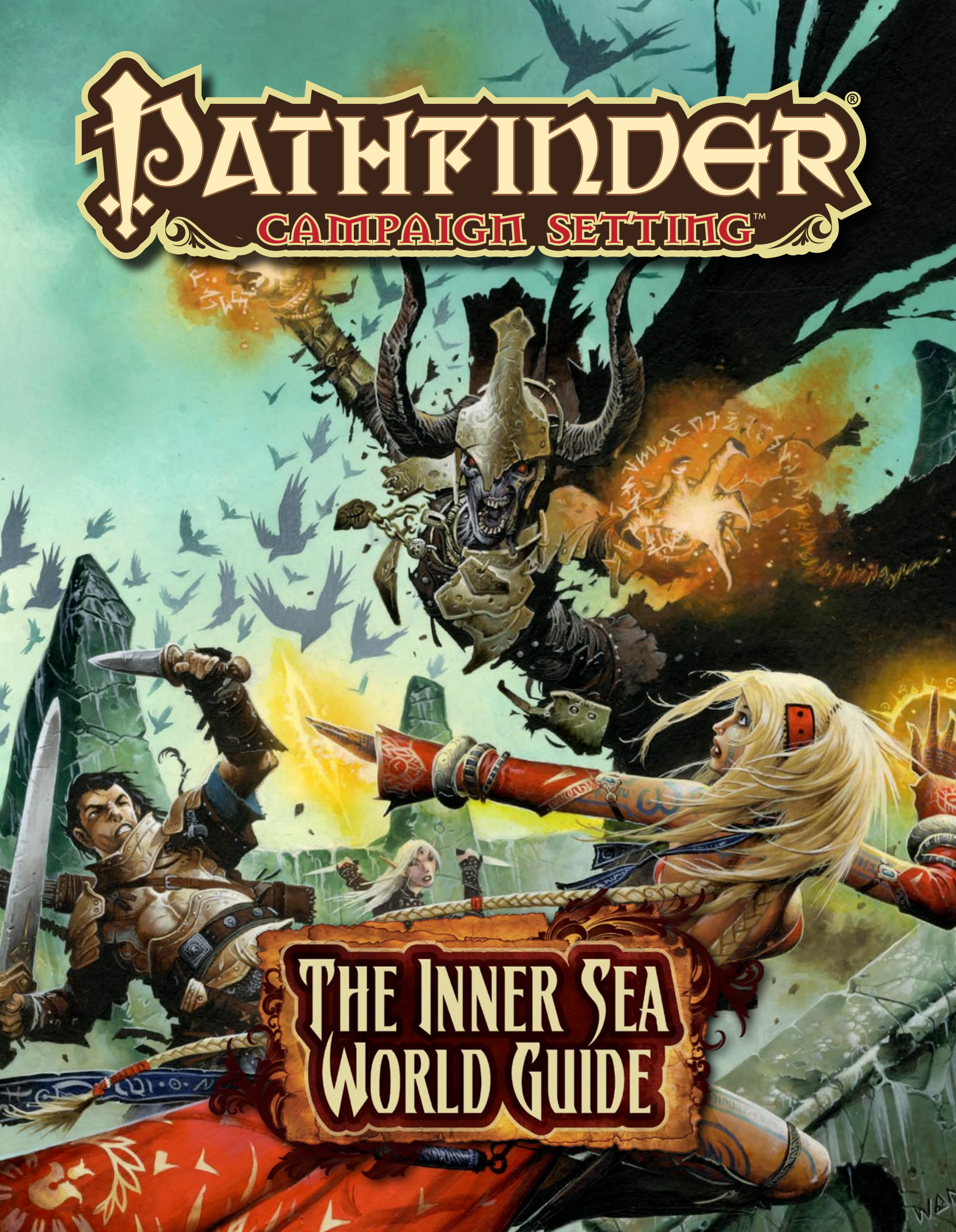
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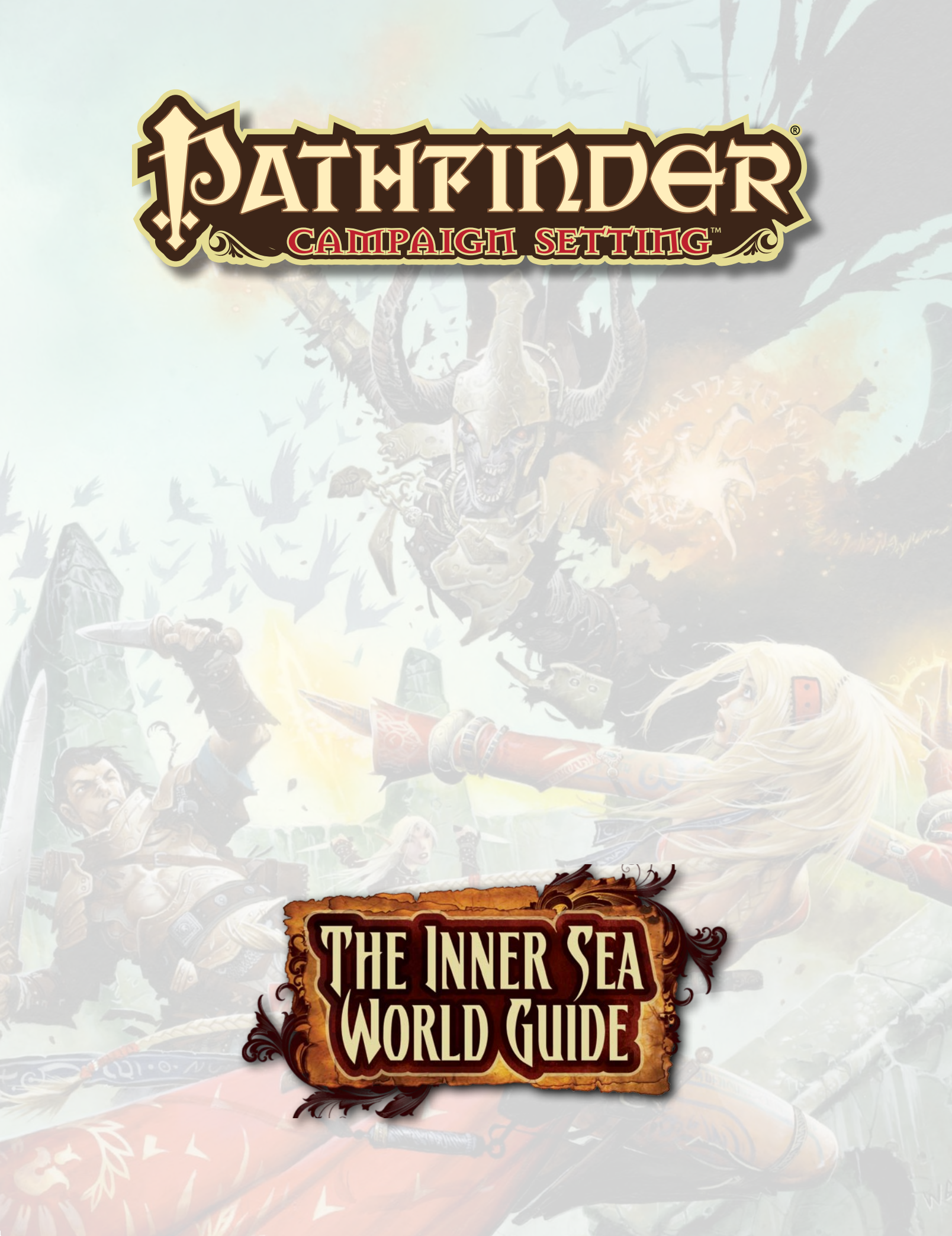
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The Inner Sea World Guide

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Welcome to the Inner Sea

Just over a century ago, the god of humanity died.

His name was Aroden, and he not only lifted humanity out of the ashes and terror of the Age of Darkness (an age that followed the meteoric cataclysm known as Earthfall), but founded the greatest city in the world—Absalom. He defeated the foul wizard-king Tar-Baphon. He drove back the demon lord of the Locust Host from the nation of Sarkoris. He eventually left the world to join the divine host after setting humanity on course for a great destiny. Prophecies said that when humanity was ready to ascend back to the pinnacle it once held in the ancient times of Old Azlant, Aroden would return to the world to usher in a new Age of Glory.

But instead of returning at the appointed time, Aroden, the god of humanity, died.

The death of the god of humanity marked the beginning of a new age. The previous ages had names to inspire and bolster the spirit—the Age of Destiny, the Age of Enthronement. But this new age is not a time of plenty. It is the Age of Lost Omens, for if a god cannot fulfill his own prophecy, what chance have any others of coming true? Aroden's death scarred the world with storms and madness. To the north, the world split open and the festering armies of the Abyss spilled out through a tear in reality known today as the Worldwound. To the south, the idyllic gulf of Abendego was consumed by a perpetual hurricane whose winds and waves drowned nations. And in the heartland of the Inner Sea region, where Aroden had been prophesied to return, civil war erupted and thousands died before the diabolic House of Thrune seized power.

The Age of Lost Omens has now entered its second century, and in the 11 decades since Aroden's death, the world has become a darker place. A place where ancient, sinful wizards known as runelords threaten to waken from 10,000 years of slumber. A place where nations are ruled by criminals or devil worshipers or worse. A place where once-great empires now wallow in self-indulgent paranoia or bloody, endless revolutions. A place where nothing is foretold, and anything can happen.

A place in need of heroes like never before—the Inner Sea of Golarion.

The Inner Sea Region

The Inner Sea region is the trading and cultural hub of two mighty continents—Avistan and Garund. At the heart of the Inner Sea's warm waters stands Absalom, the City at the Center of the World. Founded by the living god Aroden, this ancient island city-state has survived nearly 5 millennia of toppled kingdoms to thrive as a haven of merchants and scoundrels. In the west, the Inner Sea passes through the narrow Arch of Aroden, a tenaciously contested strait named for the monolithic, ruined stone bridge connecting the two continents at their closest point of approach. To the east, the Inner Sea opens into the vast Obari Ocean.

The two continents that frame the Inner Sea are very different from one another. Avistan, to the north, is the seat of once-mighty empires like Cheliax and Taldor, and site of the ruins of Lost Thassilon in the frontier realm of Varisia. South, across the wide waterway of the Inner Sea, lie the secrets of Garund, a sprawling continent of arid deserts and fecund jungles, where the mighty pharaohs of Osirion emerged from the Age of Darkness to chart a new destiny for humanity.

Generally speaking, civilization centers on the Inner Sea, with barbarism and savagery taking hold where the sea's refining influence wanes. Exceptions exist, of course, and the scattered lights of civilization stand out in the dark wildernesses and savage frontiers far to the north in Avistan and well to the south in Garund. Likewise, dark, wild areas exist within otherwise civilized lands close to the Inner Sea. Mercenaries and would-be heroes seek fortune and glory throughout the Inner Sea region, uncovering lost treasures, pacifying terrible dangers, and finding ignoble deaths in every unclaimed wilderness, kingdom, and empire of Avistan and Garund.

North of Avistan stretches the Crown of the World, a frozen landmass that links the continent with Tian-Xia. Where the two meet, hardy barbarism tends to dominate. Even in northern kingdoms that strive for advancements in civilization, such as the Lands of the Linnorm Kings and Realm of the Mammoth Lords, the use and knowledge of arcane magic remains relatively unknown and certainly mistrusted. Even Mendev, a relatively advanced nation filled with pious (and not-so-pious) crusaders, tends to shy away from arcane magic.

About This Edition

This is the third incarnation of the Pathfinder campaign setting—the first being the slim, 64-page *Gazetteer* and the second being one of Paizo's first hardcover books, the 256-page *Pathfinder Chronicles Campaign Setting*. Both of those books were published before the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* came to be, so when those books sold out, updating the setting to work seamlessly with our new rules was a no-brainer. And of course, that gave us another chance to tinker.

The result is the book you are holding—*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The Inner Sea World Guide*. Not only have we updated all the rules, but we've added a lot of new content as well. This book is 64 pages longer than its predecessor, but there are more than 64 pages of new content. How did we manage that? By removing outdated material (such as examinations of the 11 core classes and some of their variant abilities—a topic now covered in detail in the Pathfinder RPG line of rulebooks—and presentations of additional options that are now core parts of the game) and by consolidating information elsewhere.

Through it all, the goal was to add to Golarion, not remove anything from it. If you've been a frequent visitor to Golarion in the past, you'll find the world you've come to know in this book. A few dates have changed here and there and some minor elements have been replaced, but by and large, the Inner Sea region remains the same place you have all come to know.

There's just *more* of it to know, now!

Magic becomes more common in the southern nations of Avistan, particularly the devil-binding empire of Cheliax and its former colonies and vassal states. The ruling caste of shadow-haunted Nidal is suffused with forbidden magical forces, while the elves of Kyonin practice alien rites that date back millennia. On Avistan's rocky northwestern shore, the Varisian frontier boasts the mostly intact ruins and lost magics of ancient Thassilon—a 10,000-year-gone empire ruled by sadistic wizard-kings known as runelords.

Use of magic and the appearance of the fantastic and bizarre are much more commonplace on the southern continent of Garund. In the deserts of Osirion stand countless monuments to nearly forgotten pharaohs, godlike beings who raised their people from barbarism to imperial heights. Along the eastern coast lie the remnants of Nex and Geb, two kingdoms created to serve rival wizard-kings in the distant past. Today, Geb relies on animated corpses to harvest food for its living inhabitants, while the courts of Nex boast the most advanced and least understood schools of arcane learning on the planet. Between these former enemies stretches a magic-dead tract of desert known as the Mana Wastes, within which exists a city-state reliant on

technology and advanced engineering in a world dependant on the supernatural. Deep in the heart of Garund, across the Shattered Range mountains, ancient ruins of unknown origin rise out of wild, uncivilized jungles. Scattered throughout the mountains surrounding the vast jungles of the Mwangi Expanse lie the ruins of once-miraculous flying cities of the Shory, long since crashed into the rocky slopes where they now rest.

Each of these fantastic locales makes a fitting backdrop for the thrilling adventures of a Pathfinder Roleplaying Game campaign. The world of Golarion and its myriad secrets stand ready for you and your players to explore.

The Pathfinder Society

The greatest heroes of the Inner Sea region record their victories in an ongoing series of chapbooks known as the *Pathfinder Chronicles*. The amazing, often unbelievable tales bound in these oft-traded volumes tell of lost gods and sunken continents, of creatures older than the world itself that fell from the stars in the eldest of days, and of the fantastic ruins they left behind.

The authors of these tales belong to the Pathfinder Society, a loose-knit group of explorers, archaeologists, and adventurers who span the globe in search of lost knowledge and ancient treasures. Some seek to unlock the secret history of the world, piecing together the past one fragment at a time. Others are in it for the money, filtering priceless antiquities through a series of unscrupulous merchants to enrich themselves beyond measure. Still other Pathfinders take up the trade because they find the thrill of risking their lives more addicting and exhilarating than any vice or drug.

A shadowy inner circle of masked leaders known as the Decemvirate rules the Pathfinder Society from the bustling metropolis of Absalom, the so-called City at the Center of the World. There, in a huge fortress complex called the Grand Lodge, the Ten manage a vast organization of agents spread throughout the Inner Sea region and beyond.

These officers, known as venture-captains, coordinate teams of Pathfinders in their assigned regions, tipping them off to ancient legends, passing along newly discovered maps, and supporting their efforts in the field. Venture-captains are an ideal "in-world" source of adventure leads, making them indispensable NPCs in your Pathfinder campaign.

That doesn't necessarily make every venture-captain an unswerving ally, however. The ultimate goals of the Decemvirate are inscrutable, and not even the venture-captains understand the full picture of what the Pathfinder Society does with all of the information it collects.

Each venture-captain oversees the activities of several tightly knit groups of Pathfinder field agents, who conduct much of the exploration and adventures that fuel the society as a whole. Perhaps your player characters are one such group, moving from locale to locale to discover the lost secrets of dead civilizations and the wondrous treasures they left behind.

Pathfinder agents provide detailed written reports of their exploits to their venture-captains, who then forward the most compelling records to the Grand Lodge in Absalom for consideration by the Decemvirate. Periodically, the masked leaders of the society collect and publish the greatest exploits in new volumes of the *Pathfinder Chronicles*, which they send back to their venture-captains for distribution to field agents. Whenever a new volume of the *Pathfinder Chronicles* hits the field, dozens of adventurers flock to the sites described therein for further exploration and adventure.

Although they belong to the same society, individual groups of Pathfinder agents often find themselves at cross-purposes in the field, particularly if each team reports to a different venture-captain. Competition between Pathfinders rarely results in outright battle, but certain agents aren't above collapsing passages, triggering ancient traps, or selling out their rivals to hostile locals—all in the name of friendly competition, of course.

Player characters in a Pathfinder RPG campaign need not be members of the Pathfinder Society in order for the organization to play a critical role in their adventuring lives. Although the volumes of the *Pathfinder Chronicles* themselves are intended only for the eyes of Pathfinder agents, there are unaffiliated adventurers, crooked scholars, and ambitious antiquarians who track down stray volumes and use them as maps to adventure. Even the oldest volumes, whose subjects have been plundered again and again, often contain hints leading to undiscovered treasure. Beyond these books, the PCs might also encounter a Pathfinder group in the field, setting up the society as lifelong antagonists or allies.

Using This Book

This book provides a broad overview of the Inner Sea region of the world of Golarion, the official campaign setting of the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game. It's a handy resource for players and Game Masters looking to flesh out the world beyond a given adventure, and it contains hundreds of compelling hooks leading to even greater adventures. Paizo will fill in some of these blanks as the years go by, but others are here for you to explore in your own campaigns.

The Inner Sea region features a staggering array of nations, wildernesses, societies, secrets, and wonders—the question for the new arrival in this region is simple: where to begin? We've made an attempt to present the information in this book in as logical a format as possible, and try to introduce topics before they're mentioned casually, yet as with any work of this nature, there's a lot of new information to absorb. So don't be afraid on your first exploration of the Inner Sea to just flip through the book. The art and maps are intended to convey the themes of this campaign setting as much as the words are, and if you see something that piques your fancy, don't be afraid to stop and read!

The Inner Sea Region

1

Races

The hyenas' laughter was indistinguishable from their master's. The gnoll's lips pulled up in a canine grin as he yanked the slave upright by his iron collar.

"Who's the dog now?" he asked.

The human didn't answer, just stared back in mute defiance. A furred hand drew a long dagger.

Kyra could wait no longer. With one fluid movement, she drew both scimitars and leapt from the windowsill. The striped canvas of the fruitseller's awning flexed once underfoot, and then she was airborne...

Races of Golarion

In the distant north, where the endless cold of the Crown of the World meets the farthest frigid reaches of Avistan, hardened and fair-skinned barbarian tribes rely on their own strength of body and will to survive. Far to the south, many thousands of miles away in the blasted lands of southeastern Garund, dark-complexioned sophisticates pore through thick eldritch tomes, ever seeking more advanced magics. In between these two extremes of culture and climate lie many dangers and mysteries, as well as countless varieties of people, human and otherwise.

From semi-nomadic Varisians to bloody revolutionaries in Galt, and from the grim peasants of Ustalav to the genie-wrestling monks of Jalmeray, the broad range of peoples who inhabit the Inner Sea region of Golarion represent a wide swath of human cultures and individualism. And all of these many and varied folk share their lands with a half-dozen other common races: industrious dwarves, beautiful elves, curious gnomes, eager half-elves, burly half-orcs, and friendly halflings.

Yet despite all these residents of the lands, most of the regions remain dangerous wilderness, deadly to the unprepared and frightening to the helpless. Fortunately for the many civilizations of the region, though, brave and hardy individuals constantly answer the calls to exploration, conquest, and adventure.

Here, then, is your chance to step up and make a name for yourself in the world of Golarion—or, at least, to die a noble death in the quest for fortune and glory. If you seek to seal your place among the heroes of this dangerous land, to rise above the masses and achieve immortality in name and deed, then welcome, friend, to your destiny!

Core Races

The most expansive and populous of Golarion's races are known as the core races—humans, dwarves, elves, gnomes, and halflings. Half-elves and half-orcs, while technically not quite so common as many of the world's other races, are also considered part of the core races because of their close ties with humanity.

On Golarion, humanity is further divided into many different, unique ethnicities. While each human ethnicity is identical so far as rules are concerned, they have wildly different appearances, histories, and customs. Twelve human ethnicities are detailed on the following pages, followed by entries on the six non-human core races. Any of these races and ethnicities are appropriate for play in an Inner Sea region campaign.

Other Humanoid Races

In addition to the core races of Golarion, many other humanoid races, some civilized, some savage, can be found throughout the Inner Sea region. These races rarely fit in well with human society, but they share one thing in common with the core races—they lack racial Hit Dice, and as such could work quite well as player characters. Some of these races may have abilities beyond those possessed by the core races, such as the ability to breathe water, the ability to fly, or the possession of exceptional spell resistance—these races are denoted by an asterisk (*) on the list below, and caution should be used when allowing them to serve as player characters.

