primary catalyst for all the discoveries and workings of the world. It was knowledge that was privy only to the ruling elite, and remained so for countless millennia following the war. Basic technology stagnated, for why learn to forge metal when crystals and Wird-hardened resin were lighter, if not more durable than bronze and iron? Yas'Wailians, in essence, had come to rely on Wird as their crutch.

This way of living produced a caste-based system in society, harshly unyielding and cruel in its implementation. The ruling castes, as representatives of the gods, were just in all their actions, including rape and murder, while the lower castes were treated no better than cattle. By any standards, the lower slave and serving classes were mere shadows of their lords' greatness, and therefore subject to their whimsy. Destiny believed otherwise, however, and the winds of change brought forth new seeds of thought.

THE CATALYST

BELADANE, 7 YEARS BEFORE THE EXILE

The revolution began as a war of ideals. A liberal ideology was born from the fruits of religion. Through the priests, the gods made an announcement claiming equality for all. The time for the Kings had long passed according to some gods, and Yas'Wail needed a new era in which to flourish. This revelation took firm root in the lower echelons of society, and triggered a religious pogrom by the rulers, who suddenly turned against their supposedly divine benefactors. The possibility of a revolution emerged.

Had it remained a peasant revolution, the rebellion would have been over within a matter of days with the power structure of the caste system intact. The war, however, became a battle over politics and beliefs. Higher caste families looked upon the decree of the gods as just, and sided with the peasants. Other families saw their opportunity to usurp the more powerful Chapters (alliances of families) and sided with the rebellion. The battle swiftly degenerated as it went past the borders of Houses, and split entire families apart.

The rebels, now backed by the Wird magic of higher-caste sympathizers and a fair portion of the priest-caste, were able to fight a winning battle against their former masters. The war of days suddenly became the war of months.



THE GREAT REVOLUTION

BELADANE, 5 YEARS BEFORE THE EXILE

Cities, castes, Troupials and kingdoms were torn apart by opposing factions. Pitched magical battles fought within the span of a few easy seconds razed several kingdoms and killed hundreds. The gods of Yas'Wail were not pleased with the war, but rather than being a united force, they were as divided as their worshippers. Some believed that their time as rulers of the world had come to an end, and that they should depart. Other deities refused to relinquish their hold over society, and further aggravated the situation. Finally, when acting through agents and using diplomacy failed to end the conflict, the gods intervened directly. They emerged from their sky-fortresses and took position at the heads of the great armies. Unfortunately, they mostly balanced each other's influence. The war of months suddenly became the war of years.

The conflict decimated cities, tore through the ranks of the participants, and turned a once beautiful world into a blackened carcass. Eventually, the old order won the war. The rebels had lost their bid for freedom, as well as their faith when it became clear that Yas'Wail's gods were no more than



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potent Wird-casters, every bit as mortal as their worshippers. The Great Revolution was a crushing loss, both philosophically and emotionally.

My Last Legacy

If this remains my only legacy, then so be it. I leave these words behind to the generations who will carry our names so that they never forget what we saw or what we endured; miles of prisoners, lined up like dogs and treated like them. We were stripped even of our clothing as we drew ever closer to the gate; families separated from mates and offspring, and children falling to starvation at the side of the road. Finally, after all this degradation, we were led into a massive circle at least half-a-mile in diameter. The walls of the gate, several stories high, surrounded us with ominous quiet before the hum began. So deep was its resonance that several of the elderly lost their teeth. That did not concern us as much when the earth turned to mud and we fell into the quicksand with a unified scream. After that, I can remember almost drowning before I blacked out. We awoke later on Providence. Yas'Wail was left behind, our home forbidden to us like a place of legend.

THE EXILE

BELADANE, 0 YEARS BEFORE THE EXILE

Despite the completion of the war, nothing had been accomplished. Once fertile lands were now coated with a topsoil of ash and cinder; cities were skeletons of their former glory and the overtaxed families now had to contend with thousands of rebel prisoners. Killing all of the captured rebels was considered, but some families argued that it would create more martyrs for future rebellions to emulate. Besides, in truth, none of the Troupials could bring themselves to slaughter their own people. Eventually it was agreed to exile the prisoners through the portals, guarded by families of Wardens.

It took several months. Tens-of-thousands of people, including priests, peasants, members of the rebel families and several so-called "gods", all stripped of any power, were herded through the gates.



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PROVIDENCE

CARPOTHUS SIEUD, YEAR 0 - 250 C.S.

The exiles found themselves marooned within a hollow world, where the walls, floors and ceiling were all earth, water and jungle. There was no way in or out of this womb, save for the gates that only the Wardens knew how to use. The portals had transported prisoners into various locations in the valley region known as the Exodus Plains, under the auspices of Warden families. Stripped of their Wird powers, the prisoners were forced to construct makeshift shantytowns to live in.

Although the power of the Wardens was complete and pervasive, they began acting suspiciously in the year following their arrival. Unbeknownst to all, the gates which brought them here closed up after several months, cutting Providence off from Yas'Wail. The Wardens, who were sent here with a spell to return them back through the now-sealed gates, believed that they had been betrayed and abandoned. Rather than admit this to the exiles, however, and lose what control they were maintaining, the Wardens continued with their duties.

The Days of Imprisonment

The first thing that I noticed about Providence was the heat that smothered you like a hot damp cloth across your face. Many prisoners died in that first year from the warmth of the unforgiving jungle. More prisoners committed suicide, frustrated by their inability to take to the higher skies and fan themselves with the onrushing wind. We truly believed we were in the hell mentioned by our traitorous religion, but we learned to adapt to the harsh climate just the same.

Our wings inscribed with runes of torture should we try to fly, we were forced to work alongside accursed land-beasts in constructing mud-bomes, pulling down trees and tilling the fields for meagre scraps of food. All the while, guardians made of earth watched us with unblinking eyes filled with dirt and grit. Without shoes, our wives trudged through open trenches of sewage; without Wird to aid us, our children died from various contagions brought on through insect stings; without hope, our hearts surrendered easily to the indignities heaped upon us. We taught our children not to cry lest the entire family taste the whip, and we were taught that "yes master" was the only proper response to any question.



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The various prison camps were built within the Exodus Plains. A line of mountains and shoreline allowed open egress to the rest of the world through one location alone. Eventually some colonies moved beyond the protected pocket into the harsher world outside; most, however, preferred to remain within a few weeks travel of one another.

So the penal colonies grew, kept in line by elemental guards, while the Wardens themselves adopted a more isolationist attitude and remained hidden within their newly constructed keeps. Each successive generation of exiles grew up under these conditions, prisoners of invisible Wardens and fiercely independent of any religion (which had betrayed them). This remained the status quo for several centuries, with each new generation becoming less convinced that they were, in fact, prisoners.

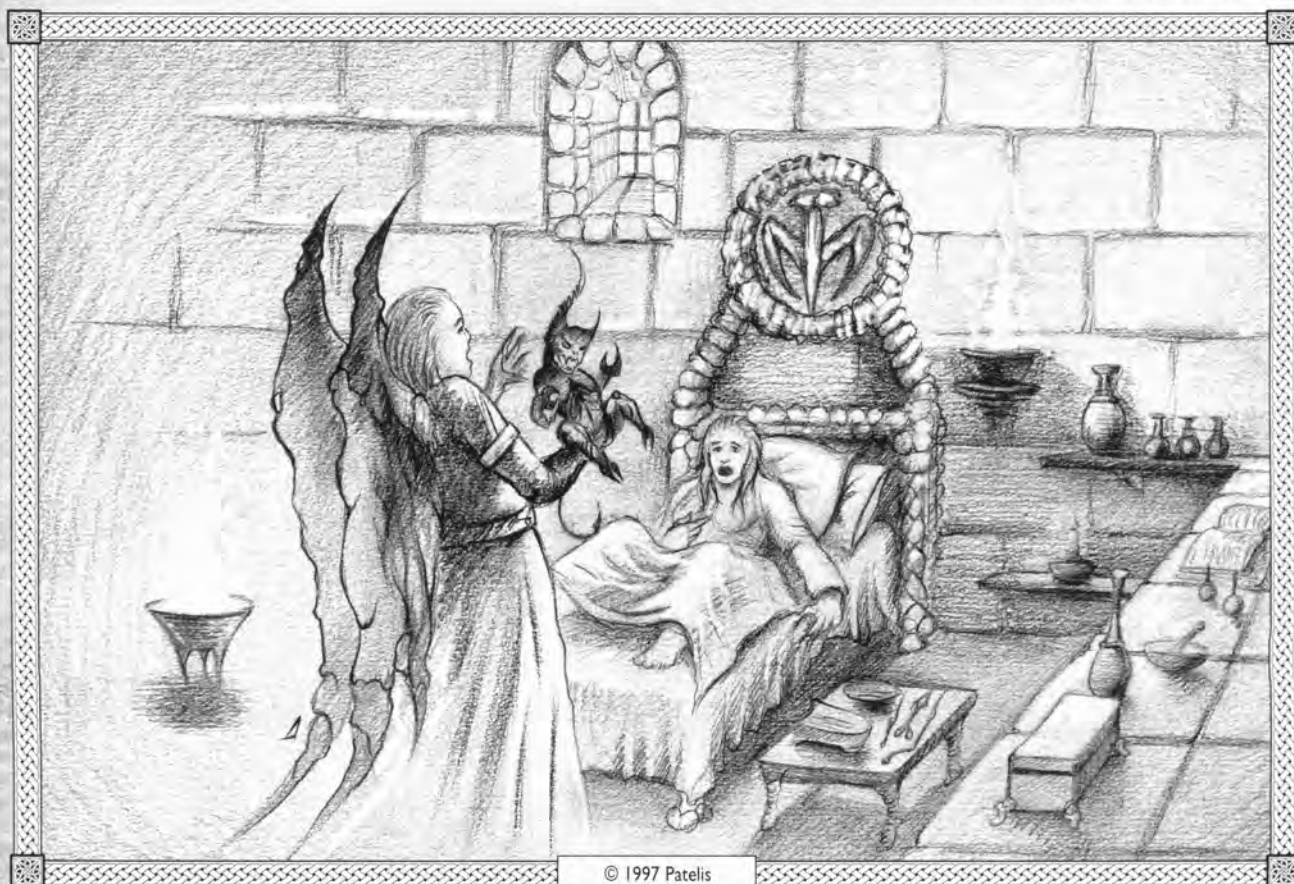
BIRTH OF MONSTERS

CARPOTHUS SIEUD, YEAR 250 - 400 C.S.

Paranoia was rife within the hierarchy of the Wardens. Feeling betrayed by the closure of the gates, they began mistrusting one another, until many completely isolated themselves from the other Wardens. Former alliances and agreements fell by the wayside and the Warden Houses now took to fraternizing with members of their immediate circle. This attitude led to the acceptance of inbreeding. It was considered dangerous to breed with prisoners because it might reawaken their ability to manipulate the Wird. After several decades the end result was the birth of deviants.

If inbreeding had been the only influence on deviants, then they may not have been dangerous, but the monsters being born were further twisted by their exposure to the Wird. At first, these newborn creatures were quickly and quietly killed, but soon more and more were allowed to live and grow.

Providence's first monsters were being born. Rumours began to trickle in from escaped prisoners. They told stories involving deviant-run camps, the slaughter of entire households and colonies, and hideous fiends running amuck in the wilderness. House Andracka was the first to act.



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The Warden Degenerates

"It has been nearly three centuries since we left Yas'Wail, the birth place of my ancestors. Although they long died cursing a false religion that betrayed them, I find myself praying to the very gods they abandoned. I have no other recourse, for what I have seen demands prayer, what I have seen could be the herald of tremendous misfortune to come.

Lady Penalla, daughter to Warden Azamara Waslanda and his wife (and daughter) Shikara, gave birth to a monstrous child. I was aghast as I pulled the beast from her, its tiny claws flailing, its mouth filled with fangs. Penalla died from the horrible wounds it inflicted as she was giving birth, but mad Azamara clutched the child to his breast as though it were his last precious treasure. I bit my tongue, for I knew that had I not, Azamara would have done so for me.

I should have known this was to come, all the inbreeding between father and daughter, mother and son could not have sired strong children. We saw the first signs generations ago and ignored them; the evidence of lunacy, the paranoia and birth defects that we were required to cover up with Wird. Penalla herself possessed the form of a woman, but the thoughts of a child, the legacy of mating family members together.

This is the first deviant I have assisted in bringing into this world, but not the first I have heard of. These monstrosities are being born everywhere, to all families. The years of marrying inside the family to protect the purity of the Houses and their respective Chapters created children whose minds were addled. It did not stop there. The malformations, no longer content to rest within the mind, spread like contagion to the rest of the body. The deviants are now born disfigured, twisted like a soft tree spun upon itself in the wind. Their intelligence is cunning, an animal's instinct, and some possess bodies which are hardened with an almost insect-like shell. I have heard of others with multiple limbs, natural weaponry such as fangs and claws, or some that even appear to be a jumble of body parts.

Whether I am believed or if it all comes to naught, I fear that we are seeing the end of our people. The legacy we leave behind is one of monsters, deviants and other unfathomable horrors. A fitting end I presume, one that would be almost poetic if the world still believed in gods.

**Eilido, Personal Chirurgeon to Lady Penalla,
Daughter to Warden Azamara Waslanda**

THE EMANCIPATION

ETHO ME'DAN, YEAR 0 E.MD.

One House assigned as Wardens to Providence was House Andracka of the Sallusturm Chapter. As Wardens of the Cry-Star colony, they treated their prisoners fairly. Of all of the Wardens, only they bred with the exiles and kept their gene pool relatively clean. When the rumours of monsters began to surface from other colonies, they realized that the charade had been carried along long enough and, damn the repercussions, they would be the first to free their prisoners.

The Emancipation began with the liberation of House Andracka's own Cry-Star colony. Those prisoners with potential were taught the ways of Wird, while messengers were sent out to encourage other colonies to join the initiative. The prison camp was swiftly turned into a fortress. Although most of the messengers did not return, the ones that did reported minor skirmishes in some penal colonies and the liberation of nearby Cliff-Spider, another colony trying to free itself of its inbred monsters. Emissaries were exchanged and the first contact between two Houses was re-established after a century of separation.

THE WAR OF THE HOUSES

ETHO ME'DAN, YEARS 1-12 E.MD.

Cliff-Spider and Cry-Star rapidly became the gathering spots for Free Tribes, the descendants of prisoners who had escaped the Penal Colonies over the last two centuries and lived in the jungles. Although a majority of the Free Tribes were distrustful of the Wardens and remained hidden, some ventured to the two cities to be reunited with relatives after centuries of separation. This time of joy, however, was a short-lived blessing.

The prison colonies of Water-Sister and Green-Deep were beginning to contact the other outposts when the news of Cliff-Spider's and Cry-Star's liberation caused a revolt. Limited success in quelling the insurrection forged the Trinity Alliance between these two colonies and Bone-Wail, the second largest prison camp next to Cry-Star. Unable to use their prisoners as troops, however, the Wardens of the Trinity Alliance were forced to mutate local wildlife into monsters under their control. These creatures, termed the Wird Hounds, for their ability to track down users of Wird and feed upon its magic, were then sent against the two free cities. The creatures, however, immediately bolted and ran for the spire walls. Much to the astonishment of the Trinity Wardens, they remained there howling and snarling at the sun, refusing to budge an inch. The Wird Hounds would have

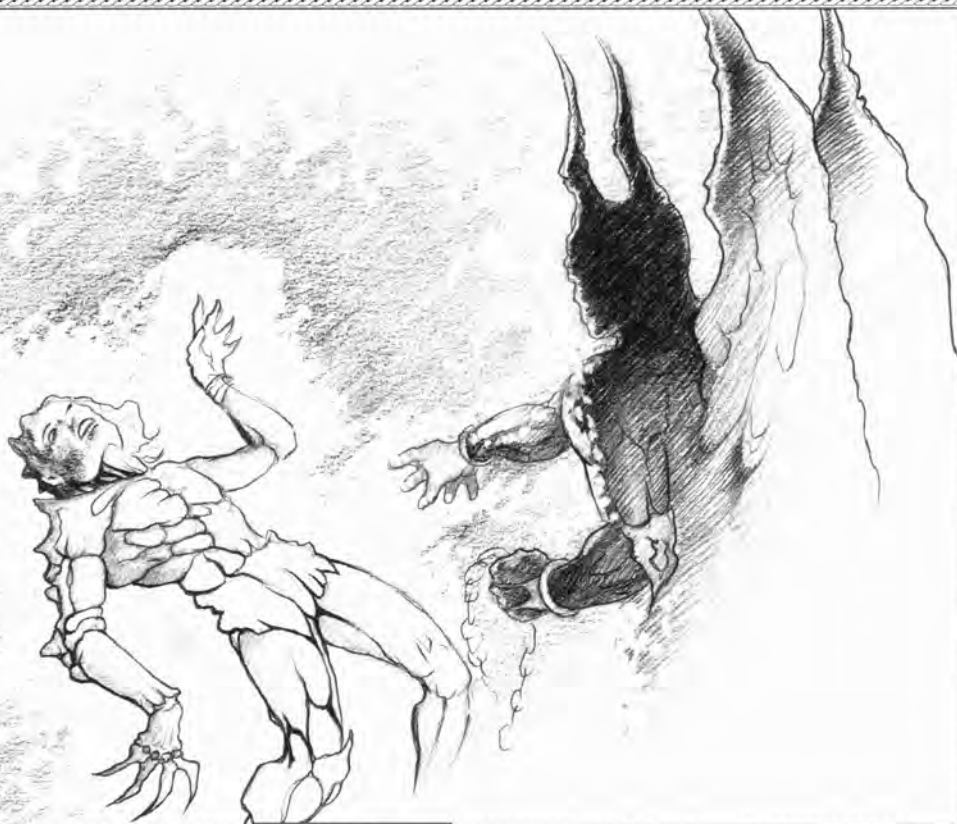
been destroyed except for the considerable time and effort it would have taken. The Wardens turned their attention towards altering their own prisoners.

Because of the aborted attack on Cry-Star and Cliff-Spider, the two free cities began to amass their forces and train their troops for the inevitable battle. The Trinity Alliance, in the meanwhile, created Ravagers, prisoners altered by Wird and bound to the Wardens. It was then that they discovered what had happened to their Wird Hounds. Able to track down users of Wird as well, the Ravagers told the Wardens that they sensed tremendous sources of Wird dormant within the spires and the sun itself. The scouts sent to investigate this however, never returned, leaving the Wardens to ponder this quandary for another time. The Ravagers were released against the free cities.

The Ravagers proved to be potent weapons. Although they were too few to actually reclaim the two cities, Cry-Star was badly damaged by the hit-and-run tactics of their adversaries, and only the former Wardens were trained enough to repulse the attacks. Cliff-Spider, on the other hand, fared rather well within the spire they called home. Unable to ascertain the location of the nomadic Ravagers, the families of the free cities chose to attack their problem at the source.

Using their Free-Tribe allies, the Free Cities sent spies to infiltrate the Bone-Wail, Water-Sister and Green-Deep colonies. Their mission was to begin seeding the notion of rebellion. Faced with this growing insurrection, the Trinity Wardens recalled their Ravagers to deal with what was becoming a conflict spiralling out of control. The appearance of the Ravagers sparked full-out rebellions in all three camps and caused the deaths of many exiles. The effort was worth it, however. The Free-Tribes had managed to convince their wilderness brethren to assist in the liberation of the three colonies, and they quickly joined a fight backed by the ex-Wardens and the new Wylders — practitioners of Wird — from Cry-Star and Cliff-Spider.

Water-Sister and Green-Deep fell, though the Ravagers and Warden family of Coblaskan from Green-Deep and Connix from Water-Sister managed to escape to Bone-Wail, reinforcing its Wird defenses. The Free Cities were now four strong and twice as large, but their enemies had increased as well. The Red-Mud and Stone-Tree colonies, afraid of losing power, joined Bone-Wail. Rather than take an aggressive stance, however, the new Trinity bolstered their defenses and prepared for the eventuality of siege.



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THE NEW GATES AND THE ELOTHORIN

ETHO ME'DAN, YEARS 13-16 E.MD.

Between the New Trinity and the Free-City Alliance, seven penal settlements were now known. This left at least five colonies unaccounted for and the need for support sparked a race to uncover the location of these remaining outposts. Of the dozens of scout groups sent out from both sides, less than ten men and women returned safely to their settlements. They had discovered the following:

1) All the prisoners within the Weeping-Rock colony had either escaped or been slaughtered. The outpost was now haunted by the completely degenerated but powerful monsters that were once the Warden family of Waslanda. The city has never been reclaimed.

2) At least two massive stone rings, measuring several miles in diameter, had been found hidden by the jungle in completely different regions. The descriptions did not match the legendary gates that had originally brought the exiles to Providence; the original gates had been lost after the Wardens moved away from their locations. Found within the rings were tracks of some gigantic multi-legged creature that dwarfed any known animal.

3) The Snake-Limb and Leaf-Roof colonies had been uncovered practically side by side, within a week's travel of one another. Both outposts were heavily damaged, but were still defended by vigilant Wardens and prisoners who had united together. While they were interested in establishing contact with the other colonies, they would not get involved in the War of the Houses.

They claimed that a far graver problem was facing the exiles of Providence, a problem they claimed was an Elothorin Avatar. Although only one had been encountered, the creature was a large, fast flight-capable serpent who was intelligent and powerful enough to manipulate the powers of Wird better than the Wardens could. It had only attacked the two colonies once, but that was enough to kill hundreds in that one onslaught. They were expecting a second attack soon.

4) The colonies of Sun-Spar and Wild-Grove were not in their original locations. The maps leading to them were inaccurate. Several centuries later, the fate of these two colonies still remains a mystery, though some Free-Tribes speak of a mobile city that moves slowly through the jungle atop the canopy of trees.

Unfortunately, beyond that, the exploration teams revealed little of the world beyond the Exodus Plains. Any plans to investigate the claims that the Elothorin was still active here would have to be suspended until a truce was formed between the existing Warden Houses and the Free-City Alliance, or a resolution to the escalating aggression arrived.



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WAR'S END

ETHO ME'DAN, YEARS 16-45 E.M.D.

The standoff between the two factions proved to be long running, nearly 30 years of uneasy truces broken by sporadic skirmishes. An all-out assault against any city was considered foolish, for Bone-Wail was well-fortified within a forest of petrified trees, Cliff-Spider was rooted within her spire, and Stone-Tree was situated within a labyrinth of well-defended mountain corridors. Water-Sister, Red-Mud and Cry-Star, all lake shore cities, constantly sent water-elementals against one another. While the battles were not evident on the surface, beneath the lake water was said to be a maelstrom of riptides as dangerous as shards of glass in a whirlpool.

Eventually, Stone-Tree, aware that it could not continue pressing the prisoners beneath the thumbscrews of Wird, began granting them limited freedom. In essence, they went from being a prison colony to a dictatorship. Bone-Wail accepted this decision in a fashion that befitted their nature; they launched the Ravagers against their former allies. Cliff-Spider immediately sent troops to assist beleaguered Stone-Tree, leaving itself vulnerable to attack. Red Mud and Bone-

Wail launched a full counteroffensive, using new creatures called Ward-Dogs (who possessed the ability to absorb Wird and redirect its flow), against Cry-Star and Cliff-Spider. In the heat of the siege, Water-Sister and Cry-Star launched a full barrage of water-elementals at Red-Mud. Red-Mud vanished beneath a towering avalanche of water and mud, killing prisoners and Wardens alike. The war had reached its bloody climax and ended in an dissatisfying stalemate.

Bone-Wail now controlled Stone-Tree, but had lost Red-Mud and many competent water-Wylders. The two remaining Warden cities were still strong, but their strength rested within their defensive posture. The Ravagers and Ward-Dogs were potent weapons, but not enough to win wars with. On the other hand Cry-Star, Cliff-Spider, Green-Deep and Water-Sister were all badly damaged from the recent fighting. Independently, they represented weak targets, but as mutual allies, they were still a strong front. Bone-Wail and Stone-Tree were not strong enough to deal with the Free Cities united forces.

It all finally came down to the Truce of Exodus, signed upon the plains of the same name in 47 Etho Me'Dan. The Alliance of Free-Cities and the Wardens agreed to a



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nonaggression pact for a minimum of a decade, at which time the truce could be sanctioned once more for another ten years. Surprisingly, the truce held up for several centuries, despite incidents of minor "misunderstandings." Although the Truce of Exodus has not been sanctioned for the last two centuries, there has only been the threat of war over the last five years.

THE INTERIM MILLENNIA ETHO ME'DAN, YEARS 47-562 E.M.D.

This was not the golden age that most had hoped for, but it was still a time better than most. Compared to prior escalations of hostility and centuries of imprisonment, it was a time of celebration.

Red-Mud, wiped away in a moment of anger, was mourned for the loss of several hundred prisoners. The survivors, liberated by Cry-Star, built the city of Haak San Bazaa upon the shores of the old city. Despite the Alliance of Free-Cities' attempt to help establish and protect the fledgling colony, she refused. Many suspect it was mostly due to lingering resentment over the tidal wave caused by Water-

Sister and Cry-Star, and it was for this reason that few demanded Haak San Bazaa join the Alliance. She became the first independent city, and has remained as such.

Snake-Limb and Leaf-Roof, having renamed themselves Bastion and Sun Guard, emerged from their isolation to join the Alliance of Free Cities. The great Elothorin Avatar that initially attacked them failed to reappear a second time. The alliance between the prisoners and the Wardens held and it was decided to liberate both cities. With the appearance of these former colonies, valuable insight and new information was gained concerning the outlying areas of the jungle.

Stone-Tree was eventually abandoned following a massive prisoner break out. At the cost of hundreds of lives, the regional Ravagers and Ward-Dogs were finally overwhelmed, allowing the remaining three thousand prisoners to escape. Of these, less than one thousand finally reached the safety of Cliff-Spider; the remaining two-thirds had died, been lost or recaptured during the trek.

Bone-Wail was the only remaining Warden city, but she grew into a community far larger than Cliff-Spider and Cry-Star put together. Her isolation hardened her into a fortress of petrified trees and mountain-high walls.



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Negotiations, alliances and trading between the various city-states began. A ruling hierarchy that would later standardize the caste system was initiated. The cultural advancement of the populace began, ushering in an era of music, art and dance that became specific to the Yas'Wailians and their experiences on Providence. For the first time, the notion that society was no longer exiled and tied intrinsically to the home world was realized. Rather than regarding Providence as a prison world, it was seen as home.

became known, disliked the Yas'Wailians, and the reason why no true alliances could ever be forged.

Despite this animosity, Yas'Wailians began to learn more about their bubble-world from the Serpenkine, including the fact that the sun and the jungle were created by the Elothorin. It seems that it had not entirely regained all the lost portions of its soul from the Grand War, and had left this world to find what was lost. Before leaving, it created the jungle and sun so that its Avatars could survive while it was gone. The other creatures and humanoids that had been exiled here during the rule of the priest-kings, had adapted over the centuries into forms more accustomed to living within the jungle.

EXPLORATION INTO THE DEEP

ETHO ME'DAN, YEARS 47-562 E.M.D.

The Deep proved to be an enigma that refused to surrender her secrets easily. Explorers, seeking to chisel their name upon history's facade, entered the domains of the unknown jungles and vanished like hot burning embers in the night wind. The number of thrill seekers grew, as did the growing roster of missing. Eventually the law of averages came into play, and a few ragged explorers returned from the permanent nightscape of the Deep. They told many stories and each one ended with regret at having ventured there in the first place.

New creatures, flora and fauna were recorded in the world beyond the Exodus Plains, and for everyone that was mentioned, there were countless others who evaded detection, or belied description. The domain beneath and within the jungle canopy of Providence was proving to be a very dangerous place, filled with creatures that did not care for the former exiles. Two different tribes of humanoid beings had been discovered, bearing very few similarities to the winged folk of Yas'Wail. Calling themselves the Swarm Dancers — a race of insect-like humans — and the Serpenkine — serpent-humanoids — they met attempts at contact with outright hostility. They also manipulated Wird, making them very difficult targets to overwhelm and conquer. Their knowledge of the jungle made them even more dangerous enemies. The two tribes were left in peace.

Later, Bentah Shahr, a Wird Weaver explorer from Cliff-Spider, managed to establish contact with the Serpenkine, and made a startling discovery. The Serpenkine and Swarm Dancers were descendants of the unwanted rabble exiled from Providence well before the last revolution. Having lived in this world for several millennia prior to the prison colonies, they adapted and evolved throughout the generations; their new forms allowed them to coexist with their immediate environment. They knew their ancestors were from another world, but rejected all knowledge or interest in their past, just as their world had turned their backs on them. It was for this reason the Lost Tribes, as they

BLOOD-SPORE CONTAGION

ETHO ME'DAN, YEAR 690 E.M.D.

One of the greatest threats that the city-states faced was the pox known as the Blood-Spore Contagion. Caravan routes had been spreading, cutting paths through the jungles with little concern for what lay hidden beneath. One such group of merchants tried to hop across the Pendulum Islands within Crysarius Sea in the hopes of discovering a shorter path between Haak San Bazaa and Cry-Star. What they did was allow their pack animals, known as Bawk-Sha, to pick up plant spores on one of the islands. The Bawk-Sha possessed a thick skin, preventing the thorny seeds from drawing blood, but once handlers in Cry-Star tried grooming the animals, they were infected.

The powder-like Blood-Spores use their thorns to attach themselves to a host in order to pierce the skin and draw blood. As they feed in this manner, the victim begins scratching the annoying "rash," thereby spreading the spores out over a larger area and introducing them into the circulatory system through the wounds. Eventually, the spores grow to the size of grains that cannot be removed unless the skin is scraped or burnt off. In the meanwhile, the maturing spores inject more spores into the blood stream. The process begins again, but this time within the circulatory system of the victim. The spores feed off the blood and excrete a toxin that slowly shuts down internal organs, and blocks the flow of blood to various parts of the body as spore colonies grow within capillaries, veins and arteries. Eventually, the victim begins coughing as the irritation reaches his throat. The spittle generated contains clusters of spores that are capable of infecting whomever has been coughed upon.

The primary distress facing the physicians of the time was not how to cure the victims, for Wird was capable of destroying the disease, but how to treat the hundreds infected. Already, a large part of the populace of Cry-Star

was stricken before anyone finally realized the cause, and reports were surfacing in Cliff-Spider of traders who were spreading the disease throughout the spire-community.

Fortunately for Cliff-Spider, the Blood-Spore Contagion and its symptoms had already been identified, and measures to isolate the infected members of society in order to cure them were successfully carried out. For Cry-Star, however, these measures were almost too late. Members of society who were not infected were kept away from the ailing, while Wird Weavers plied their healing arts to cure the rest. Their exhaustive efforts saved a city, but well over 2,700 lives were claimed before the plague was stopped.

Since then, more precautions have been taken when exploring the wilderness, but they are still not enough to prevent occasional outbreaks of new diseases or another bout of Blood-Spore Contagion. Although none of the subsequent infestations have ever reached the severity of the Cry-Star incident (thanks mostly to the vigilant efforts of the Wird Weavers), each new appearance somehow manages to claim more victims. Recently, more resistant strains of the Blood-Spores have made appearances, but none have proved completely immune to the healing arts of Wird, at least not yet.

Growth of Cities

By the time most of the prison camps had been liberated, the estimated population of freed prisoners was close to four million. Within a year, this increased dramatically in the wake of the liberation baby-boom, a period of great optimism. Following the Blood-Spore contagion, it was realized that some of the cities were becoming cramped. The population of Cry-Star and Cliff-Spider alone had jumped by several tens-of-thousands. It was estimated that the population had surpassed the six million mark, with no signs of slowing.

Later, following the formation of the Alliance of Kings, a great expansion project pushed the borders of the cities outward, removed the last vestiges of the prison camps, and reinforced their defenses. Using potent Wird Weavers and Wylders to push the projects ahead, the tasks were finally finished after five years. Each city was large enough for the current population, plus an additional million. That limit was exceeded by the time the Lost Wars rolled around.



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THE BIRTH OF SHARDS

ETHO ME'DAN, YEARS 748-1091 E.MD.

Growing ever wiser to the threats of the Deep, exploration continued, albeit more cautiously. The immediate areas surrounding the Exodus Plains were more thoroughly explored and mapped, allowing settlements to grow beyond the walled cities that now contained several million people each. The lure of hard but tranquil work attracted many settlers to cultivate and harness the Exodus Plains and the immediate borders around them. Still, the greater threat of the world beyond, especially in the face of the Lost Tribes and the emerging Elothorin Avatars, curtailed any serious exploration. This way of thinking kept many Yas'Wailians confined to the Exodus Plains for several more centuries.

Contact with the Lost Tribes was rare, and very few avatars had been encountered. While most people did not doubt that the Deep still possessed these dangers, the severity of them was cast in doubt. Eventually, the desire to visit the other regions on the opposite side of the world was too great a temptation to contain. Exploration parties once again set forth from the various city-states (except for Bone-Wail, which had remained deceptively quiet over the last few

centuries) to explore the world of Providence. Once again it proved to be a frightening reminder of the true nature of the enclosed domain.

A new Lost Tribe was the first discovery made in the Pincer Swamp region. The Green People, as they referred to themselves, had achieved a symbiotic relation with the plant life of Providence. Plants, vines and moss provided the Green People with armour and an exterior circulatory system that allowed them to breathe underwater. They served as pollination hosts, while the plants protected them with needler bulbs and pollen poisons. In essence, they controlled the forest to a degree that a Wird Weaver could never do, for they had partially become a part of the forest. While the Serpenkine proved to be the least likely to try and kill Yas'Wailians, the Green People were just the opposite. Every encounter ended in a brutal, but decisive victory for this Lost Tribe. All attempts at negotiation failed due to a complete lack of communication. The entire region was left alone, too hostile and too dangerous to risk passage.

Another major discovery was that of a potent Elothorin Avatar in 1091 E.MD., the one responsible for terrorizing Snake-Limb (now Bastion) and Leaf-Roof (now Sun Guard).



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The Arrival of Sky-Spite

"There was argument as to whether the waning pulse of the sun produced the hue of orange that soaked the sky, or if it was the battle that coloured the eyes of men and women that day. Sky-Spite, a long black spine of muscle, sinew and rage, turned endlessly upon itself, releasing bolts of iridescent WIRD upon the already fractured land below. Tiny flyers, winged and gliders, spiralled around it like angry gnats unleashing bolt after bolt of elemental fury, seemingly for naught.

Occasionally Sky-Spite claimed an unfortunate life with a snap of its head and lightning-quick bite, but it mostly ignored the WIRD being woven to stop it. Suddenly, and I do remember the moment well, Epiphany struck the first Shard. A ball of light exploded from one of the flyers, his eyes seemingly scoured out by the stream of light that erupted from within his skull. He hovered there a moment, his wings resting silently in the air, his form held aloft by a glowing nimbus that emblazoned his form against the dying sun. Suddenly a javelin of light appeared in his hand, and though dazed, he dashed it against the flanks of Sky-Spite. The creature bellowed with a voice that soothed mountains, and turned his attention to the new distraction. Another javelin was dashed against the brow of the avatar, splintering into a million embers of cracked light. Sky-Spite was still up, but seemingly confused. It curved upon itself once, unleashing a wave of power that destroyed the first two flyers in its path. And though they fell to ground, charred and smoking, the light-bearer remained aloft, unharmed within his nimbus.

Elsewhere, Epiphany struck again and a second flyer was immersed within the embrace of her own power. Her skin turned the colour of smoky quartz, and she fired shards of crystals that deftly cut through the hide of Sky-Spite.

The battle now raged on full as the two blessed flyers led a counterattack against the avatar. Sky-Spite now turned end over end trying to contend with its multiple foes. And while it seemed to be falling to the blows being landed against it, it continued fighting, slaughtering those that fell to its power or bite. Eventually, the second Shard, who was later found to be Lady Amariss of Cliff-Spider, sacrificed her life by flying directly for the avatar's mouth. Without considering its actions, it bit into her crystal form, shattering her into a million sharp pieces. Immediately, it roared as the crystal shards sliced their way through its internal organs. It fell from the sky like a blazing ball of power, shattering the ground further upon impact. The battle was over. Haak San Bazaa once again lay in ruin, an Elothorin Avatar had been confronted and defeated, and the first Shards emerged into Providence's history.

Oh, I do remember it well."

**Transcribed from the deathbed of Korarath,
Hawk Wylder.**

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Named Sky-Spite, the avatar's lair was not only uncovered, but the foolish explorers also made the creature aware of the city-states beyond. Sky-Spite destroyed the expedition, and went on to attack Haak San Bazaa. Cry-Star, Water-Sister and Cliff-Spider all sent winged Wylders to contend with the beast. The battle over the wreckage of Haak San Bazaa was said to have been magnificent to behold, for the first of the Shards came into power that day.

The first of the Shards had emerged over the skies of Haak San Bazaa. Known now as Father and Mother, the light-wielding entity was Enoval Sahar of Troupial Dove and his Epiphany-sister was Lady Amariss of Troupial Dragon. Their appearance forced many to question the common belief that the old religion had no validity.

The D'Shau Monks believed the two Shards were irrefutable proof that the old gods still existed. More pragmatic thinkers, however, believed that the Shards were an indication that Yas'Wailians had been on this world for too long, and were now being influenced by the same adaptation that had altered the Lost Tribes. While some feared the unknown power that these new beings represented, the fact of the matter was that they had helped in defeating a potent avatar. They were accepted and welcomed on this merit alone.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE AERIE

ETHO ME'DAN, YEARS 1091-1120 E.MD.

Haak San Bazaa was rebuilt, and although she again refused to join the Alliance of Free-Cities, they were now on friendlier terms. More and more Shards began to appear following the battle.

With the addition of Shards to the social strata of the caste system, the notion of whether they constituted a new level of society's hierarchy came into question. The powers bequeathed to these chosen few seemed to cross cultural, racial, gender and every other barrier placed by the rational mind. They belied description, their powers refuted any attempt to qualify or quantify them into neat, explicable categories, and their presence was a historical first. Some possessed more power than their ruling lords and ladies, while others, already gifted with the ability to cast Wird, were robbed of these talents when their Epiphany blossomed. In short, it was a branch which had been thrown into the cogs of society, and now the great machine was threatening to unravel.

Faced with this potential anarchy, Lord Juliard of Cliff-Spider, husband to the late Lady Amariss, declared that those who were gifted as Shards were to be given a special place in

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Cliff-Spider, a position of trust and honour. Placed below the royal court and the military, the new class became known as the Gifted. Their function was to provide for those below them, while acknowledging the royalty above them. In essence, Lord Juliard put them in a position directly beneath his control.

From Cliff-Spider, the practice swiftly spread to Cry-Star and Water-Sister. The Gifted became a rank in society for those obviously blessed with powers and abilities, but the laws concerning them and their position varied from city to city. In Cliff-Spider, any Fallen who had undergone Epiphany was not allowed to join the new caste strata, while in Water-Sister, a Guild specifically for Fallen Shards was created.

Meanwhile, the Gifted group to gain the quickest reputation were the Cartographers. They were the first to call themselves a Guild. The Cartographers were made up of those Shards willing to use their abilities to explore the Deep. Their powers made them better able to defend themselves, and their actions cemented this Guild a place of honour in history. The Horizon Striders of Cliff-Spider became the most famous of the lot, responsible for stretching the boundaries of the known world by several hundred miles. They were also credited with discovering the Aerie.

As stated previously, the Lost Tribes were formed by those individuals cast out of Yas'Wail for supposed crimes against the Priest-Rulers. Their exile began long before the failed revolution, and their heritage now belonged more to Providence than it did to Yas'Wail. Three Lost Tribes had been discovered by this point: The Serpenkine, the Swarm Dancers and the Green People. Thanks to the Horizon Striders, a fourth one was uncovered.

One evening, having ventured further into the Deep than any explorer had ever returned from, a group of Horizon Striders actually reached the point where they could see the lights of Cry-Star on the opposite side of the world. This was swiftly followed by the discovery of a city nestled well beneath the Deep. It was a place where the trees grew thick and formed walls of trunks and bark; where a city rested, eternally sheltered in darkness and hidden from the daylight beneath the thick canopy of the jungle; a place where the denizens had become albinos from many millennia of living within eternal night. Initially, the Horizon Striders believed that they had discovered a missing colony, but when they came upon its citizens, they knew otherwise. The fourth Lost Tribe were the White Crow, and their city was Aerie, a place more ancient than any prison colony.



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The White Crows were a winged society of purebred avians, even more so than Troupial Eagle. They were also Shadow Casters, having come to the world when there was no sun. Adapting through Wird, they hid their city half in the infinite shadows of the Deep.

The Horizon Strider expedition returned home barely alive. They were allowed to live as a warning that the White Crow were to be left alone, having no wish to share the Aerie Forest with anyone.

THE ALLIANCE OF KINGS

ETHO ME'DAN, YEARS 1120 E.MD.

Faced with more and more facts concerning the hostility of their home, the Alliance of Free-Cities decided it was time to band together and form a mutual defense accord. Lady Kassilinniss of Cry-Star, Lady Barada of Cliff-Spider, Lord Aptuan of Water-Sister, Lord Savara of Bastion and Lord Teverah of Sun Guard met at an encampment upon Sollas Field on the Exodus Plain. Delegates from Bone-Wail and Haak San Bazaa were also invited to join the proceedings, but both declined for their own reasons.

The Crucible, as it became known, was held for over a week, during which treaties and charters were hammered out and ratified by the royalty. Despite the quibbling and the numerous rumours of failed assassination attempts, the Alliance of Kings was formed in the following week under the strong guidance of Lady Kassilinniss of Cry-Star. The only city present that did not ratify the charter was Bastion, who chose to remain independent for her own reasons.

The Alliance of Kings united the four member cities under a common banner, standardizing currency, trade practices and the caste strata. They also declared their resolve to maintain the peace with Bone Wail by ratifying the ancient peace treaty. As far as the populace was concerned, it was the beginning of better times, and for the next 300 years, they were. Unfortunately, nothing ever remains the same.

THE LOST WARS

ETHO ME'DAN, YEAR 1421 E.MD.

With the increase in Shards, and growing number of people learning Wird, events known as Retributions occurred with rising frequency. In essence, the practice of Wird created a snag in the fabric of reality, a welling up of power with no avenue for release. Eventually, the bubble would pop, unleashing an elemental disaster such as a volcanic eruption, a hurricane, an earthquake or a tornado. The severity of the snag or knot would dictate the severity of the storm. Unfortunately, Retribution disasters were becoming more and more pronounced over the decades, devastating an increasingly larger area with each event.

While the Yas'Wailians simply accepted the occurrences as unavoidable, the Lost Tribes were angry with what they saw as flagrant, unnecessary and irresponsible displays of power. Representatives from the four tribes gathered in the city of Aerie, and discussed plans for an impending war. Surprisingly, while the White Crow and Green People advocated all-out war, the Serpenkine and Swarm Dancers remained neutral in the matter. This decision was fortunate for the former prison colonies, because no one truly realized how powerful a coalition of the Lost Tribes would have been had all four groups worked in tandem.

The first attack was launched amidst the night cycle, against the outlying colonies of Sun Guard and Bastion. White Crow Shadow-mages attacked from within the shadows, while the Green People brought the jungle to bear against their enemies. Although the destruction of both cities was rapid and nearly total, Sun Guard had enough time to send mystical warnings to the other cities. Within a fortnight, they too, along with Bone Wail and Haak San Bazaa, were under attack. This time, however, all the cities had managed to erect Wird defenses that mostly prevented the Green People from peeling open their giant tree-walls, or Shadow Wird from striking from within the city.

Had the battles remained at this intensity, the war might have ended in a stalemate shortly thereafter. Unfortunately, the Yas'Wailians possessed a large population of Shards who assisted in helping repulse the attacks. For some reason, this attracted a number of Elothorin Avatars to the region who joined the Lost Tribes in fighting the city-states. The Yas'Wailians were severely outnumbered and were on the verge of losing when mass Epiphanies erupted once more.

Across the various battlefields, scores of Shards suddenly came into their powers, and began stemming the slaughter. As well, various Wylders, Wird Weavers and Wird Dancers unleashed devastating spells, while Bone Wail set loose hordes of Ward Dogs and Ravagers, catching the enemy unprepared. In short, the battles could be seen across

the world, from nearly any vantage point, and it was akin to the eve of apocalypse. Then, daylight broke.

The sun pulsed several hours before it was supposed to, bringing the world into light and frightening everyone into believing that it truly was the end. As though on cue, the Elothorin's Avatars vanished as quickly as they had appeared, back to their dark havens. Robbed of their allies, the White Crow and Green People were suddenly outnumbered by their enemies, and would have died fighting had Serpenkine and Swarm Dancers not intervened. Emissaries from both Lost Tribes appeared to the rulers of the various city-states and offered them a prize for allowing the other two tribes to withdraw. The gift in question was the location of three lost gates, one for Bone Wail, one for Haak San Bazaa and Bastion to share, and one for the Alliance of Kings. If the rulers refused this agreement, then the remaining two tribes were willing to join the White Crow and Green People in bringing their strength to bear against the Yas'Wailians.

Their resources severely depleted, the rulers of the city-states agreed to the terms, and allowed the White Crow and Green People to withdraw to their territory. As promised, the location of three gates was revealed, and the remaining two Lost Tribes then promptly vanished back into their domains. This has remained the situation until recently.

THE CURRENT YEARS

ETHO ME'DAN, YEAR 1421-1516 E.M.D.

Time has become the enemy. The enclosed realm is facing danger from an unexpected source, the natural elements threaten to destroy the world through floods and volcanic eruptions. A gigantic breach in the jungle floor has allowed water to begin pouring through, claiming hundreds of square miles in just a short time. The city of Sun Guard has fallen to these floods, forcing thousands to traverse the Deep in an effort to reach Cry-Star and Haak San Bazaa.

The afflicted area, now known as the Sunderlands, is right in the heart of Serpenkine territory, forcing a schism between the members of this Lost Tribe. Some of these reptilian folk blame the Yas'Wailians for their dilemma, and have forged alliances with the city of Aerie to remove the threat once and for all. Another faction sees the Yas'Wailians as one of the few ways to stop this disaster, and has joined forces with the Alliance of Kings for the first time. This has galvanized the other Lost Tribes, bringing the Swarm Dancers behind the Alliance of Kings as well, while the White Crow and the Green People remain firm in their desire to destroy the Yas'Wailian threat. The Elothorin Avatars have remained uncharacteristically quiet in the twilight hours before the confrontation.

Bone Wail has emerged from her century-long isolation following the Lost Wars, and has sided with the Alliance. The Warden city hopes to discover the remaining gates and open them in order to escape Providence. Few trust their motives, however, for the Wardens have remained firmly in power and of the opinion that all others are still exiles to be imprisoned. The Alliance of Kings, on the other hand, has need of the Ward Dogs and Ravagers in light of the growing tension between them and the Lost Tribes.

The Elothorin's Avatars have only been seen on the rare occasion. Most still feel as though the creatures are studying and watching the city-states with keen interest. They have not attacked the populace to the degree Sky-Spite or its brethren did amidst the Lost Wars, but this has not made them peaceful either. Nobody has ever returned from investigating their reputed resting places, and erratic attacks are not uncommon. For the most part, however, Shards, often at the cost of their own lives, are known to be capable of successfully fighting the minor ones. Some of the larger avatars, such as Sunder of the Great Bridge or Wardin of Athrin's Web, however, have proven to be as powerful as their ancestors were reputed to be during the Grand War. It is simply fortunate they have not instigated any aggressive actions.

With the chance that the world is on the verge of destruction, expedition teams are being heavily funded to ascertain the locations of the remaining gates, and hopefully, to discover a way of reopening them. With less than a few years remaining before everything is flooded or burnt, it has become a mad dash for salvation.

These major events, coupled with the growing unrest over the Guilds and the caste system, places the world in the centre of chaos. A storm has gripped Providence and threatens to rend her inside out. Shards and Wylders are rising to unprecedented power levels, claiming godhood and gathering followers who believe they can be saved from the catastrophe to come. The Lost Tribes are preparing for a bloody war, perhaps in a suicidal gambit to die fighting, while the city-states are greatly divided over the actions they must pursue during the events to come. Only the strong hand of Regent Caiylus, leader of the Alliance of Kings, prevents the Alliance from being torn asunder.

Many agree that it is a time for new heroes, leaders and legends to step up and take the mantle of destiny. But who will it be?



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I have now become like one of the Fallen, an Exile bereft of flight. I did not grant my captors this pleasure, though. It was by my own hand that my remaining wing was sundered from me forever. I went to one of those hiding me, a White Crow called Willian, and I had him take the useless limb from my back. I will have no need of one wing where I go, but my enemies will be looking for it, I have no doubt.

They were fools, those who took me in the night. They believed they would break me by taking from me the gift of flight. Of all our superstitions and fanciful idiocies, this is chief — that the measure of a man is in the strength of his wings. I once believed as they believed, so much so that I took from my lady wife's arms our new born son, and dashed his head against the wall of our home. I have spilt the blood of my blood, and felt it warm against my face, so great in me was the shame that my son had no wings, nor even the weak reminder of wings that would make him Redeemed.

Perhaps that is what took me down the path that has finally led me here to the shadow-city of Aerie. I know it is so...for as I felt his blood hot upon me, I knew that I had not killed him for pride, hate, love, honour, or even contempt. I had killed him in fear, fear of what I might become, and fear of what we are all becoming.

It was then that I learned what I know now. Our power comes from places that we do not like to go. It is below the trees, and in the dark of night. In this place where I now abide and lick my wounds, it is fecund and ripe. I can smell power here in Aerie, for the White Crow do not distance themselves from it. I know what Exiles know. We are not made weaker when our brood are born wingless. We are not smaller when we soar no more and lock ourselves to the Earth. We are made better. Those who are called Pure, as I once called myself, those who choose to live above life, they are the true exiles, for they are apart from their own world.

Knowing this, I part from my wings without regret. I have used my power to alter my flesh and take from my face the brand that marked me exile. I have wrought in the fundament of this hoary city a blade for my journey, and I have named it Hate. I have constructed for myself an armour in plates of red and black, and it shall not be sundered by any force less than my own. I make myself warlike, for the imperious fliers must fall. They will be bound to the Earth by my hand, afraid to gaze upon the sun ever again. That shall be my vengeance.

The White Crow hate my people, for we weave the Wird as though it is nothing. My people will destroy our world, thinking that when they are done, they might simply fly away. The Crow are joined in their hatred by the Green People, and both of them look to me for aid. My people did not think, could not imagine that I had taken council with our enemies when I was Regent. Of course I had! I made them rich promises for their aid, told them of my plans to level Bone Wail, where the worst offenders lie. They did not trust me until news of my capture reached them, and then they knew that I was no friend to my own people, and that I would be an ally worth saving.

It is a delicious irony that the undoing of the Yas'Wailians will not be an outside enemy, or some shadowy threat from the unknown. It will be their own Regent, who once they loved, and then betrayed.



GEOGRAPHY OF PROVIDENCE

OVERVIEW

Providence is a world where the sky is filled with landscape and the search for a horizon always ends back where it started. It is in a hollow land where everything rests on the inside of the surface rather than upon the outside; a bubble of existence surrounded by a universe of soil. The jungles of Providence, however, are very diverse; they are not simply a field of unending green. Plateaus and mountain shelves hold deserts of sand in their palms. Known as Ink Winds, the dust is dragged by winds into the enclosed sky, dazzling the air with a myriad of sparkling colours as the sunlight dashes through them. Down below, trees unhindered by the touch of civilization, soar to heights of several hundred feet; their thick canopy of leaves and branches shields the virgin soil, turning the ground into a terrain of night. Only fungus grows in the barren shadows beneath the trees, creating a landscape of caves formed by wooden rock. These regions are called the Deep, and one would be hard-pressed to find one's nose in the murky darkness of these regions.

From the growing borders of the flooded Sunderlands to the enormous columns of earth known as Gods' Teeth, Providence is a dangerous place whose every curiosity is a test in wits and ability. This has transformed her populace into fighters, encouraging the weak to become stronger, and tasking the stronger to become fierce. This ideology has been ingrained into the minds of individuals since the day they were born, but many admit that recently, the tests of nature have become increasingly brutal. The world is undergoing what can only be described as seizures, and some fear that this is merely a prelude to a violent death. This has forced many to huddle together in the wake of Providence's tantrums. Others, a hardy few that can only be called heroes or fools, venture out to uncover a way to escape this place. Therein lies one of the avenues to glory.

CURRENT GEOGRAPHIC CONCERNS

Like a wound, the ground is breached and bleeds torrents of water. Along the area known as the Sunderlands, hundreds of geysers erupt daily, spraying rain into the sky and filling the enclosed heavens with a constant mist that diffuses the sunlight. While the land is flooded, the sky weeps

constantly with rainstorms that sweep across hundreds of miles in all directions.

This event, along with a volcano rapidly forming in the middle of the Deep, is forcing thousands to migrate away from the region. With no end in sight to the growing sea, many nearby cities are being abandoned in favour of the larger city-states such as Cliff-Spider and Cry-Star. Were it not for the gates which still lay hidden, possibly within the Deep, many would flee these regions entirely.

Water and fire seem to be Providence's greatest enemies right now. One threatens to drown the land with liquid, the other with ash. The events are too great merely to quell with Wird, for it seems to aggravate the situation like a burr in an already open wound. Disasters are magnified, serving to spread destruction and agitating the balance of nature. Sun Guard, the Alliance of King's outpost city, fell for exactly this reason. In trying to stem the floods of the Sunderlands, violent earthquakes split open the earth beneath the city, claimed thousands of lives, and forced tens of thousands into a deadly march across the jungle floor to sanctuary. The common cry that the refugees were heard to lament was "what are we to do?", leaving others to answer "what indeed?" A way off Providence must be found, not for the sake of the cities that will perish in the wake of things to come, but for the millions who will otherwise die.

GENERAL TERRAIN

BASIC INFORMATION

Providence has a circumference of 3,200 miles. It contains two major lakes, not counting the Sunderlands, two mountain chains, one desert and two swamp regions. The rest of the surface is covered by one expansive jungle system that varies in thickness. Because the sun pulses at regular intervals and is equidistant from every point on the map, there is very little seasonal or temperature variation. During the day, temperatures reach a maximum of 110 °F, while at night it drops to 95 °F. In the shade, temperatures decrease between 5-10 °F depending on the thickness of the jungle canopy.

The sun pulses at regular intervals, bringing about 22 hours of daylight and 9 hours of night. It takes half-an-hour between these two transitional phases before either is in full effect. This adds an additional hour, for a total of 32 hours in a day. The rest of the calendar is loosely based off the Yas'Wailian cycle, which has been modified to fit Providence. It goes as such:

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32 hours = 1 Day
5 days = 1 Week
8 Weeks = 1 Month
8 Months = 1 Year.
320 days per year

The sole difference between the Yas'Wailian calendar and that of Providence is that the former world operated off a 29 hour day.

Despite these stable environmental factors, storms and winds are still difficult to predict. Most of the air currents are created through the interaction of heated water rising to the surface of the lakes and cold water sinking. Other factors such as the increasing Sunderlands, volcanic activity and the mounting number of Retributions manifesting are wild cards that have made the weather all the more unpredictable.

Months on Providence

While Providence follows the monthly cycle of Yas'Wail, the seasons are no longer relevant. Most of the holidays are still celebrated, however, with exception of the religious ones. Only the followers of the old religions still observe the ones not forgotten over time.

THULOCK

Called the month of rebirth, this period marks the end of winter, the last day of snow and the commencement of spring. The only festival celebrated on Providence is the Day of Clean Winds, the start of the new year at the beginning of the month. People dress in garish costumes which are stripped off once Thulock actually begins. This represents leaving bad habits behind and becoming new people.

FARAWAD

On Yas'Wail, this month was normally set aside for the rites of spring festivals and the preparation for planting crops in summer. It was a time of spring rains that either helped the future crops or washed away the topsoil. This month was also referred to as 'Omens' since the farmers could tell what the year would bring by the rains of this period. On Providence, however, the month is marked by a festival known as Farmer's Market. Held in all Alliance cities, farmers gather together to sell the best crops and to celebrate their trade.

TEDLER

On Yas'Wail, the first months of summer began in the middle of this month. This period was interspaced with different festivals to appease the deities.

MANTIAN

The second month of Yas'Wailian summer had no festivals because everyone was working hard for the upcoming fall and winter season. On Providence, the

Day of Blood is observed. It is a day of rest to commemorate those who died during the Blood-Spore Contagion.

CARAPOTH

On Yas'Wail, the 21st of this month marked the last day of crops and the start of harvest. It was also the first day of fall. The city-states of Providence, oddly enough still celebrate this time. Wird Weavers working for the Alliance use their spells over the city to make it cooler, emulating as best they can the season of fall for just a few hours. It is one of the rites of the Reckoning, one designed to make people remember that they have a world to return to and conquer.

ERCHOI

Named the month of 'Ill Fortune', the 23rd marked the beginning of winter on Yas'Wail. Coincidentally, it is also the anniversary of Sky-Spite's attack on Haak San Bazaa. The 22nd of this month also had the Festival of Prayers on Yas'Wail, where the people prayed to Veckull, Goddess of the Night and to Banti, Goddess of Wird to spare them and their families from Paallau, the Death Rider.

NEDLURR

Winter on Yas'Wail began in force; both this month and the next were the worst winter months of the year. The Alliance of Kings celebrates the anniversary of the Crucible.

AMADIAN

On Yas'Wail, the final month of winter, the second half of this month marked the return of spring. The last week of this month is a celebration thrown in the honour of Crysnian, Goddess of Winter. The festival is to thank her for surviving the winter and the commencement of the new year.

LANDMARKS

While each region retains a distinct personality based on the lay of the land, whether jungle, mountains or river, the world of Providence has more than one common feature throughout. These landmarks are well known by all, and are part of the populace's cultural identity. If one wishes to understand Providence, then one must be familiar with these distinctive attributes, for they also represent the only means of proper navigation. Without a set of stars or constellations to guide the traveller, without a cycle of seasons to measure time, without a magnetic north or south to indicate what top and bottom might be, Providence is an easy place to lose touch with reality. Therefore, navigation relies on the lay of the land and top and bottom is a matter of perspective dependent upon which hemisphere one is standing in.