Each of the following races is presented with a list of regions where their members commonly dwell—if you would like more information about how these races function on Golarion, seek out the appropriate regional entries in Chapter 2 of this book.

Note that there exist many more powerful humanoid races on Golarion (such as lizardfolk and giants), but since these races all have racial Hit Dice, they are less well suited to be player characters. They are detailed in Chapter 7 of this book on pages 304–305.

Drow* (Darklands): Those few elves who stayed on Golarion to face Earthfall (see page 33) fled underground and became the drow—"accursed" in Elven. These twisted, tainted beings exemplify the worst traits of elvenkind: capriciousness, cruelty, arrogance, and disloyalty (see page 114 of the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*).

Duergar* (Darklands): When the dwarves sought out the surface world so long ago, some remained behind in the abandoned underground cities. Over the ages, these dwarves have grown cruel and sadistic—they became duergar (see page 117 of the *Bestiary*).

Gillmen* (Absalom, Oceans): Perhaps the true inheritors of the ancient Azlanti legacy (see page 12), these water-breathing humanoids often trade with port cities. Some believe that the gillmen are a sort of missing link between humanity and merfolk, while others preach that the gillmen have a hidden agenda and should not be trusted by those who breathe air (see page 310).

Goblins (Isger, Varisia): Goblins are insane, destructive parasites on greater societies. These diminutive humanoids make use of the refuse and trash such civilizations leave behind. Goblins are singularly eager in the pursuit of sadism and cruelty. Craven and weak individually, they can become quite dangerous in large numbers—both to others and themselves (see page 156 of the *Bestiary*).

Hobgoblins (Isger): Forged in a forgotten era from their diminutive and more disorganized goblin cousins, hobgoblins are a militaristic force responsible for one of the Inner Sea region's bloodiest conflicts. Today, their numbers remain limited after numerous wars they've waged and lost, yet they are a fecund people, and it's only a matter of time before the next hobgoblin army might appear (see page 175 of the *Bestiary*).

Kobolds (Andoran): Cunning and devious, the fecund kobolds are tenacious trapsmiths. Each tribe's bravery directly correlates with its numbers and the cruelty of its capricious king. Kobolds are eager to appear strong and powerful, but often are just as eager to scatter and flee from more powerful foes (see page 183 of the *Bestiary*).

Merfolk* (Oceans): Strange and beautiful, merfolk dwell at the edges of society amid the waves of the sea. Feared by some sailors as bad omens or evil aquatic spirits but sought after by others as objects of beauty or desire, merfolk are enigmatic and prefer to avoid most contact with land-dwelling creatures (see page 204 of the *Bestiary*).

Orcs (Belkzen): These tribes of rough and savage humanoids were driven to the surface by the dwarves during the Age of Darkness, and have since been relegated to the harsh and barren corners of the world, surviving primarily by raiding other races (see page 222 of the *Bestiary*).

Strix* (Cheliax): The winged strix are the subject of many a grisly tale and gruesome rumor—yet the strix believe they do only what they must to survive in a world where they are vilified and feared (see page 313).

Svirfneblin* (Darklands): Not all the races that dwell in the Darklands are steeped in cruelty. The svirfneblin, known also as deep gnomes, see themselves as a bastion of defense against the chaos and danger of the realm below, yet to assume their intentions are honorable and good would be a mistake (see page 261 of the *Bestiary*).

Tengus (The Shackles, The Sodden Lands): These avian humanoids, displaced from regions across the sea, live as best they can amid the worst society has to offer, yet somehow manage to prosper. Considered thieves and scoundrels, most tengus do little to combat this perception—they simply enjoy the attention (see page 263 of the *Bestiary*).

Native Outsiders

In addition to the races listed above, six additional humanoidlike races can be found dwelling on Golarion. Touched by magical energies or strange realities from other planes, these native outsiders lack racial Hit Dice but are slightly more powerful than the standard core races, possessing unusual resistances or strange spell-like abilities. As with the asterisked humanoid races above, you should carefully consider the implications to game balance before you allow any of the following races as PCs.

Aasimars (Andoran, Varisia): The aasimars are known also as "angelkin," "celestials," or "godtouched." They are humans graced with the blood of good-aligned outsiders—be they archons, angels, agathions, or azatas. Yet despite their sacred legacies, aasimars are often ostracized, taken advantage of, or even feared by humans too ignorant to accept such grace and beauty (see page 7 of the *Bestiary*).

Genie Kin (Qadira): Four races of genie kin exist—the fiery ifrits, the stony oreads, the ephemeral sylphs, and the aquatic undines. Just as aasimars and tieflings are touched by the outside, so are these four races—yet their otherworldly lineage comes from the elemental planes or, more commonly, from genies who have mingled with humans. Relatively rare, genie kin are typically loners who either hide their unusual features to blend in with society, or revel in their oddities and use them to inspire fear or admiration in others (see pages 160, 205, 258, and 275 of *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2*).

Tieflings (Cheliax, Worldwound): The stain of a fiendish lineage, be it from a demonic infestation, a diabolic ancestor, or any other evil incursion into a human's bloodline, can result in tiefling offspring. These twisted and oft-despised folk are also known as "hellspawn," "pitborn," or simply as "fiendlings"—but regardless of how they are known, they bear the stigma of their fiendish blood in their shape and soul (see page 264 of the *Bestiary*).

Reading the Race Entries

The entries on the following pages provide a more in-depth examination of Golarion's core races and human ethnicities. Each entry includes a short stat block that summarizes key bits of information for each race or ethnicity. Full game information for the races can be found in Chapter 2 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*.

Languages: This line lists what languages members of the race or ethnicity automatically know when they begin play. In many cases, they know more than one language—Common and their ethnic or racial tongue. Note that these automatic languages generally only apply to PCs—it's not uncommon to encounter NPCs who might lack knowledge of the Common tongue and only speak their native languages. The bonus languages remain unchanged from the *Core Rulebook*.

Favored Religions: This line lists the most commonly worshiped deities or most commonly followed philosophies by members of the race or ethnicity. Of course, specific individuals of any race can worship any deity they wish—this line merely represents the norm.

Favored Regions: While all of the core races are widespread enough that individuals can be found living almost anywhere, this line lists the regions where the race or ethnicity holds power or with which it is strongly associated.

Names: Examples of male and female names are given here. In some cases, additional example names (such as family names) are given as well.

Appearance: This line gives a short description of the typical appearance of a member of the race or ethnicity.

Azlanti

Languages: Azlanti, Common
Favored Regions: Any
Favored Religions: Any
Female Names: Aliandara, Amesducias, Aswaithe, Emalliandra, Estrude, Iaome, Iomestria, Ommarra, Oviento, Udarrin, Ulionestria
Male Names: Akorian, Alamander, Arioch, Ellismus, Erodel, Illsmus, Iogorian, Ixiolander, Olhas, Ostarian, Othollo, Udhomar, Ureste
Appearance: Azlanti are a regal, beautiful folk with handsome features and an aloof demeanor. Their skin tone ranges from olive to pale white, and their dark hair ranges from deep brown or dark red to black. The Azlanti often have expressive brows, and men often have slightly receded hairlines resulting in a sort of widow's peak. One physical characteristic—a deep purple eye color—is seen today as absolute proof of strong Azlanti heritage.

The Azlanti are an unusual case among human ethnicities, in that they may well be extinct. Long ago, the bulk of humanity was represented by the proud citizens of the continental empire of Azlant, but the empire's collapse at the onset of the Age of Darkness (see page 33) brought an end to this era. During the thousands of years that followed, the Azlanti people continued to dwindle in number. Most living today who claim to be Azlanti are, in fact, Chelaxians or Taldans who, while they may be able to trace lineage back many generations to full-blooded Azlanti ancestors, are no longer pureblood members of this ancient race. The general consensus is that Aroden was the Last Azlanti, and with his death at the onset of the Age of Lost Omens, this proud ethnicity died as well.

The Azlanti legacy lives on not just in the sunlit kingdoms of the surface world, but also in the oceans and caverns below. In the seas, gillmen may be the true inheritors of Azlanti culture and civilization; this aquatic humanoid race's links to strange ancients is obvious in their shape and ability to breathe water. In the Darklands, Azlanti blood can be found in the degenerate morlocks, subhuman monsters who remember their time on the surface only in the form of warped oral tales preserved by their shamans.

The exact nature of Azlant's culture eludes historians, but certain elements of the empire's art continue to thrive in the modern day. Genuine Azlanti jewelry commands high prices in the markets of the Inner Sea, and each new discovery can trigger new trends among the high society. The interlaced patternwork of Azlanti artisans lives on among weavers, stonecarvers, and tattooists, and the Azlanti high cupola architectural style inspires most of the monumental structures of Andoran's visionary architectural orders.

Much of what is known about the culture of Azlant is conjecture based upon artifacts or fragmentary historical records rescued from ruins more than 10,000 years old. Modern humans claiming Azlanti descent often cloak themselves in the trappings of the fallen empire, hoping to attain some measure of its lost greatness. Because those remnants of Old Azlanti art discovered to date often depict regal robes of crimson or deep green, modern would-be Azlanti tend to garb themselves in finery of those hues. Likewise, slavery is known to have existed in the lost empire, so would-be Azlanti see the ownership of slaves as part of their ancient birthright. Such attitudes are not popular in abolitionist Andoran, though it fashions itself after Old Azlant in architecture and many elements of philosophy. Here, as elsewhere, those with the strongest claims of Azlanti blood are often members of the old guard, more interested in tradition and honor than in blazing new trails or embracing modern ideas.

Today, Taldans and Chelaxians who claim Azlanti blood tend to favor the naming conventions of their current culture, but those wishing to strengthen their connection to past glories often adopt names discovered in ancient Azlanti manuscripts, wall inscriptions, or the few scant bits of history and art that survive to the modern day. Azlanti names usually begin with vowels, and neither males nor females adopt surnames. A true Azlanti must make his one name important enough to last in memory and history.

Pureblooded Azlanti

Although technically the last of the pureblooded Azlanti was Aroden, Golarion is nothing if not a magical place. Ancient Azlanti could be introduced into a game via a number of different methods, such as by being released from a temporal stasis effect, restored to freedom from an imprisonment, or even resurrected by powerful artifacts or ancient magic capable of restoring life to someone thousands of years dead. There could even be pockets of pureblooded Azlanti dwelling still in remote and well-hidden locations.

Unlike a typical human, a pureblooded ancient Azlanti gains a +2 bonus to all six ability scores. Such powerful humans can become player characters only with the permission of the GM.

Chelaxians

Languages: Common
Favored Regions: Andoran, Cheliax, Galt, Isger, Molthune, Nirmathas, Varisia
Favored Religions: Abadar, Asmodeus, Erastil, Iomedae, Zon-Kuthon, diabolism
Family Names: Alazario, Albus, Ambusta, Baradin, Charthagnion, Crispin, Drovenge, Fullonna, Galonnica, Jeggare, Krupt, Leroung, Pindleloric, Ratarion, Rugatonn, Tauranor, Thrune, Voralius, Wardroxan, Wintrish
Female Names: Asmodia, Aspexia, Aula, Boudra, Chammady, Drulia, Imperia, Ileosa, Korva, Noravia, Novennia, Pavanna, Pontia, Quinta, Rulla, Valeria, Vibia
Male Names: Aerodus, Alexite, Gellius, Grachius, Gruckalus, Lurconarr, Manius, Marcellano, Morvius, Pavo, Pellius, Petronicus, Rutilus, Solangus, Ursion
Appearance: Chelaxians are the descendents of Azlanti refugees, whose blood mixed with that of pale-skinned Ulfen raider-merchants from the northern climes. As a result, they tend as a people toward dark hair, dark eyes, and pale skin—skin lighter than that of their duskier Taldan cousins. Red hair is often seen as evidence of strong ties to diabolic influence, which can be a boon or a curse depending on one's actual affiliation. Chelaxians have sharp features—narrow jaws, strong noses, and thin, arched eyebrows.

Chelaxians thrive on the southwestern portion of Avistan, and the exploits of their once-mighty empire spread Chelish seed throughout the Inner Sea region. Haughty, cultured, intelligent, ambitious, organized, and ruthless, Chelaxians have become a dynamic force in the world—not always to the world's benefit.

Chelaxians are by and large an industrious, aggressive, self-confident people with refined cultural taste, who combine the best and worst traits of the Taldan and Ulfen peoples. They have a flair for organization, and as a result, soon came to dominate their large corner of Avistan. They undercut the power of, and later successfully rebelled against, the elder Taldan Empire, and soon dominated the surrounding regions either directly or indirectly, forming the Empire of Cheliax. They even successfully removed the center of worship of the god Aroden from Taldor to their empire, and spread both north into Varisia and south into Garund in a series of conflicts known as the Everwar.

The inherent self-confidence of the Chelaxians, instilled from birth, served them well at the time of their favored god's death and the devastating civil war that followed (see "Cheliax," page 54). Modern Chelaxians believe they are inherently more capable of handling any situation than other races—this might take the form of either helpful, positive advice or arrogant dismissal of rival viewpoints. Their aggressive attitude causes them to persevere even in desperate straits.

This self-assurance is bolstered by a long, rich heritage and a love for learning, which manifests in theology, arcane studies, and mechanical invention. Chelaxian specialists are particularly capable in discovering, developing, and adapting new techniques revealed by their own research or learned from other cultures.

Chelaxians favor rich trappings both in their homes and on their persons. Popular outfits include velvet or silk gowns or doublets with rich brocades and lace trim, often covered with a cloak of a rare and valuable color or made from the hide of some uncommon creature. In more hostile climes, they prefer inscribed armor (often of dwarven manufacture) and filigreed weapons with rich and detailed provenances. This is not to say that, when money is tight or circumstances dictate, they are above traveling in civilian clothes or mixing with the common-folk in order to avoid difficult circumstances. They never sacrifice their bearing, however, and cannot hide their confidence.

Chelaxians venerate those heroes who embody their values: strength, nobility, ambition, and—most of all—success. Chelaxian heroes tend to be accepted into the larger community with titles, grants of land, and marriage into the more respectable houses. By the same token, those heroes deemed a threat to the local ruling class are watched and, if necessary, removed, either by sending them on quests to other areas or quietly, in the dead of night.

As a people, Chelaxians are serious about oaths, contracts, and promises, and they believe in playing by the rules, all the while checking for loopholes to best subvert those rules. They tend to organize themselves and to work together toward a common goal, taking direction from an established and recognized leader. Such a talent for organization has served well among the empire's legions in its conquests, though the nation is not immune to periodic rebellions and unrest. A common joke is that while Varisians might form an angry mob, Chelaxians instead create a well-ordered, disapproving queue.

Chelaxians have a common first name and a family name or surname. Family and lineage are very important to a Chelaxian, and those of particular power or legendary ability might gain a sobriquet as well (such as "the wise," "the open-handed," or "the rat-biter"). Chelaxian names tend to sound grandiose and learned, and are used in full when officially addressing them.

Garundi

Languages: Common, Osiriani
Favored Regions: Absalom, Geb, Katapesh, Nex, Osirion, Rahadoum, Thuvia
Favored Religions: Gozreh, Nethys, Pharasma, Sarenrae, Urgathoa
Female Names: Akina, Amara, Ashia, Deka, Eshe, Hasina, Jini, Kahina, Kamaria, Leyli, Malkia, Pendah, Raziya, Zalika
Male Names: Amare, Dahrehn, Jaali, Jawara, Jirani, Jiri, Kito, Melaku, Omari, Rani, Rubani, Sefu, Zahur, Zuri
Appearance: Typical Garundi are rather tall and solidly built, with high cheekbones, broad shoulders, and dark skin. Their dark (but often prematurely white) hair is often worn in long braids or other elaborate styles, often decorated with fine jewelry.

Garundi communities can be found throughout Garund's civilized nations (and even in many of the uncivilized ones). These people generally make for kind and caring neighbors, happy to pitch in to build a stronger community for everyone to enjoy. The complex interactions between individuals and families within Garundi communities are not well understood by outsiders.

There is no certain knowledge regarding the origins of the great and noble Garundi. While scholars agree that they originally came from the southern reaches of Garund, few can agree on exactly when this migration occurred or what prompted it. Despite some superficial similarities, there is no reliable evidence that the Garundi had any biological ties whatsoever to the Azlanti culture of the Inner Sea, although a great deal of evidence shows they were contemporaries.

What is certain is that Garundi are among the very oldest human cultures in the Inner Sea region, and many truly ancient ruins made by lost Garundi civilizations predate Earthfall. The notable ancient empires of Osirion, Shory, Jistka, and the Tekritanin League all brought civilization to northern Garund after the end of the Age of Darkness. These Garundi kingdoms were among the first to rise after a millennium of worldwide savagery, and they helped to drive civilization north into Avistan.

On the other hand, in between (and sometimes during) epochs of powerful civilizations and sprawling empires, the Garundi take to wandering. Garundi influences are felt across the entirety of the continent with which they share their ethnic name, and many scholars believe the Mwangi descend from very ancient Garundi wanderers.

Garundi culture tends to divide itself into relatively small clans (usually 15–20 families that travel together). These clans form the basic unit of Garundi society, unlike the cultures of Taldor and Cheliax, which are family based. In their hearts, Garundi are expansionists; a newly founded clan tends to travel until it discovers an area suitable for development, whereupon it immediately begins building a permanent settlement and establishes a strictly hierarchical community.

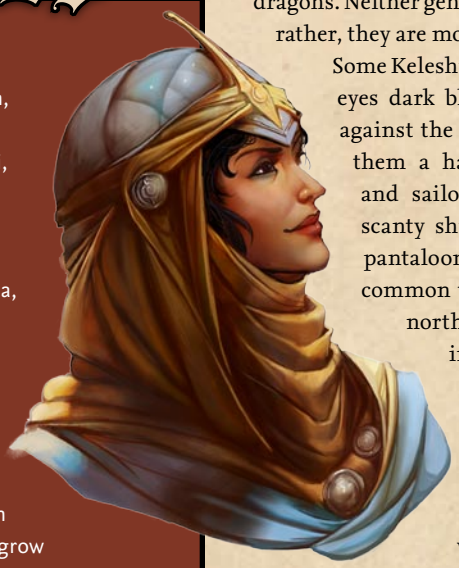
A Garundi clan does not consider itself to be successful until it has a particular place on a map that it can claim as its own. Since it sometimes takes years or even generations to find the right location, though, the clan gathers mementos of the places it has been—physical records of a spiritual journey that often become incorporated as symbolism into their art and tales.

Any Garundi clans that pass through another clan's territory are welcomed as honored guests but are not allowed to settle permanently. After a full month has passed, the visiting clan is obligated to leave or to pay a hefty tribute to the dominant families of the existing community. If this tribute is paid every month for a full year, the clan is allowed to join the permanent community, but must take up the lowest rung on the social ladder.

Regardless of the climate in which they live, Garundi dress in colorful clothing that is equally practical and beautiful. They usually attempt to incorporate parts of traditional garb into whatever outfits they don. This frequently means that men wear sashes, kilts, long robes, or pointed hats, while women cover themselves in billowing blouses, wraps, and shawls. As they originated on a continent known for its extreme temperatures, their clothing usually consists of loosely fitting layers. In the northern sections of Garund, traditional Garundi dress incorporates aspects of Keleshite garb, while heavy Vudran influences are recognizable in Nex.

Garundi names are used to define both the territory claimed by the clan and the individual's place in the local hierarchy. Those at the top of the hierarchy have names that span the entirety of the territory—the name of the city, geographic region, or nearby major river or mountain. Mid-ranking Garundi are named after sites, geographic features, or buildings known to most locals—waterfalls, neighborhoods, or important local occupations. Low-standing clan members have names of local sites (often from near where they were born)—streets, statues, or trees.

Keleshites



Languages: Common, Kelish
Favored Regions: Katapesh, Nex, Osirion, Qadira, Taldor
Favored Religions: Abadar, Calistria, Irori, Norgorber, Rovagug, Sarenrae
Female Names: Amestri, Artazostra, Barezata, Iuni, Izora, Khismia, Kyra, Naadhira, Sahba, Shirin, Utana, Waajida, Xemestra, Zarishu
Male Names: Aakif, Akkuya, Arasmes, Bahram, Ik-Teshup, Irizati, Khair, Kobad, Ormizd, Parumartish, Rusmanya, Warezana, Xoshak
Appearance: Keleshites have uniformly black hair and brown or even slightly golden eyes. The men tend to grow long beards. Their clothing ranges from gauzy silks to practical linen and cotton robes, with headdresses, veils, and turbans common to keep sun and sand out of their hair and eyes. Gold and silver decorations are popular not just for Keleshite women, but also among the men, who encrust their weaponry and top their turbans with lavish displays of wealth.

The Keleshites are a difficult folk. Their tremendous sense of superiority grates on those unfortunate enough not to be born among their number, and the existence of the Keleshite Empire in the distant east means the Keleshites' sense of entitlement is not based purely on fancy airs or past glory. Their power, learning, and skill are all quite real. Yet they are also cruel slavers, jaded mystics, zealous warriors, and hot-blooded lovers—a race bred from the heat and fire of the desert.