THE DEEP

The majority of Providence not dominated by water consists of jungles. While many areas are thick with trees, none compare to the expansive region known as the Deep. Described as the largest jungle system inside the world, the Deep is so dense that even sunlight fails to pierce its canopy.

The world below the canopy is darker than night itself, a chaotic maze where hundreds of thousands of random pillars and columns made of trees hold aloft a solid ceiling of leaves and branches. The Deep's floor is barren and cracked, the trunks encrusted with thick growths of fungus and lichen. The ground is not level either; roots, thicker than a Gargoyle's torso, course in and out of the earth, forming arches, bridges and a thousand black hiding holes for the unknown. It is a place where all shadows become one, light flickers because it is afraid, and the foolish venture to die.

GODS' TEETH

From the lakes, jungle and mountains, four columns of earth, several dozen miles in diameter and hundreds of miles high, rise to connect the ground to the stone heavens, a bridge between two hemispheres. Known as Gods' Teeth, these arches and bridges, appear at a distance, to be thick strands of stone. At least two can be seen from anywhere in Providence (except from within the Deep).

One of the columns serves as the husk for Cliff-Spider, a city carved into the stone, and connects the two shores of the Crysarius Sea like a bridge of earth; another rises to the centre, to spear the very sun; the third one is riddled with holes and whistles as the wind blows past it like the whispers of the dead; while the last one emerges from the Alegerra Sea and spills water into its basin through thundering falls. It is doubly infamous, for its other base seeps red lava from its many nostrils and rains ash and rock upon the surrounding jungle.

The one distinguishing factor about any of these arches is that they are all riddled with tunnels, passages and caves. One of these spires is inaccessible because its tunnels are either filled with lava or high-pressure water, and a second contains the city of Cliff-Spider. This leaves the last two for exploration, but even that is limited to the base of the bridge (the first two miles). Beyond this point explorers vanish or are stopped by impasses.

SHADOW FALLS

Derived from "where the shadow falls," this phenomenon is actually a byproduct of God's Teeth. Because the sun is always stationary, there are areas where the light never reaches the jungle floor due to the intruding spire arches. These places are sparse on foliage, and like scars across flesh, are practically the only barren strips of land in Providence.

It is of little surprise that the broken ground of rock and hard earth is considered cursed by most, but this does little to stem the merchant caravans and explorers who use these avenues to expedite their journey. While no major cities rest within the Shadow Falls, a number of small settlements have set root on the periphery of the jungle and the barren strips. These towns might have seen rapid growth into major communities or even minor cities had the possibility of war not frightened many back into the city-states. Those that remain consist of hardy, if paranoid settlers, who stand ready to fight at any opportunity.

MOUNTAINS

Providence possesses two mountain systems, both of which are theorized to be the remnants of ancient Gods' Teeth that collapsed and fell to the jungle floor below them. It is believed that everything beneath the two fallen pillars was crushed and the surrounding vegetation for miles around was blown down by the shock waves, but this event predated the penal colonies by centuries, so the truth is unknown. Now a verdant jungle covers these treacherous mountains, masking a dangerous terrain of fractured canyons and grass-covered caverns.

REGIONS

Providence is divided into several distinct regions whose borders are distinguished mostly by the presence of mountains and sea shores. Two of these areas are themselves seas, large enough to be seen from any vantage point across the inner surface. Other than these natural landmarks, there is little to indicate lines of property, save for the tree walls of jungle-cities and the odd half-forgotten path that cuts across the terrain.

In short, these regions are not designations for principalities, kingdoms or even domains. The people of Providence would not dream of such hubris in the face of potent and savage nature. Rather, kingdoms remain within the confines of city walls, and the rest of the land belongs to the unknown. This quick and easy rule is a reminder of how deadly the jungle can actually be.

Because the world is enclosed, there is no central point to begin indicating direction. There is no true sense of north, south, east or west, no hint of where the world might begin or end, no central mark upon the land that indicates "everything begins here"; it is all arbitrary. The only certainty is that up is where your head gazes to the heaven and down is where your feet rest. Unfortunately, this simple axiom cannot help guide caravans across the dark floor of the Deep or allow the uninitiated a point of reference from which to begin; hence the reliance on regions and corresponding landmarks.

The designations of north, south, east and west are no longer used as compass points, but to indicate the direction from a specific location (i.e. south of Bone-Wail, east of Crysarius, etc.). The sole point of unified reference for this measure has been made using the Great Bridge, the spire which spears the sun, as the central line for the east-to-west axis of the world, and Leviathan's Spine as the north-to-south axis. Unfortunately, because neither phenomena is exactly straight, the terms are used in a generic sense and not as specific measurements.



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EXODUS PLAIN

It all began in this section of Providence, between the great mountain wall of Leviathan's Spine and the Crysarius Sea. The first wave of exiles arrived here, in the thick of the sweltering jungle, and began living what would amount to their two millennia exodus. The first penal colonies began in this region, but it was also the place where freedom was first issued and the heart of the Alliance of Kings came to be. Of all the domains, it is the best explored and considered the safest to travel since the influence of the Lost Tribes is considerably less here than anywhere else.

Exodus Plain is the most densely populated portion of Providence. Most of the prison colonies were built using the wood of the surrounding jungle, and even though some were eventually abandoned, the ones that did not became thriving communities. Centuries of growth and habitation have thinned the ecology, spilling sunlight beneath the thick canopy and allowing beaten roads to remain operational between the primary cities. This has facilitated the growth of many towns and communities, each of whom, in turn, have cleared away the surrounding jungle for space and resources. The stumps which remain have been covered in hot pitch to keep the tree from

growing again. Wird Weavers, outraged over this flagrant destruction, have been ordered to remain quiet. These actions are encouraged by the Alliance of Kings, for it thins out the potential arsenal usable by the Green People, and prevents them from healing the green. Some Wird Weavers have chosen to engage in acts of eco-sabotage to stop the practice, but these individuals have been labelled Exiled by the Alliance (see Caste Designations for more information).

Despite the fact that Exodus Plain was the landing point for most of the prisoners, the new arrivals have been unable to find any of the gates. Some believe that the Wardens built the cities atop the gates when they realized they could no longer return home, while others say the colonies were moved away from them when the Wardens could not bear to be reminded of their own impotence. In either case, with the exception of the portals revealed by the Serpenkine as a concession to end the Lost Wars, no new gates have been uncovered. This has spawned a number of theories and rumours as to the real location of the portals back home. The most accepted one claims the gates may have been covered by the Elothorin's Avatars to prevent any more people from getting through. This theory has been supported by the fact that no new exiles have made it to Providence in the last 18 centuries.



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Green-Deep

Function: Warden Outpost

Population: 258,000

Ruler: Warden Eshatowin

Ruling Troupials: Swan, Dragon

There was a time when Green-Deep was one of the largest prison camps in Providence, threatening to surpass even Bone-Wail. Situated within the thick of the jungle, her walls were a solid mass of tree limbs and trunks that enclosed several dozen square miles of territory. It was also one of the first places where the Wardens begat monstrous offspring, and from where the inhuman atrocities ascribed to these deviants initially arose. When the camps were finally liberated, those monsters which did not escape were summarily executed. Green-Deep was abandoned, for the prisoners who were incarcerated there could not bear to live in a city of tortures, and everybody else was too superstitious to live in a place of the dead.

Following the Crucible for the Alliance of Kings, Bone-Wail sent a contingent of troops, several slave cadres, Ravager overseers and a few packs of Ward Dogs to maintain Green-Deep as an outpost. Although it proved to be a point of friction between the Alliance and the Wardens, eventually the subject was dropped in the years following. From there, the outpost steadily grew to become the minor city it is today, but even now her population is a far cry from the nearly one million people once interned within her walls.

Currently, Green-Deep still retains her massive fortifications, even though the city within is overgrown with weeds and roots. Most of the buildings are one to two stories high, and comprised of solid rock raised from the ground through Wird. Blockish and rather brutish in design, they bear little accoutrements, and remain covered in creeper vines. The trees within the city compound have been strengthened and connected to one another using Wird. Their trunks appear melted as a by-product, and branches drop down like long curling fingers. Atop these trees are the homes of the Wardens and their guards, supported by a latticework of branches and trunks.

Many portions of the city remain undiscovered, and are likely to stay this way for years to come. Despite their power, even the guards and their Ward Dogs are unwilling to enter some of the unexplored buildings, leading many to believe that monstrosities still live in the darker recesses of Green-Deep. The fear is encouraged by the occasional discovery of half-devoured prisoners and guards.

Green-Deep is run by Warden Eshatowin of House J'Nisbai within Troupial Swan. A potent Wylder, she rules the outpost with a sharp hand, and is not above killing prisoners to express her point. Seconding her command is Guard Master Akbradum of House Puradanium within Troupial Dragon. He is both consort and enforcer for Warden Eshatowin.



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Cliff-Spider

Function: Alliance of Kings War Citadel
Population: 4.8 million (including periphery
 Free-Keeps outside Crysarius Bridge)

Ruler: King Raldowin IV

Ruling Troupials: Hawk, Eagle, Dove

The city of Cliff-Spider was built using the massive caverns and tunnels that were found throughout the Crysarius Bridge. Occupying the base of the spire, a mile-long section that remains connected to the outside through numerous cave mouths, the populace is nowhere near exploiting the full space available in the structure.

From the exterior, all the entrances have been expanded and decorated to appear as giant ornately sculpted arches. The ledges have also been extended, creating a spire lined with half-platforms at odd intervals. During times of war, the ledges along the first quarter-mile of the spire fold upwards, sealing the entrances, while the upper ones are left open in order to launch flights of soldiers. On the inside, 34 caverns of varying sizes create the city districts, along with large tunnels which serve as avenues and bazaar strips. The floors are all level, except for those which have been sloped in order to connect the upper tiers to the ones below them. Wird-crafted stone upon the floors, walls and ceilings display a variety of different patterns and designs.

The interior is illuminated using either open windows three stories high, which helps circulate the air, or (in the case of the spire's deep interior) by enchanted torches that give off both heat and light. The first mile of tunnels and caverns behind the walls of the spire are riddled with large bay windows, however, allowing some natural light to filter to sections of Cliff-Spider. Water is obtained through a small lake in the lowest cavern named Mud-Foot and channelled throughout the city via a series of pipes called capillaries.

With humble beginnings, Cliff-Spider is one of the oldest cities on Providence (following Aerie and Cry-Star), and considered the best defended next to Bone-Wail. Ever since it was liberated, the normally constrictive and claustrophobic walls which were present during the internment, were expanded in order to create an airy city. Regardless of how open it may be, it still takes quite a bit of time before an individual can get used to living in such conditions. Many people are known to take regular visits outside the spire for fresh air, even those born in Cliff-Spider.

Currently, the city is under the rule of King Raldowin IV of House Tura, Troupial Hawk. Cliff-Spider is a staunch supporter of the caste system, and maintains the largest portion of the Alliance's militia. It is mostly a military city, run under the strong influence of House Tura, along with the support of House Cracksbore of Eagle and House Allister of Dove. This triumvirate of power holds such a grip over the city that few can ever go against the wishes of the ruling nobility.

CRYSARIUS BRIDGE

Named after the sea over which it arcs, the Crysarius Bridge is a two-hundred-mile thick spire that is considered the most accessible of the God's Teeth. While all of them contain tunnels and corridors of one sort or another, this is the only one with massive entrances along the first mile of the base's length. This does lend the bridge a pockmarked appearance, but also makes it the most habitable of the lot, facilitating entry into the numerous caverns within the structure.

The jungle terrain surrounding the spire's base has been cleared away for several dozen miles in order to grow crops for Cliff-Spider. The lands are owned by various knights and nobility attached to the regional Alliance court, who, in turn, operate feudal farms and ranches. Known as Free-Keeps, there are over 20 such communities that have been built thus far, each of them with a minor castle defending the territory. As they grow, more jungle is cleared away and used to build homes for the Free-Keeps, thinning out the Exodus Plain even more.

The strongest community is currently House Gyark of Troupial Dove, a Free-Keep supporting over 4,000 workers and labourers. Gyark already occupies the land closest to the base of the Crysarius Bridge which promises to one day become a second city at the feet of Cliff-Spider. With massive fields to cultivate a variety of crops, and large herds of domesticated animals, Gyark is Cliff-Spider's primary supplier of food staples.

THE GREAT BRIDGE

As its name implies, the Great Bridge is the longest and most imposing spire of the four Gods' Teeth. It is the most visible landmark in Providence, for it nearly spans the entire diameter of the bubble world, stretching from one side of it to its opposite hemisphere. What is even more impressive is that the centre of the spire is engulfed by the heart of the sun. When night comes, the sphere of light is still present, but far more subdued, much like a full moon. In either form, it is too high up, and generates too much heat to be approached in flight. Nobody has ever been within five miles of it.

The Great Bridge serves as the east-west marker for the world, the western point being the Exodus Plains base, the eastern base being hidden within the jungle of the Deep. Like the Crysarius Bridge, it too is laced with tunnels and caverns, though to a lesser degree. While the roots of the Great Bridge could conceivably serve as the housing for a city, it is considered too dangerous to attempt settlement. Exploration teams initially sent into the dark labyrinth

never returned, and it was not discovered until the Lost War that several Elothorin Avatars actually hibernated within the spire.

The largest of the avatars is Sunder, an insect-like centipede measuring close to a hundred yards in length. It is the largest of the Elothorin Avatars known to exist, surpassed in history only by Sky-Spite. Despite its bulk, it moves quickly. Sunder has only been seen outside of the Great Bridge once, during the Lost Wars. Oddly enough, Sunder was not attacking, merely observing, a circumstance many believe was fortunate for the Alliance at the time. Inside the tunnels of the Great Bridge is another matter. Sunder kills explorers without mercy, and is believed to be responsible for sending out the minor Elothorin Avatars to deal with nearby settlements as retribution. The Alliance has forbidden exploration of this spire for that reason alone.

LEVIATHAN'S SPINE

While the bases of most spires are not distinguished as either top or bottom, historical hindsight allows this distinction to be made about the collapsed Leviathan's Spine. What has been designated as the base, that portion which rests within Pincer Swamp, was destroyed by a volcanic eruption that decimated the local forest and caused the spire to collapse. The remainder of the structure fell across the land, leaving behind a corpse known later as Leviathan's Spine.

The longest mountain range within Providence, the collapse has created a great broken wall as well as countless islands within the Crysarius Sea. Most of the pieces which formed the chain shattered upon impact or were ground away by erosion, leaving behind a gap-toothed series of blocks large enough to be called small mountains and hills. Alone, each would have little to no significance upon the landscape, but together, the numerous blocks form a range over 750 miles long (from base to head, and including the string of islands within the Crysarius).

Of the mountain blocks, the two largest are Mt. Ailodon, which is nearly 170 miles of uninterrupted mountainside, and Mt. Unshate, over 95 miles of solid rock. Next to the Crysarius Sea, they form the largest obstacles in the regional terrain that effectively seals in and isolates the Exodus Plains. Mt. Ailodon, which would have been larger had several sections not slid off into the Crysarius, is a jungle-covered mountain with steep slopes and a multitude of fracture fissures. This hampers travel over the mountain and limits caravan passage to one of three trails through the range. The other option is to travel around the base of Mt. Ailodon, a

detour that will cost several weeks.

One of Mt. Ailodon's prime features is a lake bearing the mountain's name. Formed when the collapse exposed an enormous cavern to the surface, Lake Ailodon has since become the third largest body of water in the world following Crysarius and the Alegerra Sea. It also holds Cry-Star Falls, a magnificent waterfall that empties into the Crysarius, and is surpassed only by Sky-Torrent Falls, found on the spire of the same name within the Alegerra Sea.

Mt. Unshate, the second-largest structure within Leviathan's Spine, is not as beautiful as Ailodon, but it does hold several singular features. Like all the other Gods' Teeth, this spire was also littered with passages and tunnels throughout its interior before the collapse. Some actually survived the eruption, leaving behind a mountain block riddled with caverns and corridors. During the prison break in Stone Tree, some of the prisoners hid within Mt. Unshate and came to call this place home. It is believed that even today, descendants of Stone-Tree prisoners lie hidden, waiting for the last of the Wardens to finally die so they can safely emerge.

The two other significant features of Leviathan's Spine are the mountain base and the head of the spire. These, however, will be covered in the section dealing with Pincer Swamp and the Deep, since both structures rest within those areas.

It is both a blessing and a danger that the mountain range is littered with innumerable chasms, canyons and passages that facilitate travel in-between the Exodus Plain and the Green Barrens. Years of regular travel have revealed safe avenues of transit through the mountains, but travelers have also uncovered the fact that there are hundreds of unseen ways into the Exodus Plains that the Lost Tribes can use. It is practically impossible to maintain outposts along all these various corridors, and it has created a situation where Alliance forces can only establish a proper stand near the cities. Everybody knows that war will not come slowly to the Exodus Plains, but will flash through it like fire through paper.

Stone-Tree

Function: None

Population: 0 (except for those creatures which have made this place their home)

Ruler: None

Ruling Troupials: None

Located within Kallider's Corridor, whose width is no more than 30 to 50 feet across, Stone-Tree was a city of cliff dwellings built into the mountain. Bridges, steps and ledges connected the outside entrances to one another, while the inside was honeycombed with numerous tunnels. All that remains of Stone-Tree's infamous glory now are ruined cliff homes whose walls have collapsed, leaving them exposed to the elements.

Kallider's Corridor is pockmarked with hundreds of these open chambers that stare out like empty eye sockets. The bridges and ledges that once connected one canyon wall to the other have fallen or are on the verge of crumbling into dust. Vines and roots from the jungle atop Mt. Unsbate grow down, creating natural curtains of green over the openings and homes higher up. The corridor itself is littered with detritus from the rocks and stones dislodged by the growing roots, and the skeletons of the hundreds who died trying to escape this place during the last prison break.

Access to Stone-Tree can only be gained from the air, or through the corridor's mouths, both of which open onto the Exodus Plains. On either side of the city are giant archways, some one hundred feet high, that mark the beginning and end of the ruins. The great wooden doors that once sealed the archways have now rotted off their hinges and lie on the floor, partly obscured beneath several centuries worth of rubble and dirt. The standard for the Wardens, the same one still flying over Bone-Wail, can be found engraved over either archway, reminding visitors of this place's dark heritage.

Stone-Tree is considered haunted, but whether this is actual fact or the result of several centuries worth of folklore and superstition is unknown. While monsters and jungle denizens are known to drift through here, none have done so for extended periods of time. Neither the Alliance nor the Wardens have any plans to reclaim the colony, simply because it is boxed into a dangerous position, and has never offered a distinct tactical advantage for either side. It is neither a shortcut through Mt. Unsbate, nor overlooking a valued resource.



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DESERT PLATEAUS

Much like its counterpart, Athrin's Desert, the plateaus of Leviathan's Spine were formed when the fine sediment from the spire disintegrated into an even finer dust. Unlike Athrin's, however, there was not enough of this sand present to create an expansive desert. Instead, plateaus and ledges on the slopes of Leviathan's mountains have deposits of sediment that are occasionally thrown into the air because of winds. Known as the Ink Winds, this semi-regular phenomena creates currents of shimmering colours which are created when light passes through the silica. The sole value of this occurrence is one of appreciation as the Exodus Plains are treated to a beautiful show of nature.

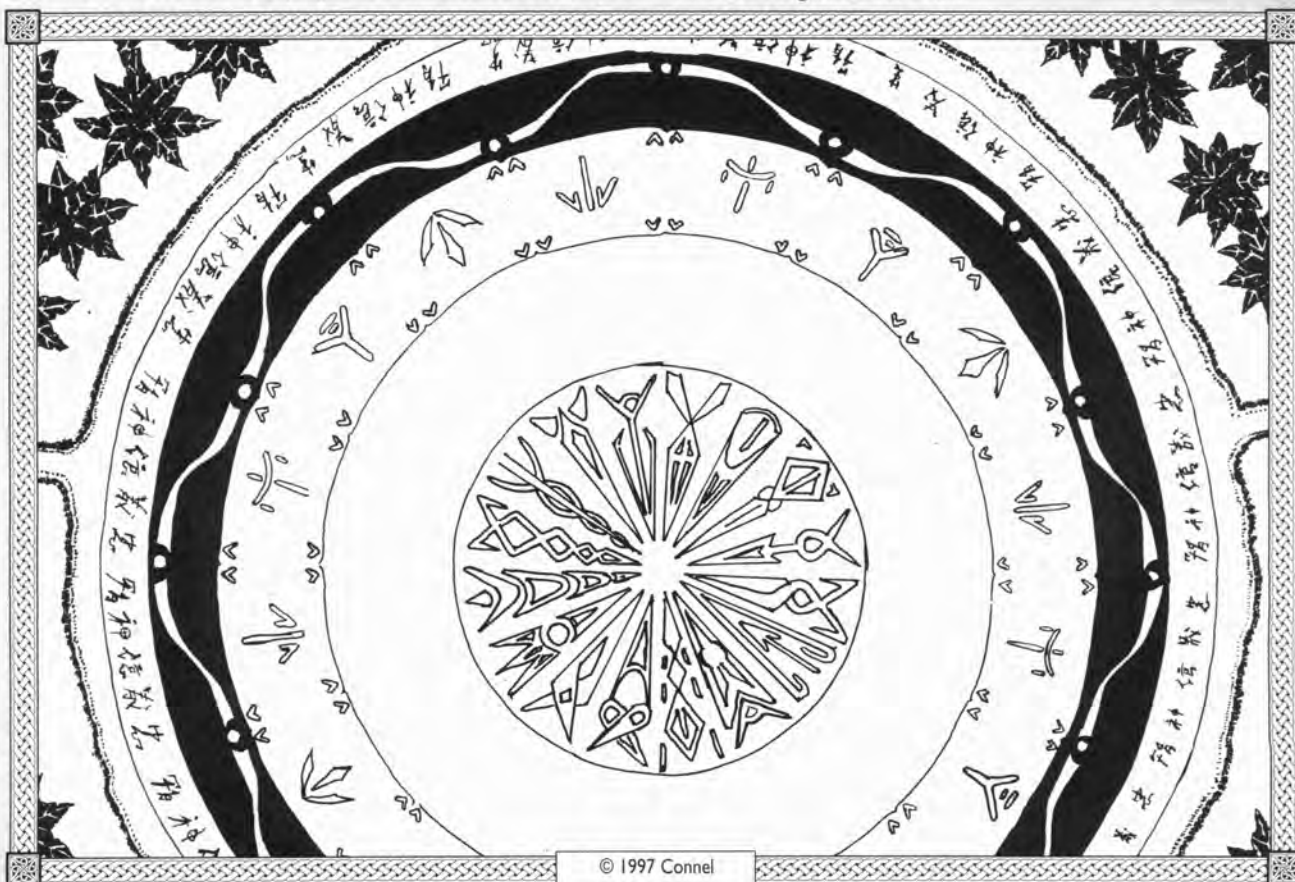
MONARCH'S PEAK

Situated southwest from the base of the Great Bridge, and northeast from the Isle of the Eye, Monarch's Peak is one of the three gates uncovered across the world thus far. Measuring a mile in diameter, the gate is a rune-encrusted metallic disk set into the jungle floor, and surrounded by a

circle of blackened trees called the Sentinels. When it was first discovered, the Alliance realized why the gate had remained hidden, for Monarch's Peak had lain obscured beneath several feet of dirt. The only clue to its presence was that no trees grew upon its surface; it was devoid of jungle for a mile.

After its discovery, several towns and military outposts sprang up around its base. The military remained to protect it and the settlements which survived long enough to become villages were mostly religious in nature. Whether they followed the teachings of the D'Shau Monks (the community of Virtue), or the philosophy of the Slaywinds (within the town of TrueDoor), they remained even after interest in Monarch's Peak waned. This place, they believed, was touched by the gods, and should be afforded proper respect like any temple. While the military was never happy with the religious "fanatics" who lived nearby, the communities were tolerated because they kept the area clean as part of their religious observances.

Due to the various threats looming over Providence, more nomadic settlements have recently gathered around the disk, waiting for the portals to open so that they might leave. This has been a windfall for the religious orders who are gaining many new adherents, and are seeing a return to the old religion of Yas'Wail.



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SOLLAS' FIELD

Sollas' Field is the site of the Crucible which formed the Alliance of Kings. Before this event, it was a simple jungle no different than the hundreds of square miles around it. In the weeks prior to the Crucible however, the trees were altered to fold over, forming a giant platform, while the branches and leaves were used to cover the trunks. The rock on the exterior of the structure was manipulated through Wird into rib-like pillars that soared high above the platform. To this day, the 120-foot diameter platform remains, surrounded by ribs bearing Troupial flags. In its centre rests a brazier holding a mystical flame that burns with tongues of gold, blue and silver, the colours of the Alliance.

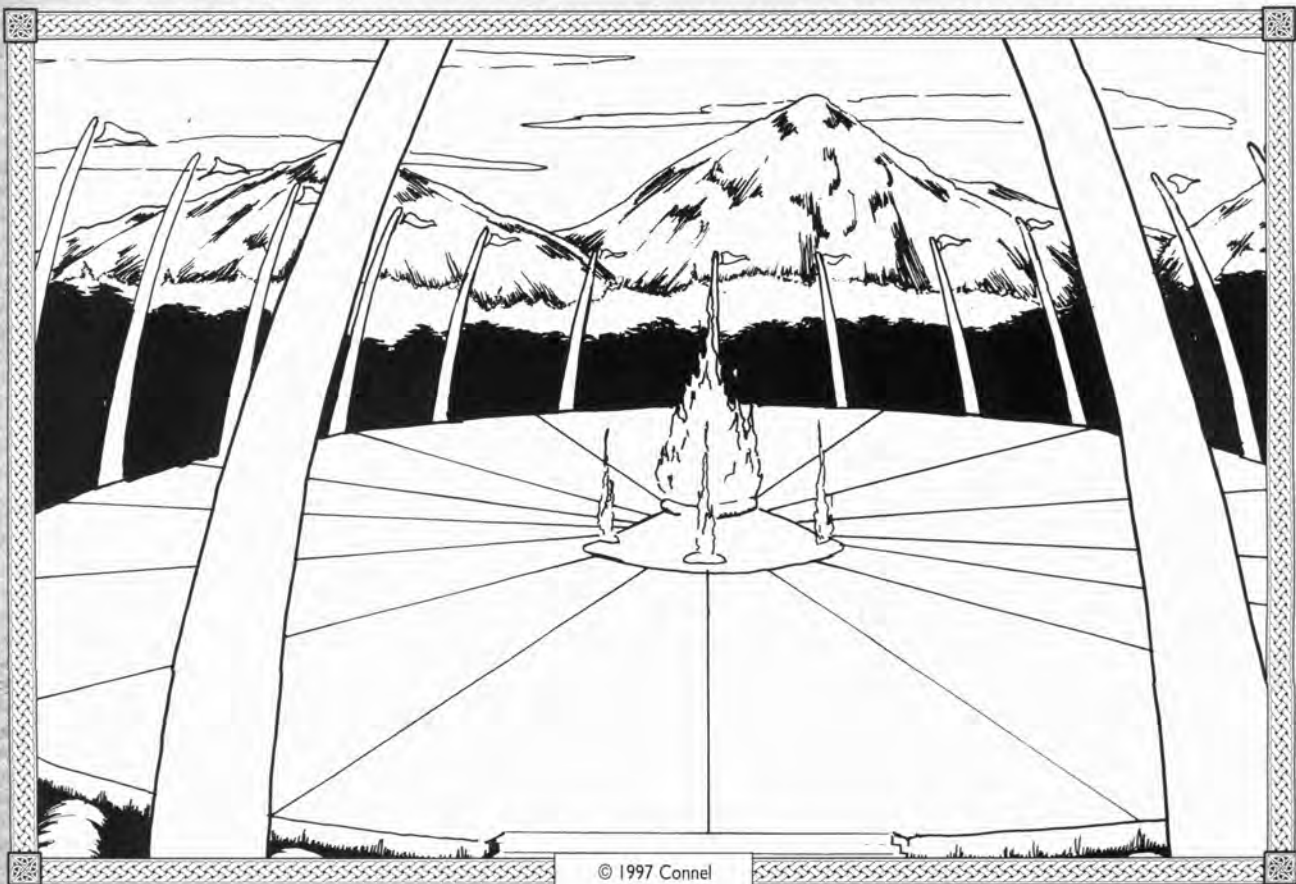
Over a thousand yards of the jungle surrounding the platform was torn down, leaving behind a clearing. Currently a town has been built outside the clearing within the local jungle, along with a garrison that was left behind. Crucible's Flame, an Alliance-sanctioned community, surrounds the area and tends to its maintenance year round.

Sollas' Field is not just important for its historical significance. It is also used to crown the new regent for the Alliance, her various kings and queens, and it is the annual

celebration point for the Crucible's anniversary. During these events, the town of several hundred becomes one that draws several thousand citizens and dignitaries. Otherwise, it is a quiet place, not visited by much grief or action.

CRYSARIUS SEA (THE ENCLOSED SEA)

Also known as the Favoured Lake, Crysarius Sea holds several distinctions that set it apart from the Alegerra Sea, Providence's second body of water. First of all, it is the largest of the two, measuring 1,300 miles in length and varying from 750 to 20 miles in width. Its northernmost point tapers and bifurcates into two rivers: Yadlew, which runs to the north, and Bassomin, which turns to the south. The opposite end of the lake ends in a pendulum-shaped bay where the paradise island named Isle of the Eye rests. From either extreme, the lake can be seen in its entirety, curving upwards towards the sky. The shores of the Crysarius are dry beach, with exception of the Haak San Bazaa peninsula, which is swamp.



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PROVIDENCE

Cry-Star

Function: Capital for the Alliance of Kings
Population: 5.7 million
Ruler: King Gunther of Troupial Eagle
Ruling Troupials: Eagle, Hawk, Dragon

Cry-Star is situated across the partly submerged plateaus at the base of the Cry-Star Falls. The city is a two-tiered architectural wonder that was built using Wird to manipulate the surrounding natural stone and wood. The first tier is the under-city, a place nearly as dark as the Deep, while the second level rests upon elevated platforms and remains exposed to the hollow sky. Her battlements were formed from the nearby rock, altered to rise from the water to some ninety feet into the air. While the fortress walls do not keep the water out, they do serve to enclose and shield the columns and support struts that hold aloft the platforms of the city.

The ground level of Cry-Star remains on the water surface, partly submerged beneath one to two feet of water. While there are no buildings proper, there are elevated roads and bridges that span the numerous chasms, facilitating herd traffic through the city's underbelly. Cry-Star law prohibits the sale of animals or passage of caravans on the platforms; they must be conducted along plateau roads. Apart from these roads and the support pillars for the platforms above, there are slightly elevated and dry forums that serve as animal and butcher yards.

Because these represent the only dry avenues on the first level of the city, the sides of the wide roads serve as the sleeping ground for the Fallen that reside within Cry-Star. Tents, make-shift homes, carts laden with cheap (and probably stolen) merchandise, sleeping rugs and a variety of refuse litter the roads, allowing animal packs to move through the area in single file alone. It is a foul and rank-smelling place, for the water is polluted with the waste of the city above. This does not stop hundreds of people from scouring through the shallow lake in search for meagre morsels of food and tradable commodities. Many die each year from disease or drowning in the latticework of chasms.

Neighbourhoods are built upon large rock platforms elevated some forty feet by thick columns and braces. This has created a dark underside beneath the platforms, a place illuminated by torches and glow moss. The massive struts and support beams used to distribute the weight of the platforms also serve as homes for those Fallen who are able to clamber up the pillars. Large nets span the space in-between struts, serving as communal hammocks for entire clans and families. If the plight of the Fallen

can be best demonstrated, it is here, in the place where Cry-Star throws her waste.

The second-tier of Cry-Star is the neighbourhoods built upon the hundreds of platforms measuring at least twenty feet thick. Since little was done in the way of urban planning, the streets and passages are laid out in chaotic fashion, sometimes stretching on endlessly, sometimes zigzagging like shattered bone. The narrow streets are blanketed by buildings ranging in height from two to eight stories, and their architecture differs according to the era in which they were built and the ruling persona of the time. Rising from this disorganized puzzle of platforms are launch towers, spires that soar some hundred feet into the air, above the city walls, allowing gliders the proper height from which to take flight.

Considered to be the flagship city for the Alliance of Kings, Cry-Star is one of the largest cities on Providence, second only to Bone-Wail. As the first prison camp established, and the first to be liberated, it has a long and proud history that mirrors the struggles of the past two millennia. First born as a Warden prison facility under House Andracka, it was eventually liberated by that family and ruled by their dynasty for several generations. While the ruling houses changed at odd intervals, the priority of Cry-Star never did. It was the first city to become free, and it pledged it would be the last city to fall at the end of the ages; every ruler who has ever needed the support of his citizens has always reaffirmed this promise. It is tradition.

Currently, Cry-Star is ruled by King Gunther of the Sallusturm Chapter, Troupial Eagle. Although it does not fall under the name of Andracka, Gunther's Kladsbea Dynasty is tied to the First Liberators (as this Warden family became known), and proudly traces their lineage to the Sallusturm Knights that fought within the Grand Rebellion. Although the Kladsbea line has been afflicted with several weak rulers, Gunther represents the first of what people hope will be a strong line of kings and queens.

Supporting King Gunther's rule is the Royal House Danlinon of Troupial Hawk and advisors from House Karistikant of Troupial Dragon. Nowhere else, apart from Cliff-Spider, is the caste system enforced as heavily or seriously.

PROVIDENCE

This facilitated the growth of several regional fishing villages, something the swamp-infested periphery of Alegerra Sea does not allow.

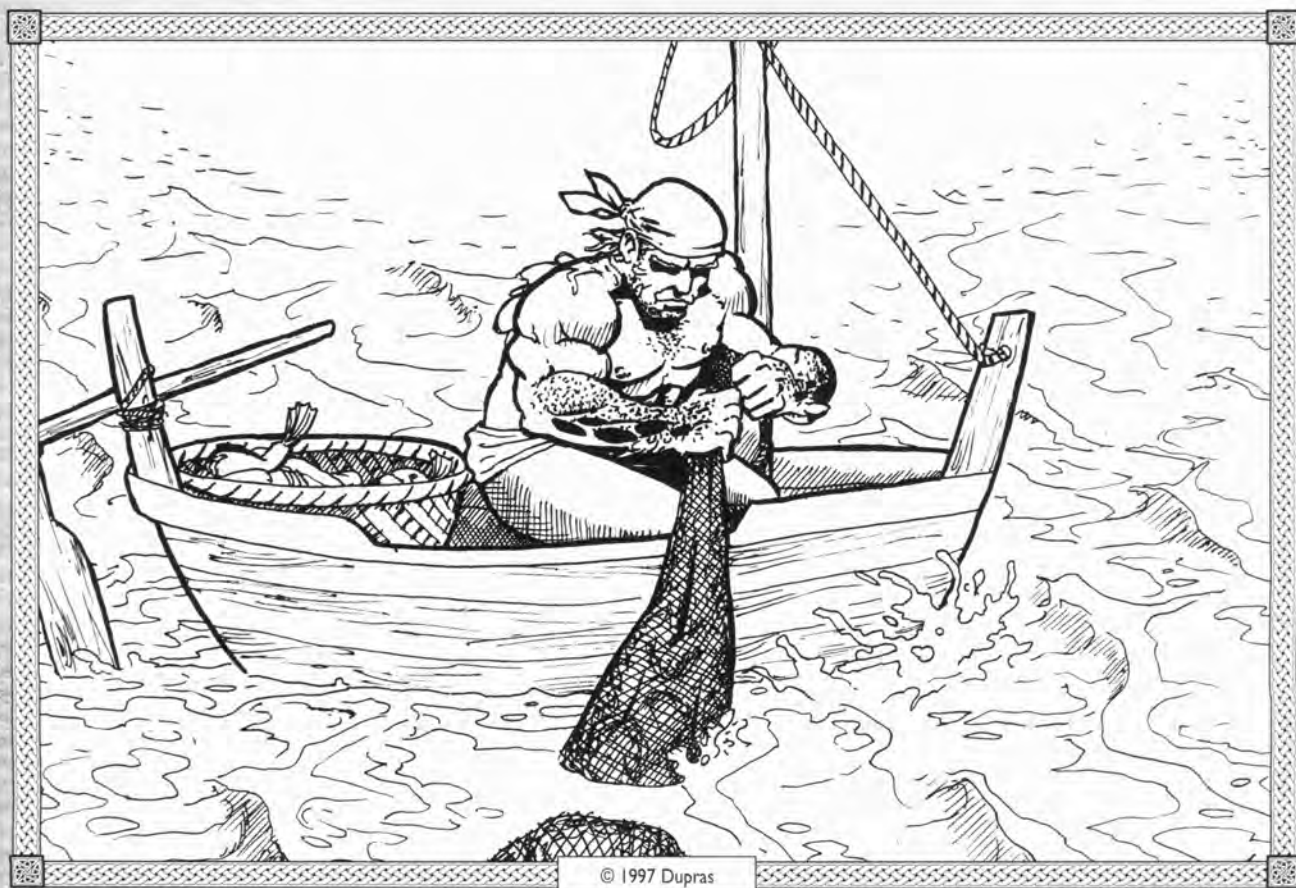
Second, the Crysarius Sea is also the first body of water that the exiles encountered, and the first avenue of exploration to the world beyond the Exodus Plains. It is for this reason that it contains no less than three major cities upon its shores (Cry-Star, Water-Sister & Haak San Bazaa).

Finally, Crysarius is simply a beautiful body of water. It is a warm green fresh water sea, highlighted by a backdrop of lush jungle, where Colourfish dance below the surface and beds of coral alight the bottom like an alien garden. While there are a couple of predator species, it is nowhere near as dangerous or as dark as the shallower Alegerra.

One of the most prominent features about the Crysarius Sea is the number of small islands that litter her picturesque surface. When Leviathan's Spire collapsed, creating the mountain chain of the same name, some of the debris fell into the sea, creating the Pendulum Island Chains. While most of Exodus Plains and Crysarius is well explored, the hundreds of small and large islands have yet to be

explored properly. The mystery surrounding them has to do with the Blood Spore Contagion that originated from one of the islands, leaving explorers a bit reticent to investigate a region so fraught with death.

Crysarius is large enough that it borders several of the larger regions including the Tyon Expanse, the Exodus Plains and the Green Barrens. Because it is used as the launch point for expeditions into the less-explored peripheries of Providence, a number of outpost towns have developed along the shores of the sea. Their economic livelihood is based on fishing, and as trading outposts for the caravans that frequent the regions. Those villages bordering the Deep jungle, however, have recently been evacuated due to the threat of flooding. The Sunderlands are continually expanding. They are now within a couple of hundred miles to the east of Crysarius' shores and on the verge of connecting with the Bassomin river. When this occurs, the Sunderlands will flood the Crysarius and force the sea level up to dangerous heights.



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CRY-STAR PLATEAUS

When Leviathan's Spine fell, an enormous but solid section of rock debris broke into two pieces upon collision with the ground. The portion which remained on the shore of Crysarius created Mt. Ailodon, while the other half slid into the sea, elevating the water levels in the surrounding regions. This created a 100 mile section of coast bordered by a sheer cliff face some three-quarters of a mile in height. If ever the magnitude of the collapse of the spire could be felt, it is here, looming over the coast like a silent sentinel.

Over the millennia, a giant lake has formed on Mt. Ailodon, creating a thunderous waterfall that plummets for three-quarters of a mile before hitting the lake below. The lake's source of water is unknown. This thunderous fall has eaten away at the partly submerged portion of Leviathan's Spine, cracking the rock and creating hundreds of islands submerged beneath a few feet of water. These small plateaus are divided by a web of chasms, some of which descend for several hundred feet, past the ancient section of rock, to the very lake floor. It is upon this puzzle-like topography that Cry-Star was built.

ISLE OF THE EYE

The prominent island of the Crysarius (and not linked with the Pendulum Island Chain), the Isle of the Eye is one of the most well-defended positions the Alliance of Kings possesses. From its discovery, the island itself was hotly contested, since several of the Warden Families immediately tried to claim it. According to the legends, each Warden chose a prisoner to act as his champion, to fight for the right to possess the isle. Although the prisoners resisted at first, they were forced into combat on the threat that if they did not participate, they would watch their families die. Rather than give the Wardens their satisfaction, each of the champions committed suicide on the field of battle when all had gathered. The Wardens, without missing a beat, awarded the island to the person whose champion died the most quietly.

Despite this ominous start, the almost tranquil and lush island prison proved to be the least harsh of the colonies. The Connix Family was a large group to begin with, and the problems that the other prisons ran into with inbred abominations was not experienced here. As a matter of fact, the Warden's idea of running a penal colony was to prevent the prisoners from escaping, but also to leave them to their ministrations. While the Connix did not help the exiles, neither did they continually attempt to crush their spirit. It is interesting to note that a large percentage of Pure Yas'Wailians can trace a portion of their heritage to this penal colony.

Water-Sister

Function: Alliance of Kings, Artisan City

Population: 670,000

Ruler: Watcher Preventine

Ruling Troupials: Dove, Hawk, Raven

If there is one place in Providence where Yas'Wailians have made an effort to coexist peacefully with the world, it is here, in Water-Sister. Built out of the very thick of the jungle, it has managed to grow without destroying the local ecology. This is due, in part, to the strong influence of the Wird Weavers and the simple style of living which is heavily encouraged by the ruling Troupials.

Perhaps a natural extension of the beauty which surrounds her, Water-Sister is known as the artisan city for the Alliance. The arts, which are considered to be as important as any science, are taught in the local schools, and it is this appreciation of beauty which is evident within the eco-architecture of the city. While this has given it the reputation of being weak in the face of adversity, the fact remains that the population is a hardy lot for their ability to survive off the land.

Water-Sister has been built using the jungle to support a network of multilevel platforms and connecting ramps and stairs. Since Wird was used to fashion the architecture, special care was made to create the platforms and buildings by manipulating the trees into specific shapes without harming them. The main fortifications and the ground structures were built using the surface rock, without disrupting the roots of the trees. Many of the other cities allowed their tree-homes to die, but those built on the Isle of the Eye are continually nurtured and encouraged through Wird to blossom. Some believe that this continual support has actually made the jungles upon this isle too dependent on spells. Were that support removed, the jungle would surely die. Whether this assumption holds any truth is unknown, but the fact remains that the Isle of the Eye is an empowered place where Wird suffuses everything living. It is perhaps for this reason that more Wird Weavers come from this place than any others.

The ruler of Water-Sister is Preventine of Troupial Dove, a powerful Wird Weaver who has adopted the title of Watcher. As the head of the Koriarill House, her family has ruled the city with a strong line of Watchers since the Wardens were overthrown so many centuries ago. Although she is not as strong a ruler as her mother, she has still managed to keep the city a pivotal player within the Alliance hierarchy. Unfortunately, she is at odds with Regent Caiylus over the continued validity of the current caste system. In addition to the injustice she feels it engenders against the Fallen, she also believes it has given the Guilds too much power. The only reason she has not completely disbanded the castes within Water-Sister is because of the strong presence of other Doves and Hawks who strongly support the status quo. Only the presence of House Skoraa and its charismatic Raven leader Wayson has prevented all the power from shifting away from Watcher Preventine.

The Isle of the Eye still remains, to this day, a lush jungle paradise that appears virtually unsoiled by Yas'Wailian hands. This is a testament to the prisoners, who learned to live off the land and not squander their valuable resources during the generations of incarceration. As a result, many naturally talented Wird Weavers emerge from the island, as well as those Shards whose powers are centred around nature. It is a tranquil place, with very little in the way of fierce predators (most were eliminated during the prison days) or a dangerous ecology. Many people believe that this has made the people of this island complacent and weak, but they mistake a casual demeanour for a weak fighting spirit.

Entirely self-sufficient, the Isle of the Eye has enough resources to maintain a small population base indefinitely. Between groves of fruit trees, a large number of mammalian herbivores and the fresh water of the Crysarius, there is little lacking in basic necessities. While various commodities such as specific brands of fabrics, earthenware and grains have to be shipped in, many of these are luxury items that the populace can do without if necessary.

PENDLUM ISLAND CHAIN

Although the Crysarius was one of the first resources exploited, the Pendlum Isles are the only portions of this region never fully explored. This can be traced back to the Blood Spore Contagion, and the near-paranoid fear of stumbling across another disease far worse than the one encountered several centuries ago. By the edict of the Alliance of Kings and the Merchant Band of Haak San Bazaa, no ships are allowed to anchor off these islands. Any that do and are discovered, are sunk without question or mercy.

The islands of the Pendlum Sea Chain were formed from the debris of the Leviathan's Spire collapse, and number at four main islands, ten secondary ones and a number of smaller island fragments. All of them are covered by a canopy of jungle that masks them almost entirely.

The main islands as well as half of the secondary ones had already been fully explored and settled prior to the Blood Spore incident. Following the contagion, however, those villages and settlements which did survive the plague were evacuated and left abandoned. While it is rumoured that some still remain, inhabited by the ancestors of villagers who refused to leave, the Alliance and Haak San Bazaa find it very unlikely that contact would be severed for so long.

Currently, the islands are silent and ominous markers on the Crysarius. Their names remain only to help guide the boats and ships around them, but they are lost to the majority of the populace. While the Alliance and the

Merchant Bands of Haak San Bazaa prefer to keep this the norm, a rumour possibly bearing some truth has surfaced. It claims that one of the lost colonies, Sun-Spar, may actually be located on one of the secondary islands. A recent discovery that the water levels of the Crysarius have been slowly rising has led some to believe that a few of the islands may have actually been connected to the shore at one time. This could account for the inaccuracy of the maps that the explorers used when they went to find this lost colony. Why the colony would have remained quiet for so long is a mystery, however, one the Alliance is willing to keep unanswered. Despite numerous petitions by hardened adventurers to explore potential islands for Sun-Spar, the Alliance of Kings has turned a deaf ear to their requests. This has forced some to break the mandate of the two local powers in order to explore the chain secretly.

ALEGERRA SEA

The Alegerra was originally a jungle basin filled in by the waterfalls coming out of the Sky-Torrent Spire. Eventually, the sea began overflowing the rim of the basin, creating the Pincer rivers to the north, and the vast swampland surrounding the sea. While it is smaller than the Crysarius, the Alegerra is considered far more dangerous, and sports a number of predator species. The swamps are renowned for the variety of poisonous reptiles living there.

The most dangerous aspect of the sea is the fact that the Alegerra and the surrounding swamps are all the domain of the adversarial Green People. Their tribes are scattered throughout the region, and their eyes are everywhere the trees and plants are. Their places of habitation are not limited to the surface either; for this Lost Tribe is also known to live beneath the water.

The most prominent feature of the Alegerra is the massive Sky-Torrent Spire, a bridge of rock that emerges from the sea, and arches its way towards the Tyon Expanse. From cave mouths several miles up the face of the spire, water cascades and tumbles down the remaining length of the bridge, emptying into the sea with a deafening roar and enough force to crack the skull of anything caught beneath it. It is a decidedly deadly beauty.

The borders of the sea keep changing, for the water levels continue to rise slowly every year. To make matters worse, the swamps wipe away any attempt at marking the shoreline from the jungle, and all endeavors to map the region prove to be nothing more than exercises in futility. No two maps of the area concur on any border; everything is up

to interpretation within the domain of the Alegerra. The only place this does not hold true is at the periphery of the sea with Athrin's Desert. Here, several dozen feet of the basin walls still remain exposed, separating the sea from the desert. At the east and west points, where the walls have overflowed, a lush jungle slowly fades into Providence's only desert (see Athrin's Desert for more information).

Despite the rising water-levels, a number of dry islands still remain at the junction of the sea and her two rivers. Most of these are expected to become swamps over the coming decade, except for Tiballa, a mountainous jungle known also as the Isle of the Green People. It should remain an island, albeit a shrinking one, for the next several centuries if the Sunderlands' flood does not join with the Alegerra. There is the possibility that will happen within the next couple of years.

SKY-TORRENT BRIDGE

The spire known as Sky-Torrent has never truly been explored, for the Green People have always killed anyone intruding upon their territory. The spire itself is a column of rock over a hundred miles in diameter that forms a bridge to the nearby Tyon Expanse. It is the shortest of the Gods' Teeth, but one of the most beautiful because of the waterfalls that cascade from it. Its opposite end, however, is cursed with volcanic activity, and spews a thick lava over the nearby terrain. People fear that should it ever explode, the blast would destroy much of the nearby jungle and fill the globe with ash.

It is believed that the tunnels and passages that lace the Alegerra portion of Sky-Torrent are filled with water for the first several miles, thus accounting for the steady waterfalls. What could create enough pressure to force liquid through the spire, as well as where it may be coming from are both mysteries, and will likely remain so in the years to come. The end result is that three large cave openings at the two, three and three-and-a-half mile mark spew out a stream of water that falls and races along the rock until it finally ends in the Alegerra Sea. This source of erosion has exposed several veins of water, creating additional but much smaller falls along the various sides of the spire. Even at a distance the rumble of thunder is low and constant as it drums the ground. The base is shrouded by mist, and the spire's lower extremities are covered in a skirt of glittering white. At a distance, the beauty of Sky-Torrent is misleadingly innocent.

Upon closer approach (if one successfully manages to avoid the Green People or their plant sentinels), the thunder of the falls is enough to deafen people, and the



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vibrations through the ground send shivers of aching numbness through the feet and shins. The ever-present mists blind the world for miles around, and puts a damp chill into the air that quickly soaks through clothing and bone. Nobody approaches within a mile of the falls by boat or flight, for the water falls with the weight of rocks, and hammers the sea below.

A mile is the closest anyone has ever managed to approach Sky-Torrent, for either the waterfalls or the Green People eventually hamper their journey. With the exception of the regional Lost Tribe, nobody has ever touched the rocky surface of this portion of the spire. It remains a deadly enigma of tantalizing beauty.

throughout the world. It fits the saying that: "On Providence, there is no death, only evolution." While people do not believe in this for themselves, they know that the plants and animals seemed to be geared around this philosophy. That which cannot find refuge within the thick canopy of the fertile swamps, or beneath the waters of the Alegerra, finds safety elsewhere.

Few people have ever successfully explored this area, for the swamps keep a tight grip on their secrets. The waters remain obscured and dark, unlike the clear waters of the Crysarius, and a layer of moss grows on the surface, deceiving those on foot into believing the land extends further than it actually does. Ancient trees remain partly submerged, their roots oddly crooked and extending out of the waters like a diver coming up for breath. Away from the din of the Sky-Torrent Falls, the swamp is an eerie and silent place, where nature comes to die.

What frightens people even more about the swamps of the Alegerra is that they also hide Green People resting below the water. Taking air from the roots of trees, this Lost Tribe waits with the patience of the jungle, guarding the world around them and dispatching intruders with the

THE SWAMP RIM

The rim surrounding the Alegerra is a land half-flooded by the rising waters of the sea. While the deluge would normally have a detrimental effect on the balance of the region's ecology, the trees and animals of this area have shown the same high degree of adaptability found



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silence that the swamp demands. Few explorers are willing to uncover the hidden treasures of the region in the light of such a quick and silent enemy.

The Green People

It is unknown whether the Green People gather along familial, tribal or clannish lines, for no community has ever been observed for very long. It is not known if there is a city for this Lost Tribe; they believe in finding their proper niche in nature to live within, even if that means leaving friends and family behind. Thus far, Green People have been discovered in packs of 30-60 members, and always near dense concentrations of jungle. While they are not tied into a hive-mind like the Swarm Dancers, they are empathically linked to the surrounding green. Isolate them from that, and they are effectively blind to the nature of their kinsmen or the state of their home jungle.

Despite this seemingly disorganized mode of operating, the Green People are capable of working with larger groups. Authority in any situation is relegated to the eldest member of the gathering, and their ability to sense movement through the jungle gives them excellent tactical information. When they are not forced to organize together in this fashion, Green People gather according to where the balance between them and nature can be best struck, regardless of who is around them. Personal tastes are not a consideration in this matter.

Tiballa is considered off limits for all exploration. The Alliance and Wardens are not stupid enough to send a group into such an obvious deathtrap. Several species of regional plants can fire off toxic needles, some are capable of emitting scents which can calm or enrage an animal or Yas'Wailian, others secrete a sticky resin that traps whatever touches it, and quite a few are capable of shooting clouds of pollen which induce a variety of effects (from seizures to hallucinations). All these plants are linked to the Green People, and may be used individually, or all at once depending on what the Lost Tribe instructs.

Whatever the plants cannot deal with, the Green People confront directly, and eliminate.

ATHRIN'S DESERT

Although desert plateaus are common throughout Leviathan's Spine, Athrin's Desert is the only true section of sand-sea that Providence possesses. It was formed in the centuries following the collapse of Athrin's Spire, the only one within Providence that was not tethered to another base. It is believed that the fall of Leviathan's Spine somehow caused the collapse of this one as well, although this has not been confirmed in any way.

The collapse destroyed the neighbouring jungle, but also filled the air with heavy clouds of dust. Athrin's bridge seemed to be composed of a finer grain sediment than that of Leviathan's, and slowly disintegrated over the ages, forming the desert of the region. Its growth is currently being kept in check by the surrounding jungle, and by the swamplands of the Alegerra.

Not all of Athrin's Spire was composed of soft sediment; the base and central spine were of harder rock that have currently formed the mountain system around which the desert grew. While the dust was thick enough to coat the ground and prevent trees from growing, the same conditions don't exist on the mountains themselves. The jungles atop the high boulders are called the "Teasing Oasis," for they are the sole source of life within the choking desert. Even then, they are too high to be reached by those who cannot fly or are too weak to climb.

Travelling Athrin's Desert is a dangerous gambit, for the dust is akin to a fine silt that kicks up underfoot a bit too easily. Caravans and travellers can be seen from miles away because of the clouds of dust they produce, and people are known to dehydrate quickly within the moisture-absorbent sands. Resin goggles, a large supply of water, encompassing clothing and face masks are a necessity for surviving the trek

TIBALLA

The mountain-island of the Alegerra Sea is impressive in its own right, but loses its stature in the background of the Sky-Torrent Spire. Regardless, this bit of land is covered by a jungle canopy equally as thick as the darkest portions of the Deep, and calls itself home to the alien Green People. Essentially, the entire island is alive, a sentient mass of jungle made aware through contact with the Green People. When they grow agitated, it moves and shudders under an unfelt wind; when they are calm, it rests with tranquil ease. This is not to say that limbs are capable of reaching out and striking an opponent, or that it can see people moving through the jungle; merely that it feels when someone steps upon its fronds, cuts into a trunk or snaps a branch. It feels all these things, and it is capable of relaying this impression to the Green People with whom it shares a symbiotic link.

Weeping-Rock

Function: Abandoned Camp

Population: 0 (excluding the descendants of the Wardens' monstrous offspring).

Ruler: None

Ruling Troupials: None

Weeping-Rock represents the second entirely abandoned settlement on Providence. While neither Stone-Tree nor Weeping-Rock have been resettled due to the harsh environments surrounding them, the latter of the two also bears the stigma of being the site of a massacre instigated by the abominations.

The Waslanda Warden family ruled and their lineage was among the first to degenerate through Wird and inbreeding. Their descendants were born powerful but completely amoral monstrosities that nearly decimated the prison populations in outright massacres. Believed to have become fully corrupted into Blight Crows, these creatures killed hundreds trying to perfect the spells to leave Providence. Many vanished in the process, leading some to believe that they succeeded, but leaving behind the more stupid and ignorant of their ilk. Those creatures left in Weeping-Rock begat more monsters who, eventually, were nothing more than barbaric beasts of instinct. The multiple attempts by the Alliance to enter the colony and destroy the creatures met with failure, until eventually, Wird Weavers covered Weeping-Rock in a series of devastating sandstorms, drowning everything in dust.

Today, Weeping-Rock bears an ironic resemblance to her name, for she is a graveyard filled with tragic memories. Very few buildings actually break the placid dunes of sand, and almost none remain visible. Not even fortune hunters are willing to disturb the grounds of the former colony, for the story goes that not everyone was destroyed in the flood of the desert. There are still abominations that slumber beneath the warm sands, waiting for the chance to breathe air once again. The belief in these legends is strong enough that some settlements force their criminals to walk over the sleeping city at night, and wait for them on the other side. Those who have emerged are deemed innocent, but this is rare; many have simply vanished during their trek, swallowed up by either the night or the sands.

Weeping-Rock also seems to attract one of the greater Eloiborin Avatars, a beast known as War-Din. The larger avatars are known to hibernate for years on end, so appearances are rare enough. Where War-Din rests, or why it digs through the city when awake is unknown, but the few times he was seen, it was within the city, burrowing into the ground.

War-Din appears to be a mutated Tiger-Wolf with two heads and a body the size of an elephant. It has six legs of powerful muscle that allow it to dig in the sand and submerge itself within a matter of minutes. It is called War-Din because of its bellow, a low growl that can shake loose teeth and whip the sand around it into a whirlwind. Once it becomes obscured in this fashion, it begins moving with the speed of wind, a storm of teeth and claws that swiftly overtakes its enemies.



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across the dusty Athrin expanse. Flyers and well-equipped caravans are the best suited for the crossing.

Very little indigenous life marks this region as territory, for there is little water or food to subsist upon. Within the jungle blocks of Athrin's Web is an entirely different matter however; anything living there is trapped within a pocket Eden. Like the Shadow Falls, this area is a barren and desolate place that many find to be too alien for the likes of Providence. It is a world out of place.




ATHRIN'S WEB

Athrin's Web is the smallest of the two mountain chains. Most of its mass is thought to have been whittled away by the elements before the trees and vegetation eventually covered it entirely, protecting it from erosion. Like Leviathan's Spine, Athrin's Web is plagued with fissures, rifts, chasms, narrow corridors and exposed tunnels. The difference between the two, however, is that the passages in Athrin's Web are obstructed with crisscrossing roots and branches that tether the hundreds of rock formations together. Many refer to the growth within these canyons as the Sleeping Forest because the obstructions are horizontal.

Over the years, people travelling through the area have opened safe passages that cut through the mountain terrain. The better known and less hazardous routes are used by merchant caravans to ferry trade from the communities of the Tyon Expanse to the cities along the Crysarius. The remainder of the traversable corridors, inhabited primarily by Tiger-Wolves and other beasts, are used only under the most dire of conditions.

Travel through the passages and corridors is far easier than trying to go over the mountain. Because Athrin's Web is actually a series of enormous rocks that shattered when they fell, the cliff walls are steep and treacherous, preventing the use of pack animals, and daunting all but the flyers. There is no central body of the collapsed spire that remains, which means travel through Athrin's Web is far quicker than vaulting over the mountains (because of the amount of times one climbs and descends slopes, mountain exploration is called vaulting).

Despite the difficulty of the mountainous terrain and the surrounding desert, Athrin's Web is also the site of an abandoned prison camp, that of Weeping-Rock. Few approach this cursed place, for it harbours too many dark secrets better left in slumber.

THE DEEP

Stories are told of the days when the exiles still lived on distant Yas'Wail, staring at a clear sky, surrounded by oceans that dwarfed the Crysarius like a dust mote in a desert. These oceans were said to be miles deep, places of unfathomable darkness and great weight, a strange and alien world beneath a placid surface. Perhaps it is for this reason that the term "Deep" was then ascribed to the jungles of Providence, for they were oceans of trees beneath which the darkness ruled supreme and weighed heavily upon the heart. Beneath the canopy of leaves and branches rested a foreign realm ruled by its own laws and intrigued with its own set of enigmas.

While the jungles of the Deep vary in intensity, the term has come to mean those sections of the forested world which have proven hostile to the exiles. Whether the danger stems from the very nature of the surroundings or because it is territory controlled by the Lost Tribes, the fact remains that these dark places are to be feared.

The Deep constitutes the greatest single area of Providence that remains unexplored. It also happens to be the largest region in the world, but only by virtue of what people fear from it rather than actual topographical considerations. The fringes of the jungle bordering the Tyon Expanse, the Alegerra Sea, Pincer Swamp, Athrin's Desert and the Green Barrens are thinner, and neither as dark nor ominous as the thick interior. Many settlements and outposts exist along these strips of land. As one enters the wilder portions of the Deep, the jungle becomes thick enough to block out the light of the sun, and silent enough to quiet the world.

Immense trees born at the beginning of the world form high cathedral pillars and domes of branches in the darkness beneath the canopy. The surface is hard, cold and devoid of smaller shrubs or greenery that might otherwise soften the landscape; giant roots break from the seemingly barren ground like snakes frozen in their death throes, creating a labyrinth of thick bridges and arches that can lose even the most veteran of explorers. It is not a place that easily forgives mistakes.

Despite the ominous tone which many ascribe to the Deep, there are sections where the vegetation is sparse or completely gone because of the shadow that the Moaning Bridge spire leaves behind. Brave caravans and explorers often use this clear strip of land to travel into the heart of the Deep or to cut their travel time down. With the increasing tensions between the Lost Tribes and the city-states, however, the Shadow Falls are being used less often.

Bastion

Function: Trade City

Population: 6.7 million (normally 2.1)

Ruler: Mercantile Council

Ruling Troupials: Dragon, Bat, Rat

Formally known as Snake-Limb, this penal colony had been named after the massive vines that were a predominant feature of the local jungle. It, along with Leaf-Roof, which was later renamed Sun Guard, were built as companion cities less than a hundred miles apart. Considering the distance between all of the other penal colonies, these two were practically bosom settlements.

Eventually, the emancipation came for both communities, not as a matter of principle or philosophical belief, but out of necessity. An Elothorin Avatar later known as Sky-Spite had claimed the region as its own, but due to its enormous size it spent centuries in hibernation between days of full cognizance. It was during one such moment of consciousness that it attacked both communities, destroying many of the Wardens and all but decimating the population. Those who survived the attack, Warden and prisoner alike, banded together to form a mutual alliance.

Following the re-establishment of contact with the other, now-liberated colonies, Bastion was renamed for the fact that it was almost entirely dedicated to the Iblit, while Sun Guard remained under the control of the Seraph. This voluntary segregation had nothing to do with any sort of racial animosity. It was simply done because the Troupials believed they needed to reunite themselves after several centuries of forced separation. The second point in which these two neighbouring communities differed eventually came during the Crucible when Bastion remained independent of the Alliance. It chose to become a mercantile city, like Haak San Bazaa, to reflect its now unique nature.

Despite the differences that mark both cities, Sun Guard and Bastion had always maintained friendly relations, assisted one another in times of trouble and even participated in one another's festivals and games. It is therefore not surprising that Bastion became the refugee centre for those who evacuated Sun Guard and the dozens of towns and settlements being threatened by the flood.

With the sudden population boom, Bastion has become overcrowded and surrounded by a shantytown that now dwarfs the city proper; it is filled to the point of bursting. Although Bastion's citizens pride themselves on their hospitality, even that is wearing down to a dangerously thin point. The Alliance has offered what help it can, but Bastion knows that the price comes with the expectation that it will join the Alliance of Kings. Bastion's Merchant Bands are currently in discussion as to their next course of action, but being the city closest to Aerie's presumed location and therefore the first target of the White Crow, they may need to ally themselves with the Alliance of Kings as a measure of self-defense.

SUNDERLANDS

The only portion of the Deep that the population of the city-states have become completely familiar with are the Sunderlands. An area of increasing size, this is a region of jungle where the ground has broken open or collapsed in upon itself over an area of several hundred miles. The floor has been completely upended and cracked into huge islands that float upon the rivers of water spilling from the ground. The inundation is not a tranquil one either, for massive pressure forces the water nearly a hundred feet into the air like a geyser, filling the sky with mist clouds.

The Sunderlands are a recent phenomenon attributed to Wird side effects known as Retributions. Unlike other natural disasters, this one shows no sign of relenting and continues to flood the nearby regions with an increasing volume of water. While the disaster has adversely affected the region's ecology, killing uncounted numbers of animals and forcing the evacuation of several dozen fringe communities, the Serpenkine have taken the worst of it.

The Sunderlands opened in the heart of their territory, displacing communities and dividing this Lost Tribe into two factions. The first believes that the flood is the work of Elothorin Avatars and has cemented a compact between themselves and the Alliance of Kings. The second group believes that all Yas'Wailians are responsible for this disaster, and have sided with the White Crow and Green People in their renewed push to destroy those whom they consider invaders.

In the meanwhile, the Sunderlands continue to increase in size, turning jungle into swamps and swamps into an island-filled lake. The entire area would be evacuated and left alone if not for the rumours concerning a possible gate hidden on the periphery of the flood plains.

THE GREEN BARRENS

A fairly large area bordering Leviathan's Spine, the Green Barrens are the second-most populated section of Providence next to the Exodus Plain. In addition to possessing Bastion and Sun Guard, they also contain a great number of growing communities, villages and towns. The jungle system within the Barrens is *not* thick, but it is even throughout the entire region, hindering traffic through all but a few paved roadways.

The flood of the Sunderlands has touched upon the Green Barrens, claiming the Alliance city of Sun Guard, and threatening Bastion. Refugees from both cities have cut a

swath through the jungle, creating makeshift communities along the way for those who could not travel far (the infirm, the elderly, the ill, etc.). As the first line of defense against any incursion from within the Deep, numerous outposts have sprung up along the borders of the two regions, and patrols have increased dramatically. The Alliance has even taken to drafting all able-bodied men and women from the regional communities to supplement their depleted forces.

Rumours abound that the Alliance of Kings is thinking of separating the lands of the Deep from the Green Barrens and the Tyon Expanse through massive earth walls. While this amount of Wird manipulation will certainly engender a massive feedback disaster through a Retribution, the Alliance is almost ready to consider this an acceptable price to pay.

caravan route. This spire is worn and shows signs of decay through the many small holes that pierce its flanks. Wind moving through these openings creates an eerie whistling that can be heard in the jungles below. Coupled with the creeper vines that crawl up the surface of its two bases, and the fact that both sides rest on the periphery of the Deep, it is not surprising that the entire spire is considered haunted. It has an abandoned look, like an old swamp mansion after 20 years of neglect.

The fact that it passes over several hundred miles of the Deep is also considered fortunate for traders. Its shadow cuts through the jungle, shortening the travel time by a week or more. While people are superstitious where it concerns the Moaning Bridge, this has not prevented the growth of several large settlements on the periphery of its shadow. Known as Eclipse Communities, they make their business as trading outposts for the numerous caravans coming from or entering nearby Bastion.

MOANING BRIDGE

There is no other place on this world that frightens people more than the Moaning Bridge, the smallest of the spires. Within its shadow, however, there is also no better



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PINCER SWAMP

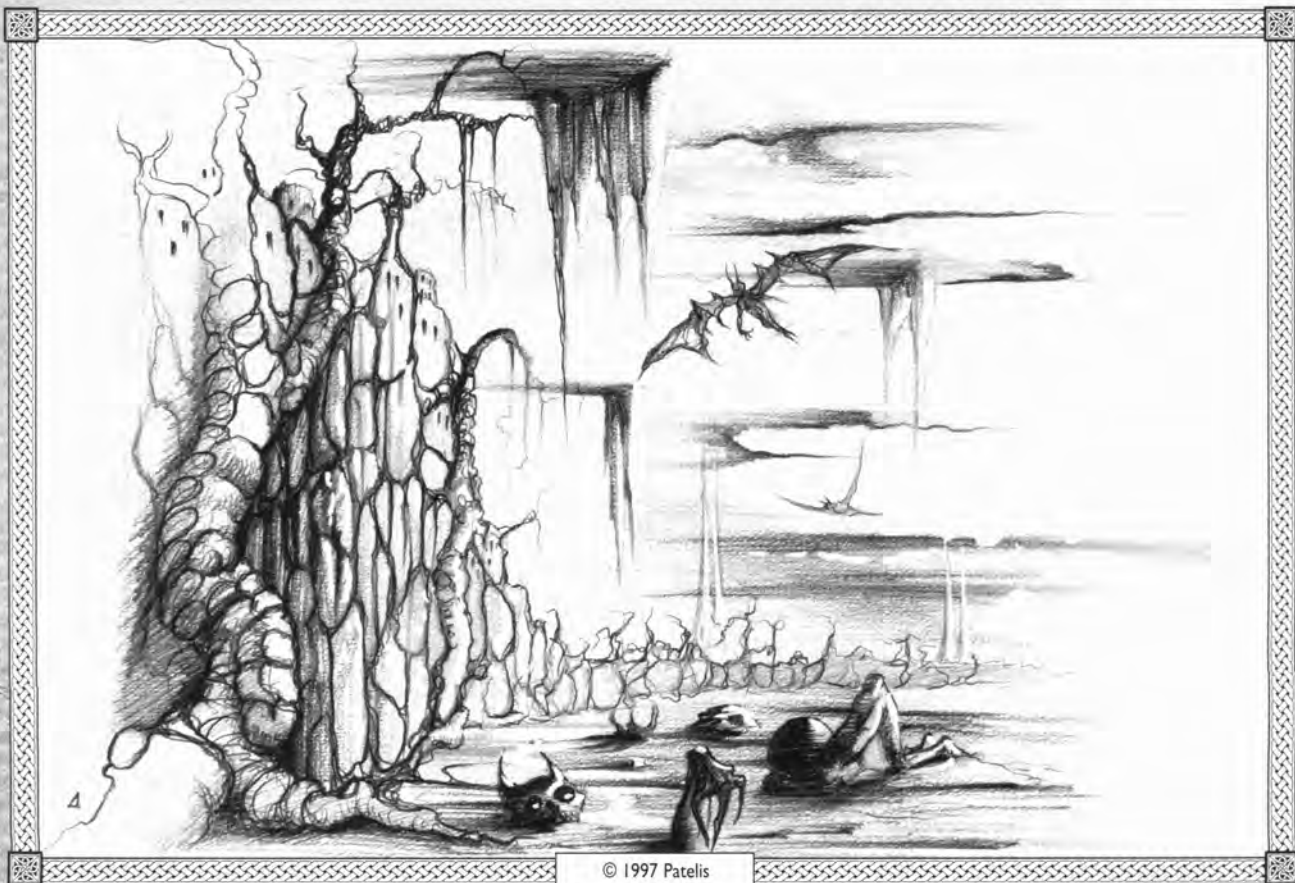
There are very few regions within the explored portions of Providence that are considered as dangerous as the dark environs of Pincer Swamp. Located between the two arms of the Alegerra's rivers, this stretch of wetland epitomizes nightmares brought to life for many people.

The true jungle floor rests somewhere beneath 30 feet of swamp water, but that does not prevent giant trees from emerging silently from the dark oily surface to cover the sky above. Hidden roots snag the bottoms of boats while thick lily pads hide the undefined territory between deep water and slightly elevated shore. What makes the land far more dangerous are the numerous species of poisonous reptiles and snakes that infest the area. Some often joke that there are so many species of snakes in Pincer Swamps, that one will never be bitten by the same type of snake more than once (and often, once is enough).

BONE-WAIL FOREST

The land surrounding the base of Leviathan's Spine was once described as "a land where thousands of dead, bony fingers break out of the ground to claw at the sky." It is not far from the truth. The Bone-Wail Forest was formed thousands of years ago, when the eruption which felled the region's spire buried the jungle around it in a hail of ash and pumice. The trees surrounding the base died that day, leaving behind petrified corpses in poses of perpetual agony. Their leaves were seared away, their branches were left bare as they stretched into the hollow sky.

None of the Lost Tribes will approach this place, for it is the deadest portion of Providence, a great scar that will never regain sensation. Even Wird seems hollow and somewhat barren in Bone-Wail Forest, far more so than in any Shadow's Fall. Over the centuries, the prime city of the region, Bone-Wail, has used Wird to augment the twisted forms of the trees, creating a maze of thorny branches through which ground and air passage is possible only through limited paths. Because the Green People are unable to affect the petrified forest, Bone-Wail is considered one of the best fortified locations within Providence, following Aerie and Cliff-Spider.



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TYON EXPANSE

The Tyon Expanse is a large stretch of jungle that nearly rivals the Deep with the thickness of its canopy and sheer density. Unlike most portions of Providence, however, this area was the least lethal to explore. The number of landmarks and the shores of the Crysarius, which constitute the entire northern border of the expanse, facilitated exploration of the region, perhaps making it the second-most well-known area next to the Exodus Plains.

What has impeded the settlement of this region is the thickness of the forest, which hampers caravan traffic greatly. Most communities are located along the shores of the Crysarius or on the edge of the shadow of the Crysarius Bridge Spire whose base is within the expanse. The largest of these communities is Haak San Bazaa on the Pateryn Peninsula, a trading city which supplies a majority of the seaside towns with their essential commodities. This situation has left vast portions of the interior undisturbed, or inhabited by wild tribes of Bats, Rats and Gargoyles.

The Tyon Expanse holds two different spires within its region, the first being the aforementioned Crysarius Bridge and the second being the lit end of the Sky-Torrent Bridge. The term "lit" is being used by the population to indicate the volcanic activity which is troubling the region.

THE TWO BRIDGES

The first of the two spires located within the Tyon Expanse is the Crysarius Bridge, whose opposite end serves as home to Cliff-Spider. The success that this Alliance city has enjoyed while living within the spire has prompted some communities to explore this portion of the bridge in order to do the same.

Currently, several independent settlements have taken possession of various sections of the spire, prompting a territorial war between the factions. The Alliance would interfere if it could, but it has more pressing problems to solve. Unfortunately, the settlement of Diorkai has approached the Wardens for help. In exchange for their assistance in procuring this end of the Crysarius Bridge, Diorkai has offered their services as Wardens over what would be a penal colony of its captured enemies (i.e. the surrounding communities).

The other towns have learned of Diorkai's plans and are beseeching the Alliance for help, but Regent Caiylus has clearly stated that she will not help these warring factions unless they pledge fealty to the Alliance. In this manner, the Wardens would be unable to move against them due to the

Bone-Wail

Function: Prime Warden City

Population: 8.6 million

Ruler: Warden Elarian

Ruling Troupials: Dragon, Eagle, Raven

Bone-Wail represents the city with the longest running dynasty of uninterrupted rule, that of Troupial Dragon's Puradanum Household. Having maintained control over the penal colony of Bone-Wail as Wardens for the last two millennia, some wonder if the line between prison camp and dictatorship has not been crossed at some point in history. The fact that nearly 7 million people have remained prisoners for so many generations amazes many, but others believe that this has occurred because slavery has become so ingrained into the social fabric of Bone-Wail's exiles that it is now a part of their nature and identity. It is no longer a prison sentence, but an obligation that the citizens themselves force upon each other. To do otherwise is both unthinkable and frightening. Who else would tell the populace what to think or what is right or wrong if the Wardens were not present to enforce the law?

Bone-Wail is the largest city on Providence, with the exception of Bastion, whose population is more of a refugee problem. It is an imposing fortress locked behind thick walls which dwarf the normally large forest surrounding it, and sectioned off into Labour Districts by equally large battlements. People are born, live their lives and die without ever leaving the protection of their districts; that is how well enforced it remains. This serves to isolate the prison population, prevents them from establishing contact with anyone outside their districts, and helps the Wardens quell the odd revolt here and there without worrying about it spreading to other areas.

The Wardens, the guards and their Freedstock assistants (prisoners who have earned partial freedom in their service to Bone-Wail), live within the walled-city, a series of buildings, palaces and homes built within the top half of the district battlements. They can be seen from the outside as windows and towers set into the walls.

One of the most predominant features about Bone-Wail is their inhuman militia. All guards are required to become Ravagers, a painful process which manages to obliterate an individual's sense of morals and values, making them completely subservient to the Wardens. Some prisoners are forced into an even more violent change that turns them into Ward Dogs, mindless beasts that could absorb Wild spells and redirect it with cunning efficiency. They can be seen everywhere within Bone-Wail, patrolling the city streets, keeping watch from the top of the lofty battlements or from within the walled city.

While the Puradanum rule Bone-Wail, they are assisted by those of Troupial Eagle's Coblaskan household. Having lost Green-Deep, the Coblaskan family was forced to become a subordinate house to that of Puradanum. There have been rumours that the two families work efficiently with one another, but will use the odd occasion to try to tip the balance of power away from the other. There is even talk that the Coblaskan recently attempted unsuccessfully to launch a coup against their "boss," but failed, sealing the fate of the family's elders. It appears true, as no Coblaskan elder seems older than 25, and all serve as assistants to the ruling Wardens.

Haak San Bazaa

Function: Trade City

Population: 3.4 million

Ruler: Mercantile Council

Ruling Troupials: Raven, Dove, Rat

Haak San Bazaa, formerly known as the prison colony Red-Mud, is considered the most tenacious city in Providence. It was destroyed twice, once due to floods caused by Water-Sister and Cry-Star, and once because of the fire that Sky-Spite rained down from the sky. Both times she rebuilt herself from the ground up, and both times she refused the help of others.

Ever since her liberation, Haak San Bazaa has remained completely independent for very specific and misunderstood reasons. What the Alliance regards as a stubborn streak, the citizens regard as a respect for the basic freedoms that everyone enjoys. Haak San Bazaa supports the solidarity of the Alliance of Kings but they disapprove of the caste system. This has been the primary obstacle to uniting the Mercantile Bands and the Alliance of Kings.

Haak San Bazaa is situated on the tip of the Pateryn Peninsula, facing the Pendulum Island Chain. The major part of the city is built on a dry section of land on the peninsula; the rest is built on massive platforms supported by thick stilts and connected to one another through a series of elevated ramps. Each of these platforms is considered a neighbourhood run by one of the Mercantile Bands, much the same as Bastion (for more information, read the Mercantile Bands section of the *Factions* Chapter).

From the ground, Haak San Bazaa looks like a bodge podge assembly of buildings and homes, but from the sky, the intent behind its design is obvious. Because the city was destroyed twice, the builders had the opportunity to learn from previous mistakes and implement the proper changes. Haak San Bazaa is organized perfectly for the needs of the community.

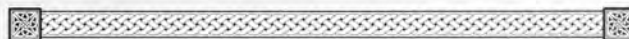
The centre of the city is a circular platform some 300 yards in diameter, with the Mercantile Pavilion in its centre. Surrounding it are other official buildings such as the port authority, the Raven's Grand Repository and the trading commission. Four slightly smaller platforms which are devoid of buildings are attached to the central one along each of the compass points; two of them serve as open-air bazaars, while the other two are docks. Extending from them are four waterways that connect to the open swamp or sea. These waterways are large enough to be used by the largest ships in Providence, the Alliance Scorpion Galleons, allowing them to dispense their wares at the docks or pickup supplies from the bazaars. It should be noted that the water pathways are equipped at regular intervals with blockers and spikes which can be swung out to damage the hull of intruding ships.

Beyond this central area, the platforms are built in a triangular shape so that they economize space better. The rest of the city is divided into four wedge-shaped districts expanding outward from each of the four circular platforms. This allows the waterways to remain straight and clear of obstructions.

truce currently in place. Many of the towns are reticent to join, however, since they are communities of Fallen who have escaped the caste system. As far as they can see, it is a choice between two evils, two different forms of imprisonment.

The second spire in the Tyon Expanse is the volcanic end of the Sky-Torrent Bridge. The spire is constantly plagued by the seepage of thick viscous lava which spreads out for a couple of miles before cooling. The main danger does not rest here, but in the occasional mini-eruption of hot gases and ash from several large steam vents on the northeastern side of the base. These have destroyed over 200 square miles of the local jungle, and even killed 320 people in one of the neighbouring communities.

Over 11 towns and settlements have currently left the region, threatened by the possibility of war and eruptions, and are heading for Haak San Bazaa. The ground tremors are increasing in frequency and in intensity on a daily basis. People feel that a huge eruption is imminent, and could be devastating enough to collapse the entire Sky-Torrent Bridge and destroy thousands of miles worth of jungle. If that occurs, the floods from the Sunderlands may be the only thing to stop the world from burning.

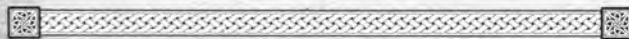


PATERYN PENINSULA

The levels of the Crysarius have been slowly rising over the centuries, claiming more land as time goes on. The peninsula of Pateryn is partly submerged because of this, and is now swampland. Unlike the swamps of the Alegerra, it is inhabited by fewer poisonous and hostile species, and its waters are not nearly as deep. The jungle in this region is not as thick, the large trees still have a wide canopy, interspacing the swamp floor in patches of night and day.

Near the border of the sea, the swamp's depth can be anywhere from 20-30 feet, while in the interior, it can go as high as three feet. The traders of Haak San Bazaa have found dry trails though the region that they can use, but most caravans travel the swamps via flat barges called "skimners."

While it may be friendlier than the Pincer Swamps, the Pateryn Peninsula should be afforded a good deal of respect. Travelling her waterways is still a dangerous gambit for the uninitiated, but fortunately, not a necessity. Several communities offer skimmer services to Haak San Bazaa and back. Having grown up in the swamps, these guides are completely familiar with the unseen roads of the Pateryn, and their services are trustworthy.



PROVIDENCE



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THE FACTIONS

Providence is a world affected by politics. Politics controls the sway of war and the commerce of peace. It influences alliances and destroys partnerships. Most of all, it can be the source of salvation or the final epitaph of a realm verging on the precipice of destruction. This may seem a bit melodramatic, but in order to escape from Providence, traditional enemies have to unite and counter not only an intelligent foe, but nature itself. The gates, while they are important to find, must be reactivated before anyone can escape the world. All this cannot be accomplished unless the various factions work with one another.

THE ALLIANCE OF KINGS

Member States: *Cry-Star, Cliff-Spider, Water-Sister, Sun Guard (destroyed)*

Ruler: *Regent Caiylus*

Capital City: *Cry-Star*

Method of Rule: *Coalition of Member-States*

The Alliance was formed as a means of creating a unified front against the threat of the Wardens and the Lost Tribes. As much as people prefer to think of the Alliance as a united body of government, it is in fact an assembly of independent principalities. Should any member decide to leave for any reason, they could do so with little to no warning. Luckily, the Alliance has been in place for so long that all the cities have a vested interest in keeping the coalition going. This holds particularly true for the last few years, with the threat of a second Lost War growing faster than the Sunderlands can claim jungle.

By far the most profound blow to the Alliance was the loss of Sun Guard to the expanding flood plains. While this may be offset if Bastion joins the Alliance, the fact remains that the resources of the coalition were severely crimped because of the loss. The city-states are being taxed further due to refugees streaming in from Sun Guard and other outlying settlements, and the infighting being encouraged by the Guilds is hampering any organizational efforts. In short, it is a time of crisis that the Alliance is attempting to weather, but failing slowly due to attrition.

ORGANIZATION

While the future seems uncertain, the hierarchy of the Alliance is as clear as ever. At the top of it all is Regent Caiylus, the elected leader-for-life of the coalition. She has the final say in any and all matters dealing with the Alliance itself, but no power over the workings of any of the cities

themselves. It is for this reason she has obtained the loyalty of the Drummers and the Recognizers; both organizations lend her position an air of authority in lieu of the fact that she has no city to back her.

Beneath Caiylus, ruling as both supporters and subjects, are the various Alliance kings and queens. Also known as lords and ladies, each of these individuals rule one of the coalition's cities, and act as the representatives for the various settlements in their region. They include King Gunther of Cry-Star, King Raldowin IV of Cliff-Spider, Watcher Preventine of Water-Sister and Lady Kharaada Emberleen of Sun Guard (whose position is an honorary one in light of Sun Guard's destruction). In Alliance matters, they answer to Caiylus, but within the domains of their city, their rule is unquestionably supreme. While they can be held accountable on certain issues, nothing short of a coup can usurp their position. The militia of each city is answerable directly to them and them alone.

Below each lord or lady is their immediate family, their House or Manor. If the ruler of a city is not present, the eldest member of the family steps in temporarily. Below the royal family is a web of up to twenty vassal households whose members occupy the various levels of the city's hierarchy. The head of each vassal family is known as a Duke, and is responsible for supervising clusters of settlements outside the city walls. It is from this tier of the hierarchy that the royal court is formed.

It should be noted that these vassal houses do not constitute a Chapter since they are a mix of various Troupials. While some local houses may belong to the same Chapter as the ruling family, forming the base of their immediate support, the other houses represent the interests of other Chapters.

The court represents the supposed supporters of the ruling family, but in actuality, it is made from the richest or most influential Houses and Manors in the city. The position of vassal family is assigned only by a city's potentate and is supposed to be a reward for years of valuable service to the ruling House. In truth, it is often a position bought through donations and alliances, blackmail and curried favours. The courts are often filled with bickering families trying to advance their own agendas, and while this is normal fare in court life, it is a distraction that the Alliance cities do not need. It is rare for a noble family with any influence to remain free of the political web. Between the Guilds cementing their power base at the cost of harmony, and the vassal families trying to advance their own agenda, the machinations of the court affect nearly all walks of life.

Below the vassal families are the lesser households. Each is allied with one of the larger families in the hope that their

wishes will be addressed. Mixed in with the royal courts are the various dignitaries and ambassadors from the Merchant Bands (an amalgamation of numerous merchant families), the Serpenkine, representatives of the allied Lost Tribes, Guild leaders and a Warden Observer from Bone-Wail. While none of these groups are allowed to get involved with the actual machinations of court life, nothing has prevented them from influencing the behind-the-scenes politicking or inflaming the growing conflicts.

CURRENT AGENDA

The Alliance of Kings is saddled with two significant problems that have divided its valuable attention. The first stems from flooding in the Sunderlands. With the hollow world "filling up" as it were, the Alliance is in a desperate race to locate the remaining gates, as well as a search for a means to reactivate them. Efforts to explore the Deep, however, have been hampered by the presence of the Alliance's second dilemma, the hostile Lost Tribes and the Elothorin Avatars. With the pending war, the resources of the coalition are split between helping people escape the beleaguered territories, and preparing for an all-out battle at any moment. It is for these reasons that they are ignoring the growing rift between the vassal households in their own courts.

THE WARDENS

Member States: *Bone-Wail*

Ruler: *Warden Elarian*

Capitol City: *Bone-Wail*

Method of Rule: *Penal Dictatorship*

Providence may have its monsters, but none frighten people more than the Wardens. It is not an issue of power, but one of memory. Everyone knows the Wardens were masters for several centuries, and whether it is from some distant memory or knowledge of their rule during the initial years of the exile, people feel threatened and intimidated by them. They are the substance of nightmares, the evil that inhabits children's fairy tales and the fear of the mindless imprisonment that awaits should the Alliance ever fall.

The Wardens are perhaps the greatest threat that the Alliance of Kings face, because while the Lost Tribes do what they do from hatred, the jail keepers behave as they do because it is their duty. In some ways they are more alien than the Swarm Dancers. The Wardens are a cold, nearly emotionless lot who are as sure of their ancient obligations as Eagles are assured of their own ability. This justifies all their actions, from the current treaty with the Alliance, to the tortures they inflict to breed more Ravagers and Ward Dogs.

ORGANIZATION

The strength possessed by the Wardens is that they are ruled by one figure. There is no public dissent, for that means death; there is no argument or debate. The Wardens have ruled for the last two millennia, and their power is as unquestionable as it is ancient. Even the city of Bone-Wail is a frightening place, for it is a prison open to a smog sky, surrounded by walls that end somewhere far above the smoke and pollution like a distant horizon. There are no streets, only a network of dirt alleys. The city is as ancient as the memories of imprisonment, a place that smells of dank urine and harbours the heart of darkness.

Bone-Wail is run by Warden Elarian of the old House of Puradanium. He is the master of the Dragon Chapter, and the leader of the Warden Senate which advises him. Their suggestions, however, are nothing more than that. The senatorial position is a superfluous effort to occupy the other Warden families who lost their camps centuries ago, and now stagnate within the city.

The Warden Senate is comprised of all the families who sought asylum in Bone-Wail following the liberation of several colonies. Each person, and their family, on the five-person Senate is in charge of a certain facet of prison life.

House Coblaskan of Troupial Eagle is the most influential of the families, and is in charge of overseeing the bureaucratic machine of the prison. For all intents and purposes, the function is a discreetly-discussed joke, for Bone-Wail has grown so large that the paperwork is over five decades behind. The offices of the Coblaskan are hivelike compartments storing tons of mouldy and disintegrating paper. So the family supposedly carries out its duty, sequestered away within the hives, slowly going mad as they sift through ancient records and discover bizarre and long-forgotten secrets.

Second on the Senate is House Jalastakar of Troupial Hawk. Their function is to train the guards and turn those deemed worthy into either Ravagers or Ward Dogs. Highly fluent in Wird, their abilities are rumoured to border along the same lines as the Blight Crows, if in fact they have not already become that. House Tritatia of Raven operates as the intelligence operative agents for the Wardens. Known as the Soonadi, their dedication to Elarian borders on the fanatical and their service is a thinly disguised form of cult worship. They are responsible for spying on the prisoners, and have operatives hidden throughout Alliance and Merchant Band cities.

Following Tritatia is House Ganovale, the Gargoyle family responsible for ruling the various prison wards. This House interacts the most with the prisoners as it is its duty to supervise them. While the Jalastakar create the Ravagers



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and Ward Dogs, Ganovale is responsible for actually assigning guard duty, establishing patrol routes through the Labour Districts and ensuring the prisoners are given the bare minimum they need to survive. Rounding out the Warden Senate is House Connix of Troupial Dove. They are specialized in producing food and raw materials for Bone-Wail, and are responsible for maintaining its walls.

All six Warden families are assisted by Freed-stock assistants who act as clerks, slaves, concubines (they are essentially breeding stock to prevent the gene pool from growing stagnant) and servants. It is the promise of better food, shelter and protection from the elements that encourages prisoners to aspire towards Freed-stock status. Most do not believe they will ever be truly free, and follow the Wardens like automatons.

The prime symbol of the Warden's power within Bone-Wail is the presence of Ravagers, guards altered through a torturous process that enhances their natural abilities. In some ways, they are considered to be proto-Shards, with a set of Wird-infused talents that empower them to extraordinary degrees. Their will, however, is completely subservient to their masters, and they possess no other thought than to serve the Wardens. The Ward Dogs are far worse, for despite their humanoid origins, they are completely feral and ingrained with a dying loyalty to the Wardens as well. This is the only proof most prisoners have that the Wardens actually exist.

CURRENT AGENDA

The Wardens only plan on adhering to the current treaty with the Alliance of Kings as long as it suits their purpose. As the armies gather, the Wardens are trying to establish a treaty with the Lost Tribes, a fact unknown to the Alliance of Kings. Thus far the attempt has not yielded much success, but lines of communications have opened between the two factions. The Wardens have assured the White Crow that they are not interested in staying on this world. With the Lost Tribes' help, they would be willing to leave and allow all the prisoners to die. This includes the Alliance, who the Wardens consider to be escaped exiles currently holding the upper hand.

Bone-Wail is essentially trying to save itself. The Wardens believe that they have served the Yas'Wailian Priest-Kings for long enough, and merely wish to return home after two millennia of exile. Unlike the Alliance, they possess one secret about the gates that their enemies do not know. Unfortunately, it is not a secret the Wardens can use at the current time.

THE MERCHANT BANDS

Member States: *Bastion, Haak San Bazaa, numerous settlements.*

Ruler: *Merchant Bands Council*

Capital City: *None*

Method of Rule: *Council vote*

It is said that in world affairs, no one can truly remain neutral. Even the Merchant Bands have failed to successfully do so despite attempts to separate themselves from the conflict between the Alliance and the Wardens. Likewise, the Alliance views them with disdain for what they see as a mercenary-like attitude while Bone-Wail considers them to be prisoners who have yet to be recaptured. Despite these attitudes, the Merchant Bands are actually a great deal more compassionate and democratic in their system than outsiders would give them credit for.

The Merchant Bands were not formed out of a desire to remain neutral, but because they did not support the Alliance's caste system. The only two independent cities, Haak San Bazaa and Bastion, gravitated towards one another for support over a period of time. As they did so, they discovered that many of the settlements established by the Free-Tribes were also interested in forming a nonmilitary alliance. The Merchant Bands came about through this desire.

In an effort to establish a non-aggressive stance towards both the Alliance and the Wardens, the Bands opened trade routes with both factions. This helped foster the image that they were mercenaries and willing to deal with whomever offered them money. Despite this view, many people have recently come to the realization that the Bands offer true freedom, not imprisonment within walls or a caste system designed to deceive.

ORGANIZATION

The Mercantile Bands are a loose coalition of powerful merchant families that control various sectors of cities. Essentially both Haak San Bazaa and Bastion are a collection of neighbourhoods and communities under the control of different families. The main trading hub of Haak San Bazaa is shared between 23 allied factions while Bastion is controlled by 17. Not all of the district families are traders, but the main commerce of either city is the wares that pass daily through their streets. So famous are the bazaars that the other cities now send trading representatives to both places to purchase exotic materials directly from their markets.

The Bands running Haak San Bazaa and Bastion are two separate groups of families using the same framework for power. No merchant empire is allowed to hold positions in both cities, regardless of its wealth, for it is

considered to be a conflict of interest. The two councils do meet on a yearly basis to coordinate new trading agreements, qualify new mercantile families and share relevant news with one another.

Apart from the type of rule used to run either city, the main difference that sets the Merchant Bands apart from the Alliance is the abolition of the caste system. Both cities are free-territories and, unfortunately, the recruiting grounds for groups like the Wayfarers. The Bands are of the opinion that as long as it does not harm business, anything goes. Unfortunately, this "let it be" attitude has placed the Bands at odds with the Alliance on numerous occasions. No extradition treaties exist between the two factions, and the Merchant Families are not interested in apprehending Alliance criminals. This was the prime reason the Recognizers were reinstated, to help capture individuals marked by the Alliance for various crimes.

CURRENT AGENDA

With the recent rumours surrounding Bastion's interest in joining the Alliance, the relations between the two cities and the various outposts has grown somewhat tense and frayed. The prime reason why Bastion has not accepted the Alliance's offer yet is the caste system. It is no longer a matter of philosophical differences, but the fact that Bastion's Troupials will rebel at the idea of being enslaved within a caste-tier.

Haak San Bazaa, on the other hand, is aware that its independence may be threatened shortly. Pride prevents it from seeking asylum within the Alliance, just as common sense dissuades it from surrendering to the Wardens. Both cities are caught within a treacherous situation, but neither knows how to surmount the problem.

To make matter worse, if Bastion attempts to leave, the bigger issue for Haak San Bazaa is control of the one gate in their possession. Bastion is sure to lay claim to it when they leave, thereby weakening the Bands' future negotiating status with the Alliance and the Wardens. Haak San Bazaa is not being greedy, they merely wish to ensure that when the time comes to leave Providence that they will not be left behind. Unfortunately, they may not make it to that point due to the growing threat of a war emerging with the Lost Tribes. Although various Merchant Families are hosting Serpenkine dignitaries, their attempts to open negotiations with the other Lost Tribes have not yet succeeded.



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THE INDEPENDENTS WAYFARER

The inequalities of our past have come back to haunt us, and you do remember what happened in the past.

Their purpose in life seems to vary according to whom one speaks with. To the higher castes, they are terrorists, malcontents and despots waiting to happen; to the lower castes they are rebels, anarchists and troublemakers. In their own eyes, Wayfarers are liberators. Much like the caste system, the Wayfarers base their membership according to appearance, and their ranks are almost entirely comprised of Fallen. They barely trust gliders, and offer no such courtesy for anyone winged.

The Wayfarers are members of the lower castes who believe that the system is simply a tool for oppression and a behemoth waiting to fall. If acts of sabotage, "strategic murders" and assaults on specific individuals are necessary to destroy the caste structure, then so be it; these will become the tools of the liberators. Now this attitude, while fairly pervasive amongst the Wayfarers, is not shared by all the members. There are more moderate individuals in the organization who are trying to achieve the same goal while using diplomacy and negotiation as their tools of liberation. The process is extremely slow, however, and understandably frustrating when talks collapse due to a radical Wayfarer attack on the population.

ORGANIZATION

The Wayfarers, while zealots, are not stupid. They know better than to try and unite all their forces, thereby endangering the whole structure of their rebellion should a portion of it be exposed. The Wayfarers operate in cells consisting of five to ten member strike teams, each of which is known as a unit. The leader of each of these units is in contact with three other unit commanders, and while it is rare for all four groups to work together, the ensemble is known as a cluster. They are considered to be support for one another.

Now depending on the size, each city can have as many as five clusters or as few as one. The different clusters, however, are normally united through two individuals alone, a regional captain and sub-captain. They organize missions and assignments for the various units within their city, and ensure that none of the Wayfarers are interfering with one another or come across the identity of the other groups.

The captains are essentially the highest ranking members in the Wayfarer chain of the command. Only they know who the other city captains are and maintain

correspondence via coded messages sent through caravans. There has been talk recently about the possibility of electing a representative for the organization, someone who can officially negotiate with the Merchant Bands on behalf of the Wayfarers. Haak San Bazaa has already agreed to receive this individual as an ambassador under the full protection of the Merchant Bands, but the Wayfarers captains are still debating the issue.

CURRENT AGENDA

With the Alliance of Kings diverting its attention to the preparations for the upcoming war, the Wayfarers are at a crossroads. Some Wayfarers have been influenced by the Anodynes, and believe that helping the Alliance in the upcoming war could strengthen their negotiating stance. The more radical elements, however, are advocating a campaign of terror, believing that the Alliance will acquiesce to their demands once they realize they cannot afford to divide their attention along two different fronts.

The more moderate factions are aware that this could have more serious repercussions for everyone. If the assets of the Alliance are divided, then Lost Tribes will be facing a weaker opponent and will win the war. If the Alliance manages to somehow win, then they may also have to contend with Bone-Wail, if it survived as well. These two differing points of view are beginning to affect the Wayfarers and may end up creating a violent schism in the organization.



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There is a place I heard of long ago, a place reportedly of Troupial Jackal, but the Ravens whisper that it is not so. They say that it is where the Fallen Eagles go and call themselves by the name of their fathers, though they have no wings. I learned of it from a Raven called Ichabbel, whom I do not love for his help. It was he who advised me how to win Isoe; it was he who failed me.

I regret having thought of him, for visions of Isoe now fill my eyes. I first saw her at the great Festival of the Gates, when she danced the most perfect ynkana I had ever seen. Her grace, her brilliant black skin, her beautiful eyes all served to enchant me. I had seen those of the Swan before, I had spoken to them, but none effected me as did Isoe. I had to have her.

Of course, my desire faced numerous impassable barriers. I was married, of course, promised at birth to my wife. However, she had little to say to me since I had killed our son. The Regent cannot leave his wife for a dancer, no matter how beautiful or perfect seeming she might be. Nor could I marry again outside the Sallusturm Chapter. There was no way I could be with her, but I had to be. So, I summoned her, as was my right, and bade her sup in my mansion.

As I was soon to discover, she was in love with a singer...a Redeemed Singer of the Dove. I promised her jewellery to lie with me for a night — wealth unimaginable to one such as she. She refused me. I promised her power, fame, even success and promotion for her lowly lover. She spurned me every time. At last I banished her from my presence, cursing her name, brooding in my lust. Everyone knows that the Swan mate for life, and there is no way to persuade them from their love. But I would not be dissuaded. I called for Ichabbel.

Keeper of Lost Secrets, Whisperer of Dark Truths, Ichabbel was one of the more unsavory of the Raven. He went nowhere with his face uncovered, and his voice was never raised. For a great sum of money, he could tell of any secret. I asked him how one might undo the love of a Swan and direct it toward one's own heart. It was he who told me of the hidden ways of the Blight Crow. He who told me that there is a force like the Wird that is not temporary, is not tied to the world outside of us but is fed by our very bodies and souls.

With his help, I found the black book and set out to learn in the midnight hours, when none could see me. I learned how to make a man's body quaver with rebellion against its very nature. I learned how to undo the prison of the flesh, making a man melt away like snow from the mountain. And I learned how to make a man hideous, even to one who loves him, and how to make another beautiful. I then summoned Isoe and her singing Dove to me, and I fed them with voluptuous abandon, pouring them wines of the finest vintage. I wove my hateful craft all that night, and then sent them to bed.

When dawn broke, Isoe found she lay with a twisted thing, gnarled like an old root. His arms and legs warped and his voice like a screeching owl. Her screams froze my heart. When I arrived at their room, I found the magic that was to make my face beautiful to her had worked. She looked to me, and could not understand what had happened, her keening cries filling the room. Yet, she did not remain oblivious to my devices. She gazed at her lover, then to me, and at once knew my feelings. For but a moment, I thought she might shift her affections, but then I knew she had gone from pity for my love to hatred of my deeds. She cursed my name and, taking up her warped lover, fled from my home.

This was the first deed I worked with my dark magics, and it was the worst. I called Ichabbel to me and demanded to know how I might undo my work upon Isoe's lover, in hopes that she might forgive me. It was then that he told me of the fountain that remakes a man. When I sought out Isoe to tell her of it, she was gone; I have not seen her since. And now I seek out the fountain, so that I might have smooth skin once more.



DESIGNING CHARACTERS

The essence of any character is not defined by statistics, power level or game rules. The most important facet of a character is history and background. This supplies the player with a motivation, an aspect that drives a person to do what he does.

As a hero, motivation is singularly important, for it will influence the way a person reacts to the world around them. To build a plausible motivation and character background, however, it is important to know who exists in the world.

The following chapter is dedicated to the various groups and divisions that define society and it begins with the caste strata, a feature of the individual determined at birth. Caste figures heavily in how people deal with one another. The Troupials are the second stop in this tour, and covers the races of Providence. Character Roles are the last part of the chapter and covers who individuals may want to play. It deals with groups defined and united by different motives, whether they be political, economic, social or spiritual.

The following material is not the only possibility the world has to offer; it is a skeletal structure designed to permit growth, expansion and new ideas. Some potential story ideas have been left as clues throughout the text, either for Game Master usage or as a hint for things yet to come.



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THE CASTES

Despite the light under which the caste system has been portrayed, it was not formed because of malicious intent, nor was it ever meant to become the source of such friction. It was implemented when the prison camps were liberated and the danger of inbred monstrosities was still great. Many people worried that the purity of the family lines had been compromised, and that the entire population would eventually devolve into monsters. The first indication of things to come was the birth of the Fallen. On Yas'Wail, Gliders had been rare to begin with. In Providence, more and more began to emerge, heightening public fears. With the appearance of a growing number of Fallen, there was a cry to protect the few remaining "pure" (mostly from the "pure" themselves).

The decision to segregate the population into various castes was first carried out in Cry-Star. It was intended to protect the winged members of society from those who were viewed as "tainted." Unfortunately, the original edict, which was passed simply to prevent marriages, soon became a sweeping set of reforms instituted by the Pure royalty. There were accusations of secret executions carried out against those members of the royal families who did not fit the accepted aesthetic, but the rumours were brutally quashed.

The strictures of the caste system became clearly defined, and managed to compartmentalize society into neat little packages. It was believed that this caste system would be different from the original one that instigated the initial war back on Yas'Wail, because this one was necessary.

The caste system was thought to be a success because fewer and fewer monstrosities were born. Everybody tried to ignore the fact that the number of Fortuned and Fallen was slowly rising. It did not escape the attention of some quiet rebels, but their attempts to end the caste system were unsuccessful.

Incidents of violence committed against the Fallen were on the rise, and was exceeded in callousness only by the royalty's indifference to their plight. Had the matter been allowed to escalate, it would have eventually erupted into class conflict, but two things interceded. The first was the formation of the Alliance of Kings, the second was the discovery of the Lost Tribes.

The Crucible which served to forge the Alliance of Kings was an exhausting event. Despite the independence that each of the member-cities maintained, a universal set of laws, codes, currency and morays had to be adopted to facilitate equal rule. One of the key issues to be addressed was the caste system, and the growing inequality that was

threatening to instigate a popular revolution. Each city had a similar caste but different degrees of enforcement and delineation. Cry-Star and Water-Sister were both known as role models for their fair treatment of the lower castes, while Cliff-Spider was brutal in its administration of the matter. Sun Guard was ripe with corruption; you were treated like a dog unless you had money.

The Alliance of Kings initiated widespread reforms based on the Water-Sister model, which required the upper castes to care for those below. The corruption in Sun Guard was supposed to be cleaned up, but this did not take place for another century or so. Eventually, Lord Emberleen of Troupial Dove, and his subsequent heirs, forged a strong dynasty that remained untouched until the day Sun Guard was claimed by the growing flood plains of the Sunderlands. Under the Emberleen line, the caste system was strictly, but fairly, upheld.

The second event to have some significant impact upon the caste structure was the discovery of the Lost Tribes. It was eventually discovered that the world of Providence had a way of influencing the evolution of its inhabitants. Those fighting the injustice of the caste system were suddenly empowered with new weapons for the battle. They realized that the Fallen were not a prelude to monsters, but were actually evolving because of nature's influence on them. They were becoming better suited to living below the jungle canopy. To further this argument, no monstrosities had been born for several generations except for those Warden offspring living in the wilderness. As a result, the first widespread notion that the caste system was inherently wrong began to surface.

Unfortunately it was not enough to turn the tide of opinion of those in power. Regardless of whether it was nature or inbreeding that caused the Fallen to come about, the ruling hierarchy was not willing to take the chance of eliminating the caste barriers. Still, the revelation of Providence's influence was enough to change the views of many people.

Recently, another change has been sweeping the caste structure, but not necessarily for the better. With the growing ecological calamities, the widespread enforcement of the system has grown lax. In some areas, the Fallen are bearing the brunt of the public's growing fears. Elsewhere, the caste restrictions have been unofficially rescinded in order to better utilize the wide range of talents needed to prepare for the upcoming war. It is a time of great change that promises to alter the face of the caste system forever. Whether the result will be favourable or not is unsure, but it is certain to happen.

CASTE STRATA

Initially, the caste system was comprised of three groups that fell into the categories of winged, gliders and the flightless, known respectively as the Pure, the Fortuned and the Fallen. During the Crucible, the Alliance of Kings realized that this system sharply divided society into isolated factions. While some separation was necessary, "intermediary" strata were needed to help bridge and anchor the three primary groups together. Thus were created the Blessed, those individuals who possessed weak wings (as opposed to membranes), and the Redeemed, people who could not fly, but still retained vestigial wings or fragile glider membranes. There was a small chance that the Redeemed would bear children who would be born a higher caste, thus redeeming the family line.

Later, with the genesis of Shards, a new caste was created, in-between the Blessed and Fortuned. Initially known as the Gifted, these disparate but powerful individuals gathered into Guilds, after which the designation was applied to their position in life.

MOVING UP OR DOWN WITHIN THE CASTE STRUCTURE

There are not many ways to move from one caste to another. The most obvious one is to gain Shard powers. Once this happens, a person has the option of joining a Guild and becoming a member of that caste. Pure and Blessed Shards will rarely consider moving down in status. This is a decision that can be made and altered at any time, although trying to leave a Guild is often far more difficult than trying to join one.

The second way, which is slightly more likely to occur, is if the parents of a lower caste give birth to a child of Blessed or Pure status. The winged infant is immediately adopted into a noble house, while the parents and siblings can choose to serve the adoptive family as vassals. In this instance, the birth of the child coupled with the family's service, elevates them in status by one tier — Fallen become Redeemed, etc. — and bestows upon them full caste benefits.

A third manner in which people may move along the caste lines is considered disreputable. Knowledge of Wird was originally sequestered by the nobility as the sole right of the upper castes. This did not stop the birth of underground schools. These were run by practitioners who taught the lower castes Wird either for the money or on a matter of principle. While it is illegal for a member of society below Fortuned rank to possess any knowledge of Wird, there are a number of potent and hidden Redeemed and Fallen

practitioners who do have the ability to manipulate it. Specific caste restrictions for Wird use are discussed below.

With the knowledge of certain styles of Wird comes the ability to cast spells that alter one's appearance. It is not unheard of for Fallen spies to penetrate the royal courts under disguise, or for nobility to give their Fallen children wings to hide their shame. These measures, however, are only temporary, for eventually, the Wird spell wears off. In the wrong circumstances, this can serve to shame an entire household or warrant the execution of the offending spy.

THE PURE

Fully winged and capable of flying, this caste is reserved for those individuals who fit the accepted social aesthetic of Troupial perfection. While Eagles claim to embody this ideal, it is actually Swans who are regarded as entirely unblemished. No Swan has ever been born outside this tier. All those individuals born into this group are considered royalty, and can access everything society has to offer. This includes the best in private tutorials, living arrangements, clothing, food and nearly any foreseeable necessity in life that money can buy. Unfortunately, the Pure are also prisoners of their own kingdom. Marriages are arranged upon birth (regardless of sexual orientation), and having children is regarded as the highest obligation a Pure individual can fulfil.

The Pure, if not already born into a royal family, are adopted by one and treated with as much consideration as the natural offspring of the household. Being Pure, means leading a sheltered life until adulthood, one filled with constant lessons on leadership, grooming, etiquette, socializing, dancing and a variety of other skills needed to interact with the affluent. All Wird Distinctions are available to this caste, with exception of Wird Dancing (which is considered a disreputable Distinction). Teaching anyone to be a Blight Crow is obviously forbidden.

The Pure are the nobility of Providence, and they are placed in positions of absolute power. They are the ruling Regents, the military Prelates and the teachers of Wird. It is their obligation to lead the populace through action and example. Those who choose not to fulfil their expected duties are not ostracized, but their families will exert tremendous pressure to get them to reconsider their ways. This can and has included tactics running from blackmail to kidnapping. A Pure who is out and alone in the world (adventuring, gallivanting about, etc.) is not held in high regard by anyone within the caste system. Even Fallen are not obligated to heed the instructions of Pure members if they turn their back on their duties.



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THE BLESSED

Even before this ranking was instituted, the Blessed were considered "lesser royalty" within the strata of the Pure. Born with weak wings, these individuals fill positions of lesser importance within the ruling courts. They became advisors, treasurers, subordinate military officers to the Regent, Ward Bosses (representatives of the various Troupials throughout a city), ambassadors, etc. Essentially any "secondary" function attached to the ruling nobility was assigned to these lesser flyers.

Following the Crucible, these individuals were delegated to the newly-created strata known as the Blessed; for all intents and purposes, they had been a second class within the Pure to begin with. The Blessed weren't really affected by this change in title, for their rights had been outlined from well before the event. They attended the best schools and universities and they were allowed to learn any style of Wird Distinction, except for Wird Dancing, if they so chose. The only change to be implemented was marriage constraints. Blessed could no longer marry Pure unless they received special permission from the region's ruler.

The lines between the Pure and the Blessed seem to blur in and out of focus these days. Because the nature of a winged individual cannot be determined at birth, when the wings are tiny and frail, it is impossible to assign caste to the child or their family. This is especially true if a Pure baby is born to a Blessed family, an event which occurs more frequently than with any of the lower castes. During the first seven years of a child's existence, the family retains its status until the nature of the child is determined. It is during these initial seven years that families are known to use Wird to try and ensure the child fits a higher caste. Outright alteration rarely works since the effects of Wird are never permanent and constant augmentations are a difficult thing to conceal.

THE GUILDS

The Guilds are the only caste that one has the freedom to choose whether to join. It is not unheard of for parents of the young Shard to offer their child into Guild service. In return, they receive a handsome fee and the knowledge that their son or daughter will have a better chance in life. Children brought into the Guilds in this manner, are well educated by in-house schools. The children are taught to excel with their particular power, and raised with a fierce loyalty to the Guild doctrine. Each Guild has its own politics and agendas that will be discussed in the Shard Chapter.

The Guilds still offer a handsome opportunity for Shards who only learn of their power during a stressful



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incident (which is usually later in life). This includes a financial boon to the immediate family members, a raise in caste for the Shard, the chance for an education, and the possibility of a steady income. It is hardly surprising that the ranks of the Guilds are swelling with lower-caste Shards who recognize the opportunities of enlistment.

The Guilds fill an interesting niche within the castes. Initially they were known as the Gifted and this tier's function was to create a place within society for individuals who had abilities above that of their peers. This new position was created to supposedly reflect their "importance" in society, but, in actuality, placed them beneath the direct control of the royalty.

While the Gifted status in society could have been made an obligatory rank for Shards, Pure and Blessed caste-members who had undergone the Epiphany were not interested in lowering their own status. It was eventually decided, after a series of vicious political conflicts, that Shards were not required to join the Guilds. In actuality, the nobility was not willing to force highly-powered individuals into a position that they might rebel against. The catalyst that changed the Gifted into the Guilds is discussed in subsequent chapters.

The Guilds, were given a tremendous financial base to encourage enlistment and used this backing to gain political power. It did not take long before they were a recognized force in the court, and an obvious threat to some of the ruling nobility.

In present times, they could be a tremendous aid in helping unite the noble families, but alas, they are not. The Guilds are too busy countering one another to realize how detrimental their actions truly are.

THE FORTUNED

The Fortuned comprise the largest segment of the populace, and possess glider membranes with which they can sail the air. As the middle-class of Providence, these people have enough of an education to make a fair living for themselves and their families. The Fortuned do not hold enough power in society to rule beyond positions of civil authority. Their ranks include court scribes, soldiers, merchants, traders, accountants, teachers, craftsmen and artisans. Any function that is based on skilled labour usually falls to the Fortuned to fulfil.

Despite their position, this caste is regarded with great appreciation for they are the driving force behind the economy of the Alliance of Kings. Without them there would



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be a damaging void in-between the often unskilled lower classes and upper echelons who are unfamiliar with the specific training needed to run the basic industries. Society would grind to a halt. It is for this reason that the Fortuned are given proper education and access to the necessities of life. In addition, they are also allowed to be taught Wird. Unfortunately, the cost of learning Wird is extremely expensive, and only the more affluent Fortuned can afford schooling in these arts.

The Fortuned are divided between the military and the public sections of society. It is often said that the rule of a regent is only as strong as his army. The soldiers within most Alliance of Kings cities are treated with great consideration. This means that because a majority of the militia is comprised of Fortuned, a new subgroup within this caste system has appeared, one which rests in-between the tiers of most gliders and that of the Guilds. Some have even advocated creating a special military caste that supersedes the Guilds. This motion is gaining stronger acceptance in the growing light of the Guilds' increasingly aggressive stance.

THE REDEEMED

The only difference that separates the Fallen and the Redeemed is that the latter still possess wings and gliders. The wings can neither be used for flight nor gliding because the muscles and the tissue are too weak and thin to support any real weight. They have become vestigial organs that serve to remind the Redeemed of their shame. Individuals whose wings or membranes have been so severely damaged in battle that not even Wird can heal them are relegated to this rank.

The Redeemed constitute the menial labour workforce on Providence. They toil the fields. They are the stable hands, the caravan drivers, the fishermen and the prostitutes, fulfilling any function in life that requires little skill to accomplish. Many are born into this position, and lack an education and their own domicile. Instead they are forced to live within a work-commune run by a Fortuned, Blessed or Pure landowner. The practice of most Wird Distinctions is barred to them, unless they were already a member of that Distinction before they became flightless. The only form allowed to them is Wird Dancing, an art style that they developed in the years before the Alliance of Kings when they were still considered Fallen.

Wird Dancing was created as a means of disguising spell casting as a dance-kata form that enhanced the practitioner. The Distinction became known when the Alliance of Kings separated the caste of the Fallen and created the new caste

of the Redeemed. The Alliance of Kings allowed its continued usage, despite the fact that it was not regarded as formal or even socially proper.

Recently, with the growing importance of foot soldiers in a combat situation, soldiers forced into this caste due to injuries, are being assigned into special units of the military. The regents of various cities are beginning to realize the importance of having dedicated combat squads familiar with ground tactics. As a result, they are actively recruiting members of the Redeemed. The greatest push to have the military become a new caste is coming from this faction of the militia.