A Keleshite, it is said, will never bore you. As a whole, they value boldness, wit, and sly tactics over caution, brute strength, and proven but unfashionable pursuits. They can be quite aggressive, and are quick to anger but also quick to forgive. Non-Keleshites never forget the sting of their insults or the warmth of their smiles. Keleshites dare you to find someone more interesting than them.

Keleshites are great lovers of luxuries. East of the Inner Sea region, the great Diamond Sultanates of interior Casmaron stretch for vast distances, and Keleshites rule in almost all of them. These sultanates are legendary in their decadence—and such extravagances are the rule in Qadira and Katapesh as well.

Many Keleshites claim their people were among the first humans to learn agriculture and other aspects of civilization, gaining this knowledge from the genie races or (in some cases) as a result of deals made with powerful blue dragons. Neither genies nor blue dragons deny these claims; rather, they are more than pleased to take the credit.

Some Keleshite nomads tattoo the space below their eyes dark blue or black as a protective measure against the sun's glare in the desert, which gives them a haunted, ghoulish appearance. Slaves and sailors among the Keleshites wear only scanty shirts and loincloths for men, or long pantaloons for women. Keleshite sailors are common throughout the Inner Sea, even as far north as the Lands of the Linnorm Kings in summer, and they are both loved as the bringers of luxuries and hated as slavers. Keleshite slavers use barbed nets, poisoned cups, and bolas to capture their victims. Once they catch victims, they restrain them with magic or heavy manacles until their merchandise can be brought to the Great Market in Katheer or to one of the slave galleys that ply the Obari Ocean.

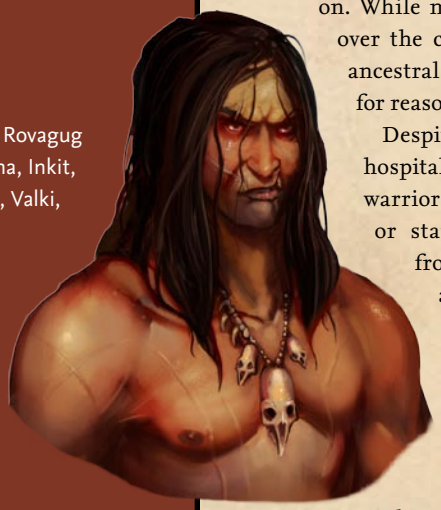
The proud Keleshite dervishes—graceful soldiers equal parts warriors and dancers—represent the most iconic image of the Keleshite military tradition. Dervishes wear long kilts or skirts that twirl and spin with them, creating breathtaking splashes of color and fabric even as the dervishes themselves set about their grim work of blood and steel. Wherever Keleshite people live, dervishes live among them. Dervishes receive preferential treatment in all lands controlled by Keleshites, and in many satrapies and other satellite states of the Padishah Empire of Kelesh they operate above the law (if not completely outside it).

Keleshite faith is a complex thing—many worship Sarenrae, the goddess of the sun, and follow her with great zeal. Yet not all Keleshites follow the spirit of Sarenrae's teachings all that well. While she is a goddess who promotes honesty and encourages redemption, she is also a goddess who encourages swift justice to those who deserve it. It is unfortunately easy, however, for an unwise leader to misinterpret Sarenrae's command to wage war swiftly and efficiently as a command to wage war often and energetically. As a result, a schism between those who use her faith as an excuse for war and those who truly understand her teachings may be inevitable.

Keleshite names derive from the cultures of interior Casmaron, east of Qadira. Members of high culture tend to adopt names from imperial Kelesh, while the lower classes and certain distinguished warrior castes have names that express their cultural ties to the horse cultures of the unaligned nations of the north-central steppes. The latter often have surnames associated with their clan and family, while the former generally go by a single name.

Kellids

Languages: Common, Hallit
Favored Regions: Numeria, Realm of the Mammoth Lords, the Worldwound
Favored Religions: Desna, Erastil, Gorum, Rovagug
Female Names: Annik, Belka, Dagur, Fesha, Inkit, Jalket, Kala, Lesit, Nalket, Selka, Shelen, Valki, Varka, Yala
Male Names: Barek, Dolok, Dron, Ganef, Gannak, Gurog, Holg, Jokum, Kronug, Nonek, Roga, Takek, Zoresk
Appearance: Kellids are a brawny, dark-haired folk who bear the scars and weathering of rough lives spent in the open. Their eye color tends toward black, blue, or steel gray, and their flesh is generally deeply tanned. A Kellid who doesn't have a story told in his body's scars is a Kellid who has succumbed to the pleasures of a comfortable life, and such weaklings are rightfully held in distrust by kin.



Clad in animal furs and bearing fetishes of feather and bone, Kellids wander the cruel, cold mountains and tundra of northern Avistan, from the Tusk Mountains in the west to the plains of Numeria in the east. Although clearly of common descent, Kellids in different nations possess significantly different cultures, with varied customs, religions, and mores. Still, they share a predilection for violence and a well-earned distrust of magic.

More than any other ethnicity, the Kellids are a people shaped by threats. The harsh, cold flatlands of the Mammoth Lords and Numeria force Kellid tribes to stay moving, to live lean and efficiently. Threatened by enormous beasts, trolls, wicked fey, mechanical monstrosities, orcs, demons, dragons, and more, Kellids have learned to fight constantly—if not monsters, then each other.

Faced with the ice magic of the Winter Witches of Irrisen to the west, the savage orcs of Belkzen to the south, and most recently the disastrous Worldwound to the east, Kellids tend to distrust outsiders. Even those who abandon their superstitious homelands for the civilized south (and there are more than a few such migrants) tend to hold both arcane matters and savage races in low regard. Yet Kellids remain common throughout Avistan, especially on the northern fringes of Cheliax and its former holdings in the east. Most Kellids speak Hallit and have little time for the fancy written languages of weaker peoples.

Tribes make up the main cooperative unit for Kellids, although they often clash over hunting rights, campgrounds, or anything else they can find to disagree on. While most disputes and clashes are resolved over the course of a few years, some tribes are ancestral enemies and continue to feud and war for reasons neither can recall.

Despite this, Kellids have a tradition of rough hospitality. Although they would kill an armed warrior without thought were he to threaten or startle them, that same warrior, half-frozen and near death, would be taken in and cared for. Dying of exposure and starvation out on the killing tundra is considered a death too grim for anyone, even if preventing it means giving succor to a sworn enemy.

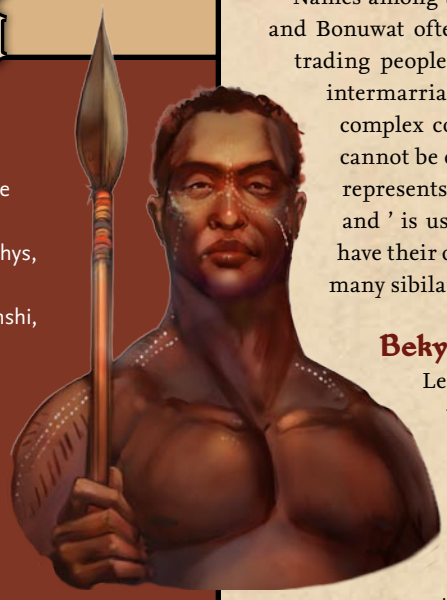
Some Kellids practice an ancient animistic religion, seeing spirits and lesser gods in most visible creatures, places, and objects. Most Kellids, though, bow to Gorum, their imposing Lord in Iron. Those Kellids who know of the recent claims by some half-orcs that Gorum is one of them find such preposterous suggestions utterly offensive. This clash of beliefs has led to a recent growth of warfare between them. In the Worldwound and Numeria, some greatly feared tribes pay tribute to Rovagug, the Rough Beast, by committing terrible atrocities. Most tribes also venerate Desna, goddess of travelers. Although depicted as a light, graceful elven woman in the south, the Kellids see her as a stately human woman astride a powerful elk, leading them to successful hunts as they follow herd animals on their yearly treks.

Despite their lack of sophistication and occasional confusion in understanding magic, technology, and other intellectual concepts, Kellids are not stupid. They simply lack the good fortune of living in places that can afford the luxury of education not tied directly to survival. Indeed, Kellids make some of the most talented and skilled barbarians, druids, and rangers in Avistan, and many citizens of the more southerly nations pay handsomely to keep Kellid guides and masters of the hunt on retainer.

Kellids tend to dress in simple clothing appropriate to the climate of their homelands. They favor durability and ruggedness, and therefore tend to wear hides, leather, and furs made into loose clothing. In the coldest areas they claim, Kellids wear fur-lined hide garments over layers of woolens or silks underneath. Where the climate turns warmer, Kellids favor the lightest, most supple leathers they can acquire.

Kellid names are curt affairs, favoring harsh consonants and guttural sounds. Second names are seldom necessary in small Kellid tribes, but are sometimes adopted or given when necessary or noteworthy. When used, last names typically refer to lineage or significant achievements.

Mwangi



Languages: Common, Polyglot
Favored Regions: Mwangi Expanse, Rahadoum, Sargava, the Shackles, the Sodden Lands, Thuvia
Favored Religions: Desna, Gozreh, Nethys, Pharasma, various demigods
Female Names: *Bekyar*—Babashk, Kamshi, Shivkah, Sinkitah, Soki; *Bonuwat and Mauxi*—Butandra, Kalizama, Marisan, Shimshem, Simbala—*Zenj*: Me'amesa, Mpaandi, Ntisi, Shikaba, Xabala
Male Names: *Bekyar*—Harisko, Kamishah, Seckor, Suuktidi, Yekskya; *Bonuwat and Mauxi*—Banipani, Baolo, Mitabu, Pateba, Teruawa; *Zenj*—Bikmelu, Hadzi, !Kunat, Kpu'unde, Shokamb, Tabansi
Appearance: All four Mwangi ethnicities have dark skin and dark hair—variations between the four groups exist as detailed below.

The disparate Mwangi peoples are the heirs of an ancient civilization that thrived in central Garund countless generations ago, of which little is known and even less is understood today. Signs of this civilization are found in the still-extant ruins of elaborate temples and fortress complexes that lie beneath concealing layers of clinging ivy, vines, and other jungle growth found principally in the forested interior of the Mwangi Expanse as well as in the forlorn mountaintops of the Shattered Range.

The Mwangi peoples actually comprise four different ethnic groups that stretch from the northern land of Thuvia to the western Garundi Coast, through the central jungles of the Expanse to the tip of Garund's farthest southern reaches. The Mwangi were mostly unknown to the rest of Golarion until recent colonization and trade began. Ignorance on behalf of the original explorers resulted in a general lack of distinction between different Mwangi tribes among the northern peoples.

Mwangi who dwell among folk from other lands typically conform to the religions predominantly held by the people there, such as the worship of Nethys or Gozreh. Exceptions to this include the Bonuwat—who predominantly venerate both Gozreh and Desna in a unique janiform incarnation they call Shimye-Magalla—and the barbaric Bekyar, who generally follow the tenets of demon lords such as Angazhan, Dagon, or Zura.

Names among the Mwangi are quite varied. The Mauxi and Bonuwat often use names borrowed from the many trading peoples they come into contact with through intermarriage. Zenj names sometimes contain complex consonants, glottal stops, and clicks that cannot be easily transcribed in written languages (! represents a clicking noise in the roof of the mouth, and ' is used to denote a glottal stop). The Bekyar have their own, seemingly unrelated, forms that use many sibilants followed by hard consonants.

Bekyars

Least known of the Mwangi are the Bekyar, whose tribes inhabit the Desolation Cape of southern Garund all the way up the coast to Sargava. The Bekyar are exceedingly tall—many topping 7 feet—with skin tones ranging from dark brown to coal black. They wear their wiry hair long but often straighten it into elaborate coifs. This group consists largely of slavers who prey upon their fellow Mwangi and just about anyone else they can catch.

Bonuwat

The Bonuwat have wide mouths and generous smiles. They favor colorful and exotic garb featuring vests and baggy pantaloons, such as is often found among far-ranging mariners. They are excellent fishermen and sailors, and have possessed an extensive trading network along the Mwangi Coast since long before the first northerners began to arrive. They are thought to have crossed bloodlines with some foreign seafaring people in the distant past, although who these people were is unknown.

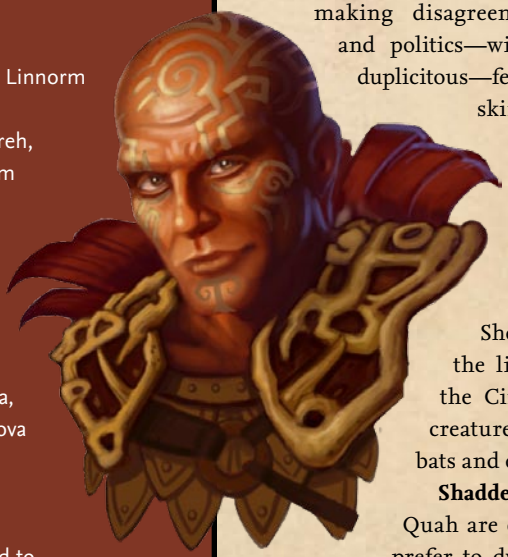
Mauxi

The Mauxi are a mysterious strain of the Mwangi, seemingly more distantly related than the other subgroups. These tall, patrician folk have grayer skin tones—prone to an ashen appearance—and straight hair. They deny any connection to the other Mwangi peoples. Many speak the Osiriani tongue, but use Polyglot as a sort of private cant among themselves. Most reside in Rahadoum or Thuvia.

Zenj

The most populous Mwangi ethnicity is the Zenj people, who inhabit the interior of the Mwangi Expanse. The Zenj comprise hundreds of tribes that exist in small fishing and hunting villages along the rivers. Many of these tribes are interrelated and form trade and marital alliances. Most require their chieftains to take a spouse from another tribe in order to cement such alliances. The Zenj are slightly shorter than average humans, with slender, muscular frames and wiry black hair.

Shoanti



Languages: Common, Shoanti
Favored Regions: Belkzen, Lands of the Linnorm Kings, Varisia
Favored Religions: Desna, Gorum, Gozreh, Pharasma, ancestor worship, totemism
Full Names: Arrow Catcher, Break Bones, Hawk Dancer, Eats What He Kills, Earth Hammer, One Tooth, Ready-Klar, Sky Whisper, Thousand Bones, Thunders When Sleeps, Who Kills Twice
Female Names: Ahalak, Beshkee, Imenda, Nalmida, Tanjah, Tekrakai, Yavenee, Zova
Male Names: Akrem, Belor, Garidan, Hargev, Krojun, Shadfrar, Vachedi
Appearance: Shoanti possess widely varying skin tones from deeply tanned to dark brown, although most are of a ruddy complexion. Hair is considered a dangerous weakness in hand-to-hand combat, so both men and women typically shave their heads, save for shamans and the elderly.

Known for their warlike nature and proud traditions, the Shoanti are a disparate people, bound together by honor and tradition. Shoanti history is steeped in conflict, from their brutally heroic legends to the defeats of the recent past and the harshness of their modern lives. Shaped by strife, the Shoanti are stalwart, tenacious, and suspicious people, oath-sworn to regain all that was once theirs and honor-bound to avenge themselves against all schemers who would dare call them barbarians.

When Shoanti youths reach majority, they must undergo a rite of passage to become adults. Upon completing this rite of passage, they receive their first tattoo. These tattoos are an important part of Shoanti life, and can be quite extensive and beautiful. Hundreds of different tattoo designs exist; each is chosen and traced by a tribe's shaman, drawn from an expansive traditional assortment of symbols with their own varied meanings and implications.

The Shoanti are given a birth name when born, but once they becomes adults, they are also given a full name—it is generally by this honorific (which is always a short phrase) that they are called in everyday life. These full names can change several times during a Shoanti's life. Birth names are generally used only by close family or lovers. Shoanti who abandon their clan to live among others typically revert to using their birth names as their standard name—a practice that many traditional Shoanti find shameful.

The Shoanti are not one people but rather many *quahs* ("clans") united by heritage, tradition, and lifestyle. These various quahs largely respect one another and their lands, making disagreements over resources, territory, and politics—widely held to be distasteful and duplicitous—few. When conflicts do arise, small skirmishes and individual battles between the quahs' champions quickly determine whom the spirits favor. The current seven quahs are summarized below.

Lyrune-Quah (Moon Clan): Expert archers and hunters, these Shoanti hunt by dusk and travel by the light of the moon. They dwell in the Cinderlands of Varisia, and revere creatures that hunt by moonlight, such as bats and owls.

Shadde-Quah (Axe Clan): The Shadde-Quah are expert divers and fishermen, and prefer to dwell in the coastal regions along northern Varisia or the southern Lands of the Linnorm Kings. They revere creatures that rely upon the sea for their livelihood, such as fish or sea birds.

Shriikirri-Quah (Hawk Clan): This clan, more than any other, regards animals as holy and mystic. Few rival their skill as animal trainers. They revere all animals, but particularly favor the hawk. They range far in their travels, but can usually be found in north-central Varisia.

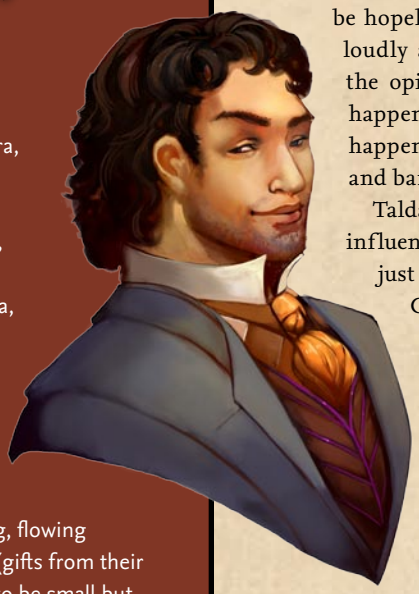
Shundar-Quah (Spire Clan): The Shundar-Quah see themselves as diplomats and storytellers—it is in large part thanks to their efforts that the seven quahs have enjoyed what peace they have with each other. Members of the Spire Clan revere the ancient Thassilonian monoliths that can be found throughout their preferred territories on the Storval Plateau or western Belkzen.

Sklar-Quah (Sun Clan): The most warlike of the quahs, the Sun Clan are the most intolerant of outsiders and the most likely to wage war against non-Shoanti. Their greatest warriors are the burn-riders—elite mounted cavalry who excel at using fire to win battles. They dwell in the southern Cinderlands, and revere the horse above all other animals.

Skoan-Quah (Skull Clan): The Skoan-Quah are the most sinister of the clans, for they associate with the dead and guard the many Shoanti burial grounds in the eastern Cinderlands and among the Mindspin Mountains. They venerate the spirits of animals and favor those associated with death, such as vultures or beetles.

Tamiir-Quah (Wind Clan): The Wind Clan are perhaps the most secluded of the quahs, venturing out of the mountains of northwestern Varisia or the southern Lands of the Linnorm Kings only to raid lowlanders for valuable resources. They venerate flying animals above all others.

Taldans



Languages: Common
Favored Regions: Absalom, Andoran, Brevoy, Cheliax, Druma, Galt, Isger, Lastwall, Molthune, Nirmathas, Qadira, Taldor, Varisia
Favored Religions: Abadar, Calistria, Cayden Cailean, Norgorber, Sarenrae, Shelyn, Torag
Female Names: Adula, Charito, Eudomia, Euphemi, Ionnia, Kale, Komana, Pasara, Salvianella, Viniana, Xemne
Male Names: Doritian, Eudonius, Gabradon, Iacobus, Menas, Narsius, Olytrius, Origen, Stichilo, Theodric, Vors, Xantrian
Appearance: Taldans generally have long, flowing brown hair and naturally bronze skin (gifts from their Keleshite ancestors). Their eyes tend to be small but expressive, with green, gray, and sometimes more exotic amber coloration.

The Taldan people are known the world over for being accomplished scholars, artisans, and practitioners of exotic martial skills. They are also known to be perhaps the most arrogant, self-important, and dismissive culture in history. Both these reputations are well deserved.

On the shores of the Inner Sea sits the kingdom of Taldor, the oldest of the surviving Avistani nations in the region. From its humble beginnings as a trading post where Azlanti fleeing the devastation of their homeland could exchange goods with Keleshites living on the frontier of ancient desert empires, Taldor grew to become a world power in its own right. At one time, the Empire of Taldor spanned most of southern Avistan, north to the River Kingdoms, and west through most of modern Cheliax. Yet today the kingdom of Taldor is a mere fraction of its former size.

Despite the loss of their empire, Taldans retain an arrogance and aloof spirit more befitting a people at the height of their power and influence. Wealthy merchants, royals, and landowners across the Inner Sea do their best to cultivate the style, air, and sophistication of Taldor, but observers can always tell the difference between a poseur and the genuine article. The way a Taldan man wears his neatly trimmed beard is as much a birthright as a matter of grooming. And the elaborate, ribbon-festooned wigs worn by the women are heirlooms passed down from generation to generation.

Outsiders sometimes find it difficult to fit into Taldan society. The local populace considers anyone who does not have the advantage of Taldan birth and training to be hopelessly provincial, an opinion they express loudly and often. They generally seem to be of the opinion that anything of importance must happen in Taldor and, conversely, anything that happens outside the kingdom must be trivial and banal.