THE FALLEN

The Fallen are recognized as the universal scapegoats of Providence. They essentially have no rights, even though the nobility claims otherwise, and they do not fulfil any real function in society. They are paupers, relegated to their position because they possess neither wings nor glider membranes. While the Redeemed had been members of the Fallen, the disdain for this group was not severe. Now that the Fallen are simply those individuals born without even vestigial limbs to call wings, they are regarded by some as sub-Yas'Wailian. Society believes that by segregating them, they are effectively keeping the lineages from becoming tainted.

Only a select few outside this caste challenge that notion and try to protest the injustice being played out against them. Although Troupials such as Eagle claim to try and protect Fallen (and in their arrogant way, they do try), the fact still remains that members of this caste are murdered without compunction and taken advantage of at every opportunity. It is no surprise that groups such as the Anodynes have formed to help these people. In contrast, the Wayfarers visit equal harm and devastation upon those who would maintain the status quo.

The current system will not be changed, not unless the Fallen choose to unite and prove that they are more than just animals to be corralled and mollified into complacency.



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THE EXILED

This is not really a caste, but a damning status used by the Alliance of Kings to condemn their enemies. The Exiles are considered far below the Fallen, regardless of their appearance or original caste. This rank was created to deal with those individuals whose crimes warranted punishment worse than mere execution. Instead, these criminals faced the Purging, a torturous process where the wings are amputated or the glider membranes are seared away. Any Fallen who has ever been deemed dangerous enough to earn the Purging is simply killed. Further scarred with a Wird brand burnt into their face, these unfortunate individuals are forced into Exile, where the public is allowed to commit any action against them.

It is hardly surprising that the majority of those marked as Exiles either vanish into the jungle forever, or die at the hands of a mob. Sighting an Exile is rare, and killing one is sometimes rewarded by the local nobility.

Of those exiled to date, the most infamous of the lot is also the Alliance of Kings' shame. It is none other than the former head of the Alliance of Kings, Regent Jenobay. A potent Wird Weaver, few realized he had fallen to temptation and had become a Blight Crow. His skill was sufficient enough to disguise his secret for a long time. The day came when his corruption finally became too great to ignore.

In a battle that claimed several court Wylders, Jenobay was finally defeated and thrown into the dungeon. His punishment was to have three parts: first, the Purging, where his Eagle wings were to be amputated before a crowd of several thousand people; second, his name was to be removed from all records and ledgers; third, he was to be executed. With the help of several allies however, he escaped during his Purging and vanished into the jungle. While this still irritates the Alliance of Kings, they are least satisfied with the knowledge that only one wing survived the Purging. The other was amputated.



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TROUPIALS

For all intents and purposes, a Troupial is a designation of one's cultural heritage. While humanoid, Yas'Wallians are distinguished by the stratification of colour on their body, even though specific markings differ from one individual to the next. This does not mean that two individuals from the same Troupial have to get along or even like one another, but there is an unspoken law that a modicum of civility be shared between the two.

Troupials are more than just identities based on skin colour, however; they are also a general indication of how a person is likely to act or react to situations. This stereotype is a culmination of environment brought on through generations of self-imposed segregation. Because of this, individuals from one group have always shown a talent in the skills attributed to their Troupial. This is not a fast or hard rule, however, and individuals can overcome their immediate inclinations. Hawks are not automatically hunters, while Dragons may not always be diplomats.

Fighting, diplomacy, theft, dexterity, knowledge, and a variety of other abilities have been attributed to one Troupial or another over the course of time. It is, however, a mistake to believe that those known for fighting (for example) do not have a mystical side to them as well. The primary skill of the Troupial does not limit a person's talents in other matters, it merely influences it. An example would be Troupial Eagle, a house known for fighting and their skill with edged weaponry. The doctors of Eagle are also likely to be proficient in their arts on the field of battle, healing and fighting with equal measure.

Another consideration when reading the Troupials is that the examples given are normally the pure-bred members of society. Centuries of exile and being imprisoned within a bubble world, however, have created children of mixed stock. While these offspring will display a tendency to appear or act as a member of one Troupial, it is not uncommon to have individuals who share the characteristics of two or more races. There is no drawback to this except, perhaps, in the way society may treat these individuals.

THE SERAPH AND THE IBLII

Troupials can be separated into two simple categories, the Seraph, those born with wings of feathers, and the IblII, those born with wings of leather. The difference between the two is that the Seraph are more avian, while the IblII appear to be more reptilian in nature. Where the differences came from is unknown, but both groups have their own legends.

Ages ago, the IblII were said to have been one hundred Troupials strong, and ruled Yas'Wail completely before the Grand War with the Elothorin. They looked nothing as they do now, for then they were full-winged reptiles, replete with armoured scales, taloned fists that could shatter trees, and voices that could speak with fire. But their hunger starved the very world, and threatened to wipe them all out through the famine they had created. IblII Wird Weavers fashioned a spell that would make their people smaller, less voracious and better adapted to live on Yas'Wail. Unfortunately, their spells had side effects, and altered the birds to become human as well. Thus were born the Seraph.

This story, of course is not shared by the Seraph, who claim that the IblII were a race of vermin-like locusts that threatened to devour the very foundations of the world like a fresh apple. Unable to stop them, Seraph Wird Weavers gave the creatures intelligence so that they recognized the destruction they wrought. From these initial vermin-locusts came the IblII.

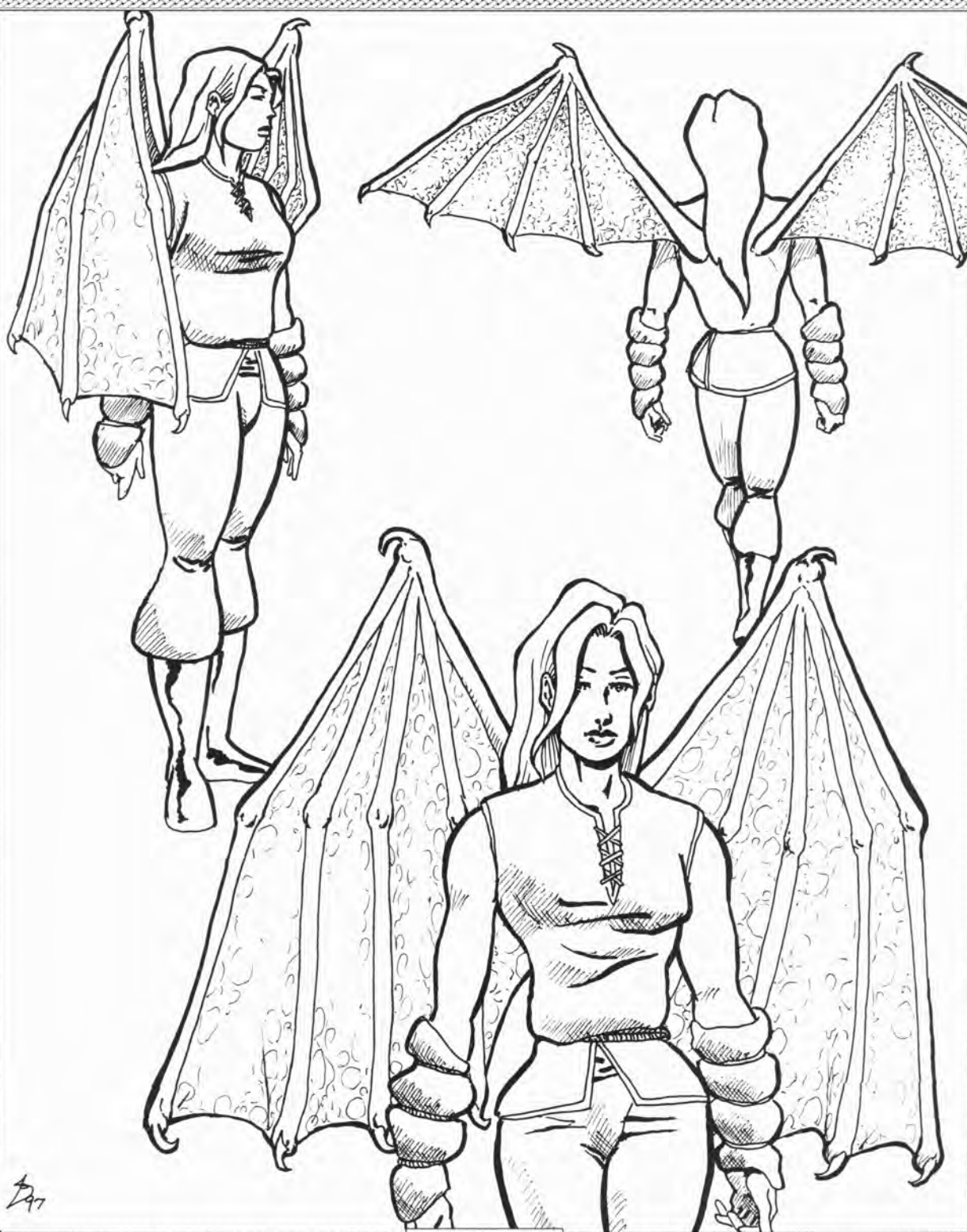
Neither the IblII nor Seraph lay much credence to either of the tall tales. The legends are only brought up to rib or insult one another with such jibes as "Uneducated vermin-spawn, didn't that damn spell affect you yet," or "We enjoyed your race more when you were still meals...er, I mean birds."

Currently, the Seraph Troupials far outnumber the IblII. This situation existed even before the Grand War itself, although now, Troupial IblII believes that the Serpenkine may indeed be one of the Legendaries (Troupials lost during the Grand War) who have returned.

PROVIDENCE



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PROVIDENCE



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CHAPTERS

Everybody in Providence belongs to a Troupial. Because these groups can be enormous, the Troupials are further divided according to territory into Chapters. These branches reserve loyalty for their group first, and for the royalty of the city second. This has created a great deal of friction in the past, but the practice is too ancient and venerated to be easily dismissed.

Chapters are alliances comprised of several Households of the same Troupial. There can be as many as 20 Houses within one Chapter or as few as five. These alliances are linked through a variety of manners including marriage and fealty to a stronger House. Some Households and Manors (Houses run by Shards) are mercenary, and are often affiliated with a Chapter.

Various regions can hold different Chapters, just as Households do not have to owe fealty to a local Chapter of the same Troupial. Not everyone belongs in a Chapter even though they are still a member of a Troupial. Chapters are choices in life, while Troupials are merely accidents of birth (or the choice of destiny as some may argue). Many people are too busy trying to survive to care about the colour of

the individual who stands beside them. Others less burdened with the worries of common life, however, gather around Chapters or households, for the benefits of protection, power, knowledge, survival or some other mutual agenda.

The reasons why a Chapter is formed are diverse, but every one has its own goal, or else it would not need the strength of its supporters. Some are officially recognized within the hierarchy of the Alliance of Kings, while others are considered criminals for their actions.

The most powerful Chapters are named within the descriptions of the Troupials, but it should be realized that some hold a very venerable reputation. The practice of forming Chapters dates back to millennia prior to the Grand Rebellion on Yas'Wail. With the war, many alliances were torn in half by conflicting ethos, and brother literally had to fight brother, sister against sister, husband against wife. When the forces of status quo emerged victorious, each Chapter section which remained loyal to the old ways had to send one household to serve as a Warden family. That is why such ancient names such as Chapter Sallusturm, Bwa'Kshall and Puradanum survive to this date.



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TROUPIAL BAT

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Nobody within Troupial Bat possesses full wings. They have glider membranes of light tan, dark brown and even glossy black leather. Male Bats are fairly short, between 4'8" and 5'5" and weigh between

100 and 120 lbs on average. The females stand between 4'6" and 5'5" tall, and their weight varies from 95 to 115 lbs. Their bodies are adorned with the same deep dark colours across their backs, buttocks, lower legs, hands and forearms, as well as their neck. Occasionally this colour scheme creates stratifications across the face, particularly around the eyes or mouth, much like a zebra. The chest, face, upper arms, crotch and upper thighs are normally a lighter hue of an individual's primary colour.

Body hair, particularly in the facial and pubic regions, is extremely short and rarely longer than a quarter of an inch. On the other hand, it tends to grow in even measures across the shoulders, along the arms and down the back, chest (in men) and legs. The hair serves as a sensory organ, enabling them to sense minor variances in air currents. As such, a Bat has a spherical range of awareness for his immediate surroundings, and is rarely taken off-guard in aerial combat.

Despite their smaller size, the flap span of a Bat's gliderwings is larger than most, because it spreads from the wrist down to below the knees, as opposed to the hip. The wider flap space increases their wings' lift potential, allowing them to climb and drop with greater ease. Bats are considered the greatest flyers of the gliders, and may even be more manoeuvrable in the air than some winged-folk.

The facial features of Troupial Bat vary to minor degrees, but for the most part, they include an upturned nose due to a shorter nose cartilage, and enlarged ears situated several inches higher than standard human. The most obvious mark a member of this Troupial bears, however, are black eyes with no discernable pupils. The larynx is built to emit sound pulses, enabling Bats to guide themselves via echolocation. While their sight is not terribly strong, individuals have good visual acuity for immediate objects (5-10 feet), and use their "sonar" for determining specific details over distances. Their sense of touch and hearing also helps to compensate for their poor eyesight.

Bat warriors use white tree gum to adorn their body in arcane markings dating back to Yas'Wail. The striking white against their dark skin is quite a contrast, and is effective in frightening unwary travellers who stumble upon them.



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NATURE

The bat has often been regarded as a silent hunter, but that is far from the truth. It lives within a dark world that few can understand, guided by its own screams. This offers it a perspective that few could ever share, much less be able to cope with, for its sight is one of sound.

Because of the manner in which they perceive the world, those of Troupial Bat tend to be xenophobic, or at least wary of outsiders. Strangers do not know how to modulate their voices properly, often causing agitation to the sound-sensitive Bats. On the other hand, Bats have developed their own secret language which cannot even be heard except by those within Troupial Dragon (and even then, this group does not understand what is being said). The reason others cannot hear the Bat's language is because it is being spoken at the same inaudible pitch used for echolocation. Only the silent opening and closing of the mouth betrays the conversation.

Most members of this Troupial wear little clothing, for their hair bristles are sensitive enough to sense the changes in air pressure and fabric would only blind them (in addition to causing constant agitation and chaffing). The sole reason they do not go around completely naked is because of their interaction, however limited, with others. When left alone amongst their own kind, they wear nothing.

Troupial Bat possesses no Chapters, for they are a united people. They tend to agglomerate into communal bands, with specific functions attached to each member. Their numbers may be small, but they would never knowingly rob, steal or cheat from any other member of their Troupial, regardless of the circumstances.

Those born with full wings are considered to be of Troupial Dragon, and are given to a proper House to be raised. Babies born with neither wings nor glider-membranes are given over to Troupial Rat. This group was formed when the number of Fallen children had increased dramatically. Rather than make them feel inferior to Troupial Bat, however, a decision was made to make them into a new Troupial where they would be amongst equals. Because of this philosophy, Troupial Rat and Bat are on strong terms.

NOTABLE CHAPTERS

While Bats are mostly united and generally see no need to form Chapters, there is one Chapter that exists which is not officially recognized by the Alliance of Kings. Bats living past the border of the Deep and the Tyon Expanse have formed several communities of Free-Tribes which trade exclusively with the Merchant Bands of Haak San Bazaa and Bastion. The Therika Alliance was formed by the Bats to improve their trading stance with the Merchant Bands, and to gain uniform barter practices.

In recent years, the alliance has grown to seven members comprising the Bat Free-Tribes of the Green-Shadows, Leapers, Eye-Wide, White Bands, Fierce, Quiet-Howl-Across-The-Jungle and the Black-Jump. With over 3700 members, it is gaining enough recognition that other Bats are joining the Therika Alliance in order to gain some political recognition outside the control of the Alliance Dragons.

The Therika Alliance is run by a council of seven individuals, each representing the interest of one of the Free-Tribes. The Council Orator is currently K'chi Delamand of the Eye-Wide tribe, but the position is an elected post decided upon by the council members. While he retains his position K'chi refuses to deal with the Alliance or Wardens, simply because he sees them as opposite sides of the same evil coin. A new election will be called within the year, and the council is sure to vote in someone who is less of a hardliner. The Therika Alliance does not believe it should remain alienated from the Alliance for too long, the upcoming war is too brutal a storm to weather alone.

ADVANTAGE

Because of their larger flap-span ratio, members of this race tend to be highly capable aerialists. Their glider membrane is more elastic, allowing them to commit to sharper dives and ascents than all other gliders. This, coupled with their hair bristles and their echolocation, turns them into deadly opponents on par with members from Troupial Hawk and Eagle when in flight.

DRAWBACK

Unfortunately, greater manoeuvrability comes at the cost of speed. Like all gliders, Bats are not terribly quick, and can be easily outdistanced in fights with good flyers. Long-range weapons and spells are often used to destroy Bats before they ever get in range. The primary disadvantage for this Troupial is its lack of visual acuity. While their other senses compensate for this drawback with remarkable proficiency, Bats are likely to miss small visual cues.

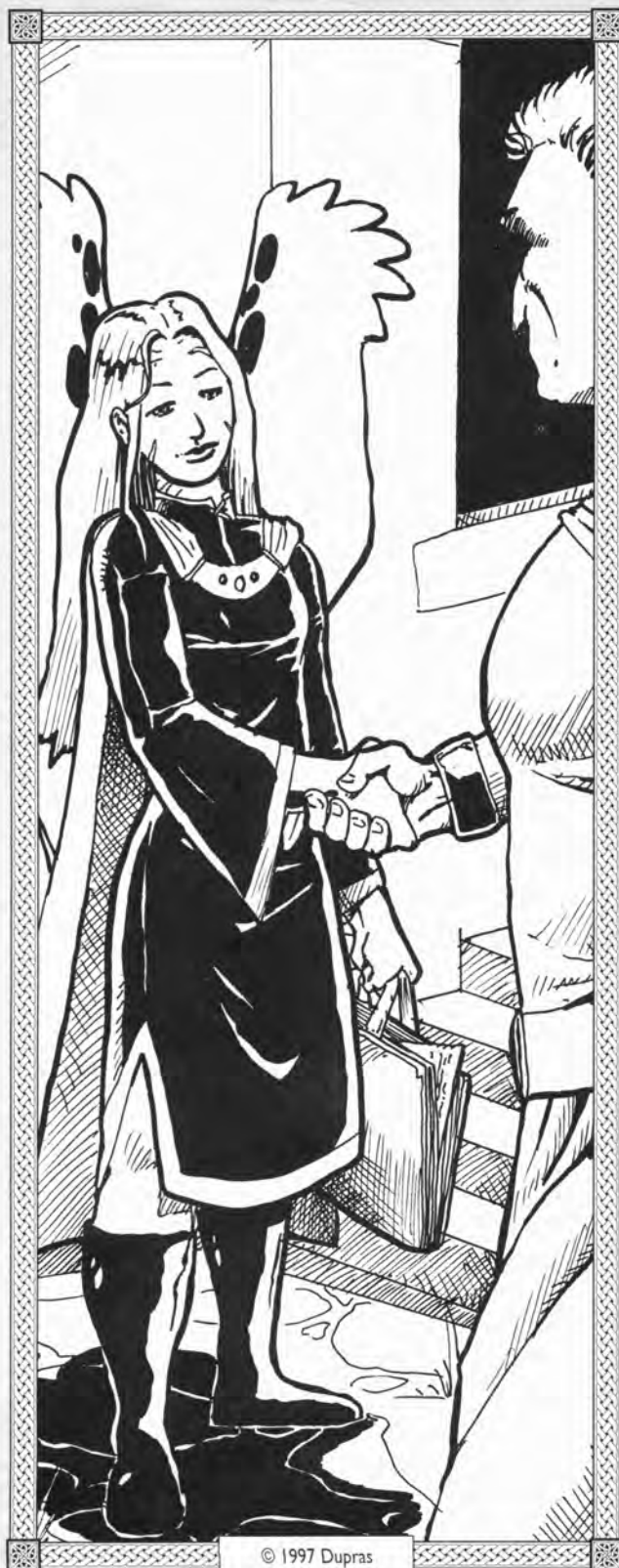
TROUPIAL ATTRIBUTES

Characteristics Perception – three points

Skills Bat Language – six points
Flight – one point

Powers Enhanced Sense Hearing – Tier 1
Enhanced Sense Sonar – Tier 1
Enhanced Sense Touch – Tier 2
Glider – Tier 2

Traits Behaviour – Wary of strangers
Caste Status – Fortuned
Good Flyer
Impaired Sense, Sight – level 2



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TROUPIAL DOVE

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Male Doves are usually between 5'0" and 5'5" tall, weighing between 150 and 180 lbs of solid muscle. Female Doves are between 4'9" and 5'4" tall, and weigh between 120 and 160 lbs. Despite

their stout body size, they have proven to be good flyers and excellent navigators. As such, they are skilled explorers and advance scouts.

An individual born into this Troupial is normally white to light bluish-grey along the back, face and legs, with a purple to bluish torso and arms. Along the face's periphery (near the hairline, the cheeks next to the ears, and under the chin) and along the sides of the neck, shoulder and wings/membranes, patches of iridescent streaks can be seen. The wings are spotted black along the arm and adjoining feathers, as well as down the arms closer to the hands. Amongst fully-winged flyers, white-grey contour feathers emerge at the wrists and run along the outside forearm, all the way down to the elbow. With gliders and members of the Fallen, soft down feathers can be found on their backs, in patches where the wings were supposed to be. Eye colours for this group are variants of blue, from powder blue to indigo.

Troupial Dove members prefer to dress in form fitting clothing since loose garments flutter in the wind, creating a good deal of noise and slowing them down when they fly. Belts and bandoleers are used to keep clothing in place, and to facilitate the transport of items. Doves tend to collect small, light-weight objects, and their many pouches allow them to carry a plethora of interesting items. They rarely carry any weapons that require the use of both hands, or ones that will slow their passage down.

NATURE

Doves are gregarious in nature, but serious when it comes to their duties. Many people find them easy to talk to and work alongside, but have a difficult time seeing them as leaders. This misconception is a dangerous one to make out loud, for Doves get angry quietly and they rarely forget slights.

One of this Troupial's strengths is their ability and willingness to work alongside other people. Doves are social individuals and enjoy working within mixed groups. Nearly everyone of them is a member of at least two to three parties, Chapters or organizations. This affords them a wide network of contacts to obtain information from.

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Their gregarious demeanour is also tempered by a hyperactive nature. For some reason, a Dove cannot remain idle without driving himself or others around him to distraction. It is not a matter of being nosy or intrusive, for they do respect the privacy of others. It is simply a need to be involved in something moving or happening. This behaviour is viewed by the other Troupials as being somewhat obsessive, and while some people may find this habit annoying, it can be an asset to have somebody with a wide range of contacts.

It is ironic that Doves are so friendly, considering their skill as scouts, a job that requires them to work alone. While they may not enjoy this solitary work, they are often duty-conscious enough to complete their assignments without complaints. It is for this reason that most armies and city-militias prefer to employ Dove scouts and messengers; they are trustworthy and competent. The one complaint about them, however, is that they can easily be distracted by shiny materials, which they collect and store in their many pouches and bags. They practically never throw away items once they pick them up.

Because Doves are somewhat informal and nonchalant, they rarely bother with the interaction restrictions engendered by the caste system. They will work with anyone as long as the job is interesting. This tends to bother Troupial Eagle and Hawk, who regard their Fallen brethren with a mixture of contempt and pity, but the matter is overlooked as Doves will rarely marry outside their caste. Doves believe that thinning their blood through intermarriage will lead to a wingless Troupial.

Despite this somewhat cold-hearted view, Doves support one another despite caste-restrictions. They do not feel the Fallen are cursed, but they are to be pitied for having lost the gift of flight. Fallen Dove Shards who can fly, however, are celebrated as heroes, for they represent one who has returned to the fold despite adversity. Troupials Hyena and Jackal regard this view as hypocritical.

NOTABLE CHAPTERS

By far, the greatest number of Chapters for any one Troupial belong to the sociable Doves. Between the Merchant Bands and the Alliance of Kings, there are twelve different alliances of various size which are in existence. They



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range from three-house Chapters to the largest and oldest of the lot, Chapter Bwa'Kshall, with its eight houses.

Bwa'Kshall was one of many Chapters which was splintered during the course of the revolution on Yas'Wail. When Warden families were being chosen from amongst the loyal alliances, House Connix was chosen from the Bwa'Kshall to serve on Providence.

Having secured the Isle of the Eye, Connix proved to be the least harsh of the Warden families, but that was still not enough to prevent their overthrow. It is ironic that it was Koriarill, a household which had managed to remain active despite their imprisonment, which was eventually responsible for usurping Connix. Both families were of Troupial Dove, and both had been with Chapter Bwa'Kshall before the Grand Revolution. The only surviving members of Connix now reside in Bone-Wail as a vassal family to the Puradanium.

Since the liberation of Water-Sister, the Koriarill Dynasty has ruled the Isle of the Eye and re-established Chapter Bwa'Kshall. Run by Watcher Preventine, the federation has strong links to various Distinctions which practice Wird, and is almost as steeped in mystical and esoteric knowledge as the Ravens are. Outside Koriarill, the second most powerful house within the Chapter is House Allister within Cliff-Spider. Although the city is under the firm control of Hawk, Allister is the third most influential group there.

With the recent loss of Sun-Guard, Bwa'Kshall has offered the expatriated ruling family of Emberleen a seat in their federation. The invitation also extends to the Emberleen Chapter as a whole which is currently only three Dove Houses strong. Although the offer is still being considered, Emberleen's acceptance could make Bwa'Kshall the second most powerful Chapter in the Alliance of Kings behind the Sallusturm Eagles.

ADVANTAGE

Doves possess an uncanny sense of navigation and direction, regardless of how alien their environment is. Even blindfolded, individuals have demonstrated a talent for going in the right direction. While this ability was exhibited on Yas'Wail, many believe that the stationary sun acts as an anchored point of reference, enhancing their skill to navigate. Doves are difficult to lose or confuse.

DRAWBACK

Doves make better hit-and-run fighters than they do aerial dualists. Their primary drawback, however, stems from their attention problem. When speaking with people, they are highly attentive, but place a shiny bit of jewellery or fabric on the other person and the Dove will have a problem

focusing on the conversation or assignment. Thankfully, they are not inclined towards kleptomania, although less scrupulous Doves may become dangerously obsessive. Dove thieves with this trait are a particularly nasty combination.

TROUPIAL ATTRIBUTES

Characteristics Constitution – one point
Strength – two points
Psyche – one point
Charisma – one point

Skills Small Talk - one point

Powers Wings/Glider Membrane – Tier I

Traits Absolute Sense of Direction
Behaviour, extreme – Social beings
Behaviour – Distracted by shiny objects
Behaviour – Vengeful
Contacts (level 2)
Reputation – Reliable (level +2)



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TROUPIAL DRAGON

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Although members of Troupial Dragon are related to Troupial Bat, they share very few similarities. The upturned nose is universal, but not the enlarged ears. While this group's auditory acuity is sharp, allowing them to hear the cries of Troupial Bat, they cannot use sound for echolocation. Troupial Dragon also lacks the proper body hair to sense atmospheric changes, and the larynx of a Dragon is not equipped to generate the sound pulses used for echolocation. Their eyes are far better developed than Bat, however, and are hued orange to deep red.

Male Dragons are between 5'6" and 6'0" tall, weighing 175 to 220 lbs. Females are between 5'4" and 5'9" tall and weigh between 135 to 190 lbs. Their muscle and fat mass, as well as their bone structure is somewhat denser than Bats, making it more difficult for them to fly. All members of Troupial Dragon are winged. Those who are not share the characteristics of Bat or Rat, and are turned over to them for care at birth. The colour hues of this group are red to green breasts and stomachs, with darker shades along the back, tail shoulders, legs, face and arms. Black leopard spots also adorn their entire backside, extending from the lower face, around to the back of the neck and down the shoulder blades all the way to their feet.

The fully grown wings of Troupial Dragon are leathery in appearance and somewhat iridescent in various angles of light. Because of the strength it takes to lift a Dragon's weight, the wide and rather thick wings are used to soar into the sky, where the flyer can then glide to his destination. Unlike the versatile Eagles, Dragons have weaker wing muscles, preventing them from being efficient flyers. It is generally agreed that Dragons are not as good in the air as they are at advising, but they do possess one extra offensive ability that no other Troupial does, a tail. This four-inch wide, three-foot long appendage is a rope of muscle tightly wound around cartilage extending from the spine. Covered with serrated scales, the tail can be used as a deadly cutting weapon when a Dragon spins around with it and connects. Flyers using this in aerial combat have been known to incorporate this attack as part of a diving manoeuvre, decapitating opponents.

Members of Troupial Dragon are smooth-bodied, with the exception of silver, white or sometimes flaxen hair that is tied into a variety of braids. Their long manes are regarded



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as a symbol of longevity and authority, and mane duels are a common way of disgracing an opponent. Because Dragons function as advisors and brokers, appearance is very important to them. A member of this Troupial can always be seen in elegant loose garments made of silk or soft hide. They love patterns, and wear anything with intricate resin work such as bracers, decorative chains, broaches, rings, hair clasps, etc. Many people claim that Dragons appear to be flowery and weak, but few would want to be on the receiving end of a tail lash.

NATURE

Dragons have always enjoyed a position of prestige and power amongst the Iblii and even Seraph. While they may not be strong in the art of combat, they are skilled in the art of persuasion. Unlike Troupial Bat, Dragons make it a point not to seclude themselves from outsiders because they recognize the importance of the other Troupials and their abilities.

They are, however, somewhat elitist and snobbish, but this is not surprising considering they all are considered part of the noble caste. Despite being the Troupial with the least amount of members, they are one of the most influential.

Mane Duels

Honour, a highly regarded attribute, is of paramount importance to Dragons. Regardless of whether somebody actually has honour, any accusation that claims a Dragon is dishonourable must be answered in combat. A time-honoured tradition amongst Dragons to settle such accusations is a mane duel. This practice is only followed amongst Dragons, and any outside challenges can be refused without a loss of face.

In the duel, both combatants are armed with knives, and must successfully remove the opponent's mane. Tails are prohibited from being used; any such attempt will be considered grounds for disqualification and forfeiture of the mane for the offending Dragon. Disgracing a foe is preferred over killing one, although deaths are neither uncommon nor frowned upon.



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Dragons can be found in positions of power as puppet masters, within the Alliance of Kings, the Warden cities and the Mercantile Bands.

The greatest advantage Dragons possess in the political courts has to do with their auditory acuity and their ability to modulate their voices. They learned, through their interaction with Troupial Bat, that certain noises can either soothe or aggravate individuals. Dragons have fine tuned their skill to the point where they can speak to a person at different pitches in order to elicit certain emotional responses. The differences are not obvious, but Troupial Bat, Rat and other Dragons can pick up on the minute deviations. In addition, they can also apply this skill to their listening abilities, and pick up emotional cues in the voice such as anger, deception, happiness, etc. What makes them skilled in persuasion is their ability to listen well, and use the emotional state of the individual to their advantage.

Unlike Troupial Bat, Dragons are solitary people. Their power comes through their own skill, and this often means developing a competitive edge against everyone else. This does little in the way of uniting the members together under a common banner. By the same token, intra-Troupial rivalry is based on games of political savvy. Few Dragons would hire an assassin to eliminate an opponent if they could outwit them politically. The courts of the Alliance of Kings are rife with rumours and gossip of entire Chapters shamed through character assassination.

Because Dragons take care to cement their position in the royal structure, it has become difficult for younger members of the Troupial to try their luck in the noble courts. Some are forced to serve more powerful members of their Chapters, waiting for an opportunity to seize the moment, while others have looked elsewhere for challenges and prestige. This has led to what the elders of the Troupial believe to be an appalling situation; younger Dragons, in their quest to hasten the political process and oust the older generations, are resorting to more brutal and direct tactics against their adversaries. They are more likely to hire killers, blackmail or even threaten their rivals in order to eliminate them. Others have simply turned their back on the entire matter and pursued alternate paths of destiny such as adventuring and exploration.

NOTABLE CHAPTERS

Unfortunately, the Dragon Chapter that remains the most notable is that of the Warden house, the Puradanium. These rulers of Bone-Wail represent the longest uninterrupted dynasty in Providence, as well as the most singularly powerful family in the realms. While people are often confused as to why this single house uses the name Puradanium to signify itself as a Chapter, only learned historians are familiar with the complete story.

During the Grand Rebellion on Yas'Wail, the Puradanium Chapter was twenty houses strong, and like all alliances of the time, split into opposing factions. When the revolution ended, the remaining 12 Puradanium houses which had remained loyal to the forces of status-quo decided to banish the practice of households within their Chapter. They realized that the primary split within the various Chapters occurred along the household lines when entire families splintered off. By disbanding the houses and making the Chapter a singular entity, loyalty could not be distracted by familial obligations. Whatever actions were done for one would be done for all.

The Puradanium of Providence are part of a whole which exists on Yas'Wail. Their obligation is to the Chapter, even though they have not seen their counterparts for nearly two millennia. It is this obligation which keeps them loyal to their duties and allows them to continue on as Wardens. Currently, the Puradanium are led by Warden Elarian and assisted by a number of other households. Their singular concern is the maintenance of the prison camps, the reacquisition of all escaped prisoners and, finally, to leave this place. They have served as Wardens for countless generations, and it is time to "change the guard" as they are apt to say.

ADVANTAGE

In addition to possessing a sharp, scaly tail that they can use as a weapon, the Dragons possess sharp auditory and pitch acuity. This allows them to detect a person's emotional



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state through clues in his voice, regardless of what is actually said. The same applies with the modulation of their voice, a talent that enables them to elicit certain emotional responses from the listener. They cannot make the listener do something contrary to their beliefs or nature, however, just as they cannot force them to do something completely opposite to their present emotional state.

DRAWBACK

While Dragons possess strong social traits, they are lacking in their physical ones. Because of their size and the relative weak muscles powering their wings, members of this Troupial are slow flyers who possess poor manoeuvrability. Of all the airborne Yas'Wailians, they are the least competent aerialists, especially in combat situations. Their only saving grace is their tail, which they are proficient in using during air duels.

In addition to this, Dragons are also afflicted with poor visual acuity. While not as bad as Troupial Bat, it is enough to hinder their long-range perception.

TROUPIAL ATTRIBUTES

Characteristics Intelligence - one point
Charisma - two points

Skills Body Language - one point
Charm - one point

Powers Altered/Inhuman Sense Sonar,
hearing only - Tier I
Increased Sense, Hearing - Tier I
Wings - Tier I
Tail - 3 point attack

Traits Bad Flyer
Caste Status - Blessed
Impaired Sense, Sight - level I



TROUPIAL EAGLE

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Troupial Eagle members are the pinnacle of Yas'Wailian aesthetic, or at least, that is what they tell everyone. Individuals are well proportioned and taller than most. Male Eagles stand between 5'9" and

6'4" on average and weigh between 190 and 220 lbs. Female Eagles are usually between 5'7" and 6'3" tall and weigh anywhere from 155 and 210 lbs. Little body fat can be found on their endomorphic forms, and most engage in a constant regime to maintain fitness.

Body hue gives them a dark brown sheen across their torso, upper arms and legs. Their face, hands, wings/membranes, forearms and back is a lighter brown awash in highlights of gold. The legs and forearms are banded by slightly paler colours, giving them a ringed look, with a thick tuft of contour feathers at the outside of their wrists and ankles.

Those of Troupial Eagle appear as the birds after whom they are named, imperial and somewhat cold. To begin with, their noses are hooked and sharply defined. A rigid but sharply-arched brow bone lends them a fierce countenance while deeply set eye sockets are countered by the sparkling glow of their light green to gold pupils. There are few people who can win a staring match against a member of Troupial Eagle. Hair colours are likewise varied, from jet black to the purest of whites, but their scalp hair is intermingled with soft down feathers.

Despite their large frames, flyers possess strong wings that take them into the sky with great mobility, and hurtling back down at screaming speeds. Their visual acuity is tremendous. Eagles are known to take flight, and wait from a mile away before beginning one of their power dives towards an opponent.

Eagles enjoy wearing resin armour specifically fitted to their form. This makes it impossible to steal their armour and have it fit properly. Clothing that illustrates the curvature of their physique is preferable, but anything that allows them to show this off while engaging in a physical challenge is even better. When they can, both genders wear garments that expose their upper chests; it is this area where victory scars are carved. The greater the quantity of scars, the more renowned an Eagle becomes. Faking scars is a difficult thing, for each scar simply represents one beaten opponent, and ten who have yet to challenge you.



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Those born into this Troupial without wings or glider membranes, are forever marked with a mystical sigil to remind them of their impurity. Located upon their foreheads, this glyph is regarded as a mark of scorn. There are legends, however, that speak of hidden warriors who can grow wings of golden feathers when endangered. Their faces are fully birdlike (beak and feathers), and their hands become claws of flame. Known as Sunbirds, the only two such creatures to have emerged came from the ranks of those thought to be "Fallen." This legend has remained the only reason why Troupial Eagle does not kill its "tainted" children upon birth, although the practice of infanticide is reputed to exist.

NATURE

If appearance is an indication of nature, then few people can mistake the sense of imperial authority that shines from an Eagle like a beacon. Individuals born into this Troupial are raised with a strong sense of self, so much so that they tend to annoy others with their arrogance. They have also been accused of being overconfident, a charge that, in all fairness, is incorrect. Overconfidence implies involvement in a situation where someone has overestimated their own skills. Eagles are not overconfident, they know exactly what they can accomplish. They simply do not possess the modesty to state otherwise.

Troupial Eagle has always regarded itself as the epitome of Yas'Wailian perfection; despite this, many of their members still fought in the great rebellion for the freedom of all. Despite their insufferable tendency to remind others of their ability, Eagles are, by nature, defenders and leaders of the weak (which just happens to be everybody else), and believe it is proper for those of their station to lead, simply by right of virtue. The Eagles were at the forefront of the fight to implement a caste structure, a system they believed would benefit the weak by identifying them and placing them beneath the responsibility of the caring nobility.

Unfortunately, while they can tolerate the weaknesses of others simply because it enhances the notion of their own superiority, they cannot accept the Fallen born into their own families. It is a reminder that their perfection is "flawed." Their sense of ethics prevents them from slaying their own children, which is a good thing, but it is strong enough to make them mark their children with Wird glyphs, and to place them under the care of Fallen within Troupial Jackal or Hyena.

Those who are born *gliders* are allowed to remain within Troupial Eagle, but greater pressure is put upon them to prove their worth. Regardless of how well they perform, they can never reach a position of respect equal to the Blessed, for they are not winged. They often serve the nobility as merchants, traders, common soldiers and messengers. King, queen and knighthood are all titles reserved for the Blessed and Pure.

NOTABLE CHAPTERS

The most powerful of the Eagle Chapters is Sallusturm, a league centred in Cry-Star and spread throughout the cities of the Alliance. On Yas'Wail, Sallusturm was one of the most powerful Chapters, a federation of over a hundred Eagle Houses. With the Grand Rebellion came indecision over the interpretation of the gods' decree, and a split formed between the forces of status quo and change that rocked the Chapter off its foundation. Following the war, house Andracka of Sallusturm was chosen to act as a Warden family, and became the only representatives of their alliance within Providence.

Although House Andracka was later responsible for freeing the Cry-Star penal colony, earning the nickname of "the First Liberators," they eventually allowed their house to join with another. In part this was done because the name Andracka was still synonymous with Warden, a word which still carries much pain. They became House Alodawn, the principle house within the newly expanding Sallusturm Chapter. This was not a bad name, since many Sallusturm Knights had fought for equality during the Grand Rebellion. Eventually Alodawn fell, even though the Chapter itself thrived and grew.

Currently, Sallusturm is 16 houses strong, and growing. Half of these Houses are in Cry-Star alone, while the remainder are spread throughout Cliff-Spider, Water-Sister and a number of large settlements in the Exodus Plains. House Crackshore, the largest Sallusturm house in Cliff-Spider, is strongly allied with the Hawk Chapter of Dendysii. This has created a potentially powerful alliance between Troupial Hawk and Eagle.

One practice that is particular to Sallusturm is the notion of vassal Households. While the convention is available for all Chapters to benefit from, the Eagles seem to put it in use the most. The idea is that any outside Troupial that wishes to join another Troupial's Chapter may do so as a vassal Household. Sallusturm has two such vassals: the Dragons of House Karistikant that serve as the Chapter's advisors, and Chapter Swift-Ground, four Rat Houses serving as information gatherers for the Eagles.

At the helm of the alliance is the Kladshea Dynasty, a House which arose from the ashes of Alodawn, and its ruler King Gunther. Next to Regent Caiylus, Gunther is perhaps one of the most powerful people in Providence. He is an influential member of the Alliance of Kings because he rules Cry-Star, he heads the formidable Kladshea Dynasty and he is leader of Chapter Sallusturm, one of the most powerful alliances.

With the collapse of Eagle Chapter Tebiak, an alliance once centred in the now flooded city of Sun-Guard, more Houses from this defunct federation seek to join Sallusturm. This could propel the Chapter to a size unprecedented after the Grand Rebellion.



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ADVANTAGE

Eagles possess keen eyesight, and can see up to hand-sized objects from nearly a mile away. This, coupled with their aerial acrobatic skills and their power-dive capabilities, makes them fierce opponents to contend with. Their prime asset is their natural ability as warriors. They possess a highly disciplined mind, and are rarely dissuaded or tricked from doing what they know is right. This strength of will has aided them in accomplishing great tasks, even when others might have died trying to accomplish the same.

DRAWBACK

While they do not regard this as a fault, Eagles are notoriously honour-bound to their codes of conduct. If someone begs for their help and it is not an obvious trap, Eagles are obliged to help. If they are challenged to duels (except on the battlefield where more is at stake than just their honour), they must fight. Eagles are limited by the codes which guide them, but there are also the laws that keep this Troupial strong.

TROUPIAL ATTRIBUTES

Characteristics Constitution – two points
Strength – two points
Willpower – two points

Skills Melee – one point
Hand to hand – one point

Powers Wings/Gliders – Tier I
Increased Sense, Sight – Tier I

Traits Behaviour – Honourable, Extreme



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TROUPIAL GARGOYLE

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Another one of the few Iblii races, Gargoyles are the only winged Troupial to appear after the loss of the rebellion and the exile to Providence. Some consider them an indigenous race of this world, but

others simply accept them as Yas'Wailians. Known as the most barbaric of the races, their appearance has more to do with elemental expression than with species (avian or mammalian). Their appearance, however, is still humanoid.

Male Gargoyles stand between 6'5" and 8'0" tall, with an average weight from 300 to 500 lbs. Female Gargoyles average the same height and weigh between 275 and 500 lbs. Colour stratification for this race is based on the primary elements: red-orange (fire), green-blue (water), brown-grey (earth), white-silver (air). The patterns of these hues depend on the nature of the element. Those born with the marks of

fire possess jagged orange lines like the stripes of a tiger. Water-related Gargoyles possess flowing patterns of blues and sea green, while those born with the sign of earth appear like cracked mud, or are stratified like layers of soil. For those born under the auspices of air, their patterns of colours are soft and diffused, merging into one another like amorphous tinted clouds.

There are no Gargoyle Fallen. Like Troupial Bat, they give those children incapable of flight to a Fallen Troupial, Jackal in their case. Members of this clan are either winged or they possess glider flaps, but they do not separate their castes to the degree of Bat, Dragon and Rat. Despite their dense body mass, they are capable of flying, even though they are described as being as agile as thrown rocks. Unfortunately, they tend to fight in much the same manner, flying as though they were thrown, and striking opponents with their body as squarely as possible. While this may seem detrimental to both the Gargoyle and his adversary, the former have the advantage of possessing curled horns.

Gargoyle skulls are made of dense bone, and both genders can grow thick curved horns that may be used as battering rams. Tribal supremacy is actually based on who



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can strike an opponent in the head the hardest, and still remain standing. The horns occasionally fall out for a couple of weeks, then start to grow again. The older a Gargoyle is, the longer the horns grow. When a leader's horns fall out, they must abdicate their position; it is considered bad form to challenge a Gargoyle without horns. Gargoyles without horns who bring up a challenge, are laughed at.

Gargoyles have a mane, either of darker or lighter hue than the body, that adorns the middle of their scalp, and runs all the way down their back to form a tail of hair. Among the older members of Gargoyle tribes, facial or braided hair is a designation of status and wisdom.

The facial features of Gargoyle, while decidedly human, are somewhat unusual. Their huge head is offset by small eyes sunken deep within the eye socket (as a matter of fact, people can often only see a glimmer of red, blue, white or grey pupils within the darkness cast by the overhanging brow). Their noses are somewhat small while the jaw line is set like a box. Elongated incisors or cuspids often break past the lips, lending a menacing air to the already wide (and sharp) toothy grin of a Gargoyle.

In terms of attire, this Troupial prefers the rough feel of animal hides and pelts over the soft touch of fabrics (for some reason, silken or velvety clothing is as grating to them as wearing burlap underwear would be to a Bat). Wide, thick belts are also worn, and it is not uncommon to find the bones of vanquished enemies dangling from them. They also prefer to walk around with untreated (meaning not touched by the Wird or by fire) heavy weapons. These include thick shafts of wood and other simple clubs.

NATURE

The first misconception surrounding the Gargoyles that should be dispensed with is the notion that they are dimwitted and slow because they are barbaric. This is far from the truth. Gargoyles are easily as sharp and intelligent as other Troupials, but their insistence on leading a more rudimentary life style is one of choice rather than situation. While some are known to live within the cities, moving amongst social and political circles as key players in court life, the remainder have strong links to their more primitive roots. In essence, the need to remain close to nature is as integral as breathing.

Because of these views, Gargoyles thrive on remaining true to their very nature. They see no need to hide their naturally aggressive demeanour, and regard civility as a form of deception. To them, life is based on the dynamics of struggle and the friction of conflict. Winning is actually considered secondary since loss teaches better lessons than victory ever can; hence the Troupial saying "Strong hero, feeble mind," something many people mistakenly attribute as

the mark of a sore loser. This affects everything surrounding the Gargoyle, including familial and spousal interaction. Children are taught to fight for their share of food, a mate has to best another just for the honour of earning his (or her) spouse's favour and tribal position is gained through gruelling matches. Surprisingly, this has also given Gargoyles an extremely sharp wit, a talent they use to try and goad others into combat with.

While this is considered a normal upbringing for Gargoyles, it can be difficult for them to interact with outsiders (especially for the outsider). They are likelier to slug someone who wishes them well than actually greet them simply because it is easier to determine someone's nature through the way they fight rather than what they say; hence another Gargoyle saying "Truth in conflict." Once they feel comfortable dealing with an individual (and the other person has dispensed with silly civil rituals), Gargoyles are less likely to "test" them constantly. This does not mean that they will not keep their friends on their toes through surprise attacks and constant jabs, merely they will not do it as much as before.

This ideology has distanced this Troupial from many of the other groups. People are simply frightened of what a Gargoyle may do to them and will stay out of their way if they encounter one. Few individuals are actually aware that a Gargoyle is not confrontational because he has a need to kill, he is confrontational because struggle is the dynamic that allows things to grow. Life without struggle is stagnation, and stagnation in life is another word for death (something the Gargoyles reserve for enemies in battle, and not for those whom they "test").

NOTABLE CHAPTERS

Like the Bats, Gargoyles form tribes, not Households. Unlike the Bats, Gargoyles do not create Chapters; they simply conquer whomever they want as an ally. Because of their mind set, this Troupial does not believe in forming alliances simply because the entire concept seems to be based on degrees of politeness, which, as everyone knows, is just another form of deception (according to the Gargoyles).

The only thing comparable to a Gargoyle Chapter is the Stone-Drop tribe of the Green Barrens. Comprised of over 28,000 members spread across four different settlements, they represent the largest accumulation of Gargoyles anywhere in Providence. Led by She-Headbutts-Hard (for some reason, this tribe insists on using the person's gender before their name), she has managed to lead her tribe to a number of victories over neighbouring Gargoyle settlements. Her fighting prowess is both brutal and unparalleled, and many who have seen her in combat believe she may be a Kestrel or Wird Dancer by the way she

moves in battle. One story about her that remains famous the Alliance over concerns her entry into the Stone-Drop settlement. It was said that when the tribe first encountered her, they demanded she prove herself worthy for admission. She in turn demanded the tribe prove its worth if it wanted to join her. It was after her subsequent fight with the Gargoyle warriors of Stone-Drop that she earned her nickname.

The Alliance of Kings is considering sending envoys to court the Stone-Drop tribe, for they may be of great benefit in the upcoming war. Regent Caiylus is hesitant, however, for she knows that whomever she sends as an envoy has to be strong enough to impress the Gargoyles in a fight if so challenged. Unfortunately, only the Guild of Drummers possesses members with that much strength, and they are occupied with war preparations.

ADVANTAGE

Put simply, Gargoyles, being physically stronger and larger than the other Troupials, not only frighten the hell out of everyone, they also know how to capitalize on this. They can intimidate or scare people into doing exactly what they want; but not because they are bullies, but because they want others to stand up to them. In addition to this, Gargoyles possess a hardened skull and horns that can be used as a battering weapon, and more developed incisor and canines that lend them a vicious bite. Both these attacks are used in real-combat situations, and not in testing others.

DRAWBACK

The reputation that the Gargoyles enjoy also works against them. People not familiar with members of this Troupial will avoid them at all costs and shun them. This makes interaction difficult at best. Gargoyles are also poor flyers, in terms of manoeuvrability and speed, and tend to be cumbersome on the ground as well.

TROUPIAL ATTRIBUTES

Characteristics	Constitution – two points
	Strength – four points
	Charisma – minus one point
Skills	Intimidation – three points
Powers	Horns – 3 points soft damage
	Bite – 3 point attack
	Wings/Glider Membrane - Tier I
	Armour – Tier I
Traits	Behaviour – Likes to be close to nature
	Reputation – Barbaric and violent
	Bad Flyer



TROUPIAL HAWK

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Troupial Hawk are hunters, and their build implies nothing but. Male Hawks are between 5'5" and 5'10" tall, weighing between 150 and 175 lbs. Female Hawks are from 5'2" and 5'9" tall and weigh between 130 and 160 lbs. Their ectomorphic bodies are naturally muscular, and highly defined regardless of their regime. Often called "Windknives," for the speed and grace with which they slice through the air, Hawks are regarded as the best rounded aerialists (speed, agility and manoeuvrability-wise). Individuals born with glider membranes are as agile as their winged counterparts, lacking only the necessary lift to take them into the sky.

This Troupial's body hue is fairly unique. Above the waistline, the skin colour runs a blue-grey, while their lower body is a motley of reddish-brown patches. The wings are likewise marked in the same colours as the upper body. Patches of contours feathers can be found along the outer arm, going towards the elbow, and beginning at the knee and reaching as far down as the ankle. Oddly enough, some have feathers beginning below the eyes along the cheekbone, and sweeping back towards the hair.

Physically, Troupial Hawk is fairly human in appearance, with the exception of their facial feathers, and the presence of clawed hands. Each hand possesses three fingers, in addition to an opposable thumb, all of which are elongated and end in razor sharp claws. The claws are retractable, allowing Hawks to touch other people without fear of scratching them.

The eyes are elongated and watch everything around them with darting agility. It is said that not even death can stop the ever-moving gaze of a Hawk.

Hawks have normal heads of hair, running from light brown to dark black in colour. Most prefer to leave it long, wild and unfettered as they fly. The common dress for aerial members of this Troupial is resin chain and form fitting leathers. Some wear nothing but the barest of garments, preferring the independence of movement over social aesthetics.

NATURE

Born the consummate hunters, Hawks thrive on the spirit of adventure, the sense of the chase and relying on nothing but one's faculties. Their nature stems primarily from their almost daredevil-like bravado, which in itself is a



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reflection of their constant need to push the envelope. They fly with wild abandon, and if they cannot do that, they "sail the ground," as quick and light-footed runners. The world needs to speed by them in a blur of colours, ripping wind and cool air, otherwise they get edgy and irritable.

Hawks are strongly united as a Troupial, despite the fact that they pursue their individual lives in a somewhat hedonistic and self-centered manner. They relish new experiences and thrive on the unknown. Hawks are more likely to rush into a dark cave in order to immerse themselves in the mystery of it all than avoid it out of fear. To them, it is the thrill of the hunt that matters, not the sense of accomplishment. They are dedicated adventurers.

Hawks are occasionally known to stop short of completely uncovering a mystery or new experience simply because they wish to be left with the notion that some enigmas remain unreachable. In short, the happiest Hawks are those with a never-ending quest to fulfil. It gives their lives purpose. The unhappiest are the ones who discover what they seek, and realize it comes nowhere near the expectations they envisioned.

Because of this attitude, Hawks are driven individuals. They remain focused on whatever agenda occupies their thoughts, and are the first ones willing to do something foolish like explore the potential Green People settlement or spy upon a White Crow caravan. Their unity as a Troupial, however, is one of the strongest assets the Alliance of Kings possesses. As staunch supporters of the caste system, along with the Eagles (followed by Troupial Dove), they firmly keep its workings in place. So strong is their belief in it that even Fallen Hawks understand the necessity of their position in the lower ranks, and do little to rebel against it.

NOTABLE CHAPTERS

Chapter Dendyssi, the strongest of the Hawk alliances, is a direct descendent of the Dow'Schell, an entire federation of houses that sided with the peasants during the Grand Rebellion. The reason why they supported the call for reform was not due to belief, however, but because they saw this as an opportunity to attack enemy alliances for prior slights. The battles between the Dow'Schell and Chapter Wala of Hawk, in particular, were said to have been exceedingly brutal, almost a private war within a war.

As history recounts, however, Dow'Schell lost in the rebellion, and the Wardenship fell to House Crelan of Wala. Upon arriving in Providence, House Crelan arranged for all Dow'Schell prisoners to be transferred to their camp in Cliff-Spider. What followed were several decades of hardship and abuse for the prisoners affiliated with this particular Chapter. Over the subsequent years, the hardship lessened with each passing generation of Wardens, and the pains of

the past, while not forgotten, were certainly dulled. When the call for independence was finally granted and the prisoners freed, the remaining Crelian members hammered out a truce with the remaining Dow'Schell descendants. The result was the creation of the first Chapter in Providence since the exile began, an alliance named after the Warden Dendyssy who agreed to free the prisoners.

Although Chapter Dendyssy is second in power within the Alliance of Kings to the Sallusturm Chapter of Eagles, they are still respected as the oldest of the federations. Centred in Cliff-Spider, they are led by House Tura under the leadership of Raldowin IV, and possess a membership of nine Houses. This includes House Danlinon in Cry-Star, the second strongest family in the Dendyssy and the one most likely to succeed House Tura in leading the Chapter. Coupled with strong ties to Sallusturm through the Eagle houses of Crackshore in Cliff-Spider and Kladshae in Cry-Star, they are viewed as the strongest advocates for the Alliance of Kings.

As the ruling federation for Cliff-Spider, Dendyssy is one of the few Chapters that is completely geared towards military families. A majority of the men and women within the nine houses maintain some position or function within Cliff-Spider's and the Alliance's war machine. This tradition is one that has been in place since the colony was freed.

ADVANTAGE

Hawks, in addition to being equipped with retractable claws, are also well-rounded aerialists and strong-willed individuals. It is their sense of drive that imparts a certain innate stubbornness and the strength to resist attempts to subvert or alter their will. In essence, they are harder to manipulate, especially if it runs contrary to their current goals.

DRAWBACK

While Hawks work well together during adventure outings, they tend to be competitive with one another. It normally manifests as a friendly tournament of sorts, something to up the stakes of the game. Sometimes they allow it to become more, reaching the point where the mission is not as important as the competition. This need to prove one's worth applies solely to physical challenges and occurs regardless of whether the goal actually interests either competitor. Hawks are generally secretive because of this, and can be quite aggressive during such bouts.

Another failing of Hawks stems from their dedicated drive to explore the new and unusual. While it imparts a resistance to manipulation, it also makes them somewhat narrow-visioned. They will not be distracted from their course, even if something of greater impact is happening elsewhere. Many Hawks recognize this flaw in themselves,

and usually strive to fulfil short-term goals. This allows them a greater range of vision during their "off-periods."

It is for this reason that firm supporters of the caste system can rarely be dissuaded from their point of view, even under the threat of death.

TROUPIAL ATTRIBUTES

Characteristics Coordination – two points
Constitution – one point
Psyche – two points

Skills Flight – one point

Powers Wings/Glider Membranes – Tier I
Claws – 3 point attack
Increased Sense, Sight – Tier I

Traits Behaviour – Curious
Extreme Behaviour – Competitive with other Hawks
Good Flyer



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TROUPIAL HYENA

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Much as Troupial Jackal, Hyena is a melange of flightless crossbreeds and rejected Fallen. Unlike their other Fallen Troupials counterparts, however, Hyenas live like scavengers off the waste of the upper castes.

They accept their position within society, and as such, have no unifying costume, look or behaviour. Most of the Fallen who are not affiliated with Jackal or Rat are simply called Hyenas regardless of association.

NATURE

It can be said that Jackals are those Fallen who rebel against their caste position, while Hyenas accept it and their "cursed" fate. Unfortunately, this has engendered a Troupial of scavengers, and a dumping ground for Providence's insane, Fallen and illegitimate. Because it is what is thought of them, Hyenas act the parts allotted to them. They are the common stock of the world, the thieves, beggars, brigands, pickpockets, freaks and cursed which Providence is burdened with, but must, in its "humble" beneficence, contend with (at least according to the rhetoric espoused by the upper castes). In truth, Hyenas are unfortunate because neither they nor anyone else (save People's Knights, Anodynes and Horizon Striders) gives them the credit for being anything greater than who they are.

Troupial Hyena is an informal community of people associated by name alone. They are the most disparate of all the groups, and remain as such because nobody believes they can do better than what they already have. They accept the scraps of society with genuine gratitude, and thank the nobles when they are spit on for being the wastrels they believe themselves to be. The few who can or are willing to fight are drafted into Jackals, while the remainder are left to their fate. Some beg, many steal or rob, while others prostitute themselves. It is not surprising to see why they are regarded with an even, but confused mix of pity and contempt.