Taldans justifiably take pride in the strong influence their native gods have exerted across not just the Inner Sea region, but across most of Golarion. Of the 20 most widely worshiped deities, four hail originally from Taldan traditions or were themselves Taldan in their mortal lives: Abadar, Cayden Cailean, Norgorber, and Shelyn. Taldans gladly point out to anyone around that two of the three mortals who ascended to godhood thanks to the power of the *Starstone* are of Taldan descent. By the same token, they become petulant whenever someone has the bad manners to point out that the third and most widely worshiped of the ascendant gods—Iomedae the Inheritor—is of Chelish stock.

Taldan arrogance manifests differently for the two sexes. Male Taldans exhibit an overbearing machismo that usually falls just shy of outright misogyny. They speak of conquests and territorial disputes when they discuss Taldan women, and of "bringing civilization to the barbarians" to brag of their exploits with women of other ethnicities or races. Taldan women express their ethnic superiority complex via biting commentary of the dress, hairstyle, body shape, or facial features of other females they see. Although they tend to focus their overly critical judgments on women from other ethnicities or races, when bored or among only close friends they sometimes casually insult one another (albeit with considerably less bile than when their attentions are drawn outside their close circles). Obviously, not every Taldan exhibits the most extreme arrogant personality traits described here, but enough do to make the pride of Taldans an unfavorable stereotype known throughout the Inner Sea region.

On the other hand, when moved to better emotions, Taldans express their concerns with nigh-unparalleled charity of time and wealth. In fact, the success with which wide-eyed impoverished children (especially those of obviously Taldan descent) and those with hard-luck tales can convince a Taldan to donate hard-earned coins further leads to the view among others that Taldans throw about their wealth with little concern for the future. This hedonism, critics observe, frequently is the reason why many adults fall on hard times and must turn to their fellows for additional aid.

Tians

Languages: Common, Tien
Favored Regions: Absalom, Katapesh, Lands of the Linnorm Kings, Nidal, Realm of the Mammoth Lords, Varisia
Favored Religions: Abadar, Calistria, Desna, Erastil, Irori, Shelyn, Zon-Kuthon, ancestor worship, Tian pantheon
Female Names: *Tian-Dan*—Bach Hien, Do Quyen, Hai Minh, Ngoc Yen, Que Xuan
Tian-La—Alerdene, Bayandash, Surenchinua, Narantuyaa, Odval
Tian-Min—Hiriko, Kaede, Kasuri, Meguma, Umie
Tian-Sing—Indah, Lestari, Nirmala, Sangati, Udara
Tian-Shu—Chao, Hua, Meilin, Qiao, Xue
Male Names: *Tian-Dan*—Tuong Kinh, Huu Tai, Phung Trong, Toan Hao, Thanh Liem
Tian-La—Batsaikhan, Enqbatu, Gansukh, Qorchi, Tomorbaatar
Tian-Min—Kousei, Shirota, Sunaki, Yuto, Zaiho
Tian-Sing—Budi, Hamengku, Kusuma, Purnoma, Suryo
Tian-Shu—Bao, Jianguo, Shuo, Xiaoran, Zhen
Appearance: Tians tend to be smaller and slighter than people of Avistan and Garund. Men only infrequently grow as tall as 5-1/2 feet, while women often barely break 5 feet in height. Even among the generally thin and narrow-bodied Tians, the Tian-Dan and Tian-Sing frequently appear particularly skinny even when well-fed. In contrast, the northwestern Tian-La generally possess moon-shaped faces and squat, muscular bodies. The Tian-Shu and Tian-Min, as with most other comparisons of Tian extremes, compose a middle ground. Although most Tians have dark hair, children are occasionally born with shock-white or silvery-white hair, which is considered an omen of greatness. Such children frequently become influential leaders and poets of the highest caliber, and families into which they are born receive great honor and frequently an increase in rank and wealth.

Although the people of Avistan and Garund see the distant Tians as a single ethnicity (a misconception that Tians reciprocate regarding natives of Avistan and Garund), the people collectively known as the Tians encompass several distinct ethnicities. Most of the Tians who come to the Inner Sea region originate from the Successor States or Minkai on the distant continent of Tian Xia.

Religion varies across Tian Xia as much as its people do; they worship a pantheon of deities whose breadth rivals that of the known gods of the Inner Sea region. Since its introduction by Vudrani missionaries, the church of Irori has spread across Tian Xia, becoming an official state religion in most nations. Most Tians who have settled in the Inner Sea region have, over the course of a few generations, adopted Inner Sea religions as their own.

Tians consider family to be of great importance. They have long perfected the art of genealogy, and some can trace their bloodlines back thousands of years. Most Tian royalty can trace their lines back at least a few dozen generations—those who cannot are often exiles or other objects of shame. Family names often have hidden meanings that can even identify where the family originated or who founded it.

Tian dress favors loose clothing, regardless of the wearer's wealth or social standing. Wealthy Tians wear robelike garments, while peasants and laborers wear simple kilts or trousers with linen wraps, leather jackets, or nothing at all on their upper bodies. Most clothing worn by Tians is colorful, and only the poorest peasants wear undyed cloth. Those who can afford it decorate their clothing with elaborate embroidery, often of scenes from nature or of powerful creatures like dragons and phoenixes.

The five major Tian ethnicities are listed below.

Tian-Dan (Xa Hoi): A time of great prosperity has seen Tian-Dan culture entering what many call a Golden Age, with a corresponding rise of beautifully decorated pagoda temples, colorful outfits, and spice-laden cuisine.

Tian-La (Hongal): In the north and west of Tian live the Tian-La, a semi-nomadic people with coarse, curly hair and lighter skin. They often view the more urban lifestyles of their neighbors as signs of weakness.

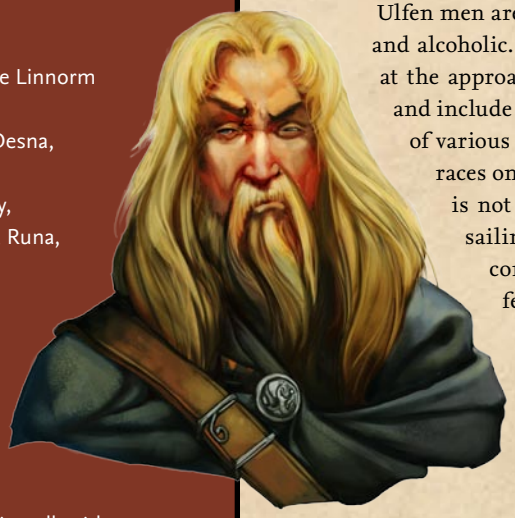
Tian-Min (Minkai): The Tian-Min of the Minkai archipelago possess the widest variety of eye color, encompassing various shades of blue, green, violet, orange-red, and (of course) black and brown. This society values honor and loyalty greatly.

Tian-Shu (Successor States): The most common Tian ethnicity is the Tian-Shu. The Tian-Shu possess dusky skin, almond-shaped brown eyes, and straight black or dark brown hair.

Tian-Sing (Minata): Far to the southeast, the dusky Tian-Sing have a reddish tint to their hair and produce more green-eyed folk. They dwell on the countless shores and hidden lagoons of the vast archipelago of Minata, known also as the Wandering Isles.

Ulfen

Languages: Common, Skald
Favored Regions: Irrisen, Lands of the Linnorm Kings, Varisia
Favored Religions: Cayden Cailean, Desna, Erastil, Gorum, Lamashtu, Torag
Female Names: Asta, Belende, Dagny, Gerda, Gunda, Hege, Ingirt, Jorun, Runa, Signe, Tine
Male Names: Birger, Dines, Eilif, Hyglak, Kjell, Kriger, Ostog, Ragnar, Sterk, Svalk, Tallak, Varg
Appearance: The Ulfen have a reputation abroad for being strong, dumb, and quiet, as well as having strange accents and smelly furs. Most Ulfen are quite tall, with men starting at 6 feet and the women just a few inches shorter. Their skin is pale and their hair blond, light brown, or red. Both men and women wear their hair long and braided; women's braids tend to be more elaborate. Men usually wear beards.



The days of easy pillage from the south are mostly over, as Ulfen raiders can no longer pass through the Arch of Aroden into the Inner Sea unaccosted. At the same time, the Ulfen are increasingly hired as sailors, marines, and bodyguards throughout Avistan, perhaps because they combine great seamanship, ruthlessness, and exotic looks.

Ulfen men and women set great store by personal appearance, valuing their flowing locks, tight braids, and well-kept furs of ermine, mink, and fox. They wear necklaces of amber, carved narwhal horn, and mammoth ivory, as well as finely worked bronze and silver in a braided style. They consider themselves the handsomest men and women in all Avistan, and the damnable thing about it, to other peoples, is that they are often right.

Ulfen hailing from the Lands of the Linnorm Kings are typically sailors and traders; those from the Irrisen lands ruled by Baba Yaga are more often riders than sailors, although they share cultural ties. The Ulfen traditionally keep thralls—slaves whose period of service ends in a set amount of time. Children born to thralls are always born free, and thralls can file a complaint against a harsh or unfair master (which shames the master, certainly, but also runs the risk of a master's fury). Thralls have been either captured in battle or condemned to service by a *thingmar*, a court of justice of the Ulfen consisting of the victim's peers, overseen by an elder jarl or chief. Even chiefs or jarls can be condemned as thralls if they have foresworn an oath, killed a child, or betrayed their fellow warriors.

Ulfen men are fond of competitions both athletic and alcoholic. Their athletic contests often occur at the approach of winter or the start of spring and include climbing ice walls, hurling timbers of various sizes, axe throwing, sled pulls, and races on foot and on snowshoes. Swimming is not a skill that Ulfens value, although sailing and rowing are. The drinking competitions happen during great feasts, when the Ulfen men boast of their ability to down kegs or even barrels of mead, ale, and cider. Outsiders tend to take away from this a view that Ulfen are boors and louts, which is not entirely true. Their boorish loutishness tends to be confined to special occasions such as feast days—Ulfen men who try this approach at other times find that Ulfen women mock them mercilessly. Few care to repeat the experience.

Ulfen women are often powerful druids and priestesses of Desna or Torag. The men are most often rangers and barbarians, and worship Erastil, Gorum, or Torag, although they have druids and priests of Desna among their numbers as well. As a group, the Ulfen are more adventurous than most—the wilderness of the Linnorm Kings and Irrisen is too thinly settled for anyone to live long who cannot prosper in the wild and find food and shelter when bad weather sets in. Yet most Ulfen are not heroes, but rather trappers, hunters, farmers, and fisherfolk, according to the season and their own family heritage.

In general, dueling and feuding are popular pastimes among the Ulfen, with great emphasis on personal honor and the value of a sworn oath. Insults are usually answered with axe and shield pushes, and while dueling is always considered purely a temporary argument, fought to the first blood and forgotten as soon as it is over, feuding is a more serious thing. In a feud among the Ulfen, entire families and clans can go to war over a conflict as simple as the proper way to mend nets or the rights to a particular salmon spawning ground. Sheep and cattle raiding are also popular pastimes.

Finally, no discussion of the Ulfen would be complete without mention of the high incidence of lycanthropy among them. The curse of lycanthropy is not considered an especially dishonorable state among the Ulfen, but rather a mark of favor from nature spirits. During the full moon, those who suffer from it and cannot control their violent urges are required to stay in a longhouse or spirit house, which is barred with silver and stocked with enough food to satiate even the largest appetite.

Varisians

Languages: Common, Varisian
Favored Regions: Lands of the Linnorm Kings, Lastwall, Nidal, Nirmathas, Numeria, Ustalav, Varisia
Favored Religions: Abadar, Calistria, Cayden Cailean, Desna, Erastil, Gozreh, Norgorber, Sarenrae, Shelyn, Urgathoa
Female Names: Alika, Alinza, Anca, Bordana, Carmelizzia, Ilinica, Iolana, Luminita, Mirelinda, Narcizia, Nicinniana, Piousa, Zeldana, Zriorica
Male Names: Alezandaru, Andrezi, Dortlin, Eugeni, Henric, Ionacu, Iozif, Kazallin, Marduzi, Silvui, Skender, Tiberiu, Viorec, Zandu, Zstelian
Appearance: Varisians have dusky skin and large, expressive eyes that are often of strange colors, such as violet or gold. Their hair color ranges widely, from platinum to blond to deep reds to brown to black—very few hair colors are considered unusual among Varisians. They tend to be a lithe and long-limbed folk, and men often have trouble growing facial hair, making the patchy or stringy beards and mustaches of Sczarni thugs a well-known look.

Many Varisians are wanderers and nomads, traveling the land in caravans and stopping only to put on exotic shows or to swindle and seduce locals. Yet just as many Varisians settle down and form small towns or, in the case of Ustalav, entire cities and nations. Yet none can deny the stereotypical con artists or swindlers who give the Varisian people a bad name. Most respect the Varisians for their ancient traditions and vast knowledge but for the same reasons mistrust their motives. To ordinary folk, the colorful travelers who never settle but flit about like butterflies over the land seem fascinating, but also just a little frightening.

A traveler can sit down in any tavern in Avistan and overhear a story about Varisians—how they never build towns or sow crops, how they live in the wagons that carry them over the land, how they sing and dance for money, how they dress in bright colors and cover their bodies with jewelry and intricate tattoos, and how a Varisian once robbed someone's uncle's wife's brother's best friend in an elaborate scam. Conventional wisdom holds that observers should view the beautiful, exotic Varisians from a distance, as if admiring a tiger prowling through the jungle.

Tales of Varisian treachery and deceit usually come from interactions with the Sczarni—organized families of Varisian criminals dedicated to larceny and confidence games. The Sczarni travel less frequently than their kin, setting up shop in cities for months—even years—at a time. So long as their criminal activities go undetected, Sczarni continue to bleed their victims until their pockets are full or their neighbors grow suspicious.

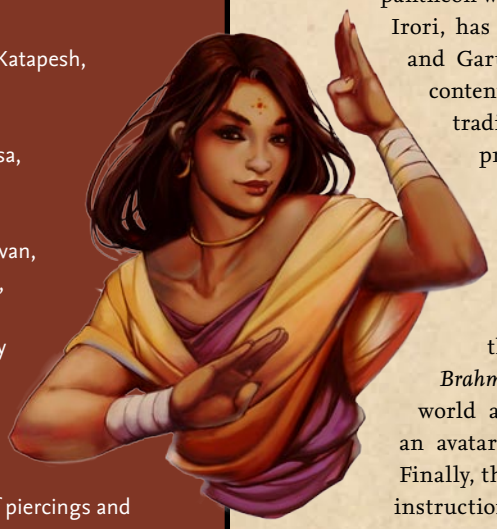
Varisians call the world their home, even if they've settled down. They favor scarves of all sizes and colors, but some hold special significance. Most notable is the family scarf, or *kapenia*. Children receive their kapenias upon maturity; to own one is to be an adult. These long, heavy scarves display elegant and complicated embroidery that is incomprehensible to most outsiders. To Varisians, though, the scarves show their family trees. By tracing the loops and whorls of a scarf, a Varisian can trace a person's history back through her mother and father, her siblings, grandparents and great-grandparents, as far back as the family possesses knowledge.

Varisians believe that certain colors carry specific powers and choose their outfits to attract the right type of energy. Pink is the color of love, kindness, and courage. Red represents lust, long life, and inner strength. Orange is the color of happiness and resourcefulness, and adventuring Varisians often wear a touch of orange while on their travels. Green enhances wisdom and self-control. Turquoise represents physical strength and nonverbal communication, and most dancing costumes feature it. Blue is the color of health, youth, and beauty. Violet enhances intuition and divine inspiration, so most fortunetellers and seers wear violet scarves. Varisians love jewelry and favor gems over coins. Most Varisians pragmatically believe that wealth is harder to steal when worn than when hidden out of sight.

Whereas the Shoanti use tattoos as marks of honor and accomplishment, to a Varisian a tattoo is a work of art, one often used to enhance existing beauty. These tattoos typically incorporate various colors of significance to the person bearing the markings, and an entire method of magic revolves around certain mystic tattoos. This delight and obsession with tattoos stems from the periodic appearance of "birth tattoos" on newborn Varisians—birthmarks that can be extremely elaborate and colorful. Some represent physical objects, such as a sword or a unicorn, while others spell out phrases in some long-dead runic language or outline a map. The tattoos might appear as tiny, blurred marks during infancy and childhood but grow with the child until they reach a clear and detailed full size at adulthood.

Vudrani

Languages: Common, Vudrani
Favored Regions: Absalom, Jalmeray, Katapesh, Nex, Osirion
Favored Religions: Any
Female Names: Abha, Hirati, Hema, Isa, Jayazi, Nigana, Nanya, Revhi, Sajna, Vilama, Zaci
Male Names: Bala, Barid, Dadshi, Darvan, Hava, Krama, Manujyestha, Pratavh, Sumna, Yantur
Appearance: The Vudrani have swarthy skin and dark-colored hair and eyes. Men often wear beards in long and extravagant styles, while women are fond of jewelry. Both genders are quite accepting of piercings and the use of colorful makeup to accentuate beauty.



The Vudrani strive for enlightenment and personal betterment, but they do not often reach beyond their station. Theirs is a culture steeped in ancient traditions that define roles, and many do not see it as proper to work above or below what the fate of their birth dictates. This mindset stays with the Vudrani even when they travel thousands of miles west to visit Jalmeray and the Inner Sea; it is only after several generations of life among the Avistani and Garundi that they begin to relax these beliefs.

The Vudrani come from distant Vudra, an immense and powerful empire made up of several nations collectively known as the Impossible Kingdoms. The affluence and stability of the Impossible Kingdoms support a large population. Despite their affluence, however, the Vudrani people do not content themselves with sitting idly by. Exploration—for the purpose of trade, conquest, or pure curiosity—has put the Vudrani on nearly every continent of the world. Vudrani merchants are known as trustworthy, fair business partners and purveyors of exotic wares.

Vudrani culture remains stable thanks to the people's strong belief in the role of birth, which in turn draws itself from religious texts that define human existence in a series of castes. According to Vudrani beliefs, a person's caste depends on the actions of her previous lives. Someone of a low caste only recently earned the right to be born as a human, while those of the highest castes are celebrated as examples of what good deeds over multiple lives can do for a soul. The ultimate goal of all this rebirthing is to serve the gods in the Great Beyond. The Vudrani are a highly religious people, and in their homeland they worship a bewildering array of thousands of gods. Vudrani who have come to live in the Inner Sea region take to the local pantheon with ease, and while one of their gods, Irori, has gained quite a foothold in Avistan and Garund, the Vudrani themselves seem content to maintain their own pantheistic traditions without feeling the need to proselytize.

Various religious texts help the Vudrani in understanding their complex faith. Chief among these collections of wisdom is the *Azvadeva Pujila*. Along with the *Azvadeva Pujila*, the *Mizravrtta Brahmodya* recounts the history of the world as told to the sage Balazastrin by an avatar of the goddess Likha, the Teller. Finally, the *Vigrahin Patitraka* provides a set of instructions, told in a series of questions and answers, on how to properly live life in order to move one step closer to Nirvana in one's next rebirth.

Whenever possible, Vudrani don luxurious garments of the finest cloth, favoring loose-fitting garb appropriate to the warm clime of their homeland. Many of these fancy clothes come to Vudra via trade from Tian Xia, while those fineries produced in the Impossible Kingdoms themselves are traded in Katapesh and Absalom. Gold jewelry adorning the ears, nose, and eyebrows is common.

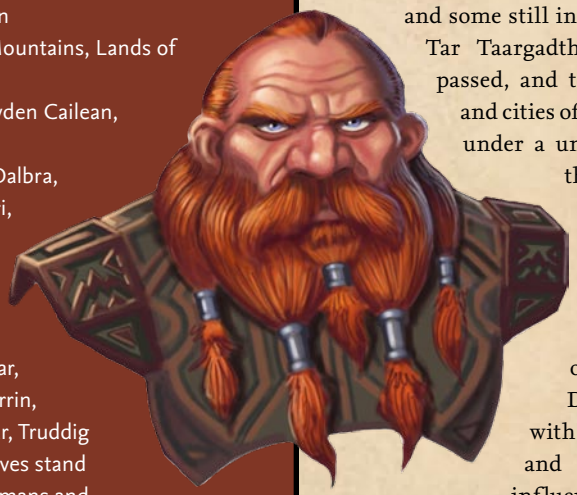
Vudrani culture places great value on beautiful, deliberate movements and the ability to spin a good story. Graceful, veiled dancers catch the eyes of Vudrani men as easily as velvet-voiced storytellers set aflutter the hearts of Vudrani women. Even when not attempting to woo others, the Vudrani value precise movements and eloquent speech.

As an outgrowth of the Vudrani love of beautiful movements, the study of martial arts (often said to have been first created in Tian Xia but perfected in Vudra) grows more popular with each passing year. So skilled are Vudrani martial artists that, on occasion, even masters from Tian Xia cross the treacherous sea separating their lands to study the precise motions of the Vudrani. Although the Vudrani are not known for their innovation in creating new or derivative styles, in the eastern half of the world, their exacting mastery of existing schools brings them great accord.