This does not mean that the Hyenas are entirely damned through their own self-hatred or through the opinion of others. Within Cliff-Spider and Water-Sister, a growing community of Hyenas have formed around D'Shau Monks and Slaywind priests willing to teach them the old ways of Yas'Wail. These growing religious groups are demanding Troupial solidarity, a push towards bettering their own position in society. They do not argue against the Alliance instituted caste system, for they support it as loyal

citizens. What they do advocate is improved conditions for their brethren and sisters.

This new drive, powered by the philosophies of the old Yas'Wailian pantheon, is still in its infancy, but it is receiving acclaim from Regent Caiylus herself. She has called it proof that nobility exists, if not in body, then at least in spirit amongst even the lowest castes. Before anything can be done, however, the religious movement must bring more Fallen on board if it is to succeed. Needless to say, this has instigated some friction with some Jackals.

NOTABLE CHAPTERS

The Hyenas do not normally maintain any sort of community network outside of small bands and familial ties; the need for food and other precious resources precludes this luxury. The exception to this rule lies with the Lost Flocks, groups of Hyenas who have gathered around the D'Shau monasteries and Slaywind settlements. Seeking meaning beyond what life has cruelly offered them, these Fallen have taken comfort in the teachings of the old religions.

Refusing to judge them based on appearance or accident of birth, the monks and priests of the D'Shau and Slaywinds have chosen to educate and help their less fortunate brethren.

The Lost Flocks, as they are being referred to, consist of more than a dozen growing settlements situated outside such Slaywind towns as True-Door and Marrin, and D'Shau temples such as Adrikall in Cliff-Spider, Krakebar in Cry-Star and Horizall in Haak San Bazaa. While the groups are still disparate, there has been talk of trying to organize the Lost Flocks into one cohesive group, thereby giving them one loud and unanimous voice.

ADVANTAGE

Advantages are based solely on an individual's original lineage.

DRAWBACK

In addition to their lineage's weakness, Hyenas are also affected by their low standing in society and their poor self-esteem (those not affiliated with the new religious communities).

TROUPIAL ATTRIBUTES

Skills Streetwise – three points
Scavenge – six points
Barter – three points

Traits Behaviour – Under Confident
Caste Status – Fallen
Contacts (level 2)
Poverty (level 5)

TROUPIAL JACKAL

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This Troupial seems to be the dumping ground for the unwanted Fallen, and as such, they are a mixed breed of people. Children born into families of mixed blood, however, show qualities from both parents.

Unfortunately, this view facilitates the maltreatment of Jackals, and even justifies their murder for some.

Jackals initially had no set appearance, save for their tattered and poor clothing, and the fact they did not possess proper wings or glider membranes. In an effort to establish their own identity, however, Jackals began using artificial means of creating a unifying mark. The result was a permanent berry-dye used around the eyes and on the hands of all those willing to call themselves Jackals.

Marked by visible deep-purple stained hands and a purple band across the eyes, this Troupial is one of the few who has actively begun fighting the caste system. What makes this Troupial dangerous is many of the children born to Jackal parents have a mixture of some Gargoyle blood (Gargoyle Fallen initially constituted over 60% of Jackal's ranks). A majority of the young idealists now entering the forefront of the new revolution are strong, tough, large and very imposing figures.

NATURE

Troupial Jackal is full of the Fallen who are trying to improve their treatment either by making sure that the system provides all of the gains that it promises to the Fallen or by reforming the system itself.

Possibly because of the Gargoyle blood, possibly because they have been trod upon so often, Jackals are aggressive and regarded as the most violent of the Fallen. The Alliance of Kings has labelled them as agitators, and is more likely to use forceful action against Jackals than is normal. This only spurs some of them on to more violent actions.

Next to Bat, Jackal has the strongest sense of Troupial unity, an asset that is slowly disintegrating. Like Bat, they are also highly xenophobic, but deal with their nature through confrontation rather than isolation. Essentially, they trust nobody except for those of their own Troupial, or other Fallen, and unless it is absolutely necessary, they are not likely to assist anyone else if it does not suit their purposes. This mercenary attitude has had more of a detrimental effect. The unity that served to make the Troupial strong is now being



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weakened by a "me first" stance. What few precious resources are available to the Jackals are being taken by the strongest of the groups.

Those not directly involved in the battle against the oppressive castes are considered secondary to those directly involved in the small-scale rebellion. This has goaded many people, who otherwise may have been peaceful, into an aggressive stance in order to simply survive. Hardest hit by this new attitude are the children and elderly. This situation has created the Anodynes, a new class of people who seek to better the condition of various Fallen Troupials.

NOTABLE CHAPTERS

While not a Chapter, the strongest alliance within the Jackals are the Wayfarers. They are discussed in the Factions Chapter.

ADVANTAGE

Members of this group do not exhibit any Jackal-specific merits, but possess those assets available to their Troupial line.

DRAWBACK

Unfortunately, while Jackals are also touched by the drawbacks that affect their original lineage, they suffer an additional social stigma; they are regarded as terrorists or troublemakers by association alone. While it is only a small handful of individuals engaged in guerrilla warfare, the Troupial as a whole is blamed for the actions of the few. Members of Jackal are the first to be brought in for questioning when a murder or robbery has been committed, and people are less likely to give them the benefit of the doubt over other groups of Fallen.

TROUPIAL ATTRIBUTES

- Skills** Streetwise – six points
Scavenge – three points
Barter – three points
- Traits** Caste Status – Fallen
Contacts – (3 points)
Poverty – Level 2



TROUPIAL RAT

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Composed entirely of Fallen, Rat is the only ground-locked group with the support of two Troupials, Bat and Dragon. Both realize that there are advantages to living below the canopy of the Deep. Rat is related

to Bat in that a member of this Troupial must be descended from Rats, Bats, or Dragons.

Members of Troupial Rat are actually smaller than their airborne siblings. Male Rats are short, from 4'0" to 4'8" in height, and normally weigh from 75 to 100 lbs. Female Rats range from 3'11" to 4'6" tall and normally weigh from 65 to 100 lbs. Rats have earned the nickname of "Youngsters" due to their youthful appearance and slight frame. They do not dislike the appellation, surprisingly enough, for it fools opponents into misjudging their strengths.

The average Rat has a small bone structure and lean muscle mass. While not physically strong, they are extremely agile and quick on their feet. As a matter of fact, when Rats are in combat, they tend to stick low to the ground, and use the terrain around them to the disadvantage of aerial opponents. Most flyers cannot fight on or even near the ground since they require space to swoop or dive. Rats know how to use that in their favour.

Members of this Troupial possess sharpened senses which are better adapted to the gloom of the Deep. Rather than using echolocation like Bats, their eyes are capable of detecting heat patterns (infrared), their olfactory senses are tracking-sensitive, and their short body hair can sense movement tremors made by anything weighing more than 90 lbs. They move with enough grace and ground presence that they are difficult to detect as they walk or run. In essence, it is a natural stealth ability that they call "Watersoft."

Rats are uniformly hued across most of their bodies with colours running from black to dark brown, grey to tan. While some also possess colour patches across random parts of their anatomy, the only standard mark of distinction found in all Rats is black hands and feet. Body hair, which is short like that of Bat, can grow across the shoulders, chest, back, arms, legs and pubic regions. The amount of hair seems to have no discernible effect on their ability to sense movement tremors.

In terms of facial characteristics, Rats possess small eyes tinged with dabs of red, and while their noses are not as

distinct as Bats, they are visibly upturned and slightly shorter than normal (one would almost say sculpted). Unlike their immediate sibling, the Bats, members of this group do not mind wearing clothing. As a matter of fact, they prefer to, simply because the Deep can often get cold, and climbing trees is painful when one is naked. Most of what Rats wear is comfortable and capable of weathering the hardships of travel and scurrying about. This often lends them a disreputable air since their attire is beaten and frayed.

NATURE

If there is a caste system in place, Rats are either unaware of it, or they simply choose to ignore it. Generally, members of this Troupial are congenial, brutally honest and somewhat chatty with most people they meet. They differ from Bats in that they are not xenophobic, and from Dragons in that they are genuinely friendly and harbour few hidden agendas. While this may seem like an endearing trait, the higher castes find this Troupial's naively honest demeanour annoying, if not somewhat unsettling.

The quality that Rats share with Bats is that both are tightly-knit groups with strong ties not only to their own

Troupial, but with each other as well. Dragons share this special bond on a limited level, however, for they do not believe it would be proper for individuals of their standing to fraternize with Fallen Troupials. While it is a self-imposed distance, it is because of the Dragons that Rats are allowed more freedom than any other Fallen Troupial. Rats are aware of this boon, and will constantly refer to Dragons as their older siblings, a practice that annoys the winged Troupial because it breaks with their sense of decorum.

Despite this protection, Rats are a Troupial not be underestimated. Their stealth abilities make them feared enemies and valued scouts. Coupled with the fact that they are extremely capable and agile fighters on the ground, often holding their own against aerial combatants, they are considered a valuable asset to the Alliance of Kings.

On an individual level, Rats are friendly and quick to strike up a conversation with anyone who catches their interest. They love nothing more than listening to and relaying stories, and can be a tome of information, gossip and knowledge. As a matter of fact, the Troupial trades secrets amongst one another for food and equipment the same way other people barter or buy.



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While Dragons are capable of fine-tuning their hearing and speech to elicit desired effects, Rats are only capable of modulated their speech to talk to Bats without agitating them. Their advantage lies with a strong olfactory sense, a gift and curse that requires them to wear masks with rose petals sewn into the lining whenever they visit a city. This strong sense of smell is almost on par with sight in identifying individuals, something that has developed into the custom of smelling their own hand after they shake hands with another person. Some people have pointed out that this custom seems rude, to which the Rats counter with "If we thought you reeked, we would not need to shake your hand in order to smell you."

NOTABLE CHAPTERS

Like most Iblii Troupials (specifically Gargoyles and Bats), Rats tend to form tribes. While this is not always the case, it is for a majority of the time. The exception to this rule is Chapter Ground-Swift, an alliance of four Rat Houses situated in Cliff-Spider, Cry-Star, Water-Sister and Bastion. The last one was in Sun-Guard before the floods forced them to evacuate to their present location.

Ground-Swift is the smallest Chapter within the Alliance of Kings, as well as the one with the least influence. The fact that there even is a Fallen Chapter is remarkable, but not too surprising considering the ties this alliance has with House Karistikant, a vassal Dragon House loyal to the Sallusturm of Cry-Star. Their ties with the Eagles allowed for the creation of this Rat Chapter as a vassal federation for Sallusturm families of each Alliance city. What makes them so special outside the influence of their Dragon benefactors? The fact that each Rat House serves the Sallusturm as spies and information gatherers.

Vassal Chapters operate off a different hierarchy than normal ones do. While Houses Sheteri, Malondoma, Ferra and Aswaya all answer to their particular family heads, the Chapter itself is under the control of King Gunther of Sallusturm. Effectively, he constitutes the leadership of the alliance, but because he cannot always be there, he operates through a mouthpiece that can be agreed upon by both Chapters. In this case, Vizier Golennai, a Dragon within House Karistikant, is the mouthpiece and mediator for both sides.

Currently, Ground-Swift has its hands full as Sallusturm has them spying on the movements of the Lost Tribes. Should its efforts help the Alliance of Kings defeat their adversaries, there is talk amongst the courts of releasing it from vassalhood and actually making the Chapter into an independent federation.

ADVANTAGE

Rats are well adapted to stealth, with lithe dark bodies, padded feet, excellent night vision, strong motion acuity and a tracking sense of smell. These benefits have made them superb ground scouts and spies who are easily comfortable working within the dark confines of the Deep. It is very difficult to surprise or ambush a Rat.

DRAWBACK

In addition to being a Fallen Troupial (which is slightly offset by their abilities and the Dragons' protection of them), a Rat's sense of smell is often too sensitive. They cannot stay within buildings or even cities for too long before the stagnant odours begin to burn their olfactory sense, and they will only visit Cliff-Spider (the city built within a spire) if they plan on leaving within a day. Their sense of smell is sensitive enough that Wird spells have been developed to use this weakness against them.

TROUPIAL ATTRIBUTES

Characteristics	Coordination – two points Strength – minus one point Perception – three points
Skills	Acrobatics – one point Climbing – one point Small Talk – one point Dodge – one point Stealth – three points
Powers	Increased Sense, Infrared Sight – Tier 1 Increased Sense, Smell – Tier 2 Increased Sense, Touch – Tier 1
Traits	Behaviour – Dislike of City Smells Behaviour – Love of Information Caste status – Fallen Reputation – Annoying/Honest (2 points)



TROUPIAL RAVEN

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

"Night's Harbinger:" This has always been the term used to describe the reclusive Ravens. As keepers of knowledge and the purveyors of secrets, this Troupial often plays up the mystery surrounding them by

acting and looking enigmatic. Their frame is lean, perhaps even slight. Male Ravens are between 5'6" and 5'10" on average, weighing around 145 lbs. Female Ravens are between 5'3" and 5'9" tall and weigh between 115 and 140 lbs. Regardless of their size, Ravens are not considered the best flyers. They tend to be average in various aerial specialties, including speed and manoeuvrability.

Ravens consider one another equal, for they believe that knowledge is blind to simple appearances and has the capacity to present itself to a variety of people. Raven is one of the few Troupials who does not have individual hue distinctions. They are all deep black, from the top of their heads to the soles of their feet, with a reflective sheen of blue. Many take advantage of their colour to paint their bodies with white arcane symbols. This only enhances their reputation as mystics.

Like many Troupials, Ravens can grow contour feathers along their outside forearms. Aside from this, their bodies are almost completely hairless and featherless with exception to their wings. Only black facial and scalp hair can be grown to any length, and usually is. Raven mystics are known to keep long manes, with bits of feathers, thread and talismans intertwined around strand clusters. Older members of the Troupial begin developing streaks of white hair upon reaching old age, and usually fashion the white strands into a single braid if they can.

The general mode of dress for Ravens is loose black robes or garments, with hooded cloaks. A travelling stick is always worn, along with sturdy boots and travel pack. Most often, a tome or travel log can be seen under their arm.

NATURE

Many legends surround the Raven and the reason for why they pride themselves as the keepers of secrets and knowledge. One legend that has always remained popular tells of when the first Troupials saw the three laws of the gods inscribed upon the terrain, and gained sentience from these words. In recognition of their achievement, each Troupial was given a place in the world to live in, a place to claim as their aerie. The Eagles took the pinnacle of the mountains to be closer to the sun, the Swans chose the lakes so that they could marvel at their own reflection, the Doves took the sky so they could play with their friend the wind. So it went, till it came to



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the Ravens who had voluntarily waited till last. They chose the shadows as their home, a place where secrets lie in wait.

Ravens have always remained quiet, enigmatic and somewhat detached from the events around them. They watch with silent patience and wait for matters to unfold. They are considered observant and rarely rush into situations without studying the parameters first. This has forced many to draw the conclusion that Ravens are somewhat paranoid, but then Ravens would quickly return the comment by adding that a fine line exists between caution and paranoia.

Ravens do not segregate themselves into castes, simply because they believe that each person is unique. They hold to the view that "He who cannot fly can run. He who cannot run can swim. He who cannot swim can dream. And he who cannot dream is dead." As far as Ravens are concerned, that is all there is to it; it answers all the questions that need asking. Experience, regardless of whether it is shared or not, impacts upon everyone in a different manner, and is therefore interpreted and seen in a variety of ways.

It is for this reason that each member is encouraged to explore the world around them, and to catalogue what they hear, feel, taste and see into one tome. It is not surprising that the literacy rate of this Troupial is the highest of any group in Providence. Once someone has completed their book, it is normally given as a gift to the Ravens' Grand Repository in Haak San Bazaa for all to read and share in, although the more dangerous information is reputed to be hidden elsewhere. While the end of this journey marks a Raven's passage into adulthood, many choose to continue travelling with their ledgers, remarking and evaluating what they experience with their senses.

NOTABLE CHAPTERS

The most famous of the Raven Chapters is also one of the strangest in terms of membership. The Ravens, more often than not, have always tried to remain outside the structure of the Alliance of Kings. Their pursuit of knowledge supposedly precludes political ambition, but their stance has more to do with their disapproval of the caste system currently in place. This is why the city of Haak San Bazaa has become such a Raven nexus. Their largest libraries and wisest scholars are located there, and they constitute the largest percentage of the population amongst all the Troupials.

Rather than completely distancing themselves, however, Ravens realized early on in the history of the Alliance of Kings that their people still needed to be properly represented within the hierarchy. The Ravens opened House Skoraa within Water-Sister, a city dedicated towards the arts and learning, and one less influenced by the prejudice of the caste system. What made this strange was the family that began Skoraa was also a member of the Merchant Bands of Haak San Bazaa. This formed strong ties between the Koriarill Dynasty that ruled Water-Sister and the Merchant Bands.

Originally, this was meant to be the only Raven House within the Alliance of Kings, but as Ravens moved to the other cities, other Skoraa Houses were opened within Cry-Star, Cliff-Spider and Sun-Guard. House Skoraa became the name for the alliance, while the various families became known as Chapter Cry-Star, Chapter Cliff-Spider, Chapter Sun-Guard and Chapter Water-Sister. In the case of Sun-Guard, however, the chapter was disbanded when the city was flooded. Those who fled to Bastion simply joined the Raven Merchant Band families already there.

Although Skoraa has spread to other cities, they hold the most influence in Water-Sister. Lead by Wayson, a charismatic seer and reputed lover of Watcher Preventine of Troupial Dove, he has proven deft at handling Alliance politics. For the first time since the formation of the Alliance of Kings, Wayson, on behalf of the Ravens, has managed to gain the respect and the ear of Regent Caiylus with his advice. He has lessened the friction between Caiylus and Preventine, and offered sage counsel in dealing with the Lost Tribes. In the war to come, he could potentially emerge as a major figure within the Alliance.

ADVANTAGE

Ravens have access to a wide range of information and knowledge through their travels and what they have learned from the investigations of others. They are Providence's undisputed scholars, and widely sought after in every city and by every royal for their grasp of the unknown. Next to Dragons, they are the most reputable advisors. What a Raven does not know, he can learn at the repository in Haak San Bazaa, a place he has automatic access to.

DRAWBACK

Too many dark secrets have passed through the hands of the Ravens. This has created numerous cults dedicated to the dark worship of gods even the D'Shau Monks forgot about, and given birth to shadow players in league with the White Crow or the Wardens. While not true of everyone, some Ravens have become worried enough to begin keeping their secrets and hiding what they know. Rumours abound of a faction known as the Moray, self-designated enforcers who are supposed to be collecting secrets for themselves by eliminating all obstacles. The line between caution and paranoia has been broken by many members of this Troupial.

TROUPIAL ATTRIBUTES

Characteristics Intelligence – two points
Psyche – two points
Willpower – two points

Skills Area knowledge – six points

Traits Reputation – Mystics (2 points)
Contact – Great Library (5 points)
Literacy



TROUPIAL SWAN

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

A Troupial whose members are few and scattered into couplets, the Swans are regarded as the most beautiful beings that anyone has ever laid their eyes on. Swans tend to be slender, graceful and elegant.

Even those who are heavier set are still beautiful, and sought after as mating partners. Male Swans are usually 5'10" to 6'1" tall, weighing between 150 to 175 lbs. Female Swans range from 5'7" to 5'11" tall and weigh between 125 and 165 lbs.

As will be discussed further on, Swans are monogamous individuals who chose their mates excruciatingly carefully, and remain faithful for life. Their beauty, however, is not an indication of their own preference; they seek a life-partner based on emotional satisfaction.

Swans are either winter-white or sleek-black in appearance. There are no patches across their bodies, no deviation in their hue. Their faces have soft features with almond eyes, full lips and a hint of red highlights. Tufts of soft down grow along the outside of their forearms, and across their forehead like a crown of feathers.

All members of this Troupial are born with large graceful wings; there has never been a Glider or Fallen to enter their ranks. By the same token, Swans marry across caste-lines, and ignore the common racism of the time. They simply fall in love with who they fall in love with. Their children always appear as either Swans or their mate's Troupial. There is no evidence of mixtures.

While their hair colour varies from rich auburns to sparkling golds, midnight black and bright reds, Swans have demonstrated no specific preference for the way they wear their hair. Most prefer classical looks that accentuates their beauty. The same applies to clothing. Swans chose garments to fit their personality, but it just so happens that they can run the gamut from healers to performers, so they may appear in a variety of fashions. Few Swans are warriors, but many are wanderers until they marry. The one major commonality is that Swans chose jobs that allow them to be physically or emotionally expressive.

NATURE

Swans are very soft-spoken individuals who are not given to loud or boisterous personalities. By their very nature, they are caring individuals who regard others with compassion and kindness regardless of their station in life. While this makes them highly prized candidates for



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companionship, Swans are patient with their spousal-choice and monogamous to their dying breath. Perhaps it is because of the care and time it takes to choose a mate that the Swans are so few in number. They may take an entire lifetime to find that one person whom they know to be the one, regardless of whether they are Fallen, the same gender or a member of a different Troupial. Once they do, however, they are dedicated to that person for life, following an exchange of intentions which reveals how the other person feels about them as well. While many worry that eventually this Troupial may vanish entirely, the fact remains that their numbers have always remained low throughout their existence, and they have not become extinct yet.

Blessed with a very elegant nature, Swans choose those skills and callings that allow them to express their nature. They are Providence's sculptors, singers, painters, architects, dancers and actors. They are also all winged, and predisposed towards the use of Wird as Weavers or Dancers simply because they are in tune with the harmony and beauty of everything around them.

While Swans are regarded as peaceful and tranquil beings, they do possess the skill to defend themselves. There are those who see their beauty as a prize to claim, and often attempt to do so through slavery and rape. Many Swans have learned Wird in order to defend themselves or their loved ones should the need arise. Others are known to disguise their appearance (again through Wird) and wander the world looking for their mate. Only then do they reveal their true face to the others.

Due to their limited numbers, Swans do not form a unified Troupial, but they will come to the assistance of one another even if they are strangers. While this is true of Swans in general (in that they will help who they can), it is an even stronger sense of loyalty that binds them together.

NOTABLE CHAPTERS

Not since the Grand rebellion has there been a proper Swan Chapter. While there are Houses, none have expressed an interest in forming a federation; they are not inclined in that direction.

ADVANTAGE

Swans are capable of eliciting specific emotional responses from people through their songs, music or dancing (skills all Swans are taught). While the Dragons use their ability to manipulate, Swans simply encourage the emotion they sense is already in play, exciting it to passionate levels, or sedating it enough for reason to take hold. In this manner, they can inflame a person's feelings of love towards someone else, or they can calm anger and hatred to a point where it is not as dangerous.

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They can only influence a person's current emotional state. By the same token, they are empathic enough to recognize someone's immediate demeanour through facial cues and posture.

DRAWBACK

Unfortunately, Swans are affected by the emotional state of others. They can find themselves caught up in a crowd's or another person's strong emotions if they are not careful, and situations that are filled with strong negative emotions are often very uncomfortable to them. Should they fail to affect someone in the grips of passion (hatred, lust, envy, love, etc.), they take on the person's emotion for the next day. This also means that they can flip-flop on emotional issues. A Swan could feel lust for an individual they had no interest in previously and they could be angry at strangers for slights never committed against them. For the next day, they are besieged by conflicting emotions that continually overwhelms their faculties.

TROUPIAL ATTRIBUTES

Characteristics Intelligence – one point

Psyche – one point

Appearance – three points

Skills Artistic Expression – one point

Body Language – one point

Charm – one point

Oratory – one point

Powers Wings – Tier 3

Traits Caste Status – Pure

Behaviour – Monogamous, extreme

Behaviour - Emotional



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THE LEGENDARIES

The one thing that individuals fear beyond their own death or those of their loved ones, is the utter extinction of their race. The loss of a Troupial signifies a great tragedy, a portion of history excised from the memories of the living, the end of a dynasty and all that is unique about

it. The various talents of the Troupials has proven that each holds some importance in the world around it, something of significance that adds to society. The death of one is a collective blow to all, for it means that a great and precious gift was lost.

At no time was this truer than during the Grand War against the Elothorin itself. Not only did empires fall and nations crumble, but several Troupials fell into extinction. The loss of their knowledge, power and very presence was a tragedy that still echoes through the ages to haunt the survivors.

Troupial Falcon, although not the knights their brethren Eagles were, had been strong warriors nonetheless. As religious fighters heavily influenced by the teachings of the Condor, they had been the mainstay of the Yas'Wailian armies, and died battling the Elothorin's avatars. After the war was won, Troupial Eagle spent months mourning their shield-allies.

Troupial Vulture was not as sorely missed, for they had been traders and nomadic merchants. Some had regarded them as bandit gypsies and con-artists. Their absence was still mourned, for they had been the link between the cities and outlying settlements.

Condor, a Troupial steeped in secular tradition and ruled by religious dogma, represented the backbone of Yas'Wail's moral majority. While some did not miss their loss, others felt that the ascension of the self-proclaimed "gods," the heroes of the Grand War, would never have been allowed had the powerful Condors had any say in the matter. They had been the last guardians of the ancient religions that predated the war with the Elothorin. Condors were renowned for their Faithsingers, a lost distinction of Wird practitioners who were empowered through prayer.

The loss of Troupial Owl is considered to be the most tragic of all the deaths, for they had been the philosophers and great thinkers of the world. They had been the ones to recognize the link between the Elothorin and its avatars, as well as devising a means to defeat it. It was a tragedy that they were not amongst the victors.

Few could actually claim any sense of loss over Troupial Peacock. Hedonistic to the point of being corrupt, as well as being vain and exceedingly haughty, they had served no real purpose except to populate the royal courts with gossips and beautiful faces to look at. It was often joked that the moral fibre of Yas'Wail remained unchanged since the Condors were no longer around to enforce their staunch doctrines and the Peacocks to corrupt them.

Troupial Hydra represented the last of the Iblii fighting forces. Unlike the Gargoyles, they were disciplined, trained and exceedingly well versed in the ways of Wird. They died while fighting the Elothorin's avatars, and their loss hurt the Dragons as greatly as the Eagles were affected by the decimation of the Falcons.

This, until recently, was naught but ancient history to the people of Providence who had their own misfortunes to contend with. That was until the Legendaries, as these lost Troupials were called, were rumoured to have been seen in a prison-settlement hidden within the Deep. The scouts who came upon the area reputedly saw an internment camp run by the White Crow containing various Troupial races including the various Legendaries. While the Alliance of Kings was quick to dismiss the rumour (since the scouts who survived the journey could not retrace their steps), others believed that there may be truth to what they saw.

One theory supporting the sightings of the Legendaries surrounds an ancient Troupial known as the Crow. They had been the only Troupial to betray the other races and ally itself with the Elothorin during the early years of the war. Some concede the possibility that the Crows who escaped to follow the Elothorin's Avatars through the portals may have brought prisoners with them. Some of these slaves may have included the last members of the Legendaries.

The primary argument against this theory is one of record. History recounts the complete destruction of the other Troupials as something that occurred before the Elothorin's weakness was exploited. This means that the Legendaries died out before the gates were ever created, thus disputing the possibility that the Crow brought Legendary slaves with them. Unfortunately, this aspect of history has always remained a bit vague considering the lack of historical data. D'zi Arador, a Raven now considered an outcast amongst his own kind, recently claimed that the reason why that period has remained obscure is because several Troupials, including Condors and Falcons, were actually destroyed following the war.

Arador claimed that the rise of the new "gods" did not sit well with the orthodox factions of Yas'Wail, but weakened by the devastation, they were no match for the inquisition launched against them by the more powerful Eagle and



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Dragon houses. Arador, before he vanished, proposed that the "Legendaries" were the last survivors of the various Troupials who actually fled through the gates to escape their fate on Yas'Wail. The records of history were therefore destroyed or altered to disguise the power struggle following the Grand War.

Currently, the official position of the Alliance of Kings is that the stories are unfounded and the work of idle minds. Regent Caiylus, on the other hand, is rumoured to be interested in uncovering the truth, and may be sending out expeditions to ascertain the location of the colony. If nothing more, it may give the city-states a better idea of what the Lost Tribes are planning.

THE LOST TRIBES

All people within Providence came from Yas'Wail. The one thing that separates them is the time of their arrival. The Lost Tribes are the first exiles from Yas'Wail, those individuals sent through the portals during the period between the Grand War and the Great Rebellion. Initially, according to recorded history (which many people are beginning to realize is less and less accurate), only Yas'Wail's greatest monsters and criminals were exiled using the gates. This proved to be untrue. Many of those individuals who were exiled or who managed to escape through the gates, were social malcontents, potential rebels who fought against the new gods and the rule of the priest-kings. While it was true that many Yas'Wailian monsters had been banished in this fashion as well (both dangerous creatures and malicious individuals), the gates were used as a tool to get the populace to cooperate. It worked, for eventually the world beyond the gates became Yas'Wail's new hell, and very few people wanted to go there.

In an attempt to reopen the gates, an interesting fact about the sealed portals was discovered. Yas'Wailian history recounts a steady stream of prisoners being shuttled through the gates. The Lost Tribes, however, represent exiles separated from one another by several thousand years. In-between these odd millennia, no new exiles made it through the portals, leaving everyone to wonder where they had gone.

GREEN PEOPLE

Next to the White Crow, the Green People are the second-oldest tribe on Providence. They arrived when the

world's vegetation first began blooming, and somehow they became involved in the germination process. By this point, water was plentiful and the Elothorin had already begun weaving its spell of life to protect its Avatars and their offspring.

The Green People were around in the nascent period of Providence's history, and rapidly adapted to form a symbiotic relationship with the wild flora and fauna. Initially, for the first few generations, this connection manifested as an empathic link to nature around them. They tried not to upset the delicate balance of the primordial green, while it, in turn, fed and sustained them. Eventually, the link between the two strengthened to the point where the Green People lost their wings with the subsequent generations, and were born with hybrid plant abilities. This peaceful coexistence continued through the years, altering the Green People more and more until they were in complete harmony with the plants around them. Some suspect that the Green People were ready to sacrifice their human state to exist as intelligent plant life before the prison camps were built.

The exiled rebels and Wardens constituted thousands of individuals who were brought over through the gates. Each generation only added to the population count, until over a million people were living in Providence when the first prison camps were liberated. Their presence exacted a damaging toll on the ecology of the world, especially in the Exodus Plains, where most of the city-states were located.

The Green People remained hidden from the new arrivals, since they shared little in common. Despite this, nature suddenly began distancing itself from this Lost Tribe. It was an instinctual reaction to protect itself, and the Green People were identified as partially responsible for the ecological damage. This was perhaps due to their shared lineage with the new arrivals. Their evolution in becoming a part of the green was halted and stagnated. They were no longer growing or evolving, and they sensed it as easily as a person feels a wound that refuses to heal.

The Green People were no longer able to use the jungle as they wished and they were constantly plagued with the pain of their growing isolation. Unable to identify with their distant cousins, the Green People became bitter and resentful of the exiles. It was only when they began deliberately distancing themselves from the cities that they sensed the plant world's approval. That became the catalyst for outright aggression, a move that has currently placed this Lost Tribe in good standing with the plant aspect of their being. They have not yet regained their former state of balance with nature, but the Green People believe that this will occur after the exiles have been completely destroyed by their hand.

SERPENKINE

The Serpenkine represent the youngest of the Lost Tribes, and as such, seem closer in mind set to their winged cousins. This last tribe was formed by those who arrived on Providence prior to the prison camp. Unwelcomed by the Green People, frightened by the White Crow and unsure of the Swarm Dancers' almost alien mentality, the ancestors of the Serpenkine took to inhabiting the caverns and tunnels of the two mountain chains within Providence. Although they eventually spread to other parts of the jungle, the mountains and spires proved to be the formative setting for their current form. They, like the other Lost Tribes, adapted to the world around them, and evolved into a new species as generations went by.

Acclimated to tunnel life, they lost the use of their wings and learned how to exist as walkers. The predominant indigenous animals of the regions were varieties of snakes and reptiles, and the Serpenkine learned how to use their poisons for medicines. Soon, they evolved to the point of communicating with snakes.

The Serpenkine accepted this change, and were assimilated into the natural flow of Providence. They took the forms of humanoid snakes over the course of a few generations. The change took a matter of three generations or less, a far quicker change than the previous groups had experienced. Regardless of their rapid assimilation, however, the other Lost Tribes were now more willing to deal with them, and the world no longer seemed as hostile. That was before the establishment of the prison camps.

Like the Green People, the Serpenkine felt the gap increase between themselves and nature, but they did not feel it to the same degree. They were still young in the link, and still shared the mind set of the new arrivals. Unfortunately, while they were interested in establishing negotiations with the Yas'Wailians, the other Lost Tribes did not. The Serpenkine remained quiet out of respect, but still felt the link weakening. The Serpenkine realized that without nature's influence, they could see matters more clearly and without as much belligerent emotion. They came to the discovery that the link to the world was not as beneficial as it appeared.

The link came at the price of their own liberty, something they identified with and shared with the current Yas'Wailian exiles. They deliberately began to distance themselves from the link, and did their utmost to convince the Swarm Dancers to do the same (who they believed had the best chance of fighting the link due to the strength of their communal thoughts). They thought they had failed, until the Swarm Dancers refused to participate in the Lost War against the Alliance of Kings, and sided with the Serpenkine.

Currently, the Serpenkine are highly divided. Their territories have been ripped asunder through volcanic activity and the deluge that threatens to drown the world. Some see it as Providence's anger at their decision to side with the Yas'Wailians, and believe the world is punishing them for their error. From this group comes a new adversarial faction ready to side with the White Crow and the Green People in a new initiative against the Alliance of Kings. The other group believes that it is nothing more than a bullying tactic, and have openly sided with the Alliance as a matter of principle.

SWARM DANCERS

If any group has been greeted with uncertainty, it has been the Swarm Dancers. This Lost Tribe was on Providence for several millennia before the exiles of the failed rebellion ever arrived, and, like the other tribes, became influenced by the natural order of the jungle around them.

When the ancestors of the Swarm Dancers first came to the world, they found themselves completely alienated from everything. The Green People had already formed their symbiotic link with nature, and were more dedicated towards this peaceful coexistence than with helping the newly-arrived exiles. The White Crow were belligerent to everyone, and were regarded by the new comers as the traitors their Crow ancestors were. To add to the difficulty, the very jungle seemed hostile to their presence, and surviving proved to be harsh under the best circumstances. Armed with no other option, people allowed the surroundings to influence the way they functioned within the world.

It is unknown why the Swarm Dancers developed a type of hive-mind intellect, but it took at least eight to ten generations before the original Swarm Dancers became who they are now. Unlike the Green People, the Swarm Dancers stopped evolving once they achieved a communal intellect, membrane wings, and a hardened exoskeleton.

During the "seedling cycles" (what the Green People always call the time before the penal colonies), the Swarm Dancers were almost completely linked together mentally. While they retained enough independence not to be automatons, this chemical link allowed them to share each other's thoughts to a degree that no one else could. It also allowed them to support one another through a network of emotional and intellectual unity. There was little trouble during these times, for the problem of one was shared by so many that mental burdens were solved nearly instantly. If it seems like a utopian view of life, that's how the Swarm



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Dancers saw it. They had achieved a state of utter tranquility with themselves and the world around them.

Following the liberation of the penal colonies, the Swarm Dancers were hard hit by nature's flagging support of them. The unity of the link became fractured, spreading an echo of dissonance throughout the normally harmonious collective. The other Lost Tribes believed that the Green People and Swarm Dancers would be the first to break and follow the bidding of whatever nature demanded of them. They were partially right. The Green People could not live without the sense of evolution and continued growth, but that didn't happen; nature made a mistake with the Swarm Dancers. They didn't lose their connection with their environment suddenly, which would have fractured the hive-mind and isolated each member. It happened slowly, allowing them to acclimate to the changes as the generations proceeded.

By the time the Lost War council had been called, the Swarm Dancers who arrived at the delegation were more independent as individuals, but were linked together well enough to work as a collective. They further surprised the

other Lost Tribes twice, once by siding with the Serpenkine in their refusal to destroy the city-states, and a second time by establishing their recent truce with the Alliance of Kings.

WHITE CROW

If one is unfortunate enough to ever come upon a White Crow, the first impressions one gains is of the complete arrogance and contempt for whomever the White Crow regards. The aged corruption and power seethes from their aura like smoke. The White Crow are perhaps the most powerful of the Lost Tribes, and beyond a shadow of a doubt, the first one in existence.

The White Crow are descendants of Troupial Crow, the great betrayers of the Elothorin war that ravaged Yas'Wail. The reason for this act of treason was nothing more than simple survival; the Crow did not believe the Yas'Wailians were going to win, and joined the side they thought would emerge victorious. When the gates were formed, and some of the Avatars were first banished, the Crow followed. They



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sensed the tides of battle changing, and knew that they would be slaughtered outright as traitors.

Upon arriving in Providence, the Crow found themselves in a barren and pitch black world. The Elothorin, still missing many pieces of itself, set about creating the world's interior sun, gravity and vegetation as a means of allowing its Avatars' hosts a chance for survival. It used some of its power to seed the world with life. The Elothorin provided this fledgling ecosystem with all the necessary tools to grow. It gave light to warm the world and provided a regular cycle of night and day. This, however, took decades to complete and while it sustained its Avatars, it left the Crows to their own devices.

Unable to find food, to keep warm in the cold perpetual night or see in the enveloping darkness, the Crow turned their Wird spells upon themselves, learning to sustain and live off their own powers. It altered them drastically.

Several centuries passed, and during this time, the Crow evolved into the White Crow, a race of winged-albinos highly versed in shadow Wird and sustained by the darkness of the world. Providence's new sun forced the White Crow into underground tunnels for several generations. When the green canopy of the growing jungle was thick enough to shield the ground from the burning glow in the sky, they reemerged into the Deep, and built a sheltered city of shadow and trees. It became known as Aerie.

Since their arrival, the White Crow have lived on Providence and watched it evolve. Unlike the other Lost Tribes, they never became part of its natural cycle, and were therefore never influenced by the world. They are not a burden on the ecology simply because they create what they need from shadows; as a result, they do little to upset the natural balance of things. They are a powerful race, made arrogant by their age, their peculiar brand of Wird and the fact that they have no need to sacrifice themselves to nature in order to survive. Far more arrogant than the Wardens could ever aspire to be, the White Crow are sure of their own superiority, and possess the power to enforce that belief with painful lessons. The renewed aggression against the Alliance of Kings is proof of that.



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130 Character Roles



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In the black of night, the chirping cries of strange creatures fills my ears. I do not walk in the daytime, for then there are too many prying eyes. I have passed a camp of armed Rats, sleeping about a fire. Their guard smelled me, I think, though he did not move as I passed silently and without a trace.

There was a time that I would have greeted this clan of Rats at play in the Deep. Many of the Chapters of their kin were loyal to my house and collected secrets for us by sneaking about in places such as this. But here, surrounded by the thicket and the humid air of night, here I am silent. They are loyal to me no longer, for I am thought a criminal. Even a lowly Rat would be rewarded for my death.

I have left Hate and my armour behind. I wear only a small cloth and a belt to carry my woad and other tools for the making of Glyphs. This is not a time for complicated things. Now is the time for Jenobay to be reborn. The wounds on my back are healed now, though they are noticeable and the scars are jagged. If I am to be thought of as one of the Fallen, without the need for weaving the Wird, I must be rid of these wounds. My flesh must be rewoven and recast, or some day I shall be discovered for what I am.

Ichabbel explained to me that the Fallen of the Eagle have a secret place where there lies a fountain. Should a man walk through the fountain, his flesh is remade as it should be. They go to this place to remove the Wird glyph that is placed upon their brows when they are born. As the story is told, some even walk from the fountain reborn with the faces of birds, and wings of fire. I do not believe it is so, but I must seek it out. To think, if it is true, my son would have walked through such a fountain and been remade, had I not ended his life.

As I pass a great bent tree, I hear the sound of feet before me, unshod and light. I look about, and see that I might hide, but there is no cause for it. If I will face a stranger, I will do so on my feet, not cowering behind a rock. In a moment, a small blinking fellow rounds the corner, staring at me with red-tinted eyes. I recognize him immediately as a Rat scout, most likely of the party I passed earlier.

"You're a Fallen Eagle, huh?" he says to me with the characteristic Rat forthrightness. I simply nod in return. "Yeah? Well, your friends are over there." He points deeper into the jungle behind him. "Please don't tell them I was watching them, okay? I know how touchy you people get about that sort of thing. Honest mistake, okay?" Again, I nod and do not speak, staring at him with the special glower we Eagles reserve for Rats.

He skirts about me, making sure to keep his eyes on mine, and the moment he is clear of me, he darts off back to his camp. For my part, I continue in the direction he indicated, silently thankful for the meeting. As I move through the night, the bestial cries the only sound to be heard, I ponder how I will finalize my plans. With the White Crow and the Green People at my side, I have power, but I will need a promised people. I will need a folk to become the new rulers of the Yas'Wailians, and it is clear to me who those folk will be. I have come across their home, deep in the jungle brush.





CHARACTER ROLES

Everyone within the world, whether they choose to admit it or not, fits within a category of some sort. This identifies them to others as having a function in society, valid or otherwise. While some of these designations are somewhat dependent on caste-restrictions, the golden adage that all rules are meant to be broken apply. The world of Providence is in constant flux. What may be important in one city is not as strongly enforced in another; what one group deems sacrilegious, another may regard as divine dogma.

The following character suggestions can be played as Shards or non-Shards. Remember, Shard is a designation, not a class unto itself, unless one is involved with a Guild. The only groups not covered in this section are those who manipulate Wird. Their powers and abilities are such an

inherent aspect of their lives, that they will be discussed later, in the chapter dealing with Wird specifically.

It should also be noted that there is a myriad of functions to fulfil within society, both positive and negative. The following designations are not the full scope of character potential, merely some of the more unusual ones present in Providence. It is possible to play simple brigands, men-for-hire (fighters and mercenaries), priests or even merchants. The game is open enough for that aspect. For those who are interested in playing characters who directly involve themselves in various scenarios and situations, the following examples are perfect. Each of the archetypes belongs to a group or ideology which have had an impact on history, and will have a significant role in the future.



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ANODYNES

If the fact that we acknowledge the pain of others is abnormal, then so be it. We will be abnormal in a world of monsters.

FUNCTION

Anodynes are healers and midwives, alchemists and herbalists. They do not have to possess Wird, but have

the practical knowledge to heal the wounds of others, soothe the suffering of the infirm, and counsel the beleaguered. Whether it is through herbs and potions, alchemy salves, or simply because they care enough to help, Anodynes constitute the best help the lower castes can receive. The Guild of Chirurgeons, also dedicated to the healing arts through Shard powers and Wird, is the purview of the nobility and affluent alone. Simply put, their services can only be purchased by the rich upper castes.

The Anodynes were born from the actions of the Wayfarers when the fight for equality became too violent and narrow-visioned. Sickened by the growing conflict, Anodynes were those individuals who realized that while the able-bodied Fallen fought for the abolition of the rigid caste system, they did it at the detriment of their weaker brothers and sisters.

Trapped between a disdain for violent actions, and the need to help their people, many chose to become the cement that bound the Fallen community together. They would fight for equality in their own way, not by tearing their opponents down, but by elevating those around them. Through their moderate action, they became the voice of reason that began swaying some members of the royal court to their favour. Unfortunately, their greatest adversaries were the Guilds who feared that their position in society would be significantly lessened if the castes were abolished. In effect, they would be considered equal to those below them, and may even be forced to offer their services for free in order that all may partake of their gifts. The Guilds began to fight back, and successfully besmirched the actions of the Anodynes by drawing a parallel between them and the violent Wayfarers.

Faced with growing opposition to their political stance, the Anodynes have decided to help save the world as a whole, not just the Fallen alone. While this has created a schism between them and the Wayfarers, the Anodynes believe that it is the only action that will grant them enough recognition to help their people rise.

APPEARANCE

Anodynes do not adhere to any particular uniform simply because their duty requires them to travel extensively in rough jungle terrain and through filthy cities. Another reason is more precautionary; a uniform might also make them a target to supporters of the caste system. Many are equipped with numerous pouches filled with medicinal leaves and balms to help those they can, as well as treated meats and dried fruits to barter for favours or help. Anodynes do not need a regular uniform to be recognized by the general populace.

ORGANIZATION

A loose affiliation of healers and helpers, Anodynes are making a concerted effort to organize themselves in order to improve their bargaining position with the upper castes. Currently, each city-state has an Advocate, an older and experienced Anodyne responsible for delegating whatever help he or she can find for the local Fallen. It is the Advocate who normally has dealings with the local courts, and is the most visible member of this group. As a matter of courtesy, travelling Anodynes will present themselves to an area's Advocate to volunteer their services.

SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT: MEDICINES

Anodynes are taught, either by each other, an Advocate or through training, the uses of various jungle herbs and plants. While these remedies are not instant cures, they are effective in treating infections, burns, wounds, ailments and a variety of other problems. It is therefore essential that the Anodyne have a number of these ingredients on him in order to help others. The need for medicine is great enough that even a well-stocked healer is likely to run out of material within a week. Constant excursions into the wilderness are necessary.

With the recent alliance between Swarm Dancers, Serpenkine and the Alliance of Kings, Anodynes have been blessed with a plethora of additional jungle herbal lore through the Wird Weavers of the Lost Tribes. Completely uninterested in the caste system and somewhat suspicious of the Guilds, the allied Lost Tribes have proven to be a great resource for the Anodynes in terms of advancing their own knowledge.



D'SHAU MONKS

Examine the flawless quality of the crystal and emulate it in your every movement, your every action.

FUNCTION

Two millennia ago, the D'Shau Monks were one of several religious orders for men and women that served the deities and ruler-priests of Yas'Wail. When the rebellion failed and the blood of supposed gods soaked the battlefield, many people lost their faith and most orders collapsed. The D'Shau were one particular group that not only fought alongside the rebellion, but also refused to recant their beliefs afterwards. Amidst the time of exile, they were responsible for smuggling crystal seeds into Providence and maintaining them through the generations.

The D'Shau Monks of the current age are an odd lot, in that they still adhere to the old religion and continue to believe in the validity of their deities. They have also assumed the new responsibility of growing crystals with a quasi-religious fervour. Over the last two centuries, following the Blood Spore infestations and the Lost Wars, the D'Shau have become decidedly more aggressive, turning the physical arts they once used for calisthenics meditation into a combat style. Although not on par with the physically-adept Kestrels, the D'Shau sheathe portions of their limbs in veneers of thin sharp crystals, making them deadly enemies for whomever they encounter. This change in direction reflects the D'Shau's dedication to the Reckoning, and a desire to regain what was lost in the first war.

Whether people share their faith or not, the D'Shau still tend to the needs of the community. They also administer blessings of fortune to whomever asks. Although many people do not follow the old faiths, the ancient superstitions are hard to kill. Many still ask for the monks' blessings before entering battle, when two individuals get married, or to help celebrate the birth of a baby.

APPEARANCE

The order accepts all people, including the Fallen, after all, the caste system was what the initial rebellion fought against. All ordained monks shave their locks with the exception of two hair strips grown behind the ears and braided with holy crystal beads. Within the confines of the city, monks must wear the robes and colours of the order (which vary from region to region). Those given permission to travel may wear any simple attire they deem necessary for travel. Most also carry a heavy ring of War Beads for

protection. The only stipulation is that travelling monks must maintain their customary hair tails and accoutrements.

ORGANIZATION

The priests believe themselves to be equal to one another, for they are all the children of their gods. Experience, however, separates the monkhood into various levels, as wisdom is believed to come through age. As such, the leader of the monks is normally the eldest. He is called the Caretaker, and it is his responsibility to lead those beneath him. While others outside the monkhood believe him (or her) to be the leader of the D'Shau, he is in fact merely a caretaker for the religion.

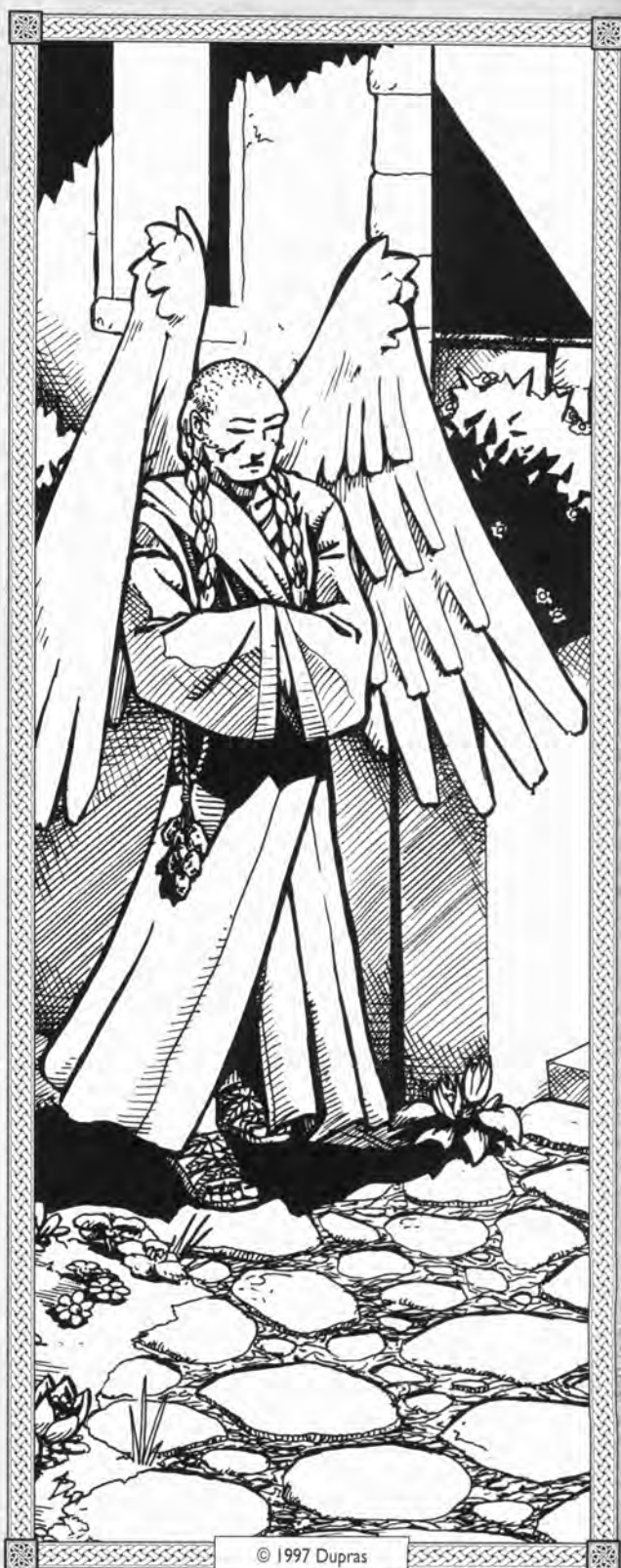
Below the Caretaker are the Journeymakers. They delegate responsibilities and oversee the schooling of the younger monks. Their title comes through age and through popular assent of the regional D'Shau monks.

Recently, the monastic orders have been specializing in one particular function. At one time, the isolated nature of the cities demanded that all monasteries teach calligraphy, reading, self-defense, mathematics, meditation, and the maintenance of the God Tears (crystal seeds). Now that the Exodus Plain has become easier to travel, the monasteries are becoming known for specializing in one of the domains. Adrikall Temple in Cliff Spider is renowned for its teaching, particularly of the sciences and art. Krakebar Temple in Cry-Star is charged with growing and tending to the small groves of God Tears, while Horizall Temple in Haak San Bazaa teaches the more physical arts of body worship, from calisthenic meditation to the D'Shau Fighting Style.

SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT: WAR BEADS

Crystal beads have been part of the D'Shau uniform since their years on Yas'Wail. Initially, when the beads were transported from one monastery to another, they were linked together by woven thread-vines to facilitate carrying a great quantity. Eventually, the practice of keeping beads on a string was turned into a part of the uniform, and incorporated into meditative katas. When the katas became the only means of self-defense for travelling monks, the beads became part symbol, part weapon.

War Beads are specific items developed for travelling monks as weapons; they are not made for anyone else regardless of the price. Unlike the smaller worry-beads used in meditation, this version is heavier and allows the monk to hit or entangle opponents. As the kata is performed, the crystals whistle in the air, creating an unnerving keening that serves to agitate the opponent into committing reckless moves. While repeated blows with War Beads are enough to kill someone, D'Shau Monks prefer pummeling opponents into unconsciousness, or embarrassing them in combat by constantly tripping them.



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GUILD SHARD

I think your talents would be better appreciated in the Guild my friend. Why waste them here?

FUNCTION

The Guilds were initially formed following Sky-Spite's attack over Haak San Bazaa. Had the first Shards not appeared in time to help defend the city, there is little doubt that they would have been regarded as abominations to kill. Because of Lady Amariss' sacrifice however, her lover Lord Juliard considered Shards to be blessed, and did his utmost to protect their position within society. The Guilds were formed as a result of this valued memory, bringing into Providence what would later be one of the most powerful factions outside (and perhaps beyond) the royal caste.

Unfortunately, the fond memory of Lady Amariss' actions faded centuries ago. Today, many people regard the Guilds as nothing more than fronts for mercenaries, thugs who hire their talents out to the highest bidder. While it is true that Guild members, unlike the People's Knights, use their talents to improve their financial standing, that does not make them evil or bad. Guild Shards simply regard their powers as a talent to earn themselves a living much in the same way a person who is skilled in carving would use his abilities to pay for his needs.

Guild members are hired out on a contractual basis. Their functions and roles within society depend on their powers and the assignment they have been hired to fulfil. In some cases this entails a rush of various assignments to complete, while under other circumstances, work can be virtually nonexistent. In instances of the latter, members are allowed to pursue other jobs and assignments on the condition that they do not compete with their own Guild's specialty. Competing with other Guilds, however, is an entirely different matter.

APPEARANCE

Varies according to Guild.

ORGANIZATION

Varies according to Guild.

SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT

Varies according to Guild.



HORIZON STRIDER

Home is where the horizon sleeps.

FUNCTION

Horizon Striders are a combination of knight errants, wandering fighters, bards and the historians of the jungle. They have been struck with a permanent sense of wanderlust, a need to explore the world and help others when the situation arises.

At one time, the Horizon Striders belonged to a branch within the Guild of Cartographers. They were the premier explorers of Providence, risking life and limb to unveil the secrets of the world, and becoming legends with the tales they brought back. Somewhere along the way, however, the Horizon Striders split from the Guild during a particularly brutal round of infighting. Although the specifics of the schism were never revealed, it is believed that the Horizon Striders became disgusted with the almost mercenary nature of the younger Guild members. Exploring the world was no longer about discovery, but about profit. Helping those in need and telling tales about the hidden wonders of the jungle floor now came with a price.

Disenchanted, the original 11 adventurers who had formed the Horizon Striders vanished into the wilds and began wandering. It was later said that they only appeared when it was time to take an apprentice. Horizon Striders became so legendary and part of local lore, so beloved by the common-folk, that the Cartographers never dared to retake their name.

Although no longer considered an official order, the current Horizon Striders are still well-received by the populace, and their appearance is often cited as an omen of good luck. They are also bards of sorts, preserving the customs, folklore and histories of various communities through their tales. While not true of all of the group, most Horizon Striders take it upon themselves to help those who ask them. In remote places where law is difficult to dispense, these self-imposed knights often act as enforcers of regional justice or at least common sense.

Each Horizon Strider is proud of his lineage, for being counted as an Horizon Strider is equal to belonging within the tightest-bonded family. True Horizon Striders (those taught under an apprenticeship) can trace their lineage all the way back to one of the original 11. While there are those who lie and lay claim to this legacy, it is said that those who do are killed by one of the 11 whose name they profane. It has happened often enough not to be quickly discounted as fantasy.

The Ghost-Walkers

It was said that the original 11 Shards who formed the Horizon Striders never died despite the centuries' attempts to bury them. This legend is true. Somewhere out there, beneath the green sky of leaves and branches of the Deep, walk the original Horizon Striders, known now as the Ghost-Walkers. How this came to be is unknown, but from what has been inferred from the occasional member who has been seen, the group has been charged with taking account of the world's passage. By whom, they will not say, but he or she is powerful enough to make these 11 men and women long-lived and virtually indestructible. They have eluded capture time and time again, and are thought by some to be naught but shadow and smoke.

The presence of a Ghost-Walker is said to be an omen for things to come. One was seen at the Crucible that formed the Alliance of Kings, several more spotted amidst the carnage of the Lost War. They have been sighted walking across the growing lakes of the Sunderlands, and in the company of Swarm Dancers (who refuse to speak of them out of respect). They are even reputed to know where the lost gates rest. Some whisper that they may very well be the keys needed to reopen the portals, allowing the Yas'Wailians to leave this growing deathtrap.

Who they are and what their role is, is a secret yet to be told.

APPEARANCE

Caste restrictions are not adhered to within the ranks of the Horizon Striders, and both royalty and Fallen have been counted as members. Shard powers are no longer necessary either, although many Striders are Shards. Because the order is not officially recognized there is no standard uniform worn except for the Year Rings. These pieces of jewellery are based on honour solely, for there is no Horizon Strider hierarchy to award them, only the mentor-pupil system. For every year of wandering, a Strider fashions for himself, from treated resin or wood, an engraved circlet to be worn from the wing or pierced glider membrane. Respect amongst the Striders is based on the amount of rings one possesses. Although it is true that others can forge rings in order to gain greater respect amongst peers, this can be a dangerous practice. The Striders believe in one basic precept: "If one person out there knows the truth, we will eventually speak with them."

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ORGANIZATION

As previously stated, they have no formal hierarchy or chain of command. When two Striders meet, loose authority is relegated to the person with the most Year Rings. Apart from that, the practice is rarely enforced as the Horizon Striders regard individual experience as unique. Every Horizon Strider has learned something that is special regardless of caste or age.

The closest sense of decorum or formality is the one expressed between a pupil and his mentor. Some Horizon Striders can honestly trace their "lineage" back to one of the original 11 members, and have sworn never to retire or even die until they have taught 11 others a modicum of what they know. These highly respected individuals will only teach those willing to walk with them for one year.