Vudrani cuisine relies heavily on strong spices, green vegetables, and dairy proteins. Many Vudrani, particularly those who strongly venerate Irori, do not eat any kind of meat at all, but most do not share this taboo and gladly eat any kind of sea creature (nearly all Vudrani eschew the flesh of mammals and birds). Despite these limitations, Vudrani cuisine provides one of the most diverse selections of food among human ethnicities.

Dwarves

Languages: Common, Dwarven
Favored Regions: Five Kings Mountains, Lands of the Linnorm Kings
Favored Religions: Abadar, Cayden Cailean, Gorum, Torag
Female Names: Agna, Bodill, Dalbra, Erigga, Gonild, Ingra, Komtri, Lupp, Morstra, Paldna, Rusilka, Stinna, Torra, Ulrikka, Yangrit
Male Names: Alk, Dolgrin, Edrukk, Grunyar, Harsk, Igmar, Kazmuk, Losk, Morgrym, Narrin, Odol, Padrym, Rogar, Stigmar, Truddig
Appearance: On average, dwarves stand about a foot shorter than humans and tend to be stockier than even the burliest half-orcs. They weigh about 100 pounds more than they appear to (because of their strong skeletons and tightly packed musculature). Most dwarves wear their hair long, and male dwarves pride themselves on the length and condition of their beards. Traditionalists festoon their beards with elaborate braids, small battle trophies, or beads commemorating important events in their lives. Shaving a dwarf's beard is a terrible insult to the dwarf, his ancestors, and his gods.



The dwarves of Golarion are best known for their skill at mining and crafting, their fierce determination in combat, and their stoic, almost mirthless demeanors. Dwarves made their mark on the world with their magnificent castles and fortresses, but they have fought and died endlessly over every last one—particularly in wars with their ancient enemy, the orcs—ever since the day they first emerged from the Darklands.

Dwarven history begins deep below the earth, where the first dwarves mined and smithed under the watchful eye of Torag, the Father of Creation. In the late centuries of the Age of Darkness, following the dictum of a series of ancient mandates handed down from a prophet of Torag, a relentless subterranean migration of dwarves called the Quest for Sky drove these people upward toward the surface. After years of civil war, strife, and skirmishes with orcs, the great dwarven general Taargick united his people. Under Taargick's leadership, the dwarves finally completed their push to the surface and established 10 glorious Sky Citadels atop the points of their emergence. The dwarven nations crowned Taargick king and named their new kingdom in his honor—Tar Taargadth.

The 10 glorious Sky Citadels of the ancient dwarves still stand today, some in ruins, some reclaimed by other races, and some still inhabited by their dwarven founders. Tar Taargadth's unifying role has long since passed, and today the various dwarven nations and cities of Golarion do not necessarily operate under a unified whole. Notable Sky Citadels that are still held by the dwarves include Janderhoff in Varisia and Highhelm along the southern coast of Lake Encarthan, but there are just as many examples of lost citadels, such as Urgir in the orc-lands of Belkzen.

Dwarven perspective tends to change with the climate. In this era of human and gnome and even elven cultural influence, what it means to be a dwarf remains more fluid than ever before, and the whitebeards of the oldest dwarven halls fear this fluidity as a sign of the impending extinction of dwarf society. Yet some aspects of dwarven culture show little sign of changing. Smithing, fighting, and stronghold-building have always been major parts of dwarven society, ever since Torag first breathed life into the earliest dwarves. The Creator God's influence on dwarven culture still guides and drives all of dwarven society, and most dwarves believe that, should they ever slacken their efforts, Torag will abandon them.

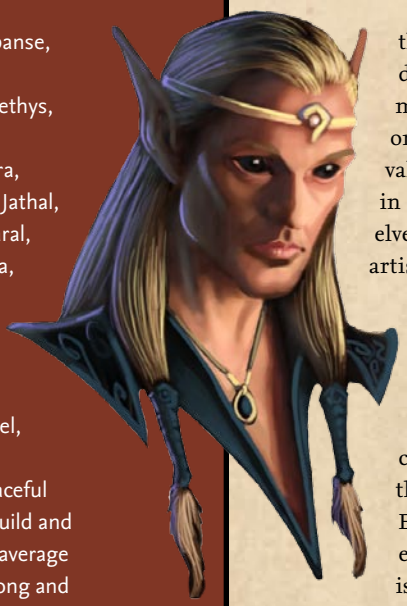
Dwarven dress, as with all physical objects dwarves craft, favors function over form, but is never plain. Decorations serve practical purposes—fasteners, padding, reinforcements of seams, pockets, and tool-holding loops.

While adventuring dwarves usually seem reserved and conservative to members of other races, they are seen at home as impetuous youths or shirking wastrels. Dwarves tend to view other races as soft, weak, or even degenerate. Elves, for example, are thought of as weaklings who abandoned the world during the Age of Darkness, while half-orcs—the progeny of a race dwarves warred with for millennia before humans started counting years—are considered savage curs who need seeing to. No one holds a grudge like a dwarf. But even the most obstinate dwarf is capable of overcoming ancient prejudices to make exceptions for battle-tested friends, and dwarves value friends even higher than the gems and gold that notoriously fuel their lust for adventure.

The dwarven language is full of hard consonants, and few dwarven names include soft sounds like "f," "h," or "th" (as in "with" or "mouth"). The letters Q and X do not appear in the dwarven alphabet. Honorifics like "-gun" ("-son"), "-dam" ("-daughter"), and "-hild" ("-wife") are common. Dwarven family names sometimes seem to contain Common words, such as "hammer" or "gold."

Elves

Languages: Common, Elven
Favored Regions: Kyonin, Mwangi Expanse, Steaming Sea, Varisia
Favored Religions: Calistria, Desna, Nethys, Shelyn
Female Names: Amrunelara, Cathlessra, Dardlara, Emraeal, Faunra, Imdlara, Jathal, Maraedlara, Merisiel, Nordlara, Oparal, Praeldral, Shalelu, Soumral, Tessarda, Varaera, Yalandlara
Male Names: Aerel, Amarandlon, Calondrel, Duardlon, Erevel, Felaelrel, Heldalel, Izkrael, Jaraerdrel, Lanliss, Meirdrarel, Narnel, Seldlon, Talathel, Variel, Zordlon
Appearance: Elves are beautiful and graceful creatures, typically quite slender of build and standing a few inches taller than the average human. Their ears are 6 to 9 inches long and pointed, arching upward gracefully along the side of the head to points just above the top of the skull. Their eyes are large and show no whites—an elf's eye possesses a solid and vibrant hue, typically blue, violet, green, or even amber or red that, upon closer examination, presents deep whorls and pools of shifting color.



Elven society upon Golarion follows a stately course of highs and lows—elves have doubtless lived on Golarion as long as humanity, and were contemporaries with ancient Azlant. They have at times clashed with humanity, but such conflicts are usually rare and have extraordinary causes and circumstances. The last major clash with humanity occurred over 10,000 years ago, but ancient evidence suggests that this was not the first such clash, nor is it likely to be the last. In any event, this conflict came to a sudden end with Earthfall and the elven flight from Golarion to a mysterious realm called "Sovyrian." They would not return to Golarion for several thousand years—this flight and return is covered in greater detail in the entry for Kyonin (see page 94).

Elves honor almost every god of Golarion, but the majority worship Calistria or Desna, with smaller numbers venerating Nethys or more obscure elven deities or Empyreal Lords. Elves see gods as their guides and inspirations in life, with swift and simple daily devotions being part of life but thought to be more than petty details. A common part of many elven religious practices is the belief in an ideal known as "the Brightness." This concept teaches that there exists a vivid, recognizable, semidivine enlightenment that is different for each elf. Those who believe in the Brightness claim that failure to find it could condemn the soul to reincarnation as a lesser being.

Elves love to laugh, play pranks, and try things on a whim, and upon occasion recklessly disregard dangers or consequences. It is a mistake, however, to view elves as thoughtless or uncaring. Most elves make friends easily, value them highly, and both love and indulge in lust (tenderly, but apart from love) with other elves or even non-elves. Many elves are superb artists, cartographers, scribes, herbalists, spice-traders, seamstresses and tailors, perfumers, and cosmeticians. Elven artisans make their livelihoods with such skills when dwelling among other races.

Elves are perhaps the most diverse of the core races, with the exception of humanity, but this diversity is not the result of ethnic lineage. Elves tend to take on many of the features of the environments in which they dwell. This change is gradual, usually taking hundreds of years to fully manifest, but over only the course of a single human generation, an elf's appearance and even abilities can change dramatically. The majority of elves hail from temperate woodlands, from whence the most well known of their kind hail. Most of the unusual elven ethnicities, such as the Ekujae elves of the Mwangi Expanse, the Mordant Spire elves, or the Snowcaster elves of the Crown of the World, have unusual appearances or customs but otherwise are fundamentally the same as their forest-dwelling kin. Only a few elven ethnicities, such as the water-breathing aquatic elves or the deep-dwelling drow of the Darklands, have developed entirely new physiologies or features. Drow are detailed in the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*. Aquatic elves are identical to normal elves, save that they have the aquatic subtype, the amphibious special quality, a swim speed of 30 feet, and replace the standard elf weapon familiarity with proficiency with rapiers, short swords, tridents, and any weapon with the word "elven" in its name.

Perhaps the most tragic elves are the Forlorn—those who lack families for whatever reason and grew to adulthood not among other elves, but among shorter-lived races like humans. By the time a Forlorn elf has become an adult, most of her childhood playmates have married, had children of their own, grown old, and died. Forlorn elves tend to be insular and morose—their lack of joy and delight manifests in darker ways, such as mischievous trickery, cynicism and angst, or even cruelty. The life of a Forlorn elf is one wrought of loneliness and sadness, but these elves, given the chance, form the strongest friendships of them all. They know what loss is, and given an opportunity to avoid it, cling with a tenacity that can be as inspiring as it is frightening.

Gnomes

Languages: Common, Gnome
Favored Regions: Avistan, Cheliax, Katapesh, Mwangi Expanse, Nex, Osirion, River Kingdoms, Steaming Sea, Varisia
Favored Religions: Cayden Cailean, Desna, Erastil, Gozreh, Nethys, Norgorber, Shelyn
Family Names: Frothelthimble, Garishgnawing, Palepartlinger, Thicketbotter
Female Names: Ava, Bani, Besh, Dei, Fijit, Gant, Lim, Lini, Nefi, Majet, Pai, Queck, Trin, Zheit
Male Names: Abroshtor, Bastarger, Halungalom, Kremernesh, Krolmnite, Lumrolur, Nulrakgrult, Poshment, Quokgol, Sarzuket, Tenzekil, Tongtokl, Varknarnost, Xurshuklo, Zatqualmie
Appearance: At about 3 feet in height, gnomes are slighter and taller than halflings. Their ears are human-like, but their highly mutable facial muscles allow for disturbing grins and their oversized eyes emphasize their often disproportionate expressions of emotion. With skin, hair, and eyes of varying, often vibrant colors, gnomes look the most alien and out of place of all of Golarion's common races.

The gnomes of Golarion are a wounded race. Originally denizens of a strange and alien realm that exists "behind" the reality of this world—a realm known as the First World (see page 239)—the gnome race still bears the trauma of its ancient migration from a realm of impossibilities to a realm firmly rooted in reality. As a result, every gnome constantly seeks new and exciting experiences on a regular basis, for a gnome who grows bored with reality runs the risk of succumbing to a dreadful malady known as the Bleaching. This need for constant new experiences, paired with their unconventional ethics, has caused the race to be perceived as fickle and chaotic, but also as innovative, daring, and radically progressive. The first records of otherworldly gnome trailblazers scouting the land date back to some point within the Age of Anguish, but to this day, the reason for the race's exodus from the First World remains a mystery, even to the gnomes.

The vibrant First World was a place of wonders for the gnomes. Their ageless life and never-ending pranks were sources of continuous delight. Uprooted from this ancestral home, gnomes never healed from the spiritual wound the separation caused, resulting in an affliction known as the Bleaching. When born, a young gnome's skin, hair, and eyes are vibrant in color, and they remain that way during her first years. From adulthood on, these features are subject to radical change depending on the individual's experiences. Those gnomes who exist in an unchanging environment see their colors fade and their sanity wither, while those with a knack for the new remain lively and vibrant. The Bleaching generally doesn't strike younger gnomes, but as gnomes age it becomes more and more of a worry. As the Bleaching progresses, the gnome's mind decays and she slips further into madness and dementia. In most cases, the Bleaching ends in death—but in rare instances a gnome can survive the Bleaching. These pallid creatures are known as bleachlings.

Once a gnome begins to suffer from the Bleaching, she must seek out new experiences to mitigate her boredom. If she does, she must make a Will save each year (DC = the amount of ability damage she's suffered from the Bleaching so far or 10 + her level, whichever is greater). A failed save causes the gnome's Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores to decrease by 1d6 each—these decreases are similar to penalties accrued from aging, and cannot be restored. If an ability score is reduced to 0 in this manner, the gnome must make another Will save (same DC as her previous save against the Bleaching). If she fails this save she dies, as if from old age, and cannot be resurrected. If she succeeds, she becomes a bleachling. A bleachling's ability score penalties caused by the Bleaching are removed. She always treats druid as a favored class, and can use her *speak with animals* spell-like ability at will.

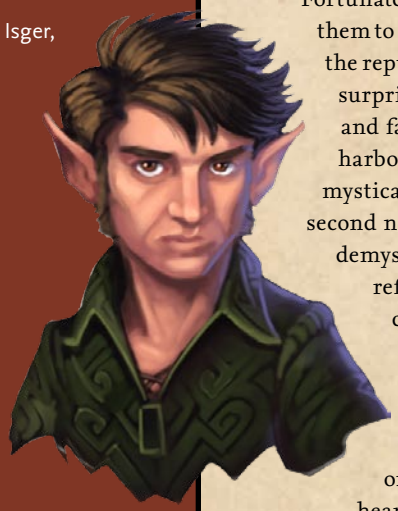
Gnomes tend toward eccentric pursuits and are attracted to objects that help to "anchor" them to Golarion and delay the Bleaching. Besides collecting stories and friends, they favor mechanical gadgets, riddles, flamboyant outfits, nicknames, perfumes, and other distinct items.

Throughout their lives, most gnomes have many intimate relationships, but they rarely engage in long-lasting ties. Lifetime bonding or marriage is extremely rare. Usually, a gnome family is loosely organized (if organized at all), and the vigorous children are taught the ways of life by the community until they are grown enough to learn from their own experiences.

Male gnome names are often unnecessarily long, multisyllabic, and intentionally difficult to pronounce. Female names reverse the male conventions, being simple and short, although many females claim their names are actually short for something.

Halflings

Languages: Common, Halfling
Favored Regions: Andoran, Cheliax, Galt, Isger, Molthune, Nidal, Taldor, Varisia
Favored Religions: Abadar, Cayden Cailean, Desna, Erastil, Iomedae, Norgorber, Sarenrae, Shelyn
Female Names: Anafa, Bellis, Chandira, Eireen, Etun, Filiu, Giama, Lissa, Marra, Onana, Piria, Rilla, Sistra, Sophone, Vaga, Yamyra
Male Names: Antal, Boram, Chimon, Edal, Elun, Guln, Hakon, Jamir, Kaleb, Karum, Lem, Liek, Mirn, Neg, Rocur, Sumak
Appearance: Halflings stand just shorter than gnomes but make up for what they lack in stature and strength with bravery, optimism, skill, and luck. The bottoms of their feet are naturally covered in tough calluses, and the tops often sport tufts of warming hair, allowing halflings to travel barefoot. Most halflings have tan skin and brown hair with hues that tend to be darker for those born closer to the Inner Sea, and their ears are slightly pointed.



With their short statures and tendency to blend into the background, halflings don't receive much notice from the other folk of Golarion. Their origins date back to the beginning of humanity. From the very start, they seem to have always walked alongside mankind, living in human cities, adopting human customs, seeing to the common needs of humans as cooks, entertainers, and menial laborers. It's easy to take them for granted because they have always been around.

Halflings themselves take nothing for granted, and always keep their eyes open for the next opportunity that allows them to survive and even thrive. This impulse often casts them as servants, with halflings attaching themselves to human families or institutions as a matter of symbiotic survival. Many societies, particularly the Chelaxians, value halflings as slaves—if only for the fact that they take up less room.

Despite their close involvement in many facets of human society, halflings have a tendency to be ignored and underestimated. Their ability to blend into the background, be it at a social gathering or amid the comforting shadows of a dark alley, is unparalleled. They know when to bend with the wind, but when they have the chance to seize a grand pile of gold, they never let the opportunity pass by. Often blamed for putting themselves into danger, the small folk simply cannot resist the temptation of a new adventure, a daring heist, or the lure of the unknown.

Fortunately, their superior sense for danger allows them to survive these hazards and has granted them the reputation of being exceptionally lucky. It is no surprise that superstitions revolving around luck and fate have become common among halfling-harboring lands, and some cultures even assign mystical value to the small folk. Being lucky is second nature to nearly all halflings, though many demystify their successes with tales of superior reflexes, unmatched skill, or inscrutable cunning. A few halflings, however, stand out because of their unmistakable lack of luck. These individuals seem to bring mischief and bad luck to those around them, and as a result they are avoided or even feared, especially among cultures heartily embracing superstitions. Halflings themselves believe this occurrence to be a rare blessing of Desna, and children bearing this gift are often encouraged to study the magical arts.

Because of these attributes, and in contrast to their stable and altruistic communities, halfling society has a hidden, darker side as meaningful, developed, and important as the unassuming face maintained for the unwitting public. Almost all halflings possess a strong opportunistic streak that is most prominent during their younger years. During this time, many stray from the rules of the community and involve themselves in the disdained affairs of thievery, subterfuge, adventuring, and vagabond life.

Despite their curiosity-driven wanderlust, halflings possess a strong sense of house and home that develops over the years. A halfling takes great pride in his domicile, often spending above his means to add to the common comforts of home life.

Halflings usually adopt the religious beliefs of the societies with which they merge. Unsurprisingly, many halflings worship the gods of humankind, such as Cayden Cailean, Iomedae, or Shelyn. Rumors also tell of a large cult venerating the aspect of Norgorber known as the Gray Master, with a few cultists worshiping him as Blackfingers.

Forever living in the shadows of their taller kith and kin, halflings wear whatever styles prevail in the human culture in which they dwell. Halfling slaves tend to dress more flashily but in cheaper fabrics than their free cousins, especially in Cheliax, as their owners often use them as status symbols. Emotionally, halflings are easygoing but excitable, prone to laziness but frenetic when roused. Ironically, their greatest strength is their perceived weakness—halflings can count on the advantage that they are continually underestimated, an edge they exploit mercilessly.

Half-Elves

Languages: Common, Elven
Favored Regions: Any
Favored Religions: Calistria, Cayden Cailean, Desna, Irori, Lamashtu, Nethys, Sarenrae, Shelyn, Zon-Kuthon
Female Names: Cathran, Eandi, Elneth, Iandoli, Ilyin, Kieyanna, Liada, Lorceli, Maddeva, Mihalyi, Nahmias, Reda, Saroun, Tamarie, Urriona
Male Names: Carangal, Cavathes, Dorsavnil, Encinal, Gouard, Iradli, Kyras, Narinso, Nassaler, Otoniel, Quiray, Satinder, Seltyiel, Troxell, Turenne, Zirul
Appearance: Half-elves generally look like attractive humans with pointed ears. They stand about half a head taller than humans and rarely put on weight no matter what they eat. Those with stronger elven traits are more likely to be viewed as outsiders by humans, who nonetheless remain strangely fascinated by them. Half-elves whose looks favor their human side tend to have a difficult time in elven society, with conservative elder elves subtly pushing them to discover their human heritage by exploring the world at large (and thus abandon the pure elf community). Half-elven skin tones usually take on the hue of the human parent's skin.

Half-elves are something of an enigma as a race. Unable to truly fit into the societies of either humans or elves, they spend their lives somewhat uncomfortably "in between" and "not quite." They adopt and adapt and are excellent survivors, able to assimilate into whatever role is needed and find a way to make themselves indispensable as they seek acceptance from without and wholeness within. Outwardly beautiful but inwardly fragile, half-elves strive to master themselves and find within their hearts the strength to command their destiny.

It is not difficult to imagine why elves and humans find each other attractive. To a human, an elf represents an unattainable beauty. Elves—with their height, slim figures, wisdom, and grace—are often seen as perfected humans, a living ideal many humans find impossible to resist. Elves appreciate humans' vivacity, their lust for life, and their willingness to act at a moment's notice. To elves, humans represent freedom, brashness, and excitement. While the most staid isolationist elves decry these traits as weaknesses of the human spirit, other elves find them irresistible. When elves and humans breed, half-elves are the inevitable result.

The term half-elf is deceptive, for only a fraction of the creatures so labeled are the offspring of a human parent and an elf parent. Most are many generations removed from the original coupling, yet exhibit traits of one race or the other that ensure they never quite fit into either.

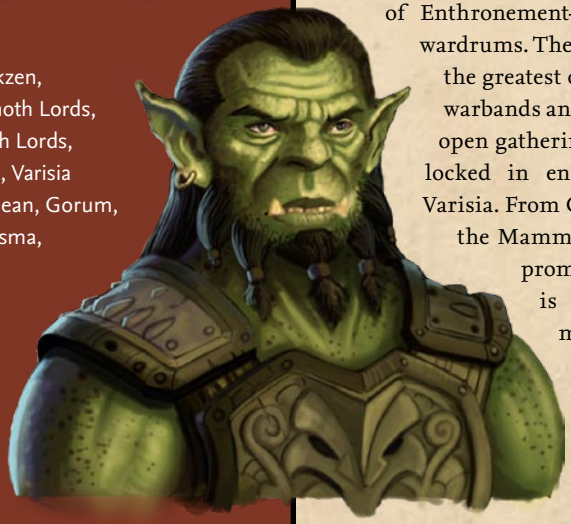
The physical beauty of half-elves masks a complex and conflicted internal psychology, as the human and elven elements of their psyche do not combine harmoniously. The dilated temporal perspective of their elven lineage leads to languorous predilections at war with their humanistic verve, adaptability, and precocious impulsivity. Their combination of the closed mind of the elves and the open mind of humans leaves half-elves in a delicate and often brittle mental dynamic. This leads many unfortunate half-elves into depression and even madness.

Half-elves have no ancestral homeland and seldom gather in groups composed explicitly of their kind. Instead, most try to fit within either human or elven society. They generally thrive in human communities, where they frequently become artists, bards, or entertainers. Despite this warm welcome, many half-elves avoid mixing with their human cousins, for foremost among the racial gifts granted to them by their elven progenitors is a long natural life. Half-elves often survive 150 years or more, and must watch as three or more generations of their human friends wither and die before their eyes. The older half-elves grow, the more likely they are to be overcome by melancholy and nostalgia, speaking wistfully of lost friends from simpler times.

Lacking a culture of their own, half-elves adopt the dress, affectations, and mannerisms of the societies in which they find themselves. They generally fall into one of two groups: those who wish to fit in and those who wish to stand out. Those of the former group stay within the mainstream fashion trends of their adopted culture, attempting to blend in with their peers by donning the kinds of clothes most other people of their social standing wear. These half-elves sometimes obsess over what others around them wear, say, and do to such an unhealthy level that they nearly drive themselves mad in an attempt to fit in. Despite all their best efforts, though, they rarely do.

Half-elven names can be drawn from the entire breadth of their human or elven cultural history and background, or half-elves may choose names for themselves. Sometimes these names are simple, almost as if meant to fade from memory, but many half-elves choose more embellished, musical names with an elven inflection.

Half-Orcs



Languages: Common, Orc
Favored Regions: Absalom, Belkzen, Katapesh, Land of the Mammoth Lords, Nidal, Realm of the Mammoth Lords, River Kingdoms, the Shackles, Varisia
Favored Religions: Cayden Cailean, Gorum, Lamashtu, Norgorber, Pharasma, Rovagug
Female Names: Anjaz, Butoi, Cannan, Drogeda, Goruza, Kifah, Mazon, Nadkarni, Pantoja, Rzonca, Shirish, Sucheta, Suzhen, Tevaga, Zeljka
Male Names: Aoukar, Ausk, Bouzaglu, Davor, Gorumax, Hakak, Kizziar, Krajasik, Makoa, Nesteruk, Passag, Shukuris, Tsadok, Unglert, Woiak
Appearance: Half-orcs stand between 6 and 7 feet in height, and are generally quite robust and muscular. Their hair color tends to be darker shades of brown, gray, or even dark red, with black hair being the most common. Their eyes tend to be small and beady, but it is the half-orcs' pointed ears, jagged tusk-like teeth, and green skin that truly display their heritage.

Half-orcs have long been the object of derision and hatred. While many orc tribes value the weaker half-breeds for their natural cunning, and in fact conduct raids into human lands specifically to breed more intelligent leaders, humans and most other races see half-orcs as unfortunate and unwanted progeny born of violence or perversion, a repulsive mix of two lines that should not cross. Half-orcs' inner conflicts make them prone to cruelty and loneliness, with ferocious tempers and burning desire to survive—traits that serve them well as guards, gladiators, or adventurers.

Half-orcs have existed on Golarion since the first battles between orcs and humans in the dying days of the Age of Darkness. After ages fighting against dwarves, orcs found humanity to be easier prey because of their unfamiliarity with orc tactics and the race's fractured state during that time. Orcs ravaged central and northern Avistan for centuries before humanity—emboldened by the sun's return and new alliances with dwarves, gnomes, and other new races to the world—cast their orc masters from their gruesome thrones, shattered their kingdoms, and drove them into the desolate wilds.

The deep interior of the Kodar Mountains hides ramshackle cities teeming with orcs, while the Menador range—cleared of orcs in the early days of the Age of Enthronement—once more echoes with savage wardrums. The Hold of Belkzen takes its name from the greatest of orc heroes, and its oft-squabbling warbands and tribal armies represent the largest open gathering of orcs and half-orcs on Avistan, locked in endless raiding with Lastwall and Varisia. From Cheliax in the south to the Realm of the Mammoth Lords in the north, the bloody promise of orc vengeance and slaughter is ever-present, and wherever orcs march hand-in-hand with conflict, half-orcs can be found.

Farther from these strongholds, in the cosmopolitan cities of the Inner Sea and Garund, such orc terror is of little concern, and half-orcs often enjoy lives relatively free from bigotry and suspicion. Still, half-orcs often find it difficult to shed their savage natures and adapt to the world of humans. Impatient, impulsive, greedy, prone to violence when frustrated, and often none too bright, half-orcs nevertheless embody the full range of human emotion and imagination.

Across the many nations in which they dwell, half-orcs venerate all the common chaotic deities, but most who practice even intermittent worship of a god tend to venerate Gorum. This deity exemplifies battle, the half-orc's lot in life, and strength, which many consider to be the half-orc's greatest blessing. Many half-orcs assume Gorum is one of them and that he remains ever hidden in iron to keep that truth from the weak humans who worship him. Rovagug remains popular among half-orcs who wish to bring down human civilization and create an anarchic equality for all races. Nonevil half-orcs tend to venerate Cayden Cailean, embracing his aspects of bravery and freedom. Among the nonchaotic deities, Norgorber (for his aspects of greed and murder) and Pharasma (in her death goddess role) occasionally attract half-orcs.

Throughout their long history of enslavement and abuse at the hands of other races, half-orcs have been branded, tattooed, and otherwise disfigured by their masters to mark their outcast status. In some areas, half-orcs have taken what were once their marks of shame and turned them into fantastic works of art of incredible detail and intricacy. Half-orcs often "collect" a variety of slave brands or embed pierced shackles or fetishes in their flesh as a reminder of their painful past.

Half-orcs are only rarely named by and cared for by their human parent with the same love and attention as the parent would any other child. More often, their names are harsh and unlovely, echoing the Orc tongue of their forebears.

2

The Inner Sea

"I think we're officially on the wrong side of town." Merisiel's head inclined slightly toward the alley, but Ezren didn't need the elf's signal.

"You're presuming there's a right one." In the shadows, shapes were moving—a lot of them. Ezren read her expression, then shrugged.

"Have it your way," he said, and turned to stand back-to-back with her. The first of the thugs emerged from the dark of the eaves, blades held backward like proper knife-fighters.

"You wanted to see how we dance in the big city," Ezren said. "And I think you've got your choice of partners..."

The Inner Sea Region

The subcontinent of Avistan and the northern third of Garund together are often referred to as the Inner Sea region. Itself consisting of over 40 nations, empires, frontiers, and wildlands, the Inner Sea region comprises a wide range of adventure opportunities. From the wild frontiers of Varisia to the cosmopolitan streets of Absalom, from the cloying diabolism of Cheliax to the hopeful independence of Andoran, any one of these locations can host countless campaigns and adventures.

The following pages take a detailed look at these regions, focusing on the history, government, and sites of interest in each area. Each entry includes a short block of information for the region being covered, starting with a brief description of that region and including such vital stats as the overall alignment of the region's populace, its predominant religions and languages, the name of its ruler and type of government, and names and populations of its major settlements and capital city.

WATERWAYS

While this chapter is most concerned with the continents of Avistan and northern Garund, a full exploration of the Inner Sea region would be incomplete without at least a cursory examination of its major oceans, seas, and lakes.

Arcadian Ocean: Surrounding the island continent of Azlant is the vast Arcadian Ocean. This ocean's eastern shores run along the coasts of Avistan and Garund, from Varisia in the north to the outlying Horn of Droon in southern Garund. Not quite the largest ocean on Golarion, the Arcadian is certainly the largest to connect directly to the Inner Sea region. As one approaches Azlant in the center of the Arcadian Ocean, submerged ruins of that ancient empire grow more common, yet elsewhere, vast undersea cities populated by aquatic elves, merfolk, sahuagin, and—in the deepest reaches—the remnants of the aboleth empire await discovery.

Eye of Abendego: Before the death of Aroden, this sizable stretch of relatively calm waters was known as the Abendego Gulf. Yet just over a century ago, a powerful and apparently perpetual hurricane churned to life within the gulf. The region is known now as the Eye of Abendego—for it is the winds and waves of this permanent hurricane that are the region's most dominant and dangerous feature. While some brave and desperate ship captains ply the outer reaches of the Eye, none have yet successfully navigated the hurricane's depths. A few magical investigations of the storm have confirmed that at its center sits a large eye of calm waters thick with debris and other mysterious flotsam, yet the preponderance of undead, ghost ships, strange sea monsters, and powerful creatures of elemental air make such investigations dangerous at best. What may have formed the eye itself is a mystery that is unlikely to ever be solved.

Inner Sea: The most important waterway in the region is the eponymous Inner Sea. Yet despite its import, this region is also the youngest waterway in the area, for until Earthfall, when the strange rock known as the *Starstone* plunged into Golarion, the continents of Garund and Avistan were connected by a land bridge. The violence of Earthfall created a massive circular crater and sent powerful shockwaves along the continental divide, collapsing much of both into ruin and allowing the waters of the Arcadian Ocean to flow east. Today, the Inner Sea shares its shores with the region's most powerful nations, and serves as a trade route and war zone as the political tides demand.

Lake Encarthan: One of the largest and most highly traveled bodies of water in Avistan, Lake Encarthan connects the nations of Druma, Kyonin, Lastwall, Molthune, Nirmathas, Razmiran, and Ustalav with a common coastline. The lake itself is home to many creatures as well, from numerous lake monsters to ogrelike merrows, scrags, and stranger creatures. Yet the lake's greatest mystery lies at its center, for it is here that the mysterious Isle of Terror looms. Said to be where Aroden mortally wounded the wizard-king Tar-Baphon in 896 AR, the Isle of Terror certainly earns its name with all manner of undead, nightmare-spawned monstrosities, and violent storms that constantly wrack its shores.

Lake of Mists and Veils: The people of Brevoy know the vast Lake of Mists and Veils simply as "the Lake." It defines the northern border of the land as well as dominates Brevoy's seasons and weather. In the winter, fierce storms howl down from the foggy waters, driven between the mountain peaks to pour freezing rain, sharp hail, and heavy snow drifts upon Issia, and slowed only slightly by the forest and the hills around Rostland, before exhausting their fury on the southern hills and plains. The lake gets its name from its tendency to warm enough in the peak months of summer so that when the first chill of winter sets in, the water "steams" with heavy layers of mist at night that slowly burn off each morning.

Obari Ocean: The massive Obari Ocean separates the continents of Garund and Casmaron. It's northernmost extreme connects to the Inner Sea, while to the south and east its extents are unknown to most of the denizens of the Inner Sea region. Its shallows are often traveled by trade

vessels, particularly those hailing from Vudra or distant Goka upon the western shores of Tian Xia, but few dare to sail the vast empty reach of the Obari's heart, where rumors of immense sea dragons, carnivorous mobile islands, and demon storms are but the least fantastic of the sea-terrors that prey upon the imaginations of sailors.

Steaming Sea: With its northernmost reaches often encased in ice during the winter, the Steaming Sea sits along the northern border of the Arcadian Ocean, sheltering it from the harsh coastline of the Crown of the World. The Steaming Sea's actual boundaries depend upon the seasonal flow of currents, but the Ironbound Archipelago and the island nation of Hermea are typically thought of as existing within this waterway's reaches. Many scholars categorize the Steaming Sea as nothing more than a minor component of the larger Arcadian Ocean.

History

Tragedy, sorrow, and loss define Golarion's history. Cataclysms undo cultural and technological advancements, periodically forcing human society into a state of relative barbarism and flux. Earthfall, the catastrophe that brought about the end of mighty Azlant and decadent Thassilon—two of the most advanced human societies ever to rise on Golarion—marks humanity's greatest resetting. A thousand years of darkness, fear, and savagery followed Earthfall, during which time the magical, technological, and cultural successes of Azlant and Thassilon were lost. Ever so slowly, though, humanity drew itself up from barbarism, as the great empires of Osirion and Taldor arose from the ashes in the Age of Destiny. Human civilization once again spread across Avistan and Garund.

A hundred years ago, humanity stood on the edge of a new age. Prophecies spoke of the return of the great god Aroden and, with him, a new renaissance for his chosen people in the modern empire of Cheliax. Instead, Aroden's connection to his clerics grew silent, and the Inner Sea region was plunged into weeks of widespread storms and chaos. With Aroden's death, mighty Cheliax fell apart, its outer territories escaping from its grasp in a series of revolutions and civil wars. In the north, the walls between worlds shifted, and Golarion inched ever closer to the demonic Abyss with the opening of the Worldwound. To the south, entire nations drowned as a vast and perpetual hurricane, the Eye of Abendego, manifested and brought ruin. The great prophecies failed, and humanity looked with apprehension upon an uncertain world. Thus was born the current era, the Age of Lost Omens.

The current year is 4711 AR (Absalom Reckoning). As the calendar advances in the real world, time also marches forward for the world of Golarion. This book was published in the year 2011, with Golarion's corresponding year ending in the same two final digits.

Inner Sea Timeline

The ages before Earthfall (perhaps the most significant event to occur in the Inner Sea region throughout recorded history) are often collectively known as the "Age Before Ages." Details of what occurred in these ages come not from recorded history as much as from mythology and legends.

Age of Creation

Date	Event
Unknown	The creation of Golarion is a hotly debated subject among scholars and priests, with as many theories attempting to chronicle such an ancient event as there are philosophies and religions. Most of these theories agree that for uncounted ages, mortal life did not exist upon the world of Golarion. Yet even this primeval world was far from abandoned. If they are to be believed, the aboleths ruled the oceans, while the land was the domain of even more mysterious races, such as the unknowable Vault Builders. Eventually, mortal life appeared—yet again, whether as a result of aboleth experimentation or divine creation, the truth is unclear. Certainly, the gods themselves had a far more direct role in the world in these early days, for it was during the Age of Creation that the deity Rovagug was confronted and defeated by an alliance of gods and goddesses, primarily through the acts of Sarenrae (who cut open the world and sealed Rovagug in a strange dimension at the world's core) and Asmodeus (who provided a lock and key capable of imprisoning a god).

Age of Serpents

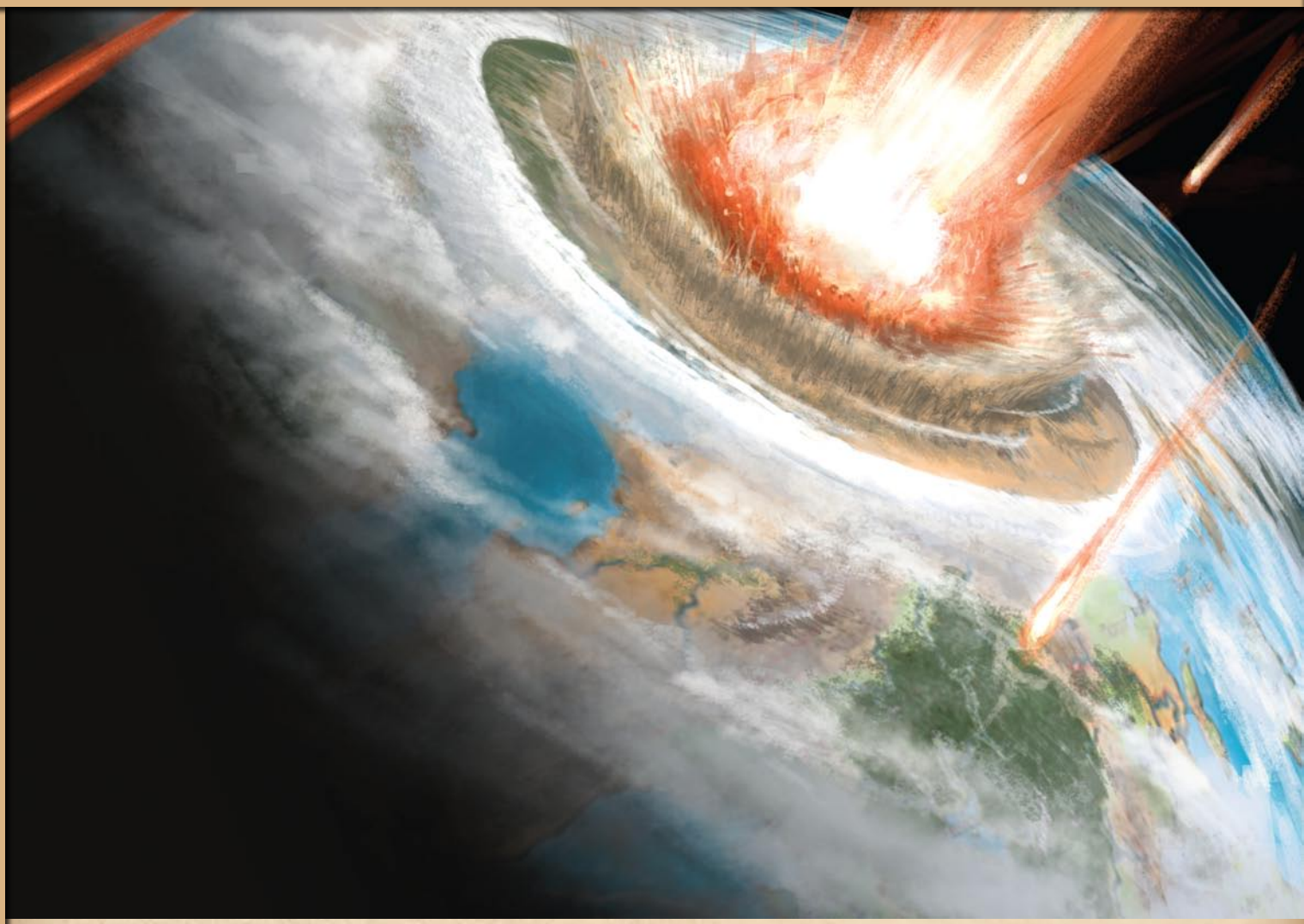
Date	Event
Unknown	Among the first of Golarion's great empires was that of the serpentfolk (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 242). By the time Azlant rose to power, the serpentfolk were already one of humanity's greatest enemies.

Age of Legend

Date	Event
Unknown	The first, and arguably the greatest, of humanity's civilizations was the continental empire of Azlant, a realm of powerful magic and technology whose secrets are still valued today. The empire of Thassilon rose near the end of the Age of Legend, founded by exiles from Azlant and ruled by wizards known as Runelords. When the people of Azlant grew too proud of their deeds, their old aboleth enemies decided to end things on their own terms by destroying Azlant by using powerful magic to cause Earthfall.

Age of Darkness

Date	Event
–5293	Earthfall. The *Starstone* tumbles to Golarion, creating the Inner Sea and kicking off a thousand



	years of darkness. Azlant and Thassilon are destroyed. The elves depart Golarion via the *Sovyrian Stone* or retreat into the far north, the southern jungles, or the Darklands.
–5133	King Taargick founds the Kingdom of Tar Taargadth, uniting the dwarves in a common cause to abandon the subterranean Darklands.
–5102	The orcs first emerge onto the surface world, fleeing vicious pogroms by righteous dwarves tunneling toward a prophesied land of the open sky.
–4987	The dwarves fulfill the Quest for Sky, emerging for the first time upon the surface of Golarion.

Age of Anguish

Date	Event
–4294	The Age of Darkness draws to a close. Humanity begins rebuilding civilization.
–4202	The gnome race, fleeing an unknown terror from the First World, arrives in various locations throughout the Inner Sea region where the boundaries between dimensions have worn thin.
–4120	Founding of the Jistka Imperium.
–3923	The Pit of Gormuz opens in central Casmaron, disgorging the Spawn of Rovagug upon the surface of Golarion for the first time.
–3708	Belkzen besieges Koldukar.
–3502	Old-Mage Jatembe and his Ten Magic Warriors bring the light of learning back to a world overcome with fear and despair in the deep Mwangi Expanse. His discoveries will eventually inspire the flying cities of the Shory empire.