This does not mean that only Horizon Striders with a lineage may take on pupils. Some of the most respected members of this group had no mentor to guide them, but they still chose to emulate the standards they read about in stories and tales. These teachers are treated with every bit of respect offered to one taught indirectly by one of the 11.

SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT: YEAR RING

Recognized as a symbol of one's dedication to the old ways, a Year Ring is often the greatest physical possession a Horizon Strider can own. One who wears this, however, has a tremendous responsibility to maintain the generosity and kindness that the Horizon Striders are remembered for. Villagers would sooner rip apart someone who defiles the memory of these rings than actually believe the "impostor" was truly a Horizon Strider. The symbol carries that much force, and that much responsibility.

Tales to Warm the Night

Many outlying communities celebrate the appearance of a Horizon Strider with a feast. In return, the Horizon Strider repays this courtesy by listening to the stories of the villagers so that they may be shared later with others. The Strider must then share tales with the others, or relay tidbits of news learned while travelling.



KESTREL

If a weapon can be knocked away, then it is not a weapon, but a hindrance.

FUNCTION

There has been debate as to whether the Kestrels can be called a monastic order or if they are simply mercenaries. On one hand, the Kestrels seclude themselves from society in their keeps, training those of talent in the secret art of Shii'klin, a martial art that combines hand to hand fighting with personal-augmentation spells. On the other hand, they hire their talents out to those who can afford their services as bodyguards and even assassins.

Respect

One odd ritual that the Kestrels are renowned for is called the Ritual of Respect. It simply means that if two Kestrels meet for the first time, they must fight if circumstances allow. It is a simple matter of honouring the other person's skill by challenging them to a fight (something they cannot refuse). While they call it a simple acknowledgment of greater skill, others are never sure how serious the fights can actually be, especially when fighters are throwing each other through walls. It is unheard of for a Kestrel to knowingly kill another during the course of the ritual. Killing anybody during the ritual is frowned upon for it indicates a lack of self-control on the fighter's part.

Everyone is aware of what happens when Kestrels fight, and almost never try to intervene lest they incur the wrath of both combatants. One particularly amusing anecdote is related of two groups of Kestrels meeting in Cry-Star for the first time. The ensuing battle occupied several city blocks as normal civilians ran for cover and allowed the city militia to try and stop the fight. That worsened the matter as half the city garrison was called in to quell the Kestrels who had now turned on the militia. All told, eight Kestrels were responsible for knocking out over thirty militia soldiers before they were finally brought down. To this day, it is said that the Kestrel guards currently employed by King Gunther of Cry-Star were the best fighters of that day.

PROVIDENCE

The Kestrels can trace their lineage back to the royal lines of Yas'Wail, where they acted as protectors for the ruling families. When the Wardens were assigned to keep watch over the exiles following the failed rebellion, Kestrels were chosen as members of the elite guard and brought the practice of their fighting style to Providence. They have always served royalty, and hire themselves out only to the top three castes (from which they also choose their non-Shard acolytes). Their prowess in combat, even against armed opponents is legendary. The moment they begin their katanadance spells, few can survive the onslaught that comes next.

Because of this history, coupled with their secretive training practices, many do not trust the Kestrels, but not many will get in their way.

APPEARANCE

Kestrels, regardless of their Troupials, berry-dye their skin till they are darker than a jungle night. This ritual is enacted every month or so to prevent the dye from fading. They tend to wear very dark clothing that is loose enough for ample movement, and leave both their hands and feet bare for combat. They want no one to mistake the fact that they are unarmed. For every opponent they defeat, they

place one white slash beneath either eye as a trophy mark. No Kestrel would dare fake these markings (or admit to it), for that would be tantamount to heresy of the highest degree.

ORGANIZATION

The Kestrels are controlled by a triumvirate of elder fighters known collectively as the Trian. All others are subservient to these three men and women. The identity of individual members of the Trian have generally managed to remain an enigma to those outside the Kestrels. Whenever the identity of one has been ascertained, however, that member commits ritual suicide from the shame while a specialized cadre of Kestrels hunt for the person who betrayed their secret. These inner-group inquisitions are often brutal, for they involve the only branch of the Trian kept separate from the rest, the Gath Hadatchi.

The Gath Hadatchi, like the Trian, are enigmas. They are believed to be children raised from the cradle into adulthood, learning the fighting styles and philosophy of the Kestrels. Each member is a student to one member within the Trian, and sworn to protect his honour in life and in death. It is believed they wear Wird-infused items known as Moss Masks that enable them to assume the visage of whomever they please.



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Prior experience has indicated that they tend to take the face of the Trian member whose honour they defend.

Below the Trian and Gath Hadatchi are the Quartermasters. Not only do they teach Kestrels how to fight, but they are also teachers of medicine. The Quartermasters believe that the best killers are those who also possess the knowledge to heal. Their training enables the Kestrels to use vital and nerve strikes against opponents. Those who graduate from the lessons of the Quartermasters still remain under their domain as subordinates. In this respect, the Quartermasters are also their superior officers.

One special Quartermaster, known by a different colour within each city (Cliff-Spider, for example, has the Red Quartermaster), is also a specialized Wird Dancer who teaches Wird-related katas. These spells are used to augment a Kestrel's fighting prowess.

SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT: NONE

Kestrels pride themselves on being superb hand to hand combatants. They will not carry any item that will inhibit their movement, be construed as an advantage in combat or can tempt them to rely on anything else but their skills.



MOCKINGBIRD

Your attention ladies and gentlemen. I have just been informed that a common thief may be operating here tonight, so please, watch your valuables closely.

FUNCTION

Most everybody will tell you that Mockingbirds have no function in society save to cause others misery. What they might not tell you is that nobody knows for sure who is a Mockingbird, and that it couldn't possibly be that wonderful street performer who entertains the masses.

Mockingbirds are performers, acrobats, tumblers, clowns, and above all thieves. The latter part they usually omit from their description, often replacing it with a word very dear to their hearts, artists. Now a great deal more has been ascribed to this group, including assassination, murder, slavery, and other sundry activities, but this is more gossip than fact. Comparing themselves to artists, Mockingbirds



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consider their thieving skills to be nothing more than a fee incurred on the populace for their entertaining talents. As a matter of course, they look down upon those who commit their crimes through force. Their belief is that if the "liberation" of currency cannot be carried off without the "patron" knowing about it, then the act is not worthwhile. Subtlety is the key.

Most understandably, Mockingbirds enjoy doing things with a certain flair, and are known to have a roguish manner about them. Some people who know the Mockingbirds better than most say that you know they're up to no good by the twinkle in their eyes and the curve of their wicked smile. Even then, it is still difficult not to be persuaded by their charm.

APPEARANCE

The clothing that best suits the nature of a Mockingbird is one that distracts through either bright and flashy colours, or one that leaves terribly little to the imagination. While the key word is distraction, the costumes are usually supple or loose enough for the artist to perform without any hindrance. Regardless of specific appearance, Mockingbirds generally dress neatly and crisply, never wearing more than is necessary.

ORGANIZATION

The Mockingbirds are independent, prizing freedom and expression of craft over a guild-like structure and group rigidity. They compete against one another during fairs to stake claims over areas, and later share a drink, laughing over the people they fleeced.

Mockingbirds consider it bad luck to work with another Mockingbird, although simple association with each other is perfectly acceptable.

SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT: ALLIKER PROPS

Mockingbirds all specialize in distraction, although they each have different methods of accomplishing that. They rely on a variety of equipment designed to make a lot of noise and distract the audience from what the performer is actually doing. This can include brightly coloured staves lined with feathers, juggling bags filled with bells, well-trained performing animals, gaily painted tambourines or even a beautiful assistant to distract the gawkers. All of these are considered Alliker props (named after the king of the Mockingbirds, the greatest trickster and performer Providence has ever known).



PEOPLE'S KNIGHT

I am who I am.

FUNCTION

Heroes, that is all there is to them. Through ability, belief, talent or all of the above, the People's Knights believe it is their duty to protect those who need it. They are ruled by individual codes of ethics, fight for their own reasons and follow a light that few others can see. Whether as individuals or as a group, the People's Knights have a strong sense of what is right and wrong, and act accordingly. There is no official organization, no overseers to guide them, no specified set of laws or dogmas to facilitate their decisions, and there are no easy answers to their dilemmas.

To become a People's Knight, one must decide to help others; it is as simple as that. From the stand point of the nobility and ruling powers-that-be, People's Knights are an annoyance since they generally refuse to adhere to the tenets of the caste system. While they will treat all people as equals regardless of their station, a People's Knight is more likely to assist a Fallen than rush to the aid of a nobleman. More insulting yet is the fact that People's Knights are generally members of the lower castes who (if they are Shards) refuse to join the Guilds. While the lower castes may support the existing hierarchy simply because it offers the protection of powerful lords and guarantees food on the table, they also admire the People's Knights for treating everyone in equal light.

APPEARANCE

The People's Knights are varied in appearance. Since they do not belong to an official organization, there is no common uniform. Many protect their identities with masks and cloaks to prevent retributions and vendettas from being carried out against their families and friends.

ORGANIZATION

With the exception of individuals who form groups of People's Knights, there is no hierarchy or chain of command. People's Knights pursue individual goals for their own reasons.

SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT: MASK

Being a People's Knight generally means pursuing an individual sense of right and wrong. While many heroes are proud of their actions or accomplishments, it often falls upon their friends or family to suffer any retribution. People's Knights have recently started to don masks to protect the identity of themselves and their loved ones.



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RECOGNIZER

By official right I am returning you to Cry-Star for trial. Be aware that I am under no obligation to bring you back alive, so do not tempt your fates or mine.

FUNCTION

Bounty hunters and trackers of the highest order, Recognizers work under the official sanction of the Alliance of Kings to apprehend criminals regardless of their location. They are charged with using any means at their disposal, short of causing damage to any domains under the Alliance of Kings.

Recognizers are regarded with a bit of suspicion by the general populace, a throwback to when Recognizers were responsible for tracking down prisoners who escaped from the internment camps. Old prejudices die hard. Essentially, so many tales had arisen surrounding the determined and often brutal Recognizers that they became the "bogey men" of Providence's early years. This reputation has died down to a minor degree, but people are still generally frightened of them.

As bounty hunters, Recognizers are given the authority to enter any city associated with the Alliance of Kings, and apprehend those criminals wanted in other regions. This does, of course, cause problems with the local authorities (the Watchers), who regard these individuals as sanctioned criminals. There is often nothing they can officially do. Unofficially, however, the tricks and maneuvers that both parties engage in to thwart one another is nothing short of malicious.

APPEARANCE

Due to the superstitious light in which the Recognizers are viewed, they like to play upon this fear by remaining mysterious. Some cloak themselves entirely, revealing little more than their eyes or their mouth, while others wear masks to protect their anonymity, adopting fierce and supernatural countenances. The one piece of uniform jewellery is a resin brooch (crafted by and given out by the Alliance of Kings to those who qualify as Recognizers), and a web-stick. Anyone bearing these items is known to be on a mission.

ORGANIZATION

Technically, the Recognizers are under the jurisdiction of the Alliance of Kings, and serve the Lords and Ladies of this body. The only person to supersede any and all members of

the Alliance of Kings is Regent Caiylus herself, who is responsible for hiring the entire organization as a privately-sanctioned militia force. She, at any time she deems necessary, can summon and place all Recognizers beneath her sole authority. It is her right.

Attached to each ruler within the Alliance of Kings is an advisor known as the Administrator, of which there is one present within each city. The Administrator not only acts as the liaison between the Recognizers and ruling royalty, but he is also responsible for running the local branch of the group. Beneath him is the Treasurer, followed by two men and two women known as Taskers. They delegate assignments and oversee the conduct of Recognizers within the city. It also falls to them to find potential recruits, and to ascertain their capabilities. It is on the consensus of all four Taskers that a new person is allowed to join the Recognizers.

Below the Taskers are the bounty hunters themselves, who may be assigned to various duties according to the needs of Regent Caiylus or the Alliance of Kings. While the Administrator, Treasurer and Taskers are paid by the Alliance of Kings for their full-time services, Recognizers are paid on a contractual basis, and must look for extra sources of revenue in order to survive. Fortunately, they can also hire themselves out to private individuals who have need of their services, a fact that the Alliance of Kings acknowledges and condones.

SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT: WEB-STICK

The Web-Stick is perhaps the most prominent feature of a Recognizer, and his primary weapon when carrying out his duties. The stick is based on the Green People's Sap Wand that enables the user to hurl globs of sticky sap at opponents. While this does not sound threatening, the weapon is extremely dangerous against flyers, and is strong enough to immobilize a target that is struck properly. The only drawback to the Web-Stick is that it only contains a limited number of charges before it must be refilled, unlike the Sap Rod which constantly generates sap on demand.

In addition to being used as a weapon, the stick is also great for laying traps. Sap can be used to lay a sticky coat on the ground or wall, binding tight anything that comes in contact with it. While the adhesive is not strong enough to keep something in place, it does act as a great diversion before the actual attack begins.



SLAYWINDS

It is not a matter of whether I miss you or not, it is a matter of whether the Gods allow you to live. I am merely the messenger.

FUNCTION

The "Holy Archers" or "Archer Paladins" as they are known, were present at the final battle of the Yas'Wailian rebellion, fighting alongside their god's persona when it fell at the battle of Sly'ain. Unlike the other religious groups who lost their faith that day, the Slaywinds were blessed with proof that their gods still lived. It is what made the loss of the rebellion tolerable.

Before this point, the Slaywinds were an order of archers who fought for the armies of the priest-kings. They truly believed that their arrows were merely messengers for the word of their gods. Should they kill their target, then the opponent had been delivered a sentence of death, but should the target survive, then he was destined to live. Of course the Slaywind's duty didn't stop there, as he was responsible for delivering several more "messages" to the target. Obviously, many people were found guilty in those days.

At the battle of Sly'ain, the various religious orders fighting for the rebellion faltered when they saw their gods perish. As the last fighters capitulated to superior numbers, the leader of the Slaywinds, Corryn of Truscans, turned to his eleven-year-old daughter Edlissa, who had served him valiantly as his quiver-maiden. Before the men and women of his command, many of whom had begun to doubt their own faith, he gave his bow to Edlissa and said: "Strike true. For good or bad, your blow is guided by fate. For good or bad, your blow is guided by faith."

Edlissa, barely strong enough to draw the bow, let one shaft fly into the air. It fell squarely between the eyes of Lord Ebaloss, leader of the advancing forces, killing him instantly. Although the Slaywinds were too tired and weak to continue fighting, they took the omen for what it was, as a sign that the gods still lived, and a signal that the time to strike back would eventually come.

Like the D'Shau Monks, the order of the Holy Archers has survived the exile by father and mother teaching their children the old ways. Many of those who later managed to escape the camps and form the Free Tribes were from the Slaywinds. They spent their years teaching and training students in the wilderness, but with freedom came recognition and the power to pull the members of the order back together again.



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These days, they are a communal monastic order that permits marriage and children. Most gatherings of Slaywinds are within the cities of Haak San Bazaa and Bastion, as well as within the settlements of True-Door (a town on the edge of one of the gates) and Marrin (near the Pincer Swamps).

Many Slaywinds are opposed to the notion of a caste system that bears too great a resemblance to the one the rebellion fought against. Few Slaywinds can be found within the cities and settlements under the domain of the Alliance of Kings.

The Slaywinds are devoutly religious to the old ways. They still teach the skill of archery to others (for in essence, it is spreading the word of the gods), but not the "Divine Draw" that gives them their unerring accuracy. Due to the recent upheaval, both socially and geologically, they realize that they can no longer remain secluded; they must work with the others in order to save the world.

Archers are now being sent out to the various cities to lend their services where necessary.

APPEARANCE

Despite their strong religious convictions and the deadly nature of their beliefs, Slaywinds are rather humble individuals, both in how they live life and how they dress. Members of this order do not adhere to any particular uniform, except when they are carrying out their duties. Normally, they wear farmers' or labourers' clothing.

They may carry normal weapons at all times, but they will only don the bow and quiver when it comes to fulfilling their function as a Slaywind. In this instance, the uniform is a white tunic tucked into a pair of breeches, and completed with a set of brown shin-high boots. A simple band crosses their chest holding the laurel of whichever of the Yas'Wailian gods they currently represent. Their quiver rests upon their hip, and the bow remains in their hands. As a matter of tradition, men use longbows and blue-shaft arrows, while the women use recurve bows and black-shaft arrows. Each arrow has a special mark upon it declaring which god has rendered judgment against the target.

ORGANIZATION

Slaywinds are organized into parishes, with a priest comprising the spiritual head of the community. Below the priest are volunteers who help conduct daily worship, act as spiritual advisors, bless the arrows and help the priest maintain the multiple shrines within the temple.

Because there are so few members currently within the Slaywinds, each priest also represents his community at the conclave held at the True-Door community each year. This conclave also serves as a pilgrimage for the Slaywinds and their families, and marks a great celebration that brings in hundreds of Holy Archers from across Providence to share in the festivities.

Outdoor masses are conducted upon the field of the Portal for the next week, followed by anointing and seminars on the old ways. There are also lessons on using the bow and how to fashion arrows, and feasts designed to unite the Slaywinds into one community. The final two days are capped off with archery tournaments for speed, blind (or faith) shooting, distance-shooting (also known as cloud-shooting), as well as accuracy contests and awards for best workmanship on arrows.

SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT: ANOINTED ARROWS

While bows are the instrument of the worshipper, the arrows are the instrument of the gods. Each Slaywind is taught how to choose, cut and fashion the proper wood into a shaft. The knowledge includes picking the proper feathers, painting the arrow in the correct manner, and engraving the right symbol in order to dedicate it. While the process is long and involved, the creation of a Slaywind's arrow is something that the entire family becomes involved in. It is considered a part of worship. Once the arrows are finished, they are given to the priests or his helpers to be blessed, then placed in the temple's armoury. Once a Slaywind makes an arrow and it is blessed, it belongs to the god it was dedicated to. The priest is then responsible for keeping the archers well-stocked and armed.



WATCHERS

My will is that of the Alliance of Kings.

FUNCTION

The Watchers are a branch of the militia that is responsible for maintaining the peace in the city. As the enforcers of law, they stop crimes, help the beleaguered and represent the will of the Alliance of Kings. Originally, this function limited them to the city in which they lived but that is no longer the case due to the growing deluge in the Sunderlands. Watchers are now being used to help patrol the outlying settlements that may fall victim to raiding parties, with evacuating the disaster-afflicted regions and with escorting refugee caravans. While this would normally be the military's job, the armies are being kept in reserve in the growing likelihood of war against the Lost Tribes.

Those who were assigned the duties of helping the populace in this time of crisis either quit when they realized they could no longer handle the burden, or began adapting to it as best they could. This increase in the scope of their duties has created a new breed of Watchers, one intent on helping people on a more personal level. Since there are only so many people available to help, the Alliance of Kings has opened its doors to capable Fallen.

This recent development in the situation has created some friction between the Watcher's hierarchy and the Alliance of Kings. While many Watchers were initially upset with the decision, the influx of Fallen into their ranks has greatly alleviated an almost stifling workload. A truce was reached among the Watchers, allowing the Fallen and non-Fallen to work side-by-side. The hierarchy is still laced with a biased view of their new recruits. It is therefore not surprising to discover that many Fallen are given the more dangerous assignments, something they do not mind since it gives them more opportunity to prove their worth.

APPEARANCE

The Watchers are all required to wear a standard uniform, in order that they can be immediately recognized. This includes a thigh-long red tabard with short sleeves and a hood, bracers bearing the heraldry of the Alliance of Kings and the seal of the city's kings or queen. They also bear a bladed weapon, grey pantaloons and knee-high boots. All Watchers are required to follow a daily regime of exercise, which keeps them healthy.

Many of the men within the Watchers grow goatees, while the women with long hair wear in a tight bun or

ponytail to keep it out of their way while they're running. Both sexes mark a slanted scar just below the right eye for each cycle of service they have faithfully served the Watchers and the Alliance of Kings.

ORGANIZATION

Below the ruling body of each city is a military commander. Below the commander is the Watcher Triumvirate consisting of three men and women, each of whom is responsible for supervising either the conduct, the training or the management of the Watchers. Assisting the Triumvirate is a sergeant who is in charge of one or more Watcher squads, depending on the size of the city.

In the current state of emergency, additional squads have been created, necessitating the appointment of captains who are responsible for squads outside the city. They are better known as field sergeants, and are required to travel with Watcher squads and supervise them.

In the wilderness, all Watchers work in squads of three or more under the command of a captain. Occasionally, a lone Watcher may be encountered, but this is a rare assignment to obtain.

SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT: IDENTIFICATION BRACER

The same bracers bearing the seal of the Alliance of Kings and that of the regional Lords is also imparted with a Wird spell designed to assist Watchers in their duty. Those criminals who are wanted badly enough have a potent Wird spell called the Tracker's Eye enacted against them. It is cast upon all Watcher bracers, and alerts the user, by causing a tingling sensation through the bracer, through a mental "nudge," that someone bearing the description of the known criminal is nearby. This spell has a 100-yard radius.

The only drawback to the item is that since it is based on general appearance, it may identify someone who bears a close resemblance to the fugitive. Watchers know better then to rely on the bracer alone as a means of absolute identification, but the item has proven its worth time and time again.



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SHARDS

I've often been asked what it feels like, that first moment when the sun cracks open behind your eyes, and surges to burst out from your finger tips. It is revelation. It is empowering. It is the Epiphany. In the course of my life, I have seen many wonders brought to

life by those of my kind, the Shards. Our flesh has become a thin veil for the font of miracles, and our blood has become the very ichor of power. Do not misunderstand me; it is not the powers alone which brings about greatness, but our actions which guide the paths these miracles take in life. It is true that our abilities are often paltry in the face of the Elothorin's Avatars, or limited compared to the scope of Wird's spell craft. It is what we choose to do, or not to do, with it that influences the destiny of others.

SHARDS: Individuals capable of manifesting natural powers and abilities.

Beyond the scope of their gifts, how does one explain what a Shard is? Well, first of all, they are individuals, gifted with a set of talents that mark them in some way. These are often minor forms of different spells practiced by the Wird Distinctions — hence the appellation "One-Spell Abilities" — but sometimes with more devastating results.

Shards were born over the skies of Haak San Bazaa, in a moment of desperation when the Elothorin Avatar Sky-Spite seemed likely to overwhelm everything thrown against it. The Epiphany that graced Lady Amariss of Troupial Dragon and Enoval Sahar of Dove became the catalyst for the emergence of the many Shards to come. They were the first two known to gain powers, hence earning the moniker of Father and Mother. Enoval and Amariss' valiant efforts that day dictated how the public would come to perceive this new class of people, and how they would be treated by others. Despite the fact that the notion was later disproved, public opinion was that those gifted with Shard abilities were noble and heroic by virtue.

This view of the rapidly expanding Shard classification facilitated the creation of a new caste for them. It also helped that Lord Juliard of Cliff-Spider, husband to the now late Lady Amariss, fully supported the Shards as though they were his



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own creation, his own blood. His vote within the Alliance went a long way to support the formation of the Gifted caste, which later became the Guilds.

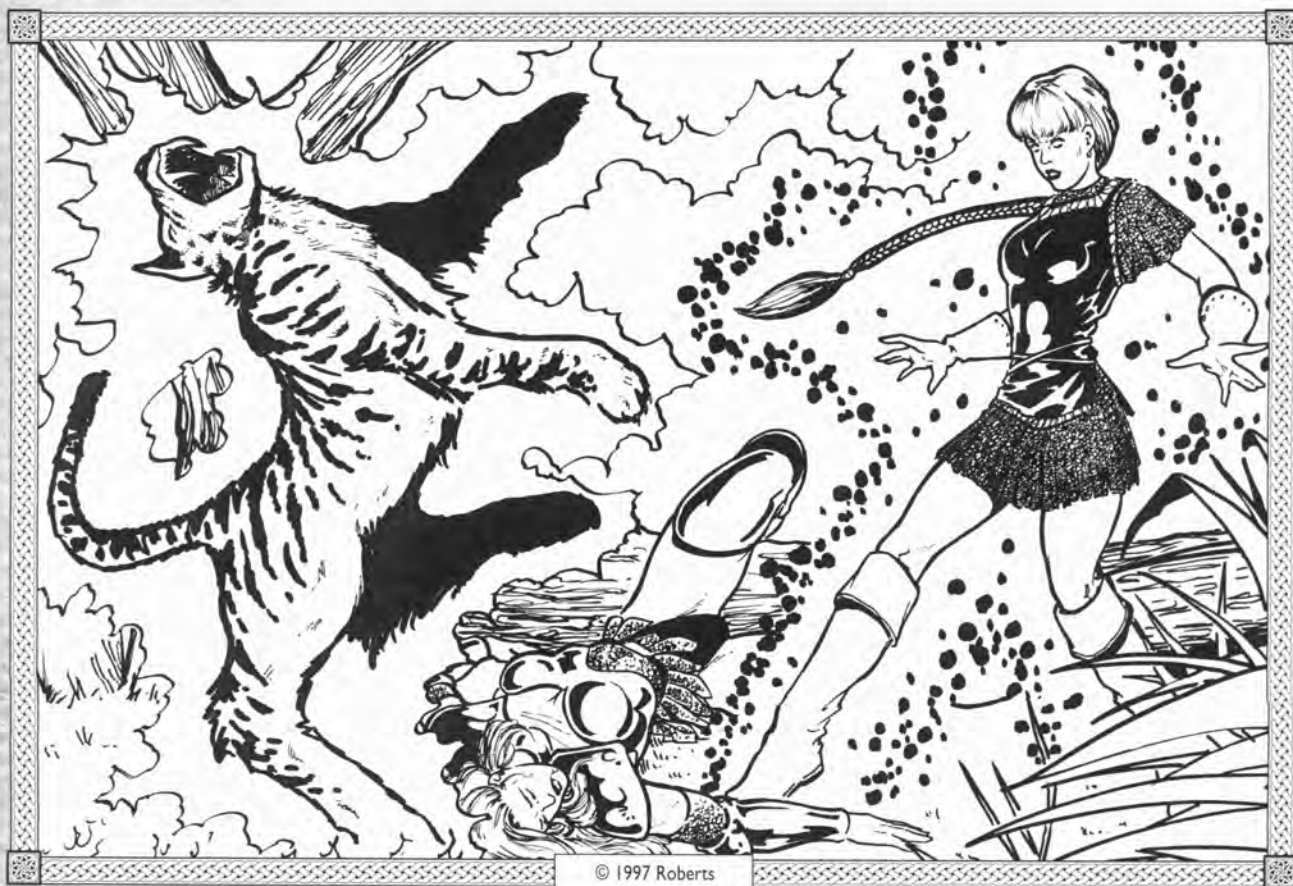
Unfortunately, as the Guilds formed, it was immediately evident that being a Shard meant either rapid advancement up society's ladder, or several steps down for those of Pure or Blessed status. Therefore, rather than making the position obligatory, it became voluntary due to the vehement insistence of the various noble houses.

The nobility, however, felt threatened by the knowledge that there may be Fallen Shards running around unaccounted for. To counter this, they donated large sums of money and property to the newly forming Guilds as an incentive program for those who chose to join. Although this succeeded in enlisting more Shards, it was also a short-sighted mistake that cemented the Guilds into a position of strength.

There are currently three different categories for Shards. There are Guild Members, Free-Holders, or independent Shards of the lower castes, and the Well-Born. These last individuals are also nonaffiliated Shards of Blessed or Pure stock.

THE EPIPHANY

I have seen the Epiphany occur only once, outside of myself. A young girl named Essaleen was serving as the shield maiden for an Eagle Knight, and was required to remain next to her regardless of circumstances. Well, in the midst of my travels with the two, a pack of Tiger-wolves attacked the party and overwhelmed our defender. Essaleen rushed to the side of her fallen mistress but was routed by two of the larger beasts. Frustrated and scared, her powers suddenly blossomed. Her eyes turned a colour of blue I can only call cold, and the air around her suddenly chilled. Her water skin burst and immediately froze, as did the blood of the two Tiger-wolves before her. It snowed for miles around, and I lost two fingers to an ancient affliction I had only heard of through tales called frostbite. Although hers was not as spectacular an Epiphany as Enoval Sabar of Dove in his battle with Sky-Spite, it was still a frightening and uncontrolled event.



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THE EPIPHANY: The point when a Shard experiences the birth of his or her power.

Rarely, if ever, is a Shard blessed with power from the moment of her birth. The abilities normally manifest much later in life, either at the onset of puberty, during a particularly stressful moment, or if it is forced out. Each of these examples does make a difference in how a person controls her talents, but they are not binding rules that apply to everyone. They are base guidelines that differ from case to case. In essence they are the rule-of-thumb for NPCs, not the player characters.

Although puberty is a troubling time for many young adults, it is perhaps the most natural way in which an individual comes across his powers. The Epiphany starts manifesting in dreams, forecasting the nature of the change about to occur. This is not the catalyst of a Shard's ability, but a herald of the actual Epiphany which normally follows the dream by a few days. When it does first appear, it is not a blossoming of power, but a slow manifestation that gradually builds in strength as the individual grows older. Some people are known to develop the full scope of their powers from the first moment, but this is rare.

The advantage offered through this form of Epiphany is a finer control over one's abilities. Shards who grow into their power display a wider range of affiliated talents. For example, Terra, who has the ability to summon winds, may also learn how to fly upon gusts of air, pick up objects with a highly localized gust, or sense the weather patterns for the next few days, or even control the weather with more experience.

There are a number of people who develop their ability later in life, normally under stressful periods such as combat situations, life-threatening circumstances and moments of extreme anxiety. Unlike those whose powers emerge naturally, Shards who undergo this form of the Epiphany are usually blessed with more destructive powers. An unfortunate few even display their full abilities in one explosive manifestation, harming anyone unlucky enough to be around them.

Shards who undergo the Epiphany in this manner lack some of the finer control, but their powers are more flagrant. They can cause more damage, their effects are more visible, and they possess less peripheral abilities. For example, had Terra come across her powers later in life, her wind control would enable her to create violent air surges, but she would not possess the ability to pick up objects or sense the weather.

A final manner in which some people develop their powers is under extreme conditions such as torture or moments of abject terror. While this is a rare circumstance, it is common enough in places like Bone-Wail, where the



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rights of individuals are secondary to the will of the Wardens. Hundreds of people each year are deliberately tortured and killed in an effort to squeeze out more Shards. While the practice is reprehensible and barbaric, it has supplied Bone-Wail with a number of powerful Shards known as the Keepers. A combination of brainwashing and Wird is used to keep the Keepers completely subservient to their Warden Masters.

Individuals who suffer psychological or physical pain while undergoing the Epiphany emerge completely different. Part of their personality has been warped by their misfortunes. To make matters worse, their powers are almost entirely destructive, singular in that there are no peripheral abilities. Fortunately, the Wardens, Merchant Bands and Alliance all possess Wird-empowered collars or bracers capable of helping an individual keep his power in check.

THE FREE-HOLDERS

It does not matter which of the lower castes Shards belongs to; if they are not attached to the Guilds, they are considered Free-Hold Shards. At one time, this designation was greeted with a good deal of suspicion since it applied to a lower-caste individual who turned down the opportunity to rise within the ranks. Only villains using their talents for evil were believed to be Free-Holders, and many independent Shards, regardless of intent, were labelled as such. This view was short-lived, however, for as the Guilds became more mercenary with their gifts, many Free-Holders rose to assume the mantle of heroism.

Free-Hold Shards are, by current definition, anyone below the rank of Guild possessing a power who chooses not to join the Guilds. Regardless of whether a Free-Holder uses his ability for good or for tyranny, the definition is applicable to both. Those who use their gifts to help whomever is in need are often called People's Knights, since they are the champion of the common person. It is a position of great responsibility, for every action can be scrutinized, and heroes are often viewed in the light of perfection.

Aside for those attached to the Anodynes and People's Knights, Free Holders have few formal ties to one another. Some gather into groups based on common-interests, mutual goals or simply for support, but it is rare for these alliances to last outside of a couple of years. Those that do survive, grow to have significant impact upon the world. The best example of this are the Horizon Striders, the premier explorers for the Guild of Cartographers who eventually went their own way. The strength of these individuals, willing to be considered Free-Holders as opposed to Guild

mercenaries, did much to improve the image of independent Shards. Their exploits have not only fashioned a portion of history, they have become part of Providence's mythology.

THE WELL-BORN

Those of Blessed or Pure stock who are Shards are simply called the Well-Born, and will rarely "step down" to enter a Guild. Fully winged individuals who do so are normally children within large noble families who will not receive what they believe to be a fair share of the wealth. Other times they are disinherited, bastards of the upper tiers, or those struck with a need to do more in life than just rule.

Well-Borns are mostly organized along the lines of family units. While many parents expect their children to follow in their footsteps and continue the family name, it has become accepted practice for Shards to begin their own family line. Akin to the royal houses, these Well-Born Manors, as they are called, are every bit as involved in court intrigue as any household.

Royal Shards are highly valued since they are not attached to the Guilds, and alliances with them are sought after by most influential families. The Alliance of Kings made it easier for Well-Born Manors to be formed on the condition that a Chapter be willing to sponsor them. This has begun a process known as "bidding," whereupon a Chapter or House offers a Royal Shard support in starting his own Manor in exchange for an alliance or service. Chapters are using this technique to woo Shards from their rivals, in order to increase their own power base.

THE GUILD CASTE

Cast aside your misconceptions; we are not the villains everyone believes we are. We are a collection of Shards, individuals gifted with the touch of power. Call it divinity, call it evolution, the matter remains that we are better than we once were. We no longer fit in a simple classification of castes and Troupials. We are the Guilds.

If this seems elitist to you, I would admit that it probably is, but what else can you say about my kind? Should we be humble? Should we supplicate ourselves to pampered royalty who have rarely arisen to the challenge demanded of them? Our powers have given us self-determination and the right to forge our own destiny. Of all the castes, we, perhaps, are the most free.

The Guilds were originally created to protect a newly emerging segment of the population known as Shards. Their appearance unsettled many, and the tier of Gifted was created, allowing Shards the opportunity to safely coexist in society without fear of recrimination.

The Gifted-class was a non-mandatory tier, one that Shards could join if they wished. While many doubted the logic of this decision, the matter was ratified with the strong support of certain influential Chapters who already possessed Shard children. They refused to "condemn" their offspring by forcing them to join a lower caste. Some Fallen and Redeemed Shards refused to join for their own reasons (mistrust being the primary one). The Alliance began offering monetary rewards for those who did join the almost empty caste, filling its ranks slowly, but assuredly.

Shortly after, somebody realized that the incentives being offered by the nobility could make rich people of those who knew how to capitalize on the venture. Members of the Gifted approached the nobility with the following offer: "Give us the finances to recruit Shards, and we will not only handle the matter, we will offer you returns on your investment." The argument was seductive enough to entice many nobles to do just that. The fledgling groups accepted the patronage of the Pure and Blessed, allowing them to donate money and land for the Gifted to use as they saw fit. They, in turn, not only recruited other Shards, they hired their talents out like any good business.

Eventually, the companies that were successful were those who specialized in one specific area of powers or expertise. The smaller and less successful groups were absorbed into the larger ones, turning the scattered disparate factions into several cohesive units. These groups were eventually called the Guilds.

GUILD AGENDA

For the last couple of centuries, the Guilds have been strong and lucrative enough to pay off all their debts. This not only ensured a strong power-base, it made this caste financially independent. In addition, the Guilds' continued services for various households have netted them a fair share of favours and material for blackmail. While this seems like a perfect recipe to seize or gain more power, the Guilds are in a conundrum. The very political structure which allowed them to gain influence, also keeps them in check. Their position is based on their high standing within the caste system, something kept in place by the Alliance of Kings. The Guilds also keep each other in check, preventing one another from gaining too much power. While under normal circumstances this would be a good thing, the unity of the Guilds is currently necessary to help stem the bloodshed in the upcoming war.

Unfortunately, the Guilds are too busy playing families against one another, trying to undermine their rivals and miring the courts down in a web of stifling intrigue. Unless something is done to unite the Guilds towards a temporary but common goal, the Alliance may fall in the war against the Lost Tribes.

RECRUITMENT AND ENLISTMENT

Aside from the immediate benefit of joining a Guild (the ability to move up the caste-ladder) there are other advantages which are enjoyed by the membership. This includes a basic education covering reading, writing and history. This also includes a monthly allowance for living and a commission for each completed assignment. Some of the richer Guilds also offer homes in Guild Settlements and even permanent employment to some.

For Shards of Free-Holder status, this may seem like the best way to leave the poverty behind and advance up the social ladder, but it is no longer so simple. During the formative years of the Guilds, recruitment was open enough that practically anyone who wished to join could. As their ranks swelled, many groups were forced to stem the influx of Shards by instigating a set of standards. What began as a loose set of recommendations has, over the years, become a set of stringent requirements. Each Guild has its own codes on the matter, covered in the Membership section of each listing, with varying degrees of strictness.

THE GUILDS

The following list is an overview of the primary Guilds and the Shard-types who are affiliated with them. While it is not a hard and fast rule that a person capable of expelling energy is going to be with the Archers Guild, many individuals will fall into a Guild stereotype. It is common practice for Guilds to specialize in one area, and they tend to enlist those who will advance their position or suit their needs. The lines defining this, however, are not set, so it is possible for a strength-based character to be a member of the Cartographer's Guild. As with any Distinction and Character Archetype, stereotypes are necessary in order to establish which rules can be broken or superseded.

These Guilds are not the complete list of the several dozen which occupy this caste. Some are new and obscure enough not to mention yet, while others are still small enough to be hidden within the shadows of the older Guilds. The Guilds mentioned below are the most significant and influential. They are the ones whose machinations have mired the courts, and tied up valuable resources that would be better served against the Lost Tribes. If the Guild caste is to be united, it must begin here, with these seven.



THE GUILD OF ARCHERS

Frightening men and women, for their powers are the most physically destructive and far-reaching of all the Guilds. In the time it takes a non-Gifted archer to unsheathe, string and draw his bow, these Shards can

unleash a quiver full of energy or matter arrows, and send them raining down upon their opponents.

BACKGROUND

The Guild of Archers is the third-oldest group created, following the Drummers and Cartographers. The Archers possess a wide field from which to draw their membership. Simply, anyone who possessed an offensive, ranged ability was pursued for enlistment, marking the Archers as the most active recruiters of Free-Holders. For this reason, many noble families supported the efforts of this particular Guild, lending it a tremendous financial base that it has maintained to this day.

Centred in Cliff-Spider, the Archers are considered one of the two Guilds forming the backbone of the Alliance armies. In essence, while it is a military Guild under the employment of Regent Caiylus, it is also free to pursue other contracts as long as it is within the domain of the Alliance.

MEMBERSHIP

Because the Guild approaches anyone with a ranged offensive ability, its ranks are filled with a wide field of energy and matter projectors. The degree of control over an ability further determines a Shard's ranking within the Archers. Those without fine manipulation of their blasts are called Hammers. Those who possess near absolute control over their ability are called Bolts.

The Archers and Drummers possess the most stringent set of tests and training for potential recruits. For this particular Guild, Shards over the age of nine must undergo three weeks of military training in D'Oshae Keep, one of the settlements near the base of the Crysarius Bridge. During this period, they are not only tested for the skill in using their power, but also for their ability to work with others and to follow orders. At the end of this period, trainers evaluate the different recruits. Shards are then invited to join, asked to



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retry at a later date, or told that they are not Guild material. Those who join are paid an allowance for their services, in addition to whatever commissions they make from assignments. Even housing is provided for, either within an Archer commune outside Cliff-Spider, or within the mammoth keep known as War-Break inside the Crysarius Bridge itself.

Shards under the age of nine are raised at the D'Oshae Orphanage. After that they are required to serve the Archers for the next five years, after which they become full members.

FUNCTION

The Archers are partially employed by the Alliance of Kings as part of the army. Their services are also available as bodyguards, and in private militia forces (as long as it does not go against the Alliance). Currently, with the growing threat of war, the Guild is asking members to finish their current contracts, and to report to their nearest Alliance office. Once they do so, they will be under the full-time employment of the city-states, and required to fulfil whatever task is asked of them.

GUILD MASTER

The post of Guild Master within the Archers is a lifetime position, brought about through popular vote of its membership at an event called a Conclave. This has not occurred for the last eight years, a time during which Guild Master Arturia Sanquade has successfully ruled. A member of Troupial Bat, Sanquade has proven to be an exception to the rule that all Bats are xenophobic. This is partially due to her inability to properly hear or use echolocation. She has been ostracised from her own Troupial because of her talent to emit blasts using high pitched screams. With this she is able to disrupt the equilibrium of targets and can literally shatter bone.

A strong-minded and dedicated woman, Sanquade has demonstrated a natural diplomatic streak that engenders many people to her cause. Some have wondered whether she may actually be more Dragon than Bat; her powers of persuasion are quite uncanny.

MOTTO

In my sight, within my power.

INFLUENCE

The Archers possess one of the strongest financial bases of any of the Guilds. In addition to the numerous noble Chapters and Manors whose support they enjoy, this group also holds Cliff-Spider within its palm. King Raldowin IV is a firm supporter of the Archers, and gives them first consideration in any matters influencing the Guilds. Due to its position within the Crysarius Bridge, Archers were considered the best possible defense for the vertical city. They have been so employed for the last several centuries.



THE GUILD OF CARTOGRAPHERS

Sailors of the sky, no Guild has ever risen to such heights of popularity, only to fall to such depths. Such is the curse of flyers, for the higher one soars, the greater one can plummet. The Cartographers have still not

stopped falling, even after they struck the ground all those years ago.

BACKGROUND

The second oldest of the Guilds, surpassed only by the Drummers, the Cartographers represented the epitome of nobility that people once ascribed to Shards. As flyers and explorers, they were the eyes and ears of the populace, gazing into the unknown territory of the Deep. Rugged, hardy and noble, they supposedly represented the strongest virtues of the Alliance.

Premier amongst them were the Horizon Striders and the Cliff-Skimmers, two bands within the Cartographers who did much to unveil the eyes of the world. Then the Guild committed folly by surrendering to the most base of mortal desires, greed. The Horizon Striders left in disgust as the practices of the Cartographers became more mercenary and less about exploration, while the Cliff-Skimmers went to form a Guild of their own.

The change in the Cartographers came about when they realized that they were not gaining any wealth from the nobility because they were not actively pursuing membership from among the ranks of the Free-Holders. They were too busy exploring a world that had remained mysterious to take care of business. As a result, the Cartographers began charging for their exploration ventures.

The more money this Guild made, the more politically ambitious they became. Soon, it was no longer a matter of discovery that drove them, but one of financial opportunity. It reached a point where the Cartographers feared that further exploration of Providence would rob them of a function in the future when everything had been uncovered. They decided to make sure that there would always be a



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need for explorers by destroying unpublished documents concerning uncovered regions. The Guild claims it no longer does this since the last Guild Master who did was killed by an angry mob. Most people suspect not only is the practice still carried out, but that the Cartographers may know where the gates lie. Whether they are keeping the knowledge as a bargaining chip for the future or the Guild is merely being misjudged is currently unknown.

MEMBERSHIP

Cartographers are no longer a Guild treated with any respect; they are mercenaries whose skills are occasionally needed and perhaps vaguely appreciated. Because of this, the recruiting process of this group is the least demanding of the major Guilds, as is what they offer to members. Entry into the Cartographers is supposedly a long and arduous process, but the larger the bribe to enter, the less paperwork seems to be involved. In return, a Cartographer earns only what is made through commission. This Guild is on the verge of bankruptcy from numerous scandals and a corrupt hierarchy. It cannot afford to pay allowances for its members.

With so many drawbacks, what encourages Shards to apply to this Guild? Status, and possibly freedom. The Cartographers represent the easiest avenue into the Guilds, a position that places them close to the ears of the nobility. The Guild is a breeding ground for tricksters and thieves, especially since its regulations are rarely enforced. Cartographers are allowed to pursue their private agenda as long as they share in the wealth.

There had been talk amongst the Alliance kings of disbanding the Cartographers, but recent events have delayed this motion. With the new drive to uncover the hidden gates and the location of adversarial Lost Tribe settlements, this Guild's skill is now badly needed. As well, the Alliance feels that some members may know more than they are willing to share concerning the location of the gates. By disbanding the Guild now, they could lose that knowledge forever.

FUNCTION

The Cartographers used to be adventurers. They were in charge of advance scouting, surveying new regions and establishing safe paths through the jungle. As greed slowly wormed its way into the Cartographers' ethos however, they took on the reputation of being thinly-veiled thieves and mercenaries. In part, this was due to an increasingly corrupt series of Guild Masters, but mostly, it was because of the hostile Lost Tribes and Elothorin's Avatars. The Cartographers were losing a good share of business as the city-states became somewhat insular and were no longer interested in funding exploration of non-lucrative prospects. Members took to accepting contracts outside the stated



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business domain of the Guild. This included thieving, spying and, sometimes, assassination. Although they have recently tried to change their reputation, the fact remains that the Cartographers have been hired by various Chapters and noble houses to commit illegal acts.

GUILD MASTER

The recent Guild Master, Sirus Khohall, is among the most devious leaders the Guild has had. This Shard has the ability to manipulate winds. Very few people are willing to fight him in the air, where he can create updraughts and pummeling winds that are capable of disabling most flyers.

Sirus Khohall shares many of the characteristics emulated by Gargoyles. He is antagonistic, caustic and confrontational. Sirus possesses tattered glider membranes shredded during a fight with a knight from Troupial Hawk. He is not interested in honesty; it is a trait he lacks. He uses his position to intimidate others, and is smart enough to know how to best accomplish this. Unlike most other Gargoyles, he is well-spoken, but rarely talks above a whisper or for more than a few sentences. He makes small "suggestions" which are rarely misunderstood.

Unlike his predecessors, Sirus does not cater to the beck and call of nobility. He has managed to gain the support of several noble houses (possibly by blackmailing them), and is reputed to hold a link with the Guild of Dusk. Sirus has a secret, and it is enough to earn him the grudging support of powerful allies.

MOTTO

Knowledge is power; knowledge is wealth.

INFLUENCE

The Cartographers lost a majority of the sponsorship they once enjoyed in the early days of the Guild. A decade ago, they were bereft of all support and were in real danger of disbanding; then Sirus came into power. Although he is no less corrupt than those before him, he is sharp enough to reestablish links with some of the lost sponsors, and to keep the Alliance of Kings at bay. Currently House Moraiye of Troupial Dove in Water-Sister, House Olivarie of Troupial Hawk in Cry-Star and Manor Rift of the Garethim Free-Keep outside Cliff-Spider, have all agreed to sponsor the Cartographers. Several more may be joining, bringing an influx of cash into the Guild.



THE GUILD OF CHIRURGEONS

Any time a member of the nobility sneezes, these healers and herbalists are instantly there, curing the illness. Anytime a Pure baby cries, one of them is by the side of the nursemaid, ensuring that the infant is not

hurt. Anytime the Regent stubs her toe against her bed, a Chirurgeon is there to remove the dull pain. For a group of people who are reputed to ease the suffering of others, I find it ironic that they seem to be more like leeches living off the rich and healthy.

BACKGROUND

These healers are the smallest of the major Guilds (and smaller than most of the minor ones), while possessing the most political and financial power. They are also the most ruthless of the lot, and will do their utmost to protect their favoured position amongst the Alliance of Kings.

From its inception, the Chirurgeons were formed with the intent of servicing the top two castes. Unfortunately, the positions of court physicians were already taken by competent Wird Weavers who guarded their jobs zealously, and the group was forced to bide its time slowly. Over the following years however, the Guild members managed to ingratiate themselves with the newly emerging Manors (Houses established by Well-Borns), and fermented a reputation through their services there. The major advantage they offered over the Wird Distinctions was that even though their numbers were small, they could rely on each other's support. That meant that if a Chirurgeon could not heal his employer, the Guild would guarantee that somebody within the organization would. In essence, hiring one Chirurgeon meant having the entire Guild at one's service.

The services offered by the Chirurgeons appealed to the growing number of Houses and Manors, but this appeal proved to be a tremendous drain on the Guild's already limited manpower. Very few Shards were actually blessed with healing abilities. The Guild eventually persuaded the Alliance to offer it special dispensation in accepting members. They were the first and only group who were allowed to enlist Wird Weavers, a move the other Guilds disapproved of.

MEMBERSHIP

The Chirurgeons have never been advocates of the notion of strength in numbers. They consider power and



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influence best appreciated when few possess them. This attitude has allowed the Guild to be very select in choosing potential candidates and kept the membership roster down to the cream of the crop. The recruitment process concentrates more upon an individual's personality rather than sheer ability. If the Chirurgeons do not believe that someone will put the Guild first, they are not inducted.

All healers within the Guild are not only very highly paid, they are also taught mathematics, to read, and to write. They are also familiarized with court etiquette, which is necessary for their position. Regardless as to whether this takes five months or five years of training, the Guild regards each healer as an investment and an ambassador. Therefore, it is not surprising that every healer is either intelligent, ambitious or both.

FUNCTION

Healers do exactly what their name implies. They heal, but at an expensive price. Because this particular gift is rare, the Alliance has allowed this Guild the right to induct Wird Weavers and learned herbalists. While this does much to swell their ranks, they are still a small group.

GUILD MASTER

The Guild Masters for the Chirurgeons have always been Shards; that is part of the same agreement that allows them to enlist Wird practitioners. Currently, that role is being occupied by Ajandi Melisrian, a member of Troupial Eagle now considered to be the second-most influential Shard in Providence. She acts as personal physician to Lord Gunther of Cry-Star, and is reputed to be his mistress. This titbit of juicy gossip is deliberately overlooked due to Ajandi's immense influence within the Alliance. Unfortunately, her ambition has placed her at odds with the Drummers, a group she cannot easily besmirch or intimidate. This has been the catalyst for the recent court intrigue that has pitted Chapter against Chapter, House against House and family against family.

Ajandi is a domineering personality who is smart enough to allow her reputation to work for her. She controls the interests of the Chirurgeons with an iron hand, but knows exactly who to befriend in order to get the results she needs. Her general demeanour is somewhat caustic, and she is known to anger opponents with well-placed jabs and insults. At one time or another, her adversaries have all taken ill, fostering the rumour that Ajandi may also be capable of afflicting people with the same blights she can cure. Most are unwilling to test this theory out.

MOTTO

Power is a rare acquisition, so too should be those who hold it.

INFLUENCE

Chirurgeons operate within the upper echelons of society only, and do much to maintain their status by enforcing the rigid caste system. Their position is powerful enough to influence the powers within the Alliance of Kings, marking them as the premier target for all the up-and-coming Guilds. Unfortunately, they make exceedingly difficult targets because there is not one ruler, regent, lord or lady who does not owe a familial boon to them.

Currently, the Guild is strongest within Cry-Star, and does much to influence its courts. They are rivals in power with the Drummers, and have forced a schism within the city over old grievances. Aside from that, their prime enemies are any of the houses or manors trying to end the caste system. This is the source of their influence and power, and they will destroy anyone who proves to be too great a threat to their security.



THE GUILD OF DUSK

There are times when things happen for no apparent reason. A twinge of sharp pain somewhere in the body, an involuntary shudder, goose bumps, a movement within the shadows. I will not tell you why

this happens, but I will say that when it does, someone watching you smiles.

BACKGROUND

How does one cover a Guild that supposedly does not exist? The same way one reads script written in shadow, through supposition. The Guild of Dusk is said to be the first of the organized groups within the Gifted. While the varied factions fought for power and recruited Shards as a means of grabbing status, the Guild of Dusk was already hiring itself out to various noble families as assassins.



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It is believed that Lord Crityom formed the Guild. He was a Shard from Troupial Swan who also went by the name of Dusk. Blessed with the ability to become a shadow, Crityom was actually the third Shard known to have undergone the Epiphany. The master of the ailing Chapter Kliara, he disbanded his vassal houses and moved to the newly rebuilt city of Haak San Bazaa. From that point on, his finances soared, allowing him to become one of the chief financiers of the city. The first of the Dusk assassinations also began around this period, the victims bearing what would become the Guild trademark, a well-preserved dusk rose placed in their mouth.

How history treated the Guild from the point of their first recognized murder to the present is unknown. They were probably treated well however, as the dusk rose has been found in the mouths of numerous victims over the last few centuries. There are rumours which claim that the Guild of Dusk is actually two warring factions of assassins who have been eliminating each other's membership and supporters.

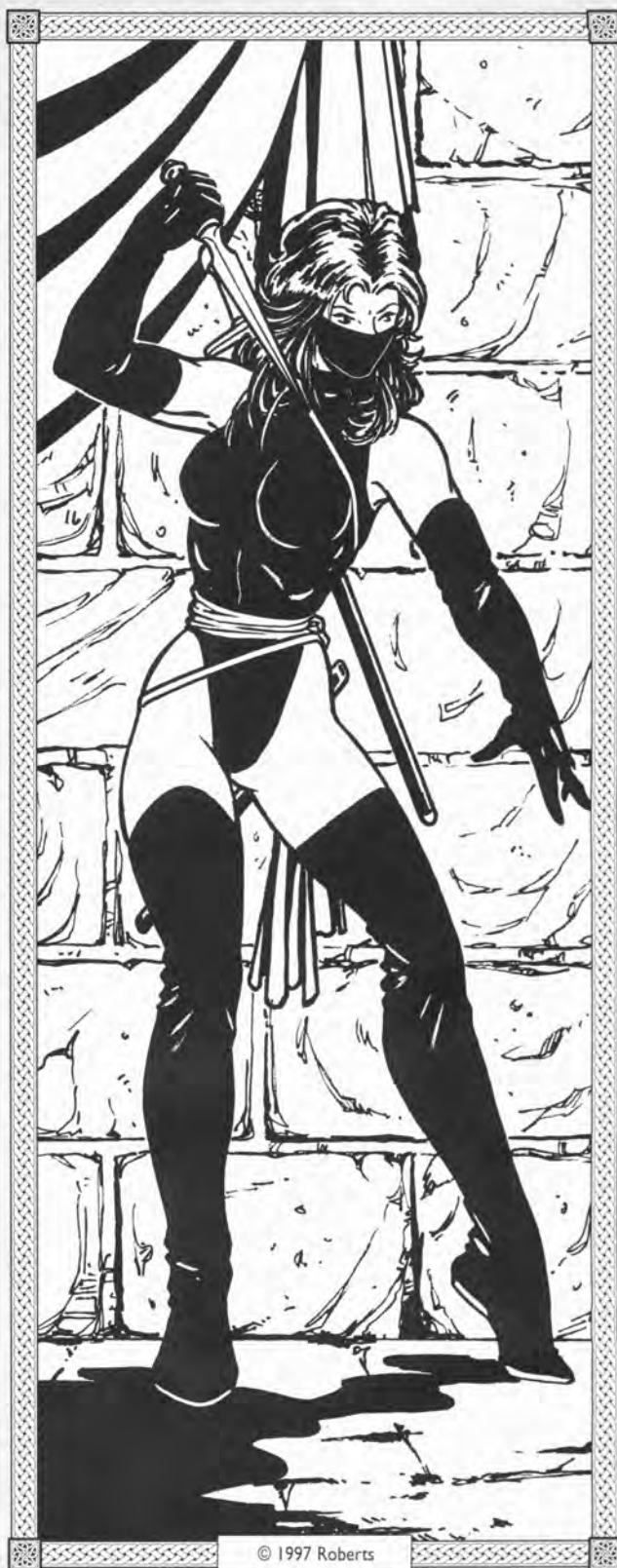
MEMBERSHIP

Again this is based on supposition and little fact, but what is known comes from the capture of an alleged Dusk member some twenty years ago. This is unusual since all of the assassins are believed to ingest a poison prior to the assignment. They must fulfil their contract before the toxin affects them or they won't be given an antidote. The individual captured, however, was believed to be immune to poisons because of his Shard ability to augment his own strength. Calling himself Echo-Fist, he revealed under torture that the Guild was actually a cover for priests worshipping Veckull, and that Lord Crityom was actually a Blight Crow who lost his powers when he became a Shard. Looking for alternate ways of power, he eventually sold his talents and freedom to the goddess Veckull. Before Echo-Fist died in his cell (a dusk rose was found in his mouth) he also claimed that Crityom was still alive and leading the Guild from a base within the shadows.

From what can be pieced together, it is obvious that the Guild of Dusk does operate from within the Gifted-caste. They apparently recruit mostly Shards, although at least one Blight Crow was seen operating on their behest. All their assassins are well-educated, smart and extremely observant. Dusk members have also displayed an unerring knack to enter and leave places undetected. This makes them highly dangerous opponents.

FUNCTION

The Guild of Dusk is used to stage assassinations, kidnappings, thefts and even torture. If one can establish a line of communication, or even pay for one of their highly expensive assassinations, one possesses a valuable asset indeed.



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GUILD MASTER

If the rumours are true and Crityom still holds power, he does so with an iron grip. Remembered in history as a harsh and brutal man, more people feared him than respected him. Because he was one of the chief financiers of Haak San Bazaa and he made donations to their coffers, the Alliance of Kings owed him heavily. Barely a handful of pictures remain bearing his visage, for his powers forever sealed him within a veil of shadow. Very few people could actually talk to Crityom face-to-face, for in his old age, many claimed they could only see a skull barely visible behind wisps of shadowy smoke.

MOTTO

This was recorded during the confession of Echo-Fist: *Dusk is but a darker shade of Dawn, and I am the kindest form of death you will get.*

INFLUENCE

At one time or another, however, nearly every Chapter, House and Manor has condemned the actions of this mysterious group. At the same time, many noble families have employed a Dusk assassin. The Guild is often the balance between different groups, a threat that most don't want to face.



THE GUILD OF DRUMMERS

The Drummers were a magnificent sight to behold during the Lost Wars. As the forces of Cry-Star rallied against the shadow beasts of the White Crow, twenty of the Guild's strongest men and

women crouched low to the ground just outside the city gates. They were built of solid muscle and rock-hard sinew, and when they began their cadence with light slaps upon the ground, it could be felt by those manning the walls. Slowly, the slaps became clenched fists and they continued to strike the ground in unison. The cadence could then be felt throughout the district. As the fervour of the battle increased, so did the strength of their pounding. It echoed across the city like musical thunder and shook the gates with deafening blows.