Age of Destiny

Date	Event
–3470	Ancient Osirion is founded.
–3300	Betrayal by powerful outsider allies and raids from desert nomads weaken Jistka.
–3250	Desert nomads form the Tekritanin League.
–3047	The Song Pharaoh overthrows the Pharaoh of Forgotten Plagues and founds Shiman-Sekh.
–3000	Osirion is at its height under the reign of the God-Kings.

–2764	The Jistka Imperium collapses in a prolonged series of succession wars.
–2323	Shory aeromancers, working from thousand-year-old traditions begun by Old-Mage Jatembe, establish Kho as the first of their legendary flying cities.
–1498	The Four Pharaohs of Ascension join forces to rule Osirion, initiating that empire's Second Age.
–1452	The armies of the Four Pharaohs break the Tekritanin League, absorbing some city-states and razing others.
–1431	The power of the Four Pharaohs breaks, and Osirion again slips into decline.
–1281	Taldor is founded by descendants of Lost Azlant and indigenous primitive humans.
–892	Nex and Geb go to war.
–841	Osirion fails to replace the assassinated governor of Thuvia, effectively ceding the province to barbarism.
–632	The Tarrasque, greatest of the Spawn of Rovagug, destroys Ninshabur and devastates Avistan until it is defeated and sealed away in a hidden cavern.
–473	The Linnorm King Ulvass discovers Arcadia, establishing the colony of Valenhall as an earthly paradise.
–43	Soldiers of Kelesh claim Qadira in the name of Padishah Emperor Adalan IV.

Age of Enthronement

Date	Event
1	Aroden, the Last Azlanti, raises the *Starstone* from the depths of the Inner Sea and becomes a living god. Absalom is founded.
23	First Siege of Absalom—Warlord Voradni Voon's ill-planned siege fails catastrophically.
37	Taldor's First Army of Exploration destroys the Goroth Lodge in the Verduran Forest and charts the Sellen River as far north as Sevenarches.
166	Nex unsuccessfully sieges Absalom, creating the infamous Spire of Nex.
253	Nex captures the Isle of Jalmeray.
499	Taldor's Second Army of Exploration pushes north beyond Lake Encarthan.
563	Khiben-Sald, the legendary Maharaja of Vudra, spends a decade on the Nexian Isle of Jalmeray, bringing Vudran culture to the Inner Sea.
576	Nex vanishes from his capital in Quantium during a Gebbite attack that kills thousands.
632	Geb attempts to escape Golarion in an act of ritual suicide, but soon returns as a ghost.
896	Aroden mortally wounds the wizard-king Tar-Baphon on the Isle of Terror at the center of Lake Encarthan.
1140	Artokus Kirran formulates the *sun orchid elixir*.
1520	Taldor's Third Army of Exploration conquers the northern shore of the Inner Sea; Corentyn is founded.
1532	Qadiran operatives topple the decadent Pharaoh Menedes XXVI, establishing the first in a long line of foreign rulers over Osirion.
1551	The Glorious Empire of Tar Taargadth collapses when orc raiders launch massive assaults against the Sky Citadels, conquering several of them and throwing the dwarves into uncharacteristic chaos for several years.
1571	The First Five Kings War erupts, engulfing all of the Five Kings Mountains and many of the surrounding human settlements.
1683	Taldor's Fourth Army of Exploration maps and claims the lands that will one day become Andoran.
1707	Andoran is founded as a province of Taldor when General Khastalus of Corentyn clears much of the Arthfell Forest and establishes Augustana.
1893	Norgorber passes the Test of the *Starstone*, following Aroden's path to divinity.
1975	Ulfen longships raid heavily along the west coast of Avistan and in the region now known as Cheliax.
2009	Taldor's Fifth Army of Exploration expands throughout the River Kingdoms and brushes against the wilds of Iobaria.
2089	Taldor's Sixth Army of Exploration loses a powerful magical siege engine known as the *Worldbreaker* to the Gorilla King in a disastrous attempt to tame the Mwangi Expanse.
2133	Taldor's Seventh Army of Exploration pacifies the Isgeri tribe of Kellids inhabiting the valleys between the Menador and Five King Mountains, forming the protectorate of Isger to capitalize on trade from Druma and inner Avistan.
2187	The teachings of Irori reach mainland Tian Xia.
2217	The cult of Sarenrae flourishes in Osirion, threatening the Qadiran satrap, who banishes the zealots to the western deserts.
2253	The resurgent Cult of the Dawnflower vanquishes the satrap of Osirion, establishing an independent dynasty of Keleshite sultans.
2332	The Kerse Accord is established in Druma.
2361	Varisian wanderers settle the region know today as Ustalav north of Lake Encarthan.
2498	The Oath Wars begin in northwest Garund. The clergies of Nethys, Norgorber, and Sarenrae vie for dominance.
2497	The demon Treerazer begins his perversion of the forests of Kyonin.
2555	The city of Azir exiles all clerics, burns their temples, and enacts the Laws of Man.
2560	The bloody Oath Wars come to an end as the Laws of Man spread throughout the region. The Red Mantis flees Rahadoum to establish a new base of operations on Mediogalti Island.
2632	The elves return en masse to Golarion via the *Sovyrian Stone* in Kyonin.

2664 In Tian Xia, Yixing courtiers perform the first chadao tea ceremony for their emperor.

2742 The Choking Death spreads west from Iobaria, devastating human populations throughout northeastern Avistan.

2765 In Absalom, Cayden Cailean drunkenly survives the Test of the *Starstone*.

2822 Vudrani rajahs wrest control of Jalmeray from the decadent Arclords of Nex.

2920 A violent earthquake rocks Qadira and Taldor, killing tens of thousands in both nations.

3001 Daralathyxl, known as the Sixth King or Emperor of the Mountains, arrives at the Five Kings Mountains.

3007 Cheliax is founded as the western frontier of Taldor.

3129 Assassins murder Grand Prince Jalrune of Taldor.

3203 Tar-Baphon returns to life as the Whispering Tyrant. The lich king unifies the orc hordes of Belkzen and terrorizes central Avistan.

3250 Katapesh becomes a nation.

3313 The nation of Irrisen is born when the Witch Queen Baba Yaga conquers the eastern reach of the Lands of the Linnorm Kings.

3332 The famed dwarven engineers of Jernashall, within Droskar's Crag, create the first successful and safe magmafall in the middle of their city.

3616 In Tian Xia, the Perfect Swordswoman, Setsuna Kuga, leads the armies of the Minkai against the forces of the Teikoku Shogunate in the Battle of Eight Bridges. With the shogun's forces routed, Minkai's armies march upon the old capital and raze it.

3619 The Minkai Empire is established in Tian Xia. Kasai is named the new capital.

3754 Taldor launches the Shining Crusade against the Whispering Tyrant.

3801 The Shining Crusade secures a beachhead on the northern shore of Lake Encarthan, in Ustalav.

3818 The Knights of Ozem summon Arazni, the warrior goddess Herald of Aroden.

3823 Tar-Baphon humiliates and kills Arazni.

3827 The Whispering Tyrant is imprisoned in Gallowspire.

3828 The Shining Crusade officially comes to an end with the founding of Lastwall, a holding of Taldor tasked with watching over the prison of the Whispering Tyrant.

3832 Iomedae, heroine of the Shining Crusade, successfully attempts the Test of the *Starstone* and becomes Aroden's Herald.

3890 Geb abducts Arazni's corpse from the Knights of Ozem, reanimates her as a lich, and takes her as his Harlot Queen.

3923 Merivesta Olinchi of Nex, a famed satiric playwright, is assassinated during the premiere of her masterpiece, *The Conception Exception*.

3980 The Rending. Droskar's Crag erupts, rocking much of southern Avistan and causing widespread destruction in Darkmoon Vale. Sections of Almas wash away in massive flooding.

4043 Kazavon drives the Belkzen orcs from western Ustalav.

4079 The Qadiran army crosses Taldor's southern border.

4081 Chelish King Aspex the Even-Tongued breaks from Taldor, claiming Andoran and the winged folk of the Devil's Perch by diplomacy and Galt and Isger by force. The decade-long power grab becomes known as the Even-Tongued Conquest, and greatly undermines Taldan influence throughout western Avistan.

4113 Karas "the Falcon" Novotnian enters Darkmoon Vale and begins pacifying the region.

4137 Under the banner of the mad prince Haliad I, Cheliax unsuccessfully sieges Absalom for the first time. Gains in Garund, however, grant Cheliax complete control of the Arch of Aroden, cementing a naval supremacy that remains to this day.

4138 Cheliax establishes the colony of Sargava on Garund's western coast.

4142 Imperial Lung Wa is established in Tian Xia, uniting 10 of the 16 Kingdoms of Shu.

4217 The Yellowtongue Sickness ravages Avistan.

4275 A powerful earthquake off the coast of Vudra causes devastating flooding in coastal areas, killing thousands.

4300 The efreeti warlord Jhavhul is imprisoned on the slopes of Pale Mountain at the conclusion of the Genie Wars by the Templars of the Five Winds.

4305 King Haliad III of Cheliax launches the Wars of Expansion to broaden the empire's northern borders by claiming land in Molthune and Varisia. This struggle lasts more than a century and spans the reign of five Chelish monarchs, eventually becoming known as the Everwar.

4307 The Pathfinder Society is founded in Absalom.

4317 Pathfinder Durvin Gest explores significant portions of the ruins of Azlant.

4329 Geb petrifies the invading army of the Pirate Queen Mastrien Slash, creating the Field of Maidens.

4332 Durvin Gest casts the *Lens of Galundari* into the Nemesis Well near Osibu.

4338 Nidal falls to Cheliax.

4369 Ordrik Talhirk murders his cousin and seizes the throne of the Five Kings, triggering the Forge War.

4382 The Forge War ends with Ordrik's triumph.

4407 Cheliax founds Korvosa in the northern frontier region of Varisia.

4410 Cheliax cedes territorial ambitions in Varisia and Belkzen, officially ending the Everwar.

4466 Ordrik's theocracy crumbles.

4499 Choral the Conqueror carves Brevoy from the corpses of Rostland and Issia.

4507 The Chelish army at Korvosa forces the Shoanti barbarians to retreat to the Storval Plateau.

4508	Forest King Narven dies in the Arthfell Forest.
4552	Mengkare, the great gold dragon, begins his grand experiment on the Isle of Hermea.
4576	The first Hellknight order, the Order of the Rack, is founded in Westcrown.
4584	Chelish explorers from Korvosa settle Magnimar.
4588	Alkenstar, fleeing persecution from Nex, enters the Mana Wastes and discovers Dongun Hold.
4601	The Duchy of Alkenstar is founded—construction of the Gunworks begins.
4603	Taldor and Qadira reach an uneasy peace.
4605	King Gaspodar of Cheliax prepares for the prophesied manifestation of Aroden, foretold to mark the advent of the Age of Glory.

Age of Lost Omens

Date	Event
4606	Aroden dies, leaving the Empire of Cheliax without a divine mandate. The Eye of Abendego forms off of Garund's northwestern coast, drowning the nations of Lirgen and Yamasa. The Worldwound opens in the north, consuming the barbarian kingdom of Sarkoris. Storms wrack the Inner Sea region for several weeks.
4608	Thousands abandon Korvosa for Magnimar.
4609	Osirians overthrow their Keleshite masters and Prince Khemet I takes control, citing a bloodline that dates back to the ancient pharaohs. Ulizmila, reportedly the granddaughter of Baba Yaga, arrives in Darkmoon Vale.
4613	Baba Yaga installs her daughter Elvanna as sovereign of Irrisen.
4615	The astrological philosophers of Lirgen take their own lives after evacuating their people from what becomes known as the Sodden Lands.
4620	The Gunworks of Alkenstar are completed—the first firearms begin emerging from Alkenstar to be purchased by rich collectors and curious scholars.
4622	The faltering Church of Aroden launches the First Mendevian Crusade.
4632	The province of Molthune declares its independence from Cheliax.
4638	Drezen falls to Worldwound demons. The Second Mendevian Crusade begins.
4640	Diabolists of the House of Thrune seize control of Cheliax, brutally ending 3 decades of vicious civil war. A dark shadow envelops the empire.
4648	The northern half of Molthune rebels against the avaricious nobles in Canorate.
4655	The conflict in Molthune ends with the founding of Nirmathas. Irgal Nirmath is assassinated.
4661	Razmiran is established.
4665	The third Mendevian Crusade begins.
4667	The Red Revolution begins in Galt.
4669	The People's Revolt transforms Andoran.
4672	Razmir founds Thronestep.
4674	The pirates of the Shackles unite under one banner to harass the fleets and merchants of the north.
4676	Shadow beasts first appear in Westcrown.
4682	Queen Domina of Korvosa gains the service of the Hellknight Order of the Nail.
4695	A contingent of 173 heavy cavalry from Lastwall routs Warlord Graukrad's force of 2,000 orcs.
4696	The Beast of Bloodcove, huge froghemoth, claims 204 victims over the course of a record hot summer.
4690	Gorilla King Ruthazek attacks Alkenstar and seizes the Gunworks' largest bombard as a trophy.
4697	The Goblinblood Wars shake Isger.
4698	A terrible earthquake rocks Absalom.
4699	The royal house of Rogarvia vanishes in Brevoy, leaving the nation in turmoil. House Surtova takes the contested crown. The great wyrm red dragon Daralathyxl makes his last appearance.
4700	Over the course of the month of Rova, the eyeless bodies of 13 krakens wash up on the western shores of the Isle of Kortos.
4701	Gnolls surge from White Canyon in Katapesh, attempting to enslave the population of Solku.
4702	The runelords stir to life in Varisia. In the sleepy town of Sandpoint, gifted artist Jervis Stoot murders 25 men, women, and children.
4703	The *Night Terror*, a Chelish merchant ship thought lost to the Eye of Abendego years ago, is found adrift off the Andoren coast in pristine condition but with its entire crew missing.
4704	White Estrid defeats Boiltongue and becomes a Linnorm King; her use of strange weapons that she claims were gifts from "earth spirits" enrages other rulers of the Lands of the Linnorm Kings.
4705	The Gray Corsairs sink three Katapeshi slave galleons in the Inner Sea.
4706	Followers of the Gorilla King behead 17 missionaries and Aspis Consortium merchants in the Mwangi Expanse.
4707	Adventurers reopen Bloodsworn Vale. Pharaoh Khemet III opens the ruins of Osirion to foreign explorers.
4708	An aging King Eodred retreats from rule of Korvosa, leaving his untested young wife, Queen Ileosa, in charge of Varisia's largest city.
4709	A monstrous metal scorpion capable of spitting fire from its mouth and tail destroys several villages in western Numeria—the beast retreats into the Felldales after harvesting dozens of living prisoners.
4710	Many travelers of the Inner Sea report sightings of an immense blue dragon flying north from Thuvia toward Avistan—later that year, several remote villages in Isger, Druma, and Molthune are mysteriously destroyed by fire and lightning.
4711	The current year.

Absalom

CITY AT THE CENTER OF THE WORLD

Alignment: N
Capital: Absalom (303,900)
Notable Settlements: Diobel (4,850), Escadar (11,700)
Ruler: Lord Gyr of House Gixx, Primarch of Absalom, Protector of Kortos
Government: Grand Council composed of representatives from several major noble houses and religious groups. The greatest of this council, called the primarch, enjoys a wide range of privileges.
Languages: Common, Osiriani, Kelish
Religion: Abadar, Aroden, Calistria, Cayden Cailean, Iomedae, Irori, Nethys, Norgorber, Sarenrae, Shelyn

Absalom is the most famous of all cities, and takes pride in being one of the largest and wealthiest cities in the known world. According to myth, Absalom was founded by Aroden himself when he raised the *Starstone* from the ocean depths and left it in its current resting place at the heart of the city. It is thus a living part of mythology. Absalom also sits in the largest natural harbor on the Isle of Kortos, in the eye of the Inner Sea. This allows it to control dozens of major shipping lanes, and makes it a critical stop on any voyage across that sea. The confluence of mercantile, strategic, and religious influence in Absalom earns its title as the City at the Center of the World. Of course, it also attracts would-be conquerors, who have unsuccessfully assaulted the city throughout history. The ruins of dozens of siege castles litter the grounds outside Absalom's walls, and its harbor is so choked with the masts and moldering hulls of sunken warships that safely reaching the city's docks requires the steady eye of a paid pilot. Yet Absalom has never fallen.

HISTORY

When Aroden raised the Isle of Kortos from the depths of the Inner Sea and founded Absalom, he called the wise and brave from nearby lands to inhabit the new land and charged them to guard the *Starstone* from all who would relocate it. Nobles, merchants, and adventurers came, especially from Andoran, Cheliax, Osirion, Qadira, Taldor, and Thuvia. As a result, the culture of the city draws heavily from all these lands, and many of its noble houses identify themselves closely with elements from those nations.

GOVERNMENT

Absalom is ruled by a Grand Council currently chaired by Lord Gyr of House Gixx, who enjoys the titles of

Primarch and Defender of Kortos. The Grand Council has 12 high seats (including the Primarch's) and a varying number of low seats. Influential religious figures, heads of the aristocracy, and powerful merchants fill the high seats—these positions are kept for as long as the members maintain the support of their fellows and honor the duties of their position. Low seat positions are voted on by the Grand Council once a year, who choose from numerous candidates selected from various other public offices or notable families. The most powerful, profitable and respectable positions, including the Exchequer of Taxation, Trade Minister, Sea Lord, and the Justice of the Courts, fall to the high seats.

All matters of state are settled by a vote of the Grand Council. The entire council votes on common matters (such as when to hold festivals and what to do about a poor fishing season), while the most important concerns are denoted as "Matters of Note" and are voted on solely by the high seats. Whether a given issue becomes a Matter of Note is, itself, a Matter of Note, allowing the high seats to take control of any issue a majority of them wish to rule on.

Above the High Council, the Primarch has a number of unique privileges that give him considerable additional power. He can veto any political appointment, be it a high seat being given control of the harbormasters, or the creation of a new low seat. He also has the sole power to call a Grand Council meeting, allowing him to hold the council hostage by refusing to allow them to meet unless they agree to settle issues to his satisfaction. Since the Primarch holds his position for life (but cannot name a successor—his replacement is voted on as a Matter of Note), most Primarchs simply try to ensure they don't become such tyrants that someone decides to end their reign at the point of a sword. The Primarch is also traditionally the Sea Lord of Absalom's navy, giving him considerable military might, but Lord Gyr has instead named himself First Spell Lord, granting himself authority over the magical institutions of Absalom.

LORD GYR OF HOUSE GIXX

GAZETTEER

Ascendant Court: Most of Absalom's temples are found in the Ascendant Court, the hub at the center of the city's great thoroughfares. The *Starstone* itself rests within a massive cathedral perched atop a pillar of rock surrounded by a seemingly bottomless pit. Three bridges cross this expanse, one for each of the Ascendants' faithful (Cayden Cailean, Iomedae, and Norgorber). A fourth bridge, corresponding to Aroden and maintained by his aging clergy, crumbled when an earthquake rocked the city a decade ago and has not been repaired. Although hundreds enter the massive structure every year, and only four are known to have ever won the ultimate prize of divinity, a few brave explorers have escaped the cathedral with their lives—and sometimes vast treasures. Their descriptions make it clear that within the rock and walls of the cathedral, magic doesn't always work properly, extradimensional movement is impossible, and the Cathedral itself regularly changes its configuration, challenges, and guardians.

The promise of the *Starstone* attracts legions of would-be deities, zealous cultists, adventurers, and desperate followers eager for something to believe in. Every day, pilgrims visit the great chasm at the center of the district. Some write their wishes and dreams onto pieces of paper they drop into the pit, hoping to send a message directly to the gods. Others hope to catch a vainglorious fool or righteous hero in an attempt to snatch divinity in the Test of the *Starstone*. Agents of Absalom's thieves' guilds prey upon the visitors by picking pockets, running cons, and demanding protection money from various "deities in training." Notable churches in the district include the Temple of the Shining Star, where clerics of Sarenrae honor the sun; the Seventh Church, site of one of Iomedae's 11 miraculous Acts; and Cayden's Hall, a grand tavern devoted to the Accidental God, where his faithful honor their master with upturned tankards and eager fists. Not far from the heart of the district lies the enormous Cathedral of Failure, where silent caretakers erect small shrines to unsuccessful seekers of divinity.

Azlanti Keep: A district all to itself, this massive stone fortress sits near the northern edge of Absalom to protect the city from invaders from the land. The keep houses the city watch and the First Guard, an elite group of warriors, wizards, and scouts whose sole purpose is to root out and eliminate threats to the city. The citadel's architecture is among the oldest in Absalom and reflects influences of the city's Azlanti origins by way of Aroden.

The Coins: Situated just north of the docks, this district hosts most of the foreign traders and sailors who come to the city. The transient nature of the Coins' residents attracts illicit trade in the form of drugs, slaves, and contraband. The most respectable sections of the district are the Monger's Mart and the Grand Bazaar, where the need for trade enforces some civility. Even so, disagreements often escalate into bloodied blades.