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PROVIDENCE



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When the White Crow and Green People finally came to the gate to fight the Drummers, the leader, Silas Sordimin, stood and said:

The cadence was the warning and we are its promise.

The battle then began in earnest.

BACKGROUND

While the various Guilds are strong within specific domains, the Drummers are, overall, the most powerful group of Shards currently in Providence. They are second to the Chirurgeons in wealth, first in influence (especially amongst the ranks of the military), better organized than the Alliance itself, and respected far more than the Cartographers were in their heyday.

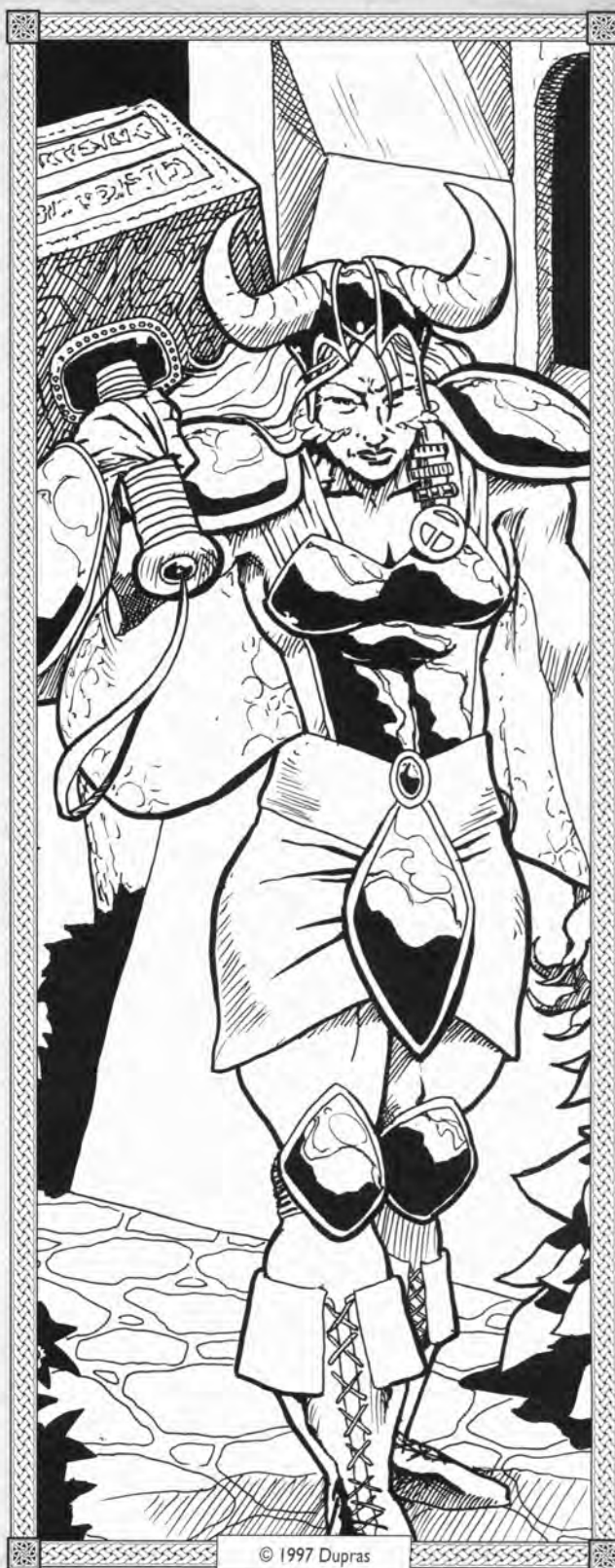
The Drummers were the first official Guild to receive sanction within Cry-Star, as well as being the first to open chapters within other cities. The group was formed with the full support of the Alliance of Kings as support for the military. Little expense was spared in recruiting and training its members. Of the Guilds, it is the only one which does not hire itself out to the public. The Drummers' charter allows exclusive contracts within the military alone, and they never will offer their services, not even to the noble houses unless ordered by the ruling regent to do so. While their sponsors are few, they do comprise the most powerful lords and ladies within the Alliance of Kings.

In truth, the Drummers are an order of Shard knights whose purpose it is to defend the city-states from all threats. This affords them a great deal of political leeway which is rivalled only by the liberties afforded to the Chirurgeons. Within the military, they answer to the local powers second, and to Regent Caiylus first.

Unlike many Shards, who still experience some prejudice because of their original caste, Drummers are practically treated with more respect than the nobility are. Like the Eagles, they follow an ethos which demands they act with nobility tempered with kindness at all times. Because of this attitude, the general public respects them. Their heroic actions have created many tales, and their stoic nature is legendary. It is unfortunate that the Drummers are not more politically involved in court matters. Of all the Guilds, they could settle many of the ongoing disputes.

MEMBERSHIP

Being physically strong is simply not enough of a prerequisite to enter the Drummers; strength of character is also required. The Guild is renowned as having one of the longest and most arduous training programs to select potential recruits. Spanning three months of assessment, and



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four years of serving as a vassal for an Alliance Chapter, it is hardly surprising that few can actually complete the process. Those who do are rewarded with the status of Drummer. In addition, they receive permanent employment, land along the shores of the Crysarius Sea and the right to establish a Manor similar to that of a Well-Born. Although this last right has raised the ire of more than one noblemen, few have raised an official complaint. Those who have actively petitioned to have this privilege revoked have found themselves swiftly bereft of allies.

Those Shards who wish to enter the Drummers must pass an initial interview with the regional Overseer, who in turn answers to the Guild Master herself. If candidates can convince the interviewer of their potential to be trained, they are sent to Shadon Allisi Keep outside of Cry-Star. For the next three months, the candidates are subjected to a rigorous physical regime to ascertain their potential strength. They are taught the chivalric code of the Drummers, and constantly tested through a battery of character-ascertaining tasks. At the end of the training program, if the candidates have proven their worth, they are assigned to a Guild Chapter within one of the Alliance cities. During this four year period, they are expected to serve their Guild without question, without hesitation and without fail. Although few can complete this arduous task, those who do find the benefits to be quite rewarding.

FUNCTION

Like the Archers, Drummers serve the Alliance of Kings as knights. They herald the first charge of any assault by pounding the ground like drums. A row of twenty to thirty Drummers doing this is frightening, for their thunder is not only heard, it is also felt. With the recent events, the Guild has been sending its members through training sessions to prepare them for the upcoming war. It is rare to see a Drummer these days who is not in battle regalia, ever-vigilant and ready to defend the city.

GUILD MASTER

Jeba Sunfierce, a glider from Troupial Hawk, is the current mistress of the Drummers. Having served the Guild for forty years, she follows a strong line of leaders who have all perpetuated the legacy of the Drummers. While Jeba is eager for the battle to come, she has not experienced full-siege warfare. While this is a disadvantage, she is competent enough to lead her forces against the Lost Tribes. She has studied the enemy for some time now, and possesses keen insight into their methodology. Unfortunately the Alliance of Kings has not taken some of her warnings seriously, due to her lack of war experience. This could prove to be a deadly mistake.

Just because the Alliance is not heeding Jeba's advice does not mean that she is not training the Drummers to contend with the enemy's tactics. She has already forged an alliance with the Archers, and is helping cross-train the two Guilds. Her tactics involve two-person-teams, with a Drummer to deflect attacks and an Archer to provide long-range support. Despite what some believe, her tactics are sound.

MOTTO

Never strive for nobility, allow it to come from your actions.

INFLUENCE

Most of the Drummers' influence is due to their military position, even though they hold the support of many noble houses. Unlike the Archers, who are considered the premier Guild of Cliff-Spider, they are forced to share favour in Cry-Star with the self-absorbed Chirurgeons. The two groups have come into conflict before, during the Lost Wars. The Drummers had demanded that the healers be assigned to the military sectors to help with the wounded. The Chirurgeons held enough political sway to stop the demand, and the two groups have been adversaries ever since. Were it not for this conflict, the Drummers would remain content to restrict their activities to the military.

Unfortunately with the healers attempting, out of sheer spite, to hamper their every step, the Drummers have had no other option but to involve themselves in political games. Luckily, they possess the support of several Dragons who know how to play these games well. Unfortunately, their conflicts are dividing the court into rival factions and doing more to hamper the Alliance than actually help it.



THE GUILD OF MESSENGERS

All those qualities lost by the Cartographers have been captured by this Guild; all the noble attributes once ascribed to them have been emulated by the Messengers. The rivalry between the two is deadly, the hatred

obvious. What else would one expect of a parent and its rebellious child?

BACKGROUND

The Messengers are the youngest of the Guilds, as well as the weakest in terms of influence. Their tenacity and honesty have kept them alive over the centuries. It is these two qualities that have recently brought them to the attention of the Alliance of Kings.

The Messengers were formed during the downward spiral of the Cartographers. They were a faction of explorers, like the Horizon Striders, who grew tired with the corruption that plagued their Guild. Determined to keep some of the ancient Cartographers' ideologies alive, the Messengers, known then as the Cliff-Skimmers, split from their parents and tried to become a guild of messengers. The Cartographers did not appreciate the betrayal, however, and did much to try and squash the floundering Guild. They may well have succeeded had Sun-Guard not taken them in as the official messengers for the city and all the outlying outposts of the Alliance. This position, however, was slight compared to the power still possessed by the Cartographers, and the Messengers kept their lessened status for the next few centuries.

As the Cartographers waned, the Messengers gained in strength. Although they never reached a point where they could directly challenge and absorb their rivals, they managed to become a growing thorn in their side. Recent circumstances, unfortunately, have thrown the Guild into turmoil. On the bad side, the loss of Sun-Guard to the Sunderlands has displaced the Messengers. House Skoraa, a Raven Chapter centred in Water-Sister, has offered to adopt the Guild, but it is taking time for all the members to regroup. In the meanwhile, the Cartographers have taken advantage of the position to gain new support without the interference of their rivals.

On the positive side, the Alliance of Kings does not trust the Cartographers, and has offered the Messengers a secret deal. In exchange for their services, the Alliance is willing to

permanently employ the Guild, in the same way they did with the Archers and Drummers. The Guild Master is currently considering the request.

MEMBERSHIP

Of all the Guilds, the Messengers are the most open in terms of the type of Shards they enlist. As long as they can move over great distances faster than the conventional means, they can be hired as Messengers. The means they use to do this are irrelevant.

The Guild tends to enlist people who are capable of surviving the wilderness. Their training program, although not as involved as the Drummers or Archers, is gruelling in its own right. Trainers take a group of potential applicants into the woods, and put them through a variety of exercises. This includes tracking, hunting, races through the jungle, and navigating the terrain with and without light. This tends to last for two weeks, and those accepted are usually individuals who excelled.

Because of the requirements of the Guild, Messengers tend to be rugged individuals who are more comfortable outdoors than within cities. Of all the Guilds they are least suited for the political games of the courts. While refreshing for the Drummers, who appreciate the Messengers' candour, this is the prime reason why they have not surpassed the Cartographers as explorers.

FUNCTION

Officially, the Messengers are messengers-for-hire. Unofficially, they are also explorers of the wilderness who adhere to the old creed of the Cartographers. Unfortunately, while they are trusted a great deal more than their parent guild, the Messengers are also experiencing a decline in business. This is due to the Alliance's unwillingness to explore the Deep following the Lost Wars.

Due to recent events, however, the Alliance of Kings has approached the Messengers with the opportunity for permanent sponsorship. Regent Caiylus fears that the Cartographers are actually sequestering information for their own benefit, and needs competent explorers to uncover the truth. If the Heralds accept this responsibility, it might entail following the Cartographers around.

GUILD MASTER

Guild Master Terracine Gulliver of Troupial Raven is currently leader of the Messengers by default. His predecessor, Guild Mistress Jolynne of Troupial Eagle, vanished in Sun-Guard during the last hours of the evacuation, when a crest of seawater washed over the city. While most believe her to be dead, the position is still held open until a suitable time passes. In the meanwhile, Terracine



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has been appointed to the position of Guild head. He has been literally overwhelmed by the responsibility of re-situating the Guild to Water-Sister, and trying to bring the disparate Messengers back together again. Although he has drawn some criticism for being too easily manipulated, he has done an admirable job of re-organizing the Guild.

Many are currently unaware of the Alliance's offer, but should Terracine accept the proposition, it may well propel the Messengers into an advantageous position. Unfortunately, Terracine may agree for the wrong reason. Principle amongst them is his hatred for the Cartographers due to a matter dating back to his father's death, another Messenger who was assassinated by the Guild of Dusk. Terracine suspects that the Cartographers in general, and Sirius Khoholl in particular, may have hired the assassin that was responsible for his father's assassination. Should he accept, he may well throw the courts into further pandemonium by bringing his political force to bear against the Cartographers instead of uniting the Guilds.

MOTTO

We will not stop until the horizon stops us.

INFLUENCE

It is a time of flux for the Messengers. They lost much of their power with the destruction of Sun-Guard, but have gained new allies with their arrival in Water-Sister. In addition, the Drummers are looking for allies, and are considering the Messengers. With the Archers, this could form a powerful coalition. If this happens, more Houses and Manors will support them merely on the recommendation of the Drummers. While their future seems uncertain, the Guild is in line to receive a great deal of influence should they accept the Alliance's offer to become another branch of the military.



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Before me looms what looks to be an ancient stone temple, built by forgotten hands. From within, I hear the sounds of a ritual dance. As I approach, the sounds of hundreds of voices and drums become clear, as though they were swallowed by the thick jungle air but a hundred spans back. Carved with faces of snakes and eagles, it stands as high as many of the towers in Cry-Star, and it is filled with light and commotion even at this late hour. As I approach the entrance, two figures move forward with spears to bar my path. "We do not know you, stranger. Name yourself."

"I am Danico," I tell them. "I have been exiled for a crime I did not commit, and I have come here seeking sanctuary, and a fountain to undo my wounds." I turn to show them my scars, and they have already seen the exile glyph I have put upon my forehead to replace the one I removed in Aerie.

They look at one another and exchange a silent conversation of looks. One turns back to me and says "Come with me." He turns his back and leads me inside.

The inside of the great structure is awash in firelight. At its centre is a black fountain that calls to me when I first spy it. I must stand in this fountain; I know it is so. At the head of the great structure, standing upon a dais is a tall figure with the beak of a bird and gleaming eagle eyes. As I enter, the music stops, and all look to me. "Who enters?" cries the figure on the dais.

I step forward. "I am Danico, and I seek the fountain."

There is a long pause as the figure eyes me. All about wonder at me, who has found this secret place, and behaves so calmly. The figure carefully looks me up and down. "Tell us, then...who are you?"

It takes me a moment to fabricate a proper tale, but once I have had the barest instant to ponder I am able to begin. "I am Danico, the son of a great warrior, born with only vestigial wings. My father was never proud of me, and sent me to labour beneath his cousins who owned a business in Cry-Star"

The great figure on the altar raises a hand, and I am silent. "There are no pasts in this place, even pasts that are false." He...it?...pauses at that to allow me to register that it knows I am lying. "This is a place of new beginnings, where we become of a new flesh. All here," and it waves its hand to encompass the now hundred figures in the hall, "All accept that they are of this clan, and this faith now, though once they were not. Who are you?"

I am quite certain that there are many answers to satisfy this foolishness. There are myriad answers to settle this inquisition, but for no reason I can explain, I determine I will walk the honest path. I take two steps forward. "I wield Hate in one hand, and dark magics in the other. I am cast down by those who live in the skies, for I have bound myself to the ways of the black lands. I cast my lot with the soil and the shadow, with the root and the worm. I was once wind weaver, and now I am land walker. I come to be made whole so that I might tear down. I come to find kindling to feed the flames of war."

There is silence - as great a silence as the roaring fire in the hall's heart will allow - and all about stare at me. They look to see what the master on the dais will say to this brazen exile who dares to call for war against the mighty masters of the aeries.

The figure before me does not balk or blink. After a long while it speaks. "The waters care not of death or of doom. The waters will repair that which has been wrongfully broken, and shatter that which is unworthy. Whether your cause is just or wrong is not of our concern, only that you be true. Step into the waters if you dare, but beware...if you come before us with false heart, you shall not live."

I am a blackguard, a rogue and a murderer, but my heart has never been false. Without pause, I step into the water.



PROVIDENCE WIRD WAYS

THE WIRD

In the world of Providence, magic is known under the appellation of the "Wird Ways," the Wird, or simply Wird. Wird seems to be a synthesis of the life force of everything within the world, woven together into a malleable tapestry that moves and flows with every breath and every action. The act of living enforces the Wird Ways, empowering and strengthening its presence. Those who practice the arts of Wird are merely creating ripples at the surface of an ocean. Nobody has developed enough of an understanding to bury themselves within this magic.

By the same token, mortals cannot elicit effects that are truly detrimental to the tapestry. Eventually nature sets herself right regardless of the damaging circumstances. These points of readjustment are called Retributions, and can generally be felt across the jungle basin of Providence. It is because of these adverse effects that some practitioners of Wird are taught their art within very strict parameters. Only one Distinction is outlawed entirely because it is highly dangerous.

DISTINCTIONS

Wird is such an infinite commodity that the practitioners of the art are extremely varied in their approach to its powers. Many effects are created by the Wird user to reflect his particular brand of magic. Despite the specific manner in which Wird is practiced however, the classes (or Distinctions as they are referred to hereafter) are based on general archetypes. There is the potential for specialization in one particular brand of Distinction, but it is not necessary.

BLIGHT CROWS

DESCRIPTION

Blight Crows are individuals who have the power to work with the tapestry of the Wird, but choose to weaken it. They pull on frayed strands, accentuate tears or even make portions of the tapestry brittle and stagnant. Their form of Wird is deadly to themselves and to others. Eventually they



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sever all the strands of the tapestry that link them to the world, and degenerate into something far from natural.

Outlawed and feared, Blight Crows are driven by greed or the desire for power. Their results have a destabilizing effect on the Wird or on the harmony of adjacent communities. If Wird could be distilled down into the analogy of the fruit tree, then Blight Crows would chop the tree down just to get at one fruit. There is no concept of planning or any hint of methodology, only gratification in the here-and-now.

STYLE

The Blight Crow's style of Wird is of the darkest nature. In order to procure the results they need, the fabric has to be manipulated to yield copious amounts of power. Initially, the caster acquires energy by draining small measures of life from plants and animals in order to recharge his Wird reservoir. The Blight Crow can cause greenery to atrophy and die, and small animals to weaken as their energy is sapped. As vile as this act is, eventually more potent means are required to procure Wird in order to fill a Blight Crow's rapidly expanding base of power.

The most efficient way to send shock waves through the tapestry and release stores of Wird is through ritualized murder. By performing sacrifices, a Blight Crow can push his power potential beyond previous limits. This comes with a dark price. The tapestry, begins excising the Blight Crow out of the tapestry like a malignant tumour. Separated by that which sustains everything, a Blight Crow is forced to rely on his power and upon the life-force of others in order to survive. He becomes something less than human in appearance, but more than mortal in power.

DOGMA

"Power is there for the taking. If it was not meant to be used, it would not be so easily attainable. If, however, nature is a fool and knows not the potential of this magnificent power, then it should not even rest within nature's care. It should be given to those who would use it. In either case, power is there for the taking."

WIRD WEAVERS

Some practitioners of Wird work with the tapestry, using the inherent folds and curves of the fabric to elicit the results they need. Known as the Wird Weavers, their effects are harmonious and less likely to cause harm to the environment. They understand that the energy they use is part of a greater whole, and something that is to be shared with others.



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Wird Weavers are the spiritualists of the practice of Wird. They approach whatever action they take in a balanced manner, knowing that nature relies on harmonious interaction between all facets. While there is death within nature, it is a part of the natural cycle. Therefore, the Wird Weaver is less likely to take a life. Self-defense is one thing, but outright maliciousness is another.

Those that practice this art have a connection with nature, and usually try to coax "natural" effects from her. This Distinction is a difficult path to follow since power is not immediately evident. Wird Weavers eventually become so in tune with the surrounding wildlife, that the very trees and animals (even humans in the case of healers) become an extension of their senses.

STYLE

Drawing upon the pure Wird that surrounds them, Wird Weavers petition the elements to lend them power. They take what they need; no more, no less. For the Wird Weaver, the act of spell casting is considered to be proper tribute to nature, for it is not expending Wird, but returning it in natural form.

DOGMA

Wird Weavers fall into the following specializations. These dictate the style of Wird they cast and their philosophies.

General (Specializing in spells across the board)

"Life, all life, is interlinked and part of a shared whole. To isolate its facets is to weaken the sum. An animal has as much right to life as a human, and so does a plant."

Generalists take the most balanced approach to their craft and try to delve into all the various aspects of nature. While they do not regard specialization as dangerous, they feel that it could become so.

Healer (Specializing in healing the sentient)

"All life is precious, yes, we concur. Special exception and care, however, must be taken for those things with intelligence, for with thought comes the realization of pain."

Unlike the majority of Wird Weavers, Healers are more community-oriented and less reclusive. They specialize in the healing arts and can be found in the cities.

Naturalist (Specializing in nature: herbalists & botanists)

"We are guests on this world, not inhabitants. It is therefore wrong to believe that nature will care for us if we do not, in turn, contribute to her well being."

Naturalists see themselves as guests in somebody else's home, and act accordingly. Living predominantly within the jungle, they use their power to heal what has been damaged.

Stormer (Specializing in elemental aspects found in nature)

"While life is significant, life does not exist without passion and emotion. It is the echo of the storm, the rage of the wind, and the sensual caress of the river. It fuels life and gives it significance."

Life is important, but passion is what drives life to its heights. Nature articulates her passion in the form of elemental facades: the storm, the volcanic eruptions and the flood waters. Stormers believe that life cannot be fulfilled without appreciating the emotional interplay of nature. They focus on eliciting, summoning and augmenting natural effects of elemental expression.

WIRD DANCER

DESCRIPTION

Wird Dancers are practitioners of Wird who manipulate the tapestry of life in order to power themselves. A select few believe that the very act of moving creates harmonious ripples in the universe, eliciting certain effects based on the emotional content of the movement. These people are called Wird Dancers.

Wird Dancers follow much of the same philosophies as Wird Weavers, with one major philosophical difference. While Wird Weavers try to work with nature, altering it slightly to make sure that there is a balance, Wird Dancers try to alter themselves to fit into the environment. Their belief is that this is less damaging to the environment. Besides, adapting to the world is one of the things Yas'Wailians do best.

As a result of their beliefs, Wird Dancer's magic isn't as spectacular as the other classes. On the other hand, this class of physical adepts can be the most dangerous of all Wird classes in combat. A Wird Dancer who has prepared spells can be tougher, stronger and faster than virtually anybody else.

STYLE

Like a free-form kata, the Wird Dancer begins moving according to what he senses around him. This solicits Wird from the tapestry surrounding the dancer and forms the basis of his "spell". The practitioners of this art refer to their spells as Dances, and are quite adamant about the difference. As one moves, patterns and lines of energy within and upon the body of the dancer appear as the 'dance' manifests. It is from these designs that the Wird Dancers take their name. As the kata continues, the practitioner is capable of causing various effects, including physical augmentations.

DOGMA

"Movement is akin to massaging the fabric of reality. Sometimes, simply brushing your hand over an area, be it empty space or even stone, uncovers hidden pockets of delightful Wird. Think of it as smoothing out the water droplets from wet clothing."

WYLDERS

A majority of those who practice the art of the Wird Ways do not believe that their powers are derived from something that is alive and sentient. A Wylder's form of Wird entails taking the fabric and causing a deliberate ripple, fold or crease, and harnessing the end result of this manipulation. Now this version of spell crafting is not done maliciously. Even though it often works against the grain of the fabric, it never strains the tapestry beyond its limits. Wylders do not possess the power to do so.

The Wylder practices one of the most visible and damaging arts. Balls of electricity, flame-trailed flight, missiles of light and scouring winds of dust are just a minor part of a Wylder's repertoire of spells. While being the most diverse in power, Wylders lack the intuitive understanding it takes to work with the world rather than against it.

STYLE

The world around a Wylder is alight with power and energy. The Wylder does not perceive the delicate balance, even though he may understand what it entails. Neither does he see the tapestry as a manifestation of life, which he probably respects. Energy is energy as far as he can see, and any means short of murder, torture or pain is a viable means of procuring it. Despite how this may sound, a Wylder is not a malicious person. There is merely a difference in the way he pursues his life and his art.

A Wylder is sensitive enough to sense the elemental content of the different energies around him. He forms his spells by tapping into this and taking the aspect he needs. There is no real ritual to the process, no sense of gratitude or desire to replace what has been taken. It is akin to taking a drink from a bubbling spring. This attitude is reflected in the way a Wylder learns his spells, for it is a cold analytical process with little in the way of *creation or imagination*. As far as the Wylder is concerned, it is all formula.

DOGMA

"Can't you see it? I can. It practically burns my tongue and sings my nostrils with its power. It's like touching raw flame, only without the pain. You can't expect energy like that to remain there for long, to stay stagnant?"



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DYNAMICS OF WIRD

What does Wird look like to the mundane mind? Nothing. The general populace does not possess the training to hone their senses to such a degree. For those properly raised in the art of Wird however, the tapestry manifests itself in an infinite amount of ways. The style that people practice also influences the manner in which they perceive the world, for with infinite perceptions come infinite truths.

HOW DIFFERENT DISTINCTIONS VIEW WIRD

BLIGHT CROW

Energy abounds and entices the senses. It teases and tantalizes like a million rich flavours, begging to be taken. It hangs from trees like jewels, lights the night with crystal stars of flawless purity and hangs off the living like rich cloaks of silk. It is there for the taking, for nobody truly sees it and therefore, do not deserve to share in its glory. Wird is the cave of riches open to thieves. Wird is the grand seductress.

WIRD WEAVER

The sky is on fire with life; the plants of the jungle sing to one another; animals share a visible link that manifests across the five senses like some primordial umbilical cord. The world shifts in its sleep and the souls of a billion different lives lights up the heavens like no star could ever do. Wird is life; the Weavers sense this and for this reason they will never take more than is needed, and never enough to harm. The world of the Wird Weaver is alight with the life glow of the world, a universal pulse of being that supersedes the physical and immediate.

WIRD DANCER

Existence is set to ever-shifting patterns. Lines of energy flow like ripples across a fluid world, revealing paths of strong and weak resistance. People find themselves in harm's way when they move against the tapestry; fortune rewards others who follow the shift of the path. The Wird Dancers, whether they adhere to the notion that nature moves to a rhythm of repeating cycles, or that it is completely random in its dance, believe in flowing with the now. It is better than trying to predict the path of existence and missing the pertinent events.

WYLDER

Wird is nothing more than the balance of the four basic elements playing off one another. Fire, earth, water and air paint the universe with their blend of colours, revealing potent reservoirs of elemental energy. The more pure a single element is, the more energy it exudes for consumption. It is wrong to drain that commodity of its power, but it is also a mistake to treat it as a "life force," for it most certainly is not.

THE ELEMENTAL FACETS OF WIRD

All expressions of Wird can be broken down into elemental facets: earth, wind, fire and water. Each ingredient is important, for it not only strikes a harmonious balance, it prevents the other elements from becoming destructive in their pure form. The living are in perfect synchronicity, for they represent an equal portion of each element. Earth supplies the body with its form. Air fills said form with breath. Water becomes its lifeblood. Fire creates the living spark.

The effect of any spell is to cause these four elements to interact with each other. It is like a recipe. Alone, the ingredients are unremarkable, but begin adding them together, and the recipe takes a variety of forms and flavours.

In the practice of Wird, most spells or powers can be altered by any element the caster wishes. All the elements have their advantages and disadvantages. This is why practitioners improve the efficiency of their spells and powers through the mastery of the different elements.

FIRE

Fire is the most dynamic of the elements; it is quick, unpredictable and unrestrained. Practitioners specialized in the use of fire can enhance the size of the area affected by their spell. It is favoured amongst Wylders.

AIR

Air's strength lies in that it is rarely hindered by obstacles; it is exceedingly pervasive and it is the quickest of the elements. Spells using air have a longer range. This element is used equally by all the Distinctions save for the Wird Dancers who have little use for it.

WATER

Water combines the strengths of various elements; it is malleable enough to slip past most obstacles, it is subtle in manifestation and quiet. Spells using this element tend to be more accurate or have better control in delivery. For obvious reasons, it is favoured by Wird Weavers and Wird Dancers mostly.

EARTH

While it is slow, earth is the strongest and most resilient of the elements; it adds the benefit of an extended duration to most spells. Earth is one of the favoured elements of Wird Dancers.

RETRIBUTION'S HAND

Retribution is a very real and frightening danger to both practitioners of Wird and the general populace. A Retribution is a point where the fabric of reality literally resets itself after too much manipulation. This effect is in the control of the Game Master. It should be used sparingly since it requires a great deal of build-up before a Retribution actually occurs.

Blight Crows are most responsible for causing Retributions, followed by Wylders, Wird Dancers and finally Wird Weavers. This knot of Wird is a potent store of energy, but any idiot who tries to tap this cyst is a dead one. It cannot be drained without the entire reservoir immediately venting through the point of release.

When the time comes for the knot to burst, it unleashes a blast of pure fury that affects the immediate surroundings and manifests as one of the four elemental signatures. The severity of the expulsion depends on the severity of the knot and the predominant element of the Retribution.

YAS'WAILIAN PANTHEON

RELIGION AND DUST

Imagine the sight visited upon the rebels who had just lost everything, save their name. The blood of thousands soaked the plains with a red sheen; bodies suffocated the grass and littered the air with a deadly stench. Amongst the dying lay the so-called gods, their bones shattered by Wird and weapon, their faces stretched in agony. The gods of Yas'Wail suffered and died like common soldiers, and religion died alongside them.

Although it was proven that the gods were nothing more than potent practitioners of Wird, religion somehow persevered and survived. There are a limited number of faithful who still, to this day, follow the old ways. The majority of the population in Providence no longer adhere to an active ethos, even though they are still affected by the beliefs of the past. Fragments of a once rich and vibrant religious culture still survive the passage of centuries. Religious tenets and dogmas have been integrated into



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social codes of conduct. Ancient prayers are used to ward away evil spirits. Old curses and axioms are still uttered in casual conversation. Yet, were anyone to mention religion or its practice, people would scoff at the notion and say "the gods died two millennia ago my friend, and they died choking in the dust."

There is an interesting phenomenon that is currently sweeping Providence. It is the emergence of new cult-oriented religions. A number of practitioners of Wird have reached new levels of power not seen before in the world of Providence. These potent manipulators of Wird have begun setting themselves up as "Providers" for the people, but the word "god" has surfaced amongst some of their more zealous acolytes. A few of these Providers have been acting more and more like they think they deserve the name. Nobody yet has had the courage yet to openly claim godhood.

FRAGMENTS OF THE PAST

Groups such as the D'Shau Monks and Slaywinds have done a great deal of work to preserve the memory of their religion. Unfortunately, several centuries of incarceration has a way of whittling the information down to a shadow of its former glory. With no wide-scale following of the old ways, little is kept to sustain the doctrines of the past save in folklore or ritual.

What has survived the passage of time are the dogmas that empower the priesthood to continue daily services and other acts of charitable work. The D'Shau Monks and Slaywind Priests have now assumed the responsibility of tending to the obligations of the entire Yas'Wailian pantheon in the absence of the other orders.

The central core of Yas'Wailian belief can be surmised in the Three Laws, a set of rules said to have been carved into the very earth of Yas'Wail by the Mother-Goddess Mapalazi. As various flocks of birds soared in the sky, they saw these laws and were forever transformed, gifted with the capacity to judge. It is this holy boon that separates people from beasts.

The Three Laws of Yas'Wail are:

- 1) Honour Thy Gods
- 2) Honour Thy Troupial
- 3) Honour Thyself

If the doctrines seem vague, they were meant to be. The Yas'Wailians believed that the laws were left open-ended intentionally in order for people to ponder what the words mean to the individual. Universal application of the Three Laws was never considered necessary in the practice of religion. Dogma and practice, however, are two separate



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matters. The ruling nobility of Yas'Wail interpreted these commandments as a need to instill a rigid caste system in order to properly carry out these tenets.

Interpretation of the Three Laws, in essence, was the catalyst for the great revolt that brought many people to Providence. The caste system put in place by the priest-kings of Yas'Wail seemed to contradict the very nature of the laws, and therefore did nothing to either honour the gods or anybody else. It is for this reason the orders of the Slaywinds and the D'Shau Monks did not support the Alliance's caste system. They remember the message from nearly two millennia ago.

Currently, the laws are practiced more as rules of conduct rather than for the religious significance that they once had. Honour has become respect and god has become ruler. A number of cult religions have reinstated the Three Laws as well, but under different wording.



THE RELIGIONS OF PROVIDENCE

THE OLD WAY: THE YAS'WAILIAN PANTHEON

In traditional Yas'Wailian belief, women held positions of power. Their role as child-bearers gave them titles of life-givers, healers and

law-makers. They also took on the role of berserker-knight and defenders. As time passed and perceptions changed, the gods, regardless of gender, became hermaphroditic, changing sex based on the need of the moment. The only two deities who remained untouched in this capacity were Mapalazi, the Great Mother, and Tanvir, the Father to everything. Their genders remained unchanged because of a need to have a mother and father figure.



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DEITIES

The following deities are still remembered despite the two millennia gap that separates active belief from mythology. Some of the stories attached to these gods have survived in modern folklore, with the deities having been transformed into mortal protagonists. Most people recognize the stories however.

MAPALAZI

If everything can be broken down into the four basic elements, then Mapalazi is represented by all four elements. She is the earthen eternity, the lifeblood of the water, the grin of fire and the laughter in the air. All creation unfolds within her womb and breathes the air she inhales; the sun is the fire of her heart and the earth is that portion of the universe she devoured to give people a place to rest their wings. Within Mapalazi all things are possible.

The worship of Mapalazi is still carried out, in part, by the Wird Weavers. They may not believe in her as a solid entity, but they do celebrate her with their ideals and defend her when they protect the land. Some Weavers even refer to nature as Mapalazi, the great mother. Of all the deities, she is perhaps the most loved. Her presence survives in stories and tales as the kindly old woman or the fierce protectress.

TANVIR

Mapalazi may have created life, but she could not have done it without the seed of Tanvir, God of the Greater Sun, the Listening Wind and Father to Everything. While he may be considered equal to Mapalazi in terms of importance and power, it is not evident by the amount of ribald tales that surround him. Tanvir is regarded as a lascivious being and a prankster. As a matter of fact, his humour is said to be as large as his sexual appetite, and jokes are a form of worship or respect of him.

According to one humorous tale, once, when Mapalazi was angry with Tanvir, she withheld her favours from him until he nearly went mad with frustration. He began having sex with whatever lay within his reach. Eventually, Mapalazi reeled him back in, but the damage was already done, Tanvir had impregnated everything. This is how he got the title of Father of Everything and why there are so many plants, animals and people in the world. Even to this day, when a domesticated animal can be heard bleating, many people will yell out "Oh, not again Great Father."

TOCIANNA

The first of Mapalazi and Tanvir's children, she is the Ruler of the Oceans and to all those who call it home. Now the D'Shau Monks claim that it is her presence that surges past the Sunderlands to flood the Deep. She is angry at how the ancient ways have been forgotten.



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DEBLOSS

He is the second offspring and is called the God of the Sky and Air. His domain is over what makes the sky their home. Many of the Slaywinds dedicate their arrows to him, not for judgment, but to carry their shots further.

SHAIR

Shair, the third child of the Parent Gods, is one of the few deities still regarded with some fondness by the general populace. Her worship, as a matter of fact, is now practiced by several cult religions who have adopted her as their patron deity. Shair is the Goddess of Dreams and Sleep, a title she received when she sacrificed her life so that her mother would not destroy the world. Shair was eventually resurrected by her grieving mother, and her actions are celebrated by mortals in their dreams.

OTONE

The fourth child of Mapalazi and Tanvir, Otone metes out the seasons of the world and ensures that all is balanced. He is regarded as a fertility figure, emulating the continual life-death-rebirth cycle of nature. He is also known as the God of Storms, and someone likely to respond out of anger.

VECKULL

Nobody is sure where this goddess originated from or how her worship survived. She is called "The Shadow Between the Stars," and represents enigma. Every eye that glows within the jungle dim is hers. Any unexplained noise is her song. Any mysterious phenomena is her machination. The strangest part of Veckull's identity is that she was never an original member of the Yas'Wailian pantheon. Her worship was adopted by several Blight Crows after the exile. This is considered to be the first actual cult of Providence.

THE FORGOTTEN

One of the greatest regrets the D'Shau and Slaywinds have are the number of gods and goddesses who have been forgotten. They feel it is an indication of their negligence in not fulfilling their duties properly. While the following list contains many deities, the monks and priests are reticent to admit that all that remains of their worship is their name, and a small hint of their function.

BOHASH Lupine Master. God of Wolves and Vengeance.

SHRIILYN Goddess of Birds and all Avian life. Keen Eyed One, the Watcher.



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- THORALE:** Wild God, God of the Berserkers and destruction. God of Chaos.
- BANTI:** Goddess of Wird and Spells. Spell Weaver and Goddess to the Distinctions.
- CRYSNIAN** Goddess of Winter. The Harsh Mistress and tester of the unfaithful.
- ESNLIT** The Protector of the Old and Young. God of Children and the Aged.
- HATH** Goddess of Knowledge and the Unbreakable Word. Giver of Law and Goddess of Impartiality.
- GELDONNE** The Justifier. The Goddess of the Keepers of Law. Shadow of Hath.
- JULLIDEK** The God of Thieves, the Swift One. God of Speed. The Nimble Shadow.
- ENTHIR** Goddess of Fools and Fortunes. The Goddess of Whims and Luck. The Goddess of Merriment.
- PAMIRON** The Goddess of Music. The Celestial Bard, Weaver of History. Goddess of Joy and Sorrow.
- INAILLE** The God of Healing. The All Forgiving, the Blind Caretaker, the All-Seeing Giver.
- PAXAKI** The Lady of Fear. Goddess of Night Terrors, the Dark One. Breather of Shadow.

THE NEW WAYS THE CULTS OF PROVIDENCE

The impetus of belief is strong, for it compels people to greater actions and loftier goals. It is for this reason that cults have flourished in the vacuum of organized religion. In one way or another, people need to believe in something outside of themselves. This is especially true these days, when the Sunderlands threatens to inundate the world and the Lost Tribes seek to destroy the Yas'Wailians.

What cults offer is a network of support that extends beyond Troupials and Chapters. They are self-reliant communities in a world that is increasingly caught



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up in its own problems. Some of the cults offer even more, with sponsors ensuring the health of all citizens, favourable crop growth and protection from the violent elements. What people offer in return varies according to the cult and its demands. Anything from a shared workload, donations of land or wealth, or simply total subservience to the will of the sponsor can be asked of cult members.

The following people are some of the better known practitioners of Wird who have collected a cadre of adherents. Outside their cults, they are regarded with some admiration and caution for the power they wield, but within the cults, they approach near-deification in the eyes of their subjects.

Here are two of the main cults currently gaining power in Providence.

PAALLAU'S CULT

Better known as the Goddess of Death, Mercy and Kindness, or simply as the Noble Death, Paallau's cult is open to those people who wish to die peacefully. Her communities can be found on the periphery of most city-states affiliated with the Alliance of Kings, and are open to all caste members. Those that come to Paallau are close to death due to age or sickness, and wish to die peacefully in a place that is surrounded by family. There is a cost for this service of course, at least half of their current possessions.

RUMOURS

Paallau's cult has caused a great many rumours over the last few years. It is said that Paallau will never heal anyone to full recovery, claiming that death has been aroused and should not be robbed of its bounty. For a higher price, however, Paallau priests can keep people alive for one year. After that year, clients are given a poison that kills the victim quietly, in their sleep. Those who try to escape their fate or the community are killed painlessly or hunted down by the assassin sect of Paallau's priesthood.

FENRAD'S CULT

Known as the Star of Retribution, the Sky Bolt, and Deafening Thunder, Fenrad's Cult is populated by those warriors ready to reclaim the heritage of their exiled ancestors. Fenrad himself, a potent Eagle Shard in the Alliance of Kings, is not regarded by all as a god, but as Providence's strongest warrior (according to the beliefs of his followers),

and the one who will eventually rule all of Yas'Wail with a just, but strong hand.

His cult is strongest within Green-Bow, Sea-Wind and Clearwater, three towns he rules within the Tyon Expanse. They are open to anyone who can fly (or glide). He is at odds with several Free-Tribes run by Fallen within the region.

RUMOURS

It is already known that Fenrad's cult has spread to an elite guard unit in Cry-Star known as the Ha'jata. There are those who claim, however, that Fenrad's cult has spread to the other palace guard units serving various rulers within the Alliance of Kings, and that Fenrad need only give the word to have them assassinated.

devastating. When it was realized that the ancient deities of Yas'Wail were nothing more than potent mortals, mythology fell with a thunderous crash.

The old religion is now remembered with feeble memory, and kept alive by two groups who still believe in the divinity of the ancient gods. Although the beliefs of Yas'Wail are ridiculed to one degree or another, there are still factions of believers who await the day they can retake their ancient world, not for the memory of their ancestors, but for the glory of the deities. To them Providence is but a test of resolve and faith.

THE OLD WAYS

When the gods of Yas'Wail first entered the war, it was an act of divine intervention. It was no longer a war of philosophy, but a holy battle sanctioned by greater powers. The gods' fall from grace was therefore all the more

THE ORDER OF D'SHAU MONKS

One of two orders to survive centuries of passage, the D'Shau Monks are well regarded; not for their beliefs, but because they are the last masters of Harbinger Stones. When the outcome of the Great Revolution was no longer in question, and the last "god" stood wounded upon the battlefield, the monks stood by his side, ready to take the



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deathblow meant for their deity. The masters of the order fell that day, their crystal armour shattered, and their secrets dead upon their cold lips.

One master, an Orchard-Tender and several of his acolytes were among the prisoners exiled into Providence. They carried a hidden God's Tear with them, a crystal seed spell cast to lay dormant until it was planted. When they arrived to Providence, the master escaped with his students into the jungle and his ancestors did not resurface until the liberation of the Cry-Star colony. With them returned the knowledge of caring for the crystals. It was they who rearmed and trained their brethren and sisters to fight during the War of the Houses.

Although the D'Shau Monks are only respected as masters of the Harbinger Stones, they are still a religious order. With the deluge of the Sunderlands, the volcanic activity of Sky-Torrent Bridge and the potential war, the D'Shau find themselves gaining more and more adherents. People have returned back to religion, hoping it will offer them the answers they need in the dark times to come.

THE ORDER OF SLAYWINDS

Also known as Paladin-Archers, the Slaywinds were one of many fighting orders attached to the gods. Along with such groups as Holy-Berserkers and Storm-Chargers, it was their duty to fight for their religion and bring honour to their order. Aside from the D'Shau Monks, they were the only other group to emerge from the Sly'ain battlefield with their beliefs intact.

During the subsequent centuries of internment, the Slaywinds were responsible for countless acts of sabotage against the Wardens. During this time, they did the best they could in educating their children in the old ways. Unfortunately, they had always been warriors, not priests, so a good deal of knowledge was lost.

Ever since that time, the Slaywinds swore that they would never allow themselves to forget anything. This mentality has shaped the current order. The loss of knowledge upsets them because they cannot be the warriors their ancestors were. They may not be comfortable taking the mantle of priests and advisors to the growing number of adherents joining their communities. However, they will not allow their own ignorance to prevent others from benefiting from the lessons they remember.

THE ORDER OF STORM-CHARGERS

The Order of Storm-Chargers was filled with Wylders who followed the teachings of Banti, Goddess of Wird. They were mystical adepts who could turn their bodies into elemental animals, and fight in this manner. When the rebellion came to an end, it was believed that their order committed ritual suicide after their goddess was killed before their eyes. None were thought to live on Providence, until now.

Adashka Minorra, one of the original 11 Horizon Striders and a Ghost Walker, recently appeared at True-Door, the Slaywind settlement. Her eyes glowing, her form regal with power and age, Minorra approached Hy Sterapath, the leader of the community. She presented him with a tattered shirt bearing the Storm-Charger insignia. Her only words were: "Your ancient allies await you, but the time is not right just yet. Be patient."

With those words, she returned to the darkness of the jungle. Hy and several others dared not follow, but they all saw a wolf made of stone join her seconds before she vanished. The Slaywinds have kept this a secret amongst themselves, revealing it only to their brothers and sisters within the D'Shau Monks. While they are trying to understand the significance of it all, one theory is that perhaps not all the Storm-Chargers died on Yas'Wail. They may have remained hidden among the exiles, and escaped after arriving on Providence. The jungle is large enough that the order could conceivably have survived within a Free-Tribe, and only been found recently by the Horizon Striders. The need for such secrecy is confusing, but it is being respected.



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I have faced death; I have forged the greatest blade known to this age; I have had my own wing pulled from my back; I have faced terrors that would reduce great men to quivering ruins, but I have never faced such pain as the mending waters.

The cool, black waters tingle as my feet first enter them. I take a second step and find that they are steep and drop off. I plunge fully into them, and I am blinded by their murky depths. I can feel their magics at work, my skin being taken away and replaced, regrowing in a moment. My bones restructure, aching as they are forced and bent. I try to scream, but the water fills my throat. After what seems like an eternity, a hand grabs me and pulls me from the water.

As I crouch on the stone, coughing and spluttering, the figure on the dais calls out, "Rise, Jenobay of Cry-Star, who would be called Danico. You have passed the test of the waters, and come forth remade." I am at a loss to understand these words for a moment, and then they are clear. They know me, and know my crimes, but my heart is true. I reach to touch my back, where the bones of severed wings should protrude; I have smooth skin.

Rising, I look about me, where perhaps two hundred fallen Eagles stare at me. They await my next move, as though I might begin to howl, scratch, and bite. At the dais in this place's head, the great eagle-headed figure stares with cold, dark eyes. It too waits to hear what I might say.

"I have killed," I say, unsure why. "Who among you has not? I have done what I was told I should not. Who among you has not? I have been destroyed and spit upon. Who among you has not? I have dared to survive, and I know there is not one among you who has not." They nod silently, for they know it is what distinguishes us.

"We are told the bravest warrior dies in a hopeless battle, rather than face shame!" I now find that I am shouting, though I do not know why. I walk toward the dais as I cry, "We are told that to be an Eagle is to value honour over life! But we know that it is not true, for we have crawled in the dirt. We have eaten grubs and maggots to survive in the shadowed lands, and we know that the taste is sweet - for we have dared to live when all others have told us to die!"

Those about begin to cheer and raise up weapons that I did not know they had. Their cries rise up and echo throughout the chamber, and somewhere drums begin to pound with the unceasing beat of violence. The Eagle on the altar rears back its head and releases a mighty cry, and its back is suddenly awash with flame - flame forming into mighty wings. I have made my pact with the White Crow and the Green Peoples, and now I have my army. We shall return to Aerie, where I shall take up Hate, and our war will begin.

To the people who were once my people, I have practiced foul ways and committed evil deeds. To them, I am a wicked creature, worthy of hatred and death. But I have done nothing worse than they, for they cast out their own kin for lack of wings. They do evil in the name of Purity. I have done evil in the name of Jenobay. They call me fallen: fallen from grace, Fallen for I have no wings. But now that I stand with a people of war, armed and prepared to topple those who would call me wicked, I know that I have only just begun to soar.





THE HAR'ADI: THE BANE- BEASTS OF PROVIDENCE

Like any world, Providence is filled with her monsters. Be they supernatural or natural in origin, the Har'adi is a classification for anything that can kill an individual. Sentience is not a factor, and neither is intent.

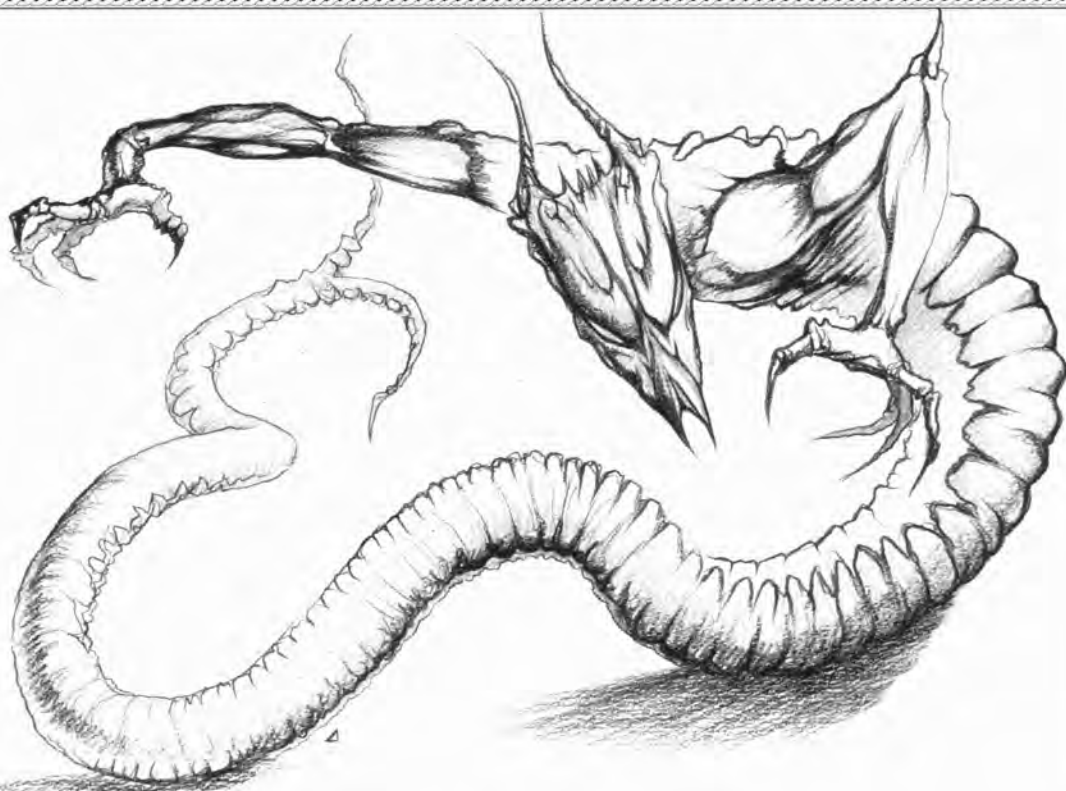
The following overview is a quick glimpse into the denizens of the world and some of the dangers that adventurers face. It should be qualified that generic should not be an indication of threat, for these creatures are deadly in their own right. The Bane-Beasts have been divided into four distinct categories: Natural Phenomena, Wird-Altered, Elothorin Avatar, & Warden Degenerate. These four groups cover most of the dangers to be found in Providence.

NATURAL PHENOMENA

This category encompasses any and all animal and plant-based dangers. Essentially, anything that is normally a part of the natural world such as snakes, Bawk'sha, insects, fish, etc.

The main difference between creatures of this classification and those of other categories is one of intelligence. Animals and plants react as part of the natural order, killing out of hunger or defense, attacking without malevolence. On a personal level, this makes them no less dangerous than an enraged Elothorin Avatar. The bite of a Clapathi Water Snake is just as deadly as an Avatar blast. Both will slay someone efficiently.

The three following examples are the most notorious or common forms of life in Providence. They are part of a self-enclosed and vibrant ecology that contains literally hundreds of millions of various plant, animal and insect species. Most are not listed simply because the reader is already familiar with them. This includes horses, dogs, cats, cows, birds and insects. While the latter two examples are indigenous species to this world, most of the livestock and domesticated animals were brought over during the exile. Few of Providence's species are obedient enough to be trained.



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BAWK'SHA PACK ANIMAL

DESCRIPTION

Bawk'shi are large docile animals used in a variety of functions throughout Providence. In essence, they are the quintessential beasts of burden, large and lumbering animals. Like most domesticated beasts, they were brought over during the exile. They were one of the few species that actually managed to survive long enough to adapt to the humid jungles and forests. This surprised many who always viewed the Bawk'sha as a slow plodding animal that would eventually die after forgetting to breathe.

Standing at nine feet tall from the top of its head to the ground, this is the largest domesticated animal on Providence. Set with a broad chest, its massive frame is covered in a thick coat of long fur which is often hued with patches of light tan to near-white. The fur is thick enough to protect it from most insect stings, but it has also served as the source for the transmission of Blood Spores.

The face of the Bawk'sha is somewhat cat-like, with a broad jaw line and large, empty, black eyes. It also possesses

a long furry tail that it uses to swat away insects. The male grows a small pair of horns three years after birth, which are from the time its ancestors were much larger and more aggressive.

While it cannot be seen, the Bawk'sha possesses an internal water sack that allows it to travel for several days without drinking. When it does, however, it drinks until its reserves are filled. Sometimes desperate traders caught in Athrin's desert will sacrifice one Bawk'sha in order to get at its water sack. While this practice is considered somewhat disgusting, it has saved many lives.

REACTIONS

The Bawk'sha is a dimwitted animal that reacts very slowly. When something finally provokes a response from it, the beast usually freezes up. For such a large animal, people are often surprised at how much of a coward the Bawk'sha is. Fortunately, it also means that it is a passive creature that has never harmed anyone intentionally. Learned individuals surmise that centuries of captivity have actually ingrained this trait into the animal.



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ABILITIES

As a domesticated animal, the Bawk'sha is the perfect beast of burden. It is strong enough to carry a good deal of merchandise and can move over great stretches of land without needing water. It will follow the orders of the rider with little encouragement or prodding.

While somewhat sour, its milk is also used in some recipes, and its meat can also be cooked in emergencies. Unfortunately, the meat usually has to be cured and treated for several days before it is edible. If it is not, then anyone eating it should be prepared for several days of cramps while it passes through their digestive system. Aside from this, the Bawk'sha possesses no offensive or defensive capabilities to speak of.

BLOOD-SPORE SEEDS

DESCRIPTION

Despite the threat this plant life once posed to the citizens of Providence, Blood-Spore plants are not belligerent or even sentient. They are simply plants, appearing evil only because of people's fear of them.

Blood-Spores derive their name from their ability to absorb nutrients from blood in their spore form. As a fully-blossomed flower, the Blood-Spore is usually found emerging from the carcass or skeleton of its unfortunate host. It stands at two feet high with a number of large petal flowers decorating its green mass. At the centre of the bright red bulb is a spore sack designed to spray out its contents when it detects impact tremors from moving animals. This normally affects a range of up to ten yards.

At any size, the spores resemble tear-shaped seeds covered with barbs and hooks. Once they are attached to a target, the barbs act as an irritant, causing the animal or person to itch. Subsequent scratching imbeds the barbs further into the skin, drawing blood and introducing the powder-fine spores into the circulatory system. Once this happens, the victim is as good as dead unless Wird is used. The spores grow rapidly through saturation into tiny seeds which are imbedded under the skin, or attached to the interior lining of arteries, veins and capillaries. The pumping blood dislodges the spores and brings them into the vital organs, where it shreds the lining. Regardless, the victim begins to hemorrhage internally, providing the seeds with a nutrient-rich playground in which they can begin to bloom. The entire process is agony to an infected person.

Fortunately, the spores release a mild toxin capable of sedating small animals once it is in the blood-stream. This, in

addition to the brief gestation period of 2 to 3 days, is what had prevented the spores from spreading from their original location within the Pendulum Isles. In large animals and in people, the effects of the toxin is enough to cause fatigue, but not unconsciousness. Furthermore, certain creatures like the Bawk'sha are immune to the spores due to their thick skin and fur. Unfortunately, that does not mean they cannot still carry it. This was how the contagion spread to outside the islands; the handlers in Cry-Star got infected when they groomed caravan animals infected with the spores. The only threat of exposure to the Bawk'sha is through the face, and it is painful enough to drive the animal into a rampaging frenzy.

REACTIONS

The Blood-Spore reacts to one thing alone, impact tremors. When something ventures too close to the plant, it turns its spore bulb in the direction of the tremors, and ejects the spores when the tremors seem closest. How it knows the difference between tremors caused by large animals at a distance and small animals up close is unknown. It is "aware" enough to hit a close target with unerring accuracy.

ABILITIES

As stated previously, untreated infections can cause death within a couple of days. Although this is a reproductive aspect for the Blood-Spore, it is thought to be evil by the populace. The plants have already earned several superstitious nick-names including Death-Green and Horrid Blooms.

TIGER-WOLVES

DESCRIPTION

In the food chain of Providence, Tiger-Wolves are considered to be among the most dangerous carnivores in the world. In adult form, they stand at four-and-a-half feet tall, are eight feet in length with a chest width of over three feet. Their hind-quarters are smaller than their expansive barrel chest, and their necks are thick ropes of muscle. Their fur is normally short and coloured dull-orange to bright red, with black ragged stripes that band their limbs. These extend from the spine to down along their flanks. A long mane of barbed bristles runs down their spine as well, ending at the tip of their thorny tail. They possess a short, brutish snout and a set of razor sharp fangs. Their legs are covered in a thicker and longer tuft of barbed fur, and their feet are armed with wicked retractable claws. Tiger-Wolves are powerful beasts, a creature of cut musculature barely veneered beneath thin

fur. They move with menacing steps and glowering stares, their head always low to the ground.

If the appearance of the Tiger-Wolf is frightening, it is nothing compared to its demeanour. Quick to anger and even faster to attack, it is the only carnivore known to kill for no apparent reason. These foul-tempered beasts are greatly feared by caravan merchants. And if one of these predators seems like a nuisance, then try handling five to ten of them, for this is the minimum size for a pack. Some packs within the Green Barrens have reached up to 20 Tiger-Wolves.

REACTIONS

Tiger-Wolves are not the smartest predators in Providence, but they are among the most aggressive. What they lack in intelligence, they more than make up in pure maliciousness. Once they spot prey, they will stalk it for up to an hour, frightening it with false lunges until they grow bored. That is when they become truly dangerous, for they will attack relentlessly unless killed.

Despite their aggressive and short-tempered nature, Tiger-Wolves have shown the ability to use some tactics such as flanking opponents and trying to draw out stragglers

from the pack. If frustrated too often however, they will go in for the straight kill. One of the favoured tactics of the Tiger-Wolf is to ram opponents, knocking them off their feet.

ABILITIES

Tiger-Wolves are capable of running at over 50 miles per hour for approximately a minute before they tire. They keep this ability in reserve for making the final kill, a last burst of speed intended to surprise the prey and drag it down. Aside from this, the Tiger-Wolf is equipped with barbed tufts of fur that make close-quarter combat with it a painful experience. It also has a spring-trap jaw lined with a mouth full of teeth, and six-inch claws on its meaty front paws.

WIRD-ALTERED

Wird-Altered includes everything that has been changed through the use of Wird. It is the result of deliberate experimentation and usually done for the purpose of creating subservient creatures. Unfortunately, any and all attempts at creating these Bane-Beasts is an exercise in



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torture. The victim is subjected to spells designed to alter his bones, muscles, internal organs, circulatory system and anything else that can be modified. It is the act of stripping away a person's or creature's identity to create an entirely new and unnatural being.

Wird-Altered abominations are not easy to create, for it is a process of trial and error. For every species that exists currently, at least a hundred test subjects died before the process was perfected. Changes to the musculature might cause internal bleeding until the tester knows enough about the new physiology to realign the circulatory system. This in turn, may cause the organs to shut down or the entire nervous system to collapse before the problem is rectified as well.

The knowledge to create this type of creature is currently outlawed within the Alliance of Kings because of two reasons. The first is that the practice is cruel and barbaric. No person or animal that has undergone this process has ever emerged sane. The use of this technique requires that the creature or individual's will be broken and remolded to suit to the needs of their creator. The second reason why this knowledge is outlawed is because it is

mostly practiced by Blight Crows. The repercussions of dealing with this malicious form of Wird are too inhumane not to completely turn the user into a monster as well.

The examples presented below are the most infamous of the lot and under the control of the Wardens within Bone-Wail. They are presented in order of their creation, because the birth of one somehow became the catalyst for the creation of the other. There are other Warden creations, whether from Bone-Wail itself or from the inbred monsters discussed later. There are even independent Blight Crows who have perfected the technique and now reside within sheltered keeps hidden in the dark wilderness.

WIRD HOUNDS

DESCRIPTION

This first successful attempt by the Wardens to create a subservient species was greeted with mixed reactions. The experimentation is considered a success because the Wird Hounds were the first creatures altered on Providence that



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were relatively defect free. They are considered failures because they can not be used to fulfil their allotted function. The Wird Hounds were created in a time when some city-states were granting their prisoners freedom, and the Wardens were in danger of losing power. The seed of rebellion had once again begun to germinate, and many people, including the guards, were beginning to question the validity of maintaining prison colonies for a long dead war.

Fearing that they may lose the loyalty of their prison militias, the Wardens sanctioned the use of Blight Crows to create a subservient species that would respond to the Wardens alone. This action further alienated the freed colonies from the prison camps. The Blight Crows successfully created a new species of dog-like animals designed to track down and destroy sources of Wird. It was hoped that they could be used against Wird Weavers, Wird Dancers and Wylders working for the Free Cities. This, however, was not to be.

The Blight Crows, in defining the parameters of the Wird Hounds' existence, failed to consider that the sun of Providence was the result of potent Wird energies. Rather than being attracted to various Wird Distinctions, the hounds vanished into the jungle or tried clamouring up the spire walls to reach the sun. The project was considered a failure, but not enough to halt the Ravagers project.

It was believed that the hounds which were not caught would die out, having exhausted themselves trying to catch the sun. Contrary to this, a few survived and actually adapted to the world. As a means of self-preservation, the instinct to hunt down Wird lessened, allowing the Wird Hounds to become part of the natural cycle. Although they can sense Wird and maintain the ability to counter it slightly, they are no longer driven to frenzy by its presence.

Wird Hounds have evolved very little on a physical level. They still resemble bird-like dogs. They are three-feet long, with compact muscle, nimble and especially fast. Their body stratification varies, from mottled to pure colour schemes, as does their body hue. For the most part, they have short dark fur, with yellow eyes and tufts of bristled hair behind their heads. Their legs are strong and well proportioned, allowing for quick movement, short-term bursts of speed, or long paced runs. These creatures are rarely sedentary, and are known to migrate in packs of 10 to 20 hounds.

The head of the Wird Hound is unusual, because it is shaped somewhat like a bird and ends in a bony yellow to dark red beak. The creature, despite its unusual appearance, is a proficient hunter capable of bringing down larger prey. Coupled with its pack nature, it seems capable of rudimentary tactics and learning from its mistakes.

REACTIONS

Wird Hounds are hunters, pure and simple. While they might not be as malicious as Tiger-Wolves, they will track a target for days before ever attacking it. The reason for this is unknown, but some surmise it is the creature's inbred need to track its prey.

Wird Hounds are known to attack Elothorin Avatars on a regular basis, with suicidal abandon. For the most part, they die quickly, but on the rare occasion when they succeed, the pack goes completely mad. When this happens they revert back to their old ways and attack anything with a kernel of Wird in it. These episodes of Wird-Frenzy are well documented, and the cause for great fear, for the pack will not stop until every last one is dead.

ABILITIES

Apart from normal defensive and offensive attributes such as fangs and claws, the Wird Hound is capable of tracking down sources of Wird within a one mile radius. After this range, the sense dies down. A few genetic throwbacks can drain Wird through their bite.

RAVAGERS

DESCRIPTION

Of all the Wird Altered creatures known to date, the Ravagers are the most frightening. They are powerful creations who were refined through centuries of experimentation. They are strong because of the variety of gifts they have, and they are to be feared because they are altered Yas'Wailians who retained their intelligence.

The Ravager program was already underway when the Wird Hound venture proved to be a failure. Having learnt from their mistake, the Wardens allowed the Blight Crows to proceed with the Ravagers on the stipulation that their tracking sense be pared down. While the experiment eventually proved successful, it cost the lives of over 500 prisoners.

The process took longer to perfect, but the end result was worth it. The Ravagers emerged, alien in appearance, but well equipped to handle themselves and intelligent enough to adapt to whatever situation was thrown their way.

The Wardens considered the program a success, and it has been used on prison guards for the subsequent centuries. It is the least painful of the transformations, but is still an arduous process to undertake because it psychologically scars the victim. The Ravagers are considered cold, detached, and horribly cruel in their actions. They are not above torturing people for pleasure. They are also



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fanatically loyal to the Wardens, and would never even consider rebelling against them.

Ravagers are about seven-feet tall, with chalk white skin and a natural exoskeleton that covers the chest, back, arms and legs. Their faces, like their bodies, are somewhat gaunt and sharply defined, as though the skin was pulled and stretched. Despite this, they are still exceedingly well proportioned, even though their musculature no longer fits the normal aesthetic. Short bone lances erupt from their elbows and end in sharp points, providing the Ravagers with a form of natural weaponry. This, however, is the least of their abilities.

Ravagers are often tattooed with red bands across their arms to indicate rank. Novices or new Ravagers currently undergoing indoctrination have one band. Those with two bands are guardsmen, while three bands indicates guard chiefs. Guard captains are decorated with four red bands, while the Warden personal guard are decorated with a single black band. They are considered the elite of the Ravagers. Some odd-looking brutish types have been seen with a solitary blue stripe, but their position in the hierarchy has yet to be determined. Some believe it may be a new version of a Ravager, one designed for hand to hand combat.

REACTIONS

Ravagers will follow the orders of the Wardens without question or hesitation. The desire to do so is overwhelming and ingrained into them at the moment of creation. They are blindly loyal and will plunge headlong into death if so commanded. If something does not fit within the parameters of their orders, they will attempt to kill it simply because it has now become a threat. Otherwise, Ravagers have no real personality that they can call their own. They are almost drone-like in their servitude, and only show some independence when torturing another person.

ABILITIES

In addition to their natural armour and their elbow lances, Ravagers have a number of Wird spells that make them dangerous. All of them are stronger than normal, at least four times that of a Gargoyle's strength, and fairly quick. Those of guard chief rank possess the ability to unleash a fireball spell up to four times a day and can fly despite the lack of wings. Ravagers of guard captain rank have also demonstrated an ability to increase their speed in short bursts of several seconds. Those who become the Warden's personal guard can turn invisible.

New types of Ravager are said to exist, ones with shape-shifting to make them look and act like a normal individual. Another type is said to have the power to communicate with Ward Dogs. While the Wardens claim that this is completely unfounded, the Alliance is beginning to look for a means to counter this potential threat.

WARD DOGS

DESCRIPTION

Following the success of the Ravagers, experimentation was halted for a brief period before the attempt to create Ward Dogs began. Still interested in the idea of altering animals for their programs, the technique behind the Wird Hounds was resurrected, using a different set of augmentations. The tracking sense was brought down tremendously, and the animals were ingrained with an undying sense of loyalty towards the Wardens first, and the Ravagers second. What emerged were the Ward Dogs, animals with the power to absorb Wird and redirect its flow.

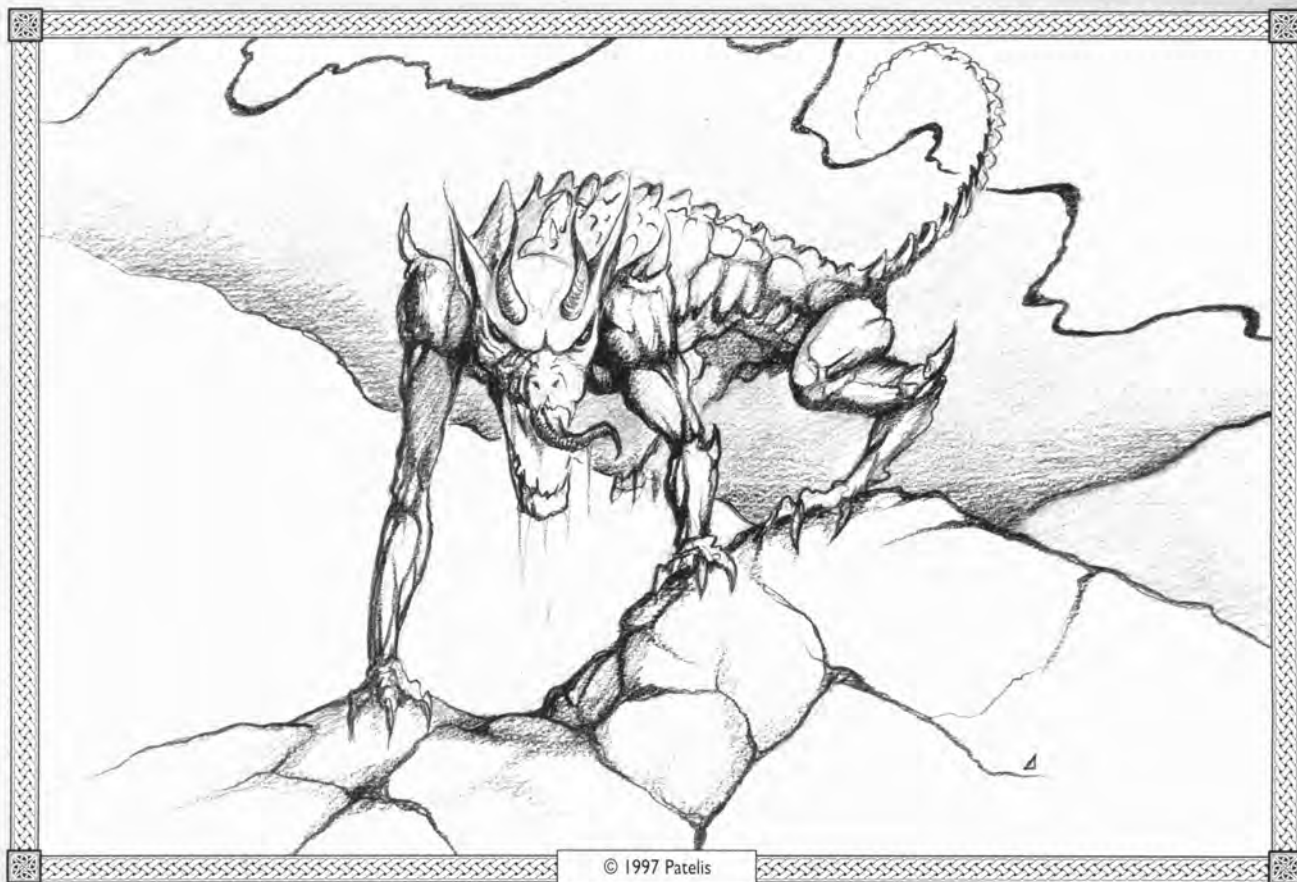
Leaner and slightly smaller than Wird Hounds, these creations look like dogs with the exception of the horns erupting from the side of their heads. The fur is also thick and barbed enough to draw blood, and it varies in colour from light greys to light browns. While Wird Hounds are better muscled, Ward Dogs are considerably more streamlined and much faster than their predecessors. They are also better trained to follow orders and are taught how to kill swiftly and efficiently.

Like the Ravagers, the Ward Dogs were refined and perfected over the generations. While they are used within the prison camp predominantly, the Wardens have released packs into the Deep in order to disrupt whatever is occurring outside the walls of Bone-Wail and Green-Deep. An unforeseen side-effect of this is that Ward Dogs have mated with Wird Hounds in the wild, creating very potent offspring.

REACTIONS

Ward Dogs will not attack a Warden or Ravager for any reason, but are trained to go after the jugular of any individual not recognized as part of the Bone-Wail or Green-Deep hierarchy. The dogs are trained not to attack anything bearing the necklace of office worn by the Wardens. Strangely enough, attempts at duplicating this standard have failed to fool wild Ward Dogs. This leads people to the conclusion that some Wird effect is attached to the necklaces of the Wardens.

Ward Dogs are loyal creatures that normally work alone or in the presence of a Ravager. In the wild, however, some travel in packs, even though this does not seem to alter their loyalty to their former masters. While they are trained



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to attack people, they will only kill what they recognize to be animals when hungry.

ABILITIES

In a limited degree, Ward Dogs can sense and track down the presence of active Wird within a mile radius or so. They can also absorb Wird-inflicted damage and reflect it back against the attacker and other targets. If confronted with hand to hand combat, they can inflict damage with their extremely sharp bite or with a rake of their serrated claws.

ELOTHORIN AVATAR

Overall, the Elothorin Avatars touch upon so many different fears that the name is enough to frighten people. It is bad form to mention them in casual conversation. Some people are superstitious and believe that harm befalls people who brings its name to their tongues. While this reaction seems a tad melodramatic, it must be remembered that one Elothorin Avatar was responsible for destroying Haak San Bazaa, and an army of them all but decimated an entire planet.

Many millennia ago, the remnant population of Yas'Wail managed to avoid destruction after learning that the Elothorin race was actually one creature capable of giving portions of itself to other animals. These became known as the Elothorin's Avatars, and the name of Elothorin itself came to identify one entity.

The war eventually ended when several powerful Elothorin Avatars were tricked into going through a number of one-way gates leading to Providence. Separated from its pieces, the Elothorin itself vanished through the gate, and brought the remainder of its avatars with it.

Afterwards, the Elothorin created a rich jungle world with its own sun for its animal avatars, and left in search for its other pieces. As a result of this, most of Providence is imbued with its essence. Not everything is aware of that fact, however. Rather than identifying everything as an avatar, it is much easier to use the term Elothorin Avatar for any sentient creature capable of using the Elothorin's power. With the Elothorin being gone for so many millennia, a good number of these "souls" have forgotten where they came from. Only a handful of these avatars remember, including Sky-Spite, Sunder and War-Din. Other avatars simply attack anyone venturing too close to them.

CHASERS

DESCRIPTION

When the body of an avatar dies, the Elothorin soul goes and seeks out another creature to inhabit. The larger the portion of the avatar's soul, the larger the body it requires. Chasers are minor avatars that vary from a large dog to a horse in size. Although they are considered "lesser" Elothorin, it would be a dangerous mistake to treat them as such. Creatures with such minor powers are still enough to destroy even the most skilled individual. Coupled with their above-human intellect, they are one of the most challenging threat a competent person can face.

Avatars appear to be augmented versions of the species they have come to inhabit. Some are known to use the same base mutation for each form they take, and can be identified from one incarnation to the next by certain physical signatures. Black Daunter, one of the more infamous of the Elothorin's Avatars living in the Exodus Plains, continually modifies his new body to reflect a star-studded night. Fire-Rush, an avatar said to be hidden within Stone-Tree, always grows a fiery mane around its head.

Apart from the signature characteristics of specific avatars, the general changes that seem to affect the host include glowing eyes and an increase in body mass. Some are further augmented with changes to the skeletal structure or with the growth of extra limbs.

Occasionally, an avatar is powerful enough to maintain its host's body even after it dies and begins decomposing. This causes them to spiral into madness rapidly. When this occurs, other Elothorin Avatars who learn of this will come to destroy the physical form of the creature, forcing the soul to inhabit a new body. If this can be done, the sanity of the avatar in question returns back to normal.

REACTIONS

The past few centuries were a relatively quiet time for the avatars. The larger ones chose not to get involved in the affairs of the Lost Tribes and the city-states, and the smaller ones have taken their cue. This does not mean that avatars are leaving the populace in peace. If someone intrudes upon the territory of an Elothorin host, the creature will destroy the interlopers and those in the immediate vicinity.

ABILITIES

It is virtually impossible to guess what range of powers Elothorin Avatars possess. The smaller ones, while not as diverse as their larger counterparts, hold a minimum of five to ten innate talents at Tier 2 to 6.



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WARDEN DEGENERATES

While the Elothorin's Avatars are feared, the Degenerates are loathed in equal measure, because they are the Warden's monstrosities and part of a hated legacy. Wird is a potent force, an aspect of the dynamic that fuels reality and keeps it from turning stagnant. When the Wardens isolated themselves from each other and married from their own stock, malformations through inbreeding occurred in the subsequent generations of children.

Wird Weavers and Wylders within the Warden families believed they could prevent this from happening by altering the appearance of these monsters, but the manipulations merely aggravated the problem. Children were being born who were physically healthy but mentally twisted. Paranoia, schizophrenia and hundreds of other psychological ailments gripped the offspring of the royalty, who were unwilling to address the problem. Rather than dealing with the catalyst, which was the isolation, they dealt with each symptom as it manifested.

Eventually, too many inbreeds were born, and a few slipped into the Warden hierarchy without notice. They were given knowledge of Wird and assumed positions of power, a mistake that many paid for with their lives. These Degenerates, as they were called for some of their more peculiar interests, were influenced by the Wird growing stagnant within their bodies, driving them into further madness. The use of "disguise" spells also failed some two centuries after the Degenerates first appeared. Malformed children were born resistant to the Wird treatment designed to make them appear normal. Their offspring were twisted into greater monstrosities.

These Degenerates were eventually dealt with. No longer capable of rational thought, these monsters are creatures of instinct and ruled by their madness. They still possess Wird powers and the intellectual capacity to study situations and use them to their best advantage. The spells they once manipulated have now surfaced as natural abilities.

Like the Elothorin Avatars, there is no set form to any Warden Degenerates save for the fact that they still appear to be humanoid. The exception to the rule seems to be a species that came about through a specific Degenerate. Now living as a tribe near Stone-Tree, these Thorn-Burster creatures all share similar appearances and abilities. While they may not be the only Degenerate species out there, they are the only ones uncovered thus far.



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BLIGHT ELEMENTALS

DESCRIPTION

Although they are not considered a species, Blight Elementals are the result of a Degenerate being engulfed within the extreme of one element. It is akin to releasing a Retribution knot upon one's self, and surviving. The experience obviously changes you forever.

Blight Elementals are mindless creatures whose forms were saturated with Wird which has corrupted it because of their impure state. This is happening with rising frequency to Degenerates hidden near the Sunderlands and Sky-Torrent Bridge. The Retributions affecting both regions have created more Blight Elementals within the span of the last few months than were ever seen in Providence's history.

Because they are suffused with corrupted Wird, Blight Elementals take on one of four specific shapes. They can appear to be black spheres of flame shooting out arcs of fire like a solar flare. They can look like ground distortions, a travelling shock wave moving in a specific direction. Some become a whirlwind of noxious-looking vapours, while the final group manifests as a blob of putrid water dissolving anything it touches.

REACTIONS

Because the Blight Elementals are mindless, they do not react to outside stimuli. They move in a direction dictated by their elemental form, destroying everything in their path without prejudice or any other emotion. Blight Elementals made of flame are erratic in their movement, they can shift suddenly, turn back upon their tracks or dance in the same area for hours. Water variants generally move in one direction, and will shift paths only if something obstructs them. Air travels in grand sweeps and arcs, rarely taking sharp turns or doubling back upon itself, while Earth barrels straight ahead, regardless of what lies in its way.

ABILITIES

Again, the ability of Blight Elementals depends on the element in question:

FIRE

It burns everything in the area. Flames of black fire leap out of it in a chaotic manner, hitting whatever lies around it with no rhyme or reason.



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AIR

A whirlwind of sickening aromas, it affects the living, causing them to vomit or faint from the odours. Some other whirlwinds have been known to suck the breath away from victims.

EARTH

Earth Blight Elementals break whatever is hit by their shock waves.

WATER

Perhaps the most damaging of the lot, Water Blight Elementals are made of an acidic solution that dissolves whatever it comes in contact with.

It should be noted that in very rare instances, two elements are known to combine to form an exceedingly nasty pair; whirlwinds of acidic water, shock waves filled with fire, scalding clouds of steam, that sort of thing.

The only way to defeat this phenomenon is to counter it with appropriate Wird spells, or simply to allow it to run its course. This may take a while; Blight Elementals hold a great deal of power.

THORN-BURSTERS

DESCRIPTION

Like all Degenerates uncovered thus far, Thorn-Bursters appear to be humanoid, distant cousins to Yas'Wailians. This particular race stands at four feet high, with a very lean build. Their skin has turned chalky white, but the majority of their body is covered by a white exoskeleton over the chest, groin, joints, shins and arms. The exterior skeleton appears to be composed of minute bone-like flat bristles. These "hairs" can be ejected at a close range into a mist of shards. Against the skin, it does little, but if released in the face, it can blind opponents.

The eyes of a Thorn-Burster are unblinking, bright red and round, giving them a malevolent look. Their hands have three claw-like digits, each of which are long and hooked along the underside. They possess leathery glider-membranes which are somewhat alien in appearance because of large throbbing veins which run through them. It is theorized that the Thorn-Bursters have an inadequate body-cooling system, and are forced to pump blood through the membranes as they fly to cool their heated blood off.

Thorn-Bursters are not terribly bright, and may be reverting back to an even more animalistic level since they lack opposable thumbs. They have a rudimentary language

based on grunts and gesticulations, but it is not one that other people have taken the time to decipher. They band together in basic tribal packs around the strongest individual. Males and females have multiple partners, and it is up to the latter to care for the children.

REACTIONS

If approached, Thorn-Bursters will attack without hesitation; after all they are carnivores and have even displayed cannibalistic tendencies. If hunting after food, they tend to travel in packs, but betray no sense of tactics. They all attack at once simply because food is taken, not given. When they kill something, the meal turns into a feeding frenzy.

ABILITIES

As stated before, the Thorn-Bursters are fairly well armoured and nimble due to their small size. They can also see along the infrared spectrum. As well, they can fire off a mist of bone shards that can blind a target permanently if it is shot straight into the eye. Their fingers are lined with hooks along the underside, allowing them to rip meat off the bone. Obviously, this may also be used as a weapon.

REACTIONS

The mind set of the Shadow-Worm is completely alien and unpredictable. Sometimes it attacks without provocation, other times it will not react to outside stimuli unless injured. The general rule of thumb with this monster is to kill it simply because of what it could do to the next person who encounters it.

ABILITIES

The Shadow-Worm flies constantly, even though it is not very quick or nimble. In addition, its regenerative powers are astounding; cutting it in half will merely create two creatures. The best option to damage it is to use wide-area attacks such as cold, fire, and electrical spells and blasts of water or earth. In essence, anything that can do widespread damage against it is a good weapon.

The most feared ability of the Shadow-Worm is its power to paralyze victims with its touch. Once this is accomplished, it uses the row of tiny mouths along its flanks to inject a solvent that erodes the connective tissue between the skin and the muscles. After that, it begins sucking the loose skin off.

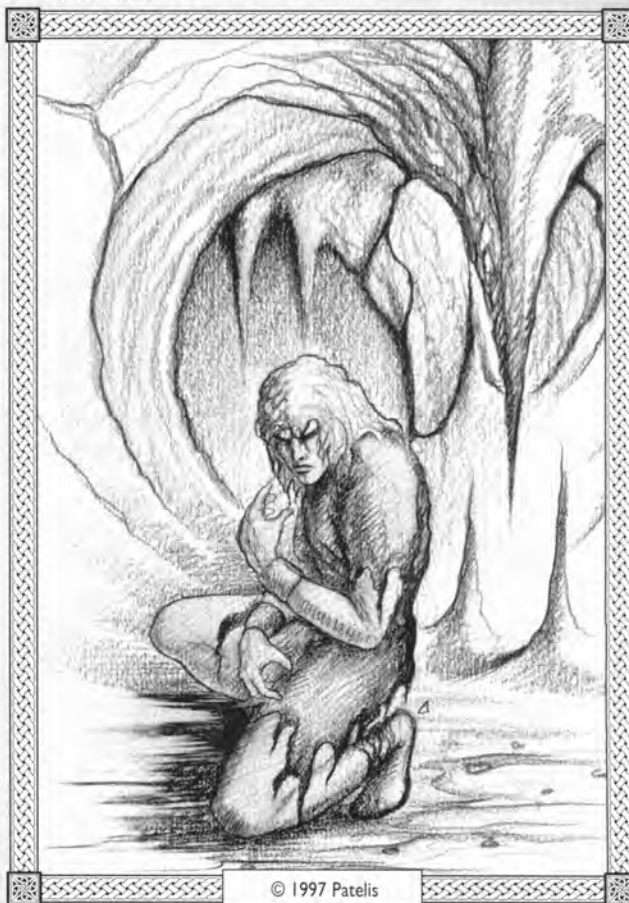
SHADOW-WORMS

DESCRIPTION

This type of Warden Degenerate has been encountered on more than one occasion. Some Serpenkine allies to the Alliance have claimed that it is a race of minions who recently began working for the White Crow. The lack of information however, prevents them from being classified as a race.

Shadow Worms are earthworm-like creatures that grow up to ten feet in length and three feet in diameter. Their surface seems to be comprised of an oily black gel, and exudes a dark putrid mist from a row of tiny mouths along its flanks. This monster, despite its appearance, is highly intelligent and moves by flying, twisting and turning in the air in some sort of eerie and silent dance.

The manner in which this creature feeds is revolting. It wraps around a target, uses the black film covering its body to anesthetize the victim, and uses its tiny mouths to devour the layers of skin. It seems to have no taste for any of the other body parts. This is a process that kills the paralyzed victim slowly.



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SERPENKINE

LOW LEVEL

CHARACTERISTICS

1 Coordination	1 Strength	0 Constitution
0 Intelligence	0 Willpower	0 Psyche
-1 Appearance	-1 Charisma	1 Perception
0 Aura	7 Body	16 Endurance

SKILLS

3 Area Knowledge	2 Awareness	3 Biology-Fauna
2 Biology-Flora	3 Climbing	2 Camouflage
1 Dodge	2 Grapple	4 Language
1 Melee	2 Spear	2 Stealth
2 Swimming	3 Survival	

ABILITIES

Claws (1/2/3/4/)
 Fangs (1/1/2/2)
 Tail (1/2/2/3) Soft
 Armour Tier 1
 Infravision Tier 1
 Regeneration Tier 1

SERPENKINE

MEDIUM LEVEL

CHARACTERISTICS

3 Coordination	4 Strength	2 Constitution
0 Intelligence	0 Willpower	0 Psyche
-1 Appearance	1 Charisma	1 Perception
0 Aura	11 Body	24 Endurance

SKILLS

4 Area Knowledge	2 Awareness	1 Battle Tactics
3 Biology-Fauna	2 Biology-Flora	4 Climbing
4 Camouflage	2 Dodge	2 Grapple
4 Language	3 Leadership	3 Melee
3 Spear	3 Stealth	2 Swimming
3 Survival		

ABILITIES

Claws (1/2/3/4/)
 Fangs (1/1/2/2)
 Tail (1/2/2/3) Soft
 Armour Tier 2
 Infravision Tier 2
 Regeneration Tier 1

SERPENKINE

HIGH LEVEL

CHARACTERISTICS

5 Coordination	8 Strength	3 Constitution
0 Intelligence	1 Willpower	0 Psyche
-1 Appearance	2 Charisma	2 Perception
0 Aura	15 Body	28 Endurance

SKILLS

5 Area Knowledge	3 Awareness	3 Battle Tactics
4 Biology-Fauna	3 Biology-Flora	5 Climbing
6 Camouflage	3 Dodge	3 Grapple
4 Language	5 Leadership	4 Melee
5 Spear	4 Stealth	2 Swimming
4 Survival		

ABILITIES

Claws (1/2/3/4/)
 Fangs (1/1/2/2)
 Tail (1/2/2/3) Soft
 Armour Tier 3
 Infravision Tier 3
 Regeneration Tier 1
 Poison 3 points of damage for 5 rounds, On Successful Fang attack

WEAPONS (for all levels)

Spears (2/3/5/7)

TRAITS (for all levels)

Behaviour - Prefers action to words
 Behaviour - Values Freedom



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SWARM DANCER

LOW LEVEL - WORKER

CHARACTERISTICS

1 Coordination	1 Strength	0 Constitution
0 Intelligence	0 Willpower	1 Psyche
-3 Appearance	0 Charisma	1 Perception
0 Aura	7 Body	16 Endurance

SKILLS

3 Area Knowledge	2 Awareness	3 Biology-Fauna
3 Biology-Flora	1 Camouflage	4 Climbing
1 Dodge	2 Flight	1 Hand to Hand
2 Stealth	3 Survival	4 Swarm Language

ABILITIES

Armour Tier 2
Claws (1/2/3/3)
Fangs (0/0/1/2)
Enhanced Sight Tier 3
Enhanced Smell Tier 5
Wings Tier 2

SWARM DANCER

MEDIUM LEVEL - SOLDIER

CHARACTERISTICS

2 Coordination	5 Strength	0 Constitution
0 Intelligence	0 Willpower	1 Psyche
-3 Appearance	0 Charisma	1 Perception
0 Aura	11 Body	16 Endurance

SKILLS

3 Area Knowledge	3 Awareness	3 Biology-Fauna
3 Biology-Flora	2 Camouflage	5 Climbing
3 Dodge	3 Flight	2 Stealth
3 Strike	3 Survival	4 Swarm Language

ABILITIES

Acid 1 point for three rounds. Range 2 yards
Armour Tier 3
Claws (1/2/3/4)
Fangs (1/1/2/2)
Enhanced Sight Tier 3
Enhanced Smell Tier 5
Wings Tier 3

SWARM DANCER

HIGH LEVEL - ELITE FIGHTER

CHARACTERISTICS

3 Coordination	10 Strength	1 Constitution
0 Intelligence	0 Willpower	1 Psyche
-3 Appearance	0 Charisma	1 Perception
0 Aura	17 Body	20 Endurance

SKILLS

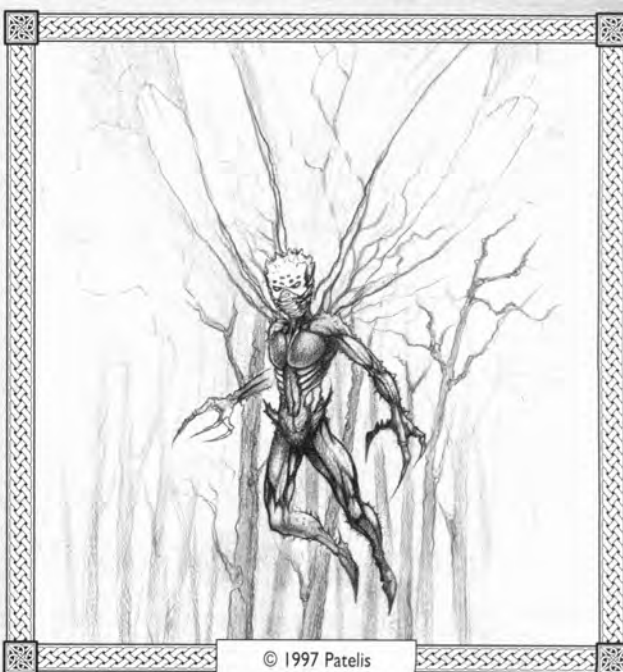
3 Area Knowledge	4 Awareness	3 Biology-Fauna
3 Biology-Flora	3 Camouflage	6 Climbing
4 Dodge	3 Flight	3 Grapple
3 Hand to Hand	3 Stealth	4 Strike
3 Survival	4 Swarm Language	

ABILITIES

Acid 2 points for four rounds. Range 2 yards
Armour Tier 4
Claws (1/2/3/4)
Fangs (1/1/2/2)
Enhanced Sight Tier 4
Enhanced Smell Tier 5
Wings Tier 4

TRAITS (for all levels)

Behaviour, extreme - Puts group ahead of self
Behaviour - Protective of home and friends
Behaviour, extreme - Will follow Swarm Consensus



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Some Skills for the Green People have a slash. The number before the slash represents the skill in an urban environment where there are few plants while the second is in the woods where plants are readily available.

GREEN PEOPLE

LOW LEVEL

CHARACTERISTICS

0 Coordination	1 Strength	1 Constitution
0 Intelligence	0 Willpower	1 Psyche
-1 Appearance	0 Charisma	1 Perception
0 Aura	8 Body	20 Endurance

SKILLS

3 Biology-Fauna	6 Biology-Flora	2/4 Camouflage
3 Climbing	2 Dart	1 Dodge
1 Grapple Vines	1 Hand to Hand	4 Green Language
2 Leaf Sword	1 Melee	3 Stealth
4 Survival	3 Swimming	2 Tracking

ABILITIES

Armour 4 points
Water Breathing
Increased senses Tier 3 (not in urban environment)

WEAPONS

Leaf Sword (2/4/6/8)
Sap Wand (1/2/3/4) Soft damage, entangles
Str roll vs. TN 15 to escape
Darts (1/2/2/3) Hard damage, 4 yard range
Poison Needs damaging dart attack, 2 points for 5 rounds
Grapple Vines +3 Dice to grapple rolls

GREEN PEOPLE

MEDIUM LEVEL

CHARACTERISTICS

1 Coordination	1 Strength	1 Constitution
0 Intelligence	0 Willpower	1 Psyche
-1 Appearance	0 Charisma	1 Perception
0 Aura	8 Body	20 Endurance

SKILLS

2 Battle Tactics	4 Biology-Fauna	6 Biology-Flora
3/5 Camouflage	4 Climbing	4 Dart
2 Dodge	3 Grapple Vines	3 Hand to Hand
4 Green Language	2 Leadership	4 Leaf Sword
2 Melee	2 Spear	4 Stealth
3 Strike	5 Survival	3 Swimming
3 Throw	3 Tracking	

ABILITIES

Armour 8 points
Water Breathing
Increased senses Tier 5 (not in urban environment)

WEAPONS

As low level with the below modifications
Leaf Sword (2/4/7/9)
Grapple Vines +5 Dice to grapple rolls



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GREEN PEOPLE

HIGH LEVEL

CHARACTERISTICS

1 Coordination	1 Strength	2 Constitution
0 Intelligence	0 Willpower	2 Psyche
0 Appearance	0 Charisma	1 Perception
1 Aura	9 Body	24 Endurance

SKILLS

4 Battle Tactics	5 Biology-Fauna	6 Biology-Flora
4/6 Camouflage	5 Climbing	6 Dart
3 Dodge	4 Grapple Vines	3 Hand to Hand
4 Green Language	3 Leadership	5 Leaf Sword
3 Melee	2 Spear	5 Stealth
3 Strike	6 Survival	3 Swimming
3 Throw	4 Tracking	

ABILITIES

Armour 12 points

Water Breathing

Increased senses Tier 6 (not in urban environment)

Control Plants Area of Effect 5/10/20/40 yards. Centred around user. Can use Parry/Strike/Throw/Grapple/Disarm with plant life. Green Person has 10 dice available for attacks, but can't exceed 10 dice in the round. Can attack on any segment after their Initiative.

The Strength available with the attack depends on the location.

Vegetation	Strength	Sample Location
Clear	none	—
Short Grass	-6	—
Long grass/Flower garden	-3	—
Wild Garden	-1	—
Tended Farm/Field	0	—
Wild Field	1	—
Sparse Woods	3	Civilized areas of Providence
Average Forest	6	Light Providence Wilderness
Dense Forest	10	Average Providence Wilderness
Tropical Forest	15	Deep Providence Wilderness
Dense Tropical Forest	21	The Deep
Green People Heartland	28	Algerra Swamp

WEAPONS

As medium level with the below modifications

Poison Needs damaging dart attack, 3 points for 5 rounds

TRAITS (for all levels)

Behaviour - Dislikes Yas'Wailians

Extreme Behaviour - Wants link to the World

Extreme Behaviour - Environmentally Friendly

WHITE CROW

SOLDIER

0 Coordination	0 Strength	1 Constitution
0 Intelligence	1 Willpower	0 Psyche
0 Appearance	0 Charisma	1 Perception
1 Aura	7 Body	20 Endurance

SKILLS

4 Area Knowledge	1 Awareness	2 Battle Tactics
2 Bow	2 Camouflage	2 Climbing
4 Crow Language	1 Dodge	1 Grapple
2 Hand to Hand	2 History	2 Parry
2 Politics	2 Stealth	2 Strike
2 Sword	1 Tracking	

ABILITIES

Shadow Sustenance: Don't need to eat or drink (permanent)

Dark Armour 5 points of protection

Infravision +15 to perception

WEAPONS

Long Sword 2/4/7/9

Long Bow 3/6/9/12

Shield 3 points protection, +6 to Parry roll

TRAITS

Behaviour - Arrogant

Extreme behaviour - Don't like sunlight

Behaviour - Power hungry

Higher level White Crow will be detailed in an upcoming supplement.



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BAWK'SHA

CHARACTERISTICS

-1 Coordination	15 Strength	12 Constitution
-5 Intelligence	-3 Willpower	-3 Psyche
1 Perception	25 Body	64 Endurance

MOVEMENT

1/4/7/10

SKILLS

2 Charge	2 Survival
----------	------------

ABILITIES

Armour 4 points

Horns (1/2/2/3) Only males have horns

THORN BURSTER

CHARACTERISTICS

1 Coordination	-2 Strength	-1 Constitution
-2 Intelligence	0 Willpower	-1 Psyche
0 Perception	3 Body	12 Endurance

MOVEMENT

1/2/4/5

SKILLS

2 Area Knowledge	1 Awareness	2 Blast
3 Biology-Flora	3 Biology-Flora	2 Climbing
3 Language	2 Stealth	1 Strike
3 Survival		

ABILITIES

Armour 3 points

Bristle Blast 1 point, Soft damage

Claws - 1 point, Hard damage



BLOOD SPORES

CHARACTERISTICS

-3 Coordination	-5 Strength	-2 Constitution
n/a Intelligence	n/a Willpower	n/a Psyche
2 Perception	-2 Body	n/a Endurance

MOVEMENT

None

SKILLS

5 Ranged attack

ABILITIES

Blast 4 points of damage, range 2 yards. Successful hit with damage means infected with spores. If hit but undamaged the spores are on you. If you're not cleaned off, you're a carrier. Spores themselves do 1 point of damage. Victims suffer 1 slight wound every six hours unless magically healed of all damage suffered.



TIGER-WOLF

CHARACTERISTICS

5 Coordination	5 Strength	8 Constitution
-4 Intelligence	0 Willpower	0 Psyche
2 Perception	16 Body	48 Endurance

MOVEMENT

3/7/12/25

SKILLS

3 Area Knowledge	1 Awareness	3 Biology-Flora
3 Climbing	4 Jumping	4 Stealth
2 Strike	4 Survival	3 Tracking

ABILITIES

Armour 3 points, also does 3 point attack

Bite 7 points Hard damage

Claws 9 points Hard damage

Increased Senses +3 dice to Awareness



WARD DOGS

CHARACTERISTICS

2 Coordination	-1 Strength	0 Constitution
-3 Intelligence	0 Willpower	0 Psyche
1 Perception	5 Body	16 Endurance

MOVEMENT

3/8/18/23

SKILLS

3 Area Knowledge	1 Awareness	3 Biology-Fauna
3 Biology-Flora	2 Blast	3 Strike
3 Survival	1 Tracking	

ABILITIES

Claw 4 points, Hard damage

Armour 1 point

Bite 6 points, Hard damage

Blast Can redirect up to 9 points of damage of any energy attack which has just hit the Ward Dog

Increased Senses +3 dice to Awareness rolls

Sense Wird +6 dice to Awareness rolls

Wird Protection 7 points of Armour versus all Wird-based attacks

WIRD HOUNDS

CHARACTERISTICS

1 Coordination	0 Strength	0 Constitution
-3 Intelligence	0 Willpower	0 Psyche
2 Perception	6 Body	16 Endurance

MOVEMENT

2/5/10/14

SKILLS

3 Area Knowledge	2 Awareness	3 Biology-Fauna
3 Biology-Flora	2 Strike	4 Survival
4 Tracking		

ABILITIES

Armour 1 point

Bite 4 points, Hard damage

Claws 4 points, Hard damage

Increased Senses +3 dice to Awareness

Sense Wird +15 dice to Awareness



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YAS'WAILIAN OCCUPATIONS

These are samples of some of the different careers players may wish their characters to have. The Characteristic minimums are the minimum that characters must have to be a member of the group. Unless otherwise specified, movement is as normal.

The Skills listed are the minimum skills that the organization will teach. Any character playing a member of any of these organizations must take the skills listed at least to the level shown.

D'SHAU MONK

CHARACTERISTIC MINIMUMS

None. They are willing to teach anybody, although advancement will depend on one's abilities.

SKILLS

1 Artistic Expression - Calligraphy	1 Etiquette
1 Farming	1 First Aid
2 History	1 Martial Arts
2 Meditation	1 Oratory
1 Survival	2 Philosophy
	1 Teaching

D'SHAU MONK FIGHTING STYLE

D'Shau Monks have the option of either a Hard or Soft Martial Art. These different styles reflect a more aggressive or passive attitude

Manoeuvre	Level
Strike	1 (Hard)
Parry	1 (Hard)
War Beads	1 (Hard)
Dodge	1 (Soft)
Throw	1 (Soft)
Disarm	1 (Soft)

EQUIPMENT

War Beads 0/1/2/4

TRAITS

Literate

Level 1 Rank (in monk's order)

Behaviour - Must help people

Contacts in organization (level 2)

HORIZON STRIDER

CHARACTERISTIC MINIMUMS

Coordination 0, Strength 0, Constitution 1, Willpower 1, Psyche 0

SKILLS

2 Area Knowledge	1 Awareness	2 Biology-Fauna
2 Biology-Flora	1 Camouflage	1 Dodge
1 History	2 Oratory	2 Stealth
2 Survival	1 Sword	2 Tracking

EQUIPMENT

Year Ring (one for each year served)

TRAITS

Level 3 Reputation, "Horizon Strider"

KESTREL

CHARACTERISTIC MINIMUMS

Coordination 0, Strength 0, Constitution 0, Willpower 0, Psyche, -1, Perception 0, Body 7

SKILLS

1 Acrobatics	1 Athletics	1 Awareness
1 Battle Tactics	2 Biology (Anatomy)	1 Body Language
2 Breakfall	1 Etiquette (Kestrel)	1 First Aid
2 Hand to Hand	2 Martial Arts	1 Medicine
2 Meditation	1 Philosophy	1 Resist Pain

SHI'KLIN - THE KESTREL MARTIAL ARTS

This art is a synthesis of hard and soft manoeuvres that are combined to devastating effect. As a result, the Martial Art must be bought twice in order to get all the manoeuvres. These are the manoeuvres for a character with level two in Shii'Klin.

Manoeuvre	Level
Charge	2 (Hard)
Strike	2 (Hard)
Multiple Strike	2 (Hard)
Dodge	2 (Soft)
Parry	2 (Soft)
Throw	2 (Soft)

TRAITS

Level 2 Reputation - good fighters



SLAYWIND

CHARACTERISTIC MINIMUMS

Coordination 1, Psyche 0

SKILLS

- | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| 2 Survival | 3 Missile Weapon | 2 Bow |
| 1 Awareness | 1 Battle Tactics | 1 First Aid |
| 2 History | 1 Medicine | 2 Multiple Strike |
| 2 Quick Draw | 1 Survival | 2 Philosophy (Religion) |
| 2 Weapon Smith (Fletcher) | | |

TRAITS

Combat Reflexes

Level 2 Rank (Slaywind)

Behaviour - Protective of Slaywind Society

Behaviour - Religious



WATCHER

CHARACTERISTIC MINIMUMS

Coordination 0, Strength 0, Constitution 0, Intelligence 0, Charisma -1

SKILLS

- | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------|
| 2 Area Study | 3 Area Knowledge | 1 Awareness |
| 2 Body Language | 1 Dodge | 1 Grapple |
| 2 History | 1 Intimidation | 2 Law |
| 1 Stealth | 3 Streetwise | 1 Strike |
| 2 Sword | | |

EQUIPMENT

Watcher Bracelet - Increased Perception, +6 dice, only for criminal identification

Wooden Broad Sword 2/3/5/7

TRAITS

Level 3 Military Rank

Level 4 Social Responsibility



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PROVIDENCE

Providence Weapons Chart

Name	Skill	Damage	Type	Range	BPV	Weight	Effect
Axe	Innate	1/3/5/7	Hard	—	14	4 1/2 lbs	Does Damage
Battle Axe	Innate	3/5/8/10	Hard	—	20	10 lbs	Does Damage
Battle Axe - Crystal	Innate	2/5/8/10	Hard	—	25	7 lbs	Does Damage
Battle Axe - Wood	Innate	2/4/6/8	Hard	—	14	7 lbs	Does Damage
Blowgun	Innate	0/0/1/1	Hard	3 yards	2	1 lb	Poison delivery system
Bola	Learned	0/0/1/3	Soft	5 yards	5	4 - 6 lbs	Entangles (TN 9 to escape)
Broad Sword	Innate	2/4/6/8	Hard	—	18	3 lbs	Does Damage
Broad Sword - Crystal	Innate	2/4/6/8	Hard	—	22	2 lbs	Does Damage
Broad Sword - Wood	Innate	2/3/5/7	Hard	—	10	1 1/2 lbs	Does Damage
Club	Innate	1/2/3/4	Hard/Soft	—	8	3 lbs	Does Damage
Dagger	Innate	1/2/3/4	Hard	—	8	1 lb	Does Damage
Dagger - Crystal	Innate	1/2/3/4	Hard	—	10	1 lb	Does Damage
Dagger - Stone	Innate	1/2/3/3	Hard	—	7	1 1/4 lbs	Does Damage
Dagger - Wood	Innate	1/2/2/3	Hard	—	5	1/2 lb	Does Damage
Darts	Innate	1/2/2/3	Hard	4 yards	6	1/3 lb	Does Damage
Drummer's Hammer	Innate	5/10/15/20	Hard	—	40	75 lbs	Does Damage
Flail	Learned	2/4/6/8	Hard	—	16	8 lbs	Does Damage
Great Sword	Innate	3/6/9/12	Hard	—	24	14 lbs	Does Damage
Great Sword - Crystal	Innate	3/6/10/13	Hard	—	29	10 lbs	Does Damage
Great Sword - Wood	Innate	2/5/8/10	Hard	—	14	9 lbs	Does Damage
Hatchet	Innate	2/3/4/5	Hard	3 yards	10	3 lbs	HTH or Thrown
Hatchet - Stone	Innate	1/2/3/5	Hard	3 yards	9	4 lbs	HTH or Thrown
Hawk's Claws	Innate	1/2/3/4	Hard	—	8	1 lb	Does Damage
Heavy Crossbow	Learned	3/6/9/12	Hard	40 yards	12	13 lbs	Fires Projectiles
Javelin	Innate	1/2/4/6	Hard	8 yards	12	4 lbs	Thrown weapon
Knife	Innate	1/1/2/3	Hard	5 yards	6	1/2 lb	HTH or Thrown
Knife - Crystal	Innate	1/2/3/3	Hard	5 yards	8	1/4 lb	HTH or Thrown
Lance	Learned	2/4/8/12	Hard	—	24	15 lbs	Must be mounted
Light Crossbow	Learned	2/4/6/8	Hard	30 yards	10	5 lbs	Fires projectiles
Long Bow	Learned	3/6/9/12	Hard	40 yards	8	6 lbs	Fires projectiles
Long Sword	Innate	2/4/7/9	Hard	—	18	6 lbs	Does Damage
Long Sword - Crystal	Innate	2/5/7/10	Hard	—	22	5 lbs	Does Damage
Long Sword - Wood	Innate	2/3/6/8	Hard	—	11	5 lbs	Does Damage
Mace	Innate	2/3/4/6	Hard	—	12	5 lbs	Does Damage
Mace - Stone	Innate	2/3/5/7	Hard	—	12	7 lbs	Does Damage
Man-catcher	Learned	1/2/3/6	Hard	—	10	12 lbs	Entangles: Grapple roll
Morningstar	Innate	2/3/5/8	Hard	—	16	15 lbs	Does Damage
Net	Learned	0/0/0/1	Soft	2 Yards	2	3 lbs	Entangles (TN 9 to escape)
Quarterstaff - Wood	Innate	1/2/3/5	Hard/Soft	—	10	6-8 lbs	Does Damage
Rear Nets	Learned	0/0/1/2	Soft	3 yards	3	3 lbs	Entangles (TN 9 to escape)
Short Sword	Innate	2/3/4/6	Hard	—	12	3 lbs	Does Damage
Short Sword - Crystal	Innate	2/4/5/7	Hard	—	16	2 1/2 lbs	Does Damage
Short Sword - Wood	Innate	2/2/3/5	Hard	—	8	2 lbs	Does Damage
Short Bow	Learned	2/3/4/6	Hard	30 yards	6	3 - 4 lbs	Fires projectiles
Spear	Innate	2/4/6/8	Hard	5 yards	16	6 lbs	HTH or Thrown
Spear - Crystal	Innate	2/4/7/9	Hard	5 yards	18	5 lbs	HTH or Thrown
Spear - Wood	Innate	2/3/5/7	Hard	5 yards	12	4 lbs	HTH or Thrown
Stiletto	Innate	1/1/3/6	Hard	—	10	1/2 lb	Does Damage
Throw-Globes	Innate	1/2/2/3	Hard	5 yards	4	1/2 lb	Fires Projectiles
Throwing Axe	Learned	2/3/4/6	Hard	5 yards	12	3 lbs	HTH or Thrown
Throwing Axe - Crystal	Innate	2/3/5/7	Hard	5 yards	16	2 lbs	HTH or Thrown
Throwing Axe - Wood	Innate	2/3/4/5	Hard	5 yards	8	2 lbs	HTH or Thrown
Throwing Wedge	Innate	1/2/2/3	Hard	5 yards	5	1/6 lb	Does Damage
War Hammer	Innate	2/5/8/10	Hard	—	20	15 lbs	Does Damage
War Beads	Learned	0/1/2/4	Hard	—	6	2 lbs	Entangles, enables Throw
War Club - Wood	Innate	2/3/4/6	Hard	—	12	5 lbs	Does Damage
Web-Stick *	Innate	1/2/3/4	Soft	—	9	4 lbs	Entangles (TN 9 to escape)
Whip	Learned	1/1/2/5	Soft	2 yards (max)	12	4 lbs	Does Damage

PROVIDENCE

Providence ArmourChart

Name	Armour	Weight	Parry	BPV	Cover bonus
Buckler	1	1 lb	+2 to roll	6	+1
Chain mail	5/7/2	35	—	15	—
Leather Armour	3/2/3	8 - 10 lbs	—	10	—
Padded Armour	2/1/3	3 lbs	—	7	—
Plate Mail	8/10/5	60-80 lbs	—	25	—
Plate Mail - Crystal	10/12/8	45 - 55 lbs	—	35	—
Plate Mail - Resin	6/9/4	40 - 50 lbs	—	20	—
Plate Mail - Wood	5/8/5	45 - 55 lbs	—	17	—
Ram-Bucklers - Resin	3	8 lbs	+5 to roll	9	+3
Ring Mail	4/5/3	15 - 25 lbs	—	13	—
Ring Mail - Crystal	6/7/5	10 - 20 lbs	—	18	—
Ring Mail - Resin	4/4/3	10 - 20 lbs	—	10	—
Scale Mail	5/5/4	20 - 40 lbs	—	13	—
Shield - Crystal	4	5 - 8 lbs	+6 to roll	12	+4
Shield - Wood	2	7 - 10 lbs	+6 to roll	6	+4
Shield	3	8 - 12 lbs	+6 to roll	8	+4
Shield - Resin	2	5 - 8 lbs	+6 to roll	7	+4
Shred Guards	1	4 lbs	—	8	—
Target Shield	2	3 lbs	+4 to roll	6	+2
Target Shield - Crystal	3	2 lbs	+4 to roll	8	+2
Target Shield - Resin	2	2 lbs	+4 to roll	5	+2
Target Shield - Wood	2	3 lbs	+4 to roll	5	+2
Tower Shield	4	15 - 25 lbs	+8 to roll	12	+6
Tower Shield - Crystal	6	12 - 17 lbs	+8 to roll	16	+6
Tower Shield - Wood	3	14 - 20 lbs	+8 to roll	8	+6
Tower Shield - Resin	3	12 - 17 lbs	+8 to roll	10	+6

Name - Name of the weapon or armour.

Skill - What category of skill the weapon skill is.

Damage - The amount of damage, taking into account the amount of success the wielder has had.

Type - Explains what type of damage the weapon does.

Range - The short range of the weapon.

BPV - The BPV of the weapon. Anything more than this will break the weapon.

Weight - The weight of the object.

Effect - A short description of how the weapon affects the target.

Armour - The amount of damage the armour will protect against. There are three categories, how well it does all around / how well it does against edged weapons / how well it does against blunt. The last two categories can be ignored if the GM is using the basic rules.

Parry - This is the bonus to your parry roll with armour that can be parried with (ie: shields).

Bonus - Shields also provide a certain amount of cover. This causes the wielder to be harder to hit, whether the character is attempting to Parry or not, as cover normally does. This column gives the increase to the Target Number an opponent has when trying to hit someone carrying a shield.

* The Web-Stick has 6 charges that can be used before it must be refilled. Additional charges can be purchased.

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PROVIDENCE



PROVIDENCE

Character Information

Name: _____		Troupial: _____	
Sex: _____	Height: _____	Caste: _____	
Age: _____	Weight: _____	Occupation: _____	

Characteristics

☐ Coordination (/) ☐ Agility ☐ Reflexes ☐ Dexterity	☐ Strength (/) ☐ Build ☐ Fitness ☐ Might	☐ Constitution (/) ☐ Health ☐ Resistance ☐ Stamina
☐ Intelligence (/) ☐ Logic ☐ Memory ☐ Wits	☐ Willpower (/) ☐ Determination ☐ Drive ☐ Focus	☐ Psyche (/) ☐ Stability ☐ Tolerance ☐ Vitality
☐ Appearance (/) ☐ Beauty ☐ Voice	☐ Charisma (/) ☐ Poise ☐ Presence	☐ Perception (/) ☐ Observation ☐ Senses
☐ Aura (/)	☐ Wyrd = (Aura+Con+8) x 3	☐ Endurance = (Con) x 4
☐ Body ☐ True Body	☐ Initiative Base	☐ / / / Movement

Skills

cost	Skill	Level	Type	Stat	cost	Skill	Level	Type	Stat
(/)					(/)				
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BODY	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3
Slight	1-20	1-19	1-18	1-17	1-16	1-15	1-14	1-13	1-12	1-11	1-10	1-9	1-8	1-7	1-6	1-5	1-4	1-3	1-2	1	0	0	0	0
Grave	21-40	20-38	19-36	18-34	17-32	16-30	15-28	14-26	13-24	12-22	11-20	10-18	9-16	8-14	7-12	6-10	5-8	4-6	3-4	2	1	0	0	0
Devastating	41-60	39-57	37-54	35-51	33-48	31-45	29-42	27-39	25-36	23-33	21-30	19-27	17-24	15-21	13-18	11-15	9-12	7-9	5-6	3	2	1	0	0
Dead/KO	61+	58+	55+	52+	49+	46+	43+	40+	37+	34+	31+	28+	25+	22+	19+	16+	13+	10+	7+	4+	3+	2+	1+	0
Overkill	121+	115+	109+	103+	97+	91+	85+	79+	73+	67+	61+	55+	49+	43+	37+	31+	25+	19+	13+	7+	5+	3+	2+	1+

☐ Current Body	☐ Slight Wounds (-1 Die)	☐ Grave Wounds (-2 Dice)	☐ Devastating Wounds (-4 Dice)
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Character Sheet



PROVIDENCE



Magic (Powers or Spells)

cost	Power/Spell	Level	Description	Wird Cost
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Traits

cost	Trait	Description/Effect	cost	Trait	Description/Effect
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Notes



Character Sheet



PROVINCES OF MOWORIND

The map is a circular representation of the island of Morrowind, enclosed within a thick, braided border. The map is divided into several provinces, each labeled with a name on a scroll. The provinces are: Hoonfall, Greenpebb, Pines, Excess, Stonefire, Morning Bridge, The Tree, The Great Beech, Bonehouse, Pincer Swamps, The Crystalline Bridge, Water Sister, Tynon, and Expanse. The map is surrounded by various creatures and symbols, including a large eagle at the top, a dragon at the bottom left, and a phoenix at the bottom right. The map is also decorated with various symbols, including a compass rose, a sun, and a moon.

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KNOWLEDGE IS WEALTH
- ORION -

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