Ivy District: The verdant Ivy District is home to numerous theaters, bawdy houses, and galleries that attract some of Absalom's most influential artists and craftsmen, as well

as minor nobles, gifted actors, and popular bards. While certain "soft" crimes such as narcotics and prostitution thrive here, the residents of the district have little tolerance for hardened criminals or indigent street-dwellers.

The Petal District: Perched atop Aroden's Hill with the whole city at its feet, the Petal District is home to the greatest merchants and most powerful nobles in the wealthiest and most powerful city in the Inner Sea region. Decadent palaces, elaborate gardens, and glittering promenades characterize the district, which gets its name from the well-tended rows of flowers that run down the center of nearly every street. The overwhelming beauty forms a strange backdrop for the treacherous politics of Absalom's ruthless upper class, which resorts to poison and murder as often as negotiation and armistice.

Precipice Quarter: Once Beldrin's Bluff, a quiet and well-maintained section of town, the Precipice quarter suffered greatly from an earthquake a decade ago, during which much of the district crumbled into the harbor. Now, law-abiding citizens avoid the Precipice District and rumors whisper of strange hauntings and eerie sounds in the mostly-abandoned ruins.

The Puddles: The same terrible earthquake that ruined Beldrin's Bluff sank the Puddles as well, so that today much of this district floods during the high tide, resulting in persistent erosion of building foundations and society. Most honest citizens fled the district years ago, ceding it to addicts, criminals, and those too poor to have any other choice. Thieves and cutthroats abound here in great numbers, and more than one guild of dubious character operates from the slouching, unsteady buildings of the Puddles.

Wise Quarter: Within the city itself, the Wise Quarter stands just north of the Ivy District, separating the affluence of that neighborhood from the immense Azlanti Keep. Absalom's public government buildings stand in the Wise Quarter, including the Grand Council's hall and the residence of the Primarch. In addition, the Wise Quarter houses the Arcanamirium, one of Golarion's most adept institutions of magic (founded by the Arclords of Nex). Numerous independent sages, scholars, and scribes also work within the Wise Quarter, blending their philosophies and skills brought from a dozen home countries.

The Isle of Kortos: Although most people think of Absalom as an independent city, it is in fact the capital of a nation (also named Absalom) that controls the entire Isle of Kortos (much of which is still unsettled), as well as the settlements of Diobel and Escadar. Additional sites on the Isle of Kortos are summarized below.

Cairnlands: The vast plain of broken weapons, stone barrows, and shallow graves surrounding Absalom is known as the Cairnlands. Over 40 centuries, thousands of would-be conquerors met their doom here, often without the proper religious rituals to keep their spirits quiet. Also found here are numerous siege castles—huge fortresses used in the many wars of conquest that have failed to take the great city. Notable siege castles include the treacherous El Raja Key and the Red Redoubt of Karamoss. The immense and weirdly beautiful Spire of Nex is located a few hours north of Absalom, and remains a popular adventuring spot thousands of years after it was abandoned.

Diobel: Diobel is a bustling port town that does business mostly with fishermen, traders exporting furs and lumber off Kortos, and smugglers looking to bring illicit goods in and out of Absalom itself overland, thus avoiding the watchful gaze of the larger port's harbormasters. Control of Diobel can give political forces increased influence in Absalom, making it a common first target for a growing faction. Currently, Diobel is ruled by Lord Avid of House Arnsen, a bitter rival (and old childhood friend) of Lord Gyr.

Escadar: Larger than Diobel—but still tiny compared to Absalom proper—the city of Escadar sits on the Isle of Erran, north of Kortos. Escadar is a military town, designed to support and maintain the naval might of Absalom. While the city of Absalom itself has never fallen to invaders, the port has been blockaded more than once, often leading to conditions of near starvation within the city. After such a siege a few centuries ago, the Grand Council voted to establish a shipyard and warehouse on Erran, to serve as a base for running through any future blockades. The town of Escadar has since grown into a fair-sized military base, with regular operations taken against pirates throughout the Inner Sea and as far south as the Obari Ocean. Escadar is ruled by a Lesser Council, comprised mostly of retired ship's captains and younger relatives of members of the Absalom Grand Council. In addition to maintaining ships of its own, the Lesser Council offers letters of marque to ships willing to fight pirates, giving independent ships some legal authority in the seas around Kortos.

Kortos Mounts: The Kortos Mounts dominate the center of the Isle of Kortos. Still wild despite their proximity to Absalom, these mountains are home to several tribes of minotaurs, centaurs, and harpies that engage in constant warfare among each other and against those who dare enter their lands. Many of these tribes also worship demon lords (particularly Baphomet and Pazuzu), and some throw sacrifices into vast crevices in the mountains.

Spire of Nex: A few hours north of Absalom stands the imposing Spire of Nex, a mile-tall column of smooth gray stone visible on the horizon from nearly every district in the city. The Spire contains dozens of pocket dimensions abducted by the archmage during his extensive interplanar travels, a battery from which to draw a legion of creatures from a multitude of realities to do war upon Absalom. Nex's gambit petered out four thousand years ago, and the Spire has served as beacon for explorers and looters ever since. The sheer edifice has no apparent entrances, but tales abound of those who have found their way in—and of the strange beings that manage to find their way out.

FIRST GUARD OF ABSALOM

Andoran

BIRTHPLACE OF FREEDOM

Alignment: NG
Capital: Almas (76,600)
Notable Settlements: Alvis (2,090), Augustana (54,200), Bellis (4,800), Caldamin (550), Carpenden (10,600), Claes (648), Cyremium (370), Falcon's Hollow (1,400), Fusil (488), Lavieton (505), Olfden (3,319), Oregent (22,700), Piren's Bluff (210), Riverford (1,740), Sauerton (2,780), Souston (920), Steyr (2,634), Triela (3,899)
Ruler: His Excellency Codwin I of Augustana, Supreme Elect of the Free Peoples of Andoran
Government: Fledgling democracy
Languages: Common
Religion: Abadar, Aroden, Cayden Cailean, Erastil, Iomedae, Shelyn

Andoran owes its power to a consortium of political radicals, wealthy merchant lords, and sympathetic aristocrats who seek to spread their political philosophy and open new markets throughout the world. Much of the nation's impressive wealth comes from precious antiquities raided from other lands, such as Osirion, the Mwangi Expanse, and even Azlant or distant Arcadia. Competition for these resources grows fiercer by the year, pitting agents of Andoran against those of enemy powers like Cheliax and Taldor.

Andorens seek not just to transform their homeland, but to export their cultural, philosophical, and mercantile beliefs to the world. Years ago, revolutionaries of Andoran emptied the nation's prisons and freed all its slaves in an attempt to bolster the strength of the nation against its enemies (particularly Cheliax), and its people thereafter subscribed to a militant abolitionism. Agents dispatched from the capital city of Almas actively seek to undermine the Inner Sea slave trade and those nations who actively support it, with Cheliax, Katapesh, Osirion, and Thuvia being among the worst offenders. As an unfortunate result of such interventions, many view Andorens as troublemakers and unwanted ideological imperialists.

History

Andoran got its start 3,000 years ago as the westernmost marchland of Old Taldor, a vast, wooded plain populated by a curious, peaceful folk in awe of their more civilized eastern neighbors. The seemingly endless timber from the Arthfell Forest fed a growing shipyard at Augustana, and soon Andoran became critical to Taldor's navy and exploration of the seas beyond the Arch of Aroden. Andorens even settled the disastrous Sun Temple Colony

on Azlant, and their ships were among the first to reach the shores of central Arcadia, establishing strongholds that serve the nation to this day.

At the behest of the influential Chelish King Aspex the Even-Tongued, Andoran abandoned its ties with Taldor in 4081 AR. The move came just after the armies of Qadira—Taldor's traditional enemies—crossed the empire's border in a brazen invasion. Vastly weakened and plagued by its own decadence, Taldor could not fight on two fronts. It ceded Andoran to Cheliax without a single battle.

Trade thrived under the kings and emperors of Cheliax, and the merchants of the nation's towns and cities grew more and more powerful, rivaling the hereditary nobles. Hobgoblin raids from the northwestern wilderness, trouble with druids and fey in the country's noticeably dwindling forests, harassment by pirates on the open sea, and native uprisings that disrupted colonial operations in Arcadia were constant threats, but life in Andoran remained mostly peaceful and free from upheaval.

The trouble in Cheliax after Aroden's death threatened that peace. After the House of Thrune seized control to the west, Andoran's margrave and his relatives in the ruling class capitulated to the demands of Cheliax's new diabolical queen in the interest of keeping things peaceful. They judged correctly that most of their citizens would prefer to avoid the bloodshed that drowned the heartlands, but they incorrectly assumed the citizens would trade safety for servitude to diabolists.

By 4669 AR, outrage at the House of Thrune grew too great for the Andorens to endure its rule any longer. Citing the anti-nobility screeds of Galtan philosophers like Jubannich and Hosetter, the merchants rallied the common man to demand greater rights and cast down the old order. Unlike in Galt, whose own revolution went astray, the merchants of Andoran did not seek to kill their former lords. Instead, they offered their nobles citizenship in the new kingdom without a king, where all were equal and leaders ruled only at the mandate of the people. Those who agreed were welcomed into the new order; those who refused faced exile or the noose. Either way, the nobles' holdings became the property of the state and were often immediately sold off or given to supporters of the People's Revolt.

Government

The Supreme Elect of Andoran, currently Codwin I of Augustana, manages the Executive Office, a huge bureaucracy that handles most governmental affairs in the nation. The 350 citizen-representatives sit on the marble benches of the People's Council in the monument-laden capital of Almas. Many representatives once held noble titles, while others rose from slavery or serfdom to speak for their home shires in the assembly. From the highest government official of Andoran to its lowliest servant, nearly everyone believes in the tenets of the People's Revolt that transformed the nation some 40 years ago. They are the children of the second and third generations of liberty, and their faith in the Andoren way is resolute.

Andoran has a centralized, republican government. The source of power resides in the People's Council, which is subject to public approval and control. At the origin of the nation's code of laws is the so-called Associative Act of 4669 AR, which was written by the 350 first councilors as a "private, sworn, and voluntary" pact to safeguard the interests of every single citizen of Andoran, effectively opening the way to advanced forms of economical emancipation, administrative development, and the affirmation of civil rights.

In addition to 30 ministers who take care of the nation's finance and foreign affairs, the People's Council includes 20 consuls, who exercise executive power over the nation's internal security and command Andoran's army and navy. The most powerful of the consuls is the commander of the Eagle Knights of Andoran, currently General Reginald Cormoth. The commander resides in the Golden Aerie's Guardian Tower, an immense column from a monumental ruin. The column, brought in pieces from a distant land, was restored and fitted on a pedestal in the middle of the Field of Concord in the capital city of Almas. The tower is topped with a 15-foot-tall gold-plated statue of Talmandor, the powerful avoral (see the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2*) patron of the nation and the protagonist of several ancient local legends.

An efficient, prosperous trade system; an egalitarian, transparent government; and a benevolent tolerance of all goodly religions are the three pillars of Andoran's stability as a liberal republic. To maintain this stability, Andoran spends enormous amounts on welfare and security, which are administered by a cabinet of 30 additional ministers chosen by the people from among the nation's most efficient and competent bankers. Andoran's banking system operates with widespread accessibility of credit and interest rates convenient enough to thwart tax evasion and usury. Almas is also the seat of several big banks that support foreign merchant enterprises. The Andoren code of law equates corruption and extortion by both bankers and state officials with high treason, and those found guilty of such crimes are invariably exiled and their property confiscated.

Gazetteer

Almas: The city of Almas is Andoran's capital. Situated at the mouth of the Andossan River, Almas epitomizes the soul of Andoran—in terms of both its arrogance and its independence. The palace of the People's Council dominates the west end of the Field of Concord, a sprawling open space that cleaves Almas's densely urbanized center. Once the arms square of a Chelish fortress, the Field of Concord contains a central avenue sided by gardened areas and cobbled squares functioning as multiple,

interconnected marketplaces. At the east end of the field is the Golden Cathedral, formerly a grand temple of Aroden and now a gathering place used for secular sermons on the value of Common Rule. The cathedral's twin spires make it the tallest building in Andoran. Each morning during the summer season, when the People's Council gathers to discuss public business, Codwin I and representatives of Andoran's political parties perform a ritual salutation before the Golden Cathedral. The first Toilday of every month, a duty-free market is held in the Field of Concord, and every year, during the entire month of Sarenith, the Great Andoran Fair attracts merchants from across Golarion. During the fair, the cosmopolitan aspect of Almas blossoms in a marvelous kaleidoscope of races and cultures, as the city welcomes tens of thousands of visitors from every part of the world. The business volume of the fair is one of the greatest in Avistan, and the tax revenue collected by the local government on that occasion is equally abundant. During the Great Andoran Fair, goods from Oregent, Carpenden, Falcon's Hollow, and the multitude of villages that lie along the Andossan River are shipped to the capital for purchase at convenient prices.

Arthfell Forest: Primarily a forest of fir and pine trees, the Arthfell Forest is relatively unpopulated by citizens of Andoran. Numerous druid circles and werewolf packs are known to dwell within the Arthfell—yet the shipyards of Augustana have a never-ending demand for lumber, and conflicts between the forest's denizens and eager loggers grow ever more frequent as a result.

Augustana: The city of Augustana owes its name and importance to the prolonged presence of a large Chelish port and military camp during the long campaign undertaken by General Khastalus of Corentyn to subjugate the tribes of Arthfell some 3,000 years ago. As the "city of the emperor," Augustana was surpassed in importance by Almas only a century ago. Augustana's shipyards and dock facilities are still among the largest and most important of the Inner Sea, and include the arsenal of the Andoren navy and the coastal fortress commanded by the consul admiral in charge. The first bank of Andoran, the Forester's Endowments, has its historical headquarters in the center of the town.

Bellis: The frontier town of Bellis stands on the west bank of the Sellen River in the Verduran Forest.

The settlement was founded only half a century ago to consolidate Andoran's presence in the region and to intensify the use of the Verduran Forest as a new source of timber to augment the Arthfell Forest and Darkmoon Vale, now reduced and thinned after centuries of exploitation and fires. Apart from a tradition of apiculture that makes Bellis an excellent source of honey, beeswax, and mead, it has little to offer in terms of trade. Its location on the heavily traveled Sellen has done more to ensure its continued prosperity than anything else, and Bellis's citizens have begrudgingly accepted the fact that this constant flow of traffic through their waterfront is a necessary discomfort.

Candlestone Caverns: Partially exposed by an earthquake 2 centuries ago, the Candlestone Caverns are a live limestone labyrinth extending for several miles beneath the surface. The caverns are infested with all manner of dangerous vermin, kobolds, hobgoblins, and, in some deeper areas, a significant amount of undead and duergar dwarves. Yet the primary denizens are tribes of jinkin gremlins (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2*) and other underground-dwelling fey; the caves themselves eventually open into the Darklands realm of Nar-Voth near a strange fey city known as the Court of Ether.

Carpenden: Set in a fertile and densely populated range of rolling hills, Carpenden's vast plantations of grape vines and olive trees make it an important agricultural center. The town supports a rich and growing woodworking industry aimed at the production of furniture, art objects, and other trade goods. About a third of Andoran's standing army is stationed in Carpenden, which also serves as the residence of the Consul Marshal, commander of the nation's land forces.

Darkmoon Vale: Danger lurks in every corner of the ancient and mysterious woodland known as Darkmoon Vale. While its fringes lie under constant attack by eager lumberjacks, the denizens of the woods are more than capable of defending themselves and their homes from extensive deforestation. Kobolds, werewolves, hags, worgs, and worse are said to dwell within this deep, dark forest.

Droskar's Crag: Looming on the north end of Andoran's horizon and marking the southernmost tip of the Five Kings Mountains is the volcano known as Droskar's Crag. The crag's last recorded eruption was in 3,980 AR, but in the centuries since that devastating event, the mountain's increasingly frequent rumbles and minor stirrings hint that another eruption may be soon to come.

Falcon's Hollow: The oldest standing logging community in the nation, Falcon's Hollow lies just south of the mysterious Darkmoon Vale. Falcon's Hollow is a truly backwater place, although its skilled lumberjacks are always a distinct presence at the Great Andoran Fair in Almas. Adventurers are drawn to Falcon's Hollow by rumors of fabulous dwarven treasures hidden in the wilderness north of the town. Some of these adventurers actually manage to return to civilization with remarkable prizes, while many others are never seen again.

Necropolis of Nogortha Peaks: Once ruled by many tribes of barbarians, the forest-covered Nogortha Peaks are now regarded as a backwoods region claimed by hillfolk and other fringe-dwelling outcasts. The last remaining evidence of the barbarian tribes who once dwelt here is the sprawling burial ground known as the Nogortha Necropolis. Here lie a multitude of barrow mounds amid strange ruined towers and totems. Some of the mounds have been plundered by grave robbers and others excavated by Pathfinders, but most remain unopened and unexplored.

Oregent: The earthquake that exposed so many of the Candlestone Caverns to the surface struck the city of Oregent more strongly than any other Andoren settlement. Even today, centuries after the devastation, tremors are unnervingly commonplace in Oregent, and many of its buildings still bear scars of destruction. Numerous belltowers accent Oregent's skyline, their bells often used to send coded messages or warnings.

HALFLING EAGLE KNIGHT

Hold of Belkzen

SAVAGE ORC HOMELAND

Alignment: CE
Capital: Urgir (28,700)
Notable Settlements: Blisterwell (9,750), Wyvernsting (11,320), Trunau (780)
Ruler: Prominent orc champions and their respective clans include Grask Uldeth of the Empty Hand, Tulluk Clovenface of the Haskodars, and Hundux Half-Man of the Murdered Child
Government: Numerous tribal hordes constantly vying for dominance
Languages: Orc
Religion: Lamashtu, Rovagug, Zon-Kuthon

Belkzen is a harsh region filled with badlands, thorny scrub, and dangerous peaks. Water is scarce and concentrated primarily in the seasonal Flood Road, which serves as a caravan route during the dry season, and in the vast, salty lake of quicksand known as the Dirt Sea. Yet there is history here as well, and of more than just the orcs who constantly churn the soil with their conflicts.

HISTORY

During the Age of Darkness, the ancient dwarves finally fulfilled their Quest for Sky, and the stout folk peered forth from their tunnels and gazed upon a surface world that was theirs to claim. Yet in pressing ever upward, they had driven before them their ancient enemies—the orcs. These brutal warmongers were likewise eager to claim this newly discovered world, and for generations their violence stained northern Avistan red. In time, the dwarves pushed the hordes back into the dark corners of the world, particularly into one large, isolated mountain valley, but there they met their match: an ambitious orc warlord named Belkzen. Belkzen met the dwarven army head-on, and in doing so managed to take Koldukar, one of the 10 dwarven fortress-cities known as Sky Citadels. He renamed this ransacked metropolis Urgir, meaning "first home," and made it the center of his new nation. Unwilling to risk further loss, the dwarves retreated. Although Belkzen's fledgling empire long ago collapsed into dozens of squabbling tribes, the region still bears his name.

Since that time, the orcs of Belkzen have waxed and waned with the ages, at times growing so numerous that they threatened to spill over into neighboring nations. Yet

whenever the orcs grew too numerous, the combination of opposition from without (in the form of neighboring armies) and within (in the form of treachery and infighting) inevitably saw the orc menace decline into obscurity for a few centuries. The two largest orc uprisings in Belkzen coincided with the rise of the Whispering Tyrant in 3203 AR (when the orcs of Belkzen augmented the lich lord's armies of undead in conquering Ustalav) and during the reign of the blue dragon Kazavon beginning in late 4043 AR. Kazavon, a powerful worshiper of Zon-Kuthon, nearly managed to organize the orcs of Belkzen into a single unstoppable army before he was put down at his lair in Scarwall.

The beleaguered kingdom of Lastwall has found its northern border pushed back again and again by the savage hordes. The first border, a great line of uniform fortresses known as the Sunwall, was established upon Tar-Baphon's defeat in 3827 AR, and stood for hundreds of years. Upon its fall, the great General Harchist dug in on the banks of the River Esk and created a new line of strongholds, complete with a long, low stone wall connecting many of them. This new position held only half as long as the one before it, falling in 4237 AR. The Hordeline, when it was grimly constructed in 4515 AR by demoralized soldiers and desperate farmers, was a sad affair—little more than earthen ramparts and crude wooden palisades. Lastwall's current border, as of yet unnamed, has held well due to an influx of money and troops from the country's southern reaches, but wise officials know that unless something changes, it's only a matter of time before the orcs once again turn their attention south and history repeats itself.

GRASK ULDETH
OF THE EMPTY HAND

Government

The orcs of Belkzen are a teeming, brawling multitude of seminomadic tribes, from warbands of just a few families to massive armies stationed in valuable fortifications. Although the orcs are capable of forming alliances and living in peace during the rainy seasons, their natural pugnacious tendencies and the region's meager resources keep any larger-scale organization from lasting long. Notable tribes include the Black Sun, Blood Trail, Broken Spine, Cleft Head, Empty Hand, Gutspear, Haskodar, Murdered Child, Twisted Nail, and Wingripper.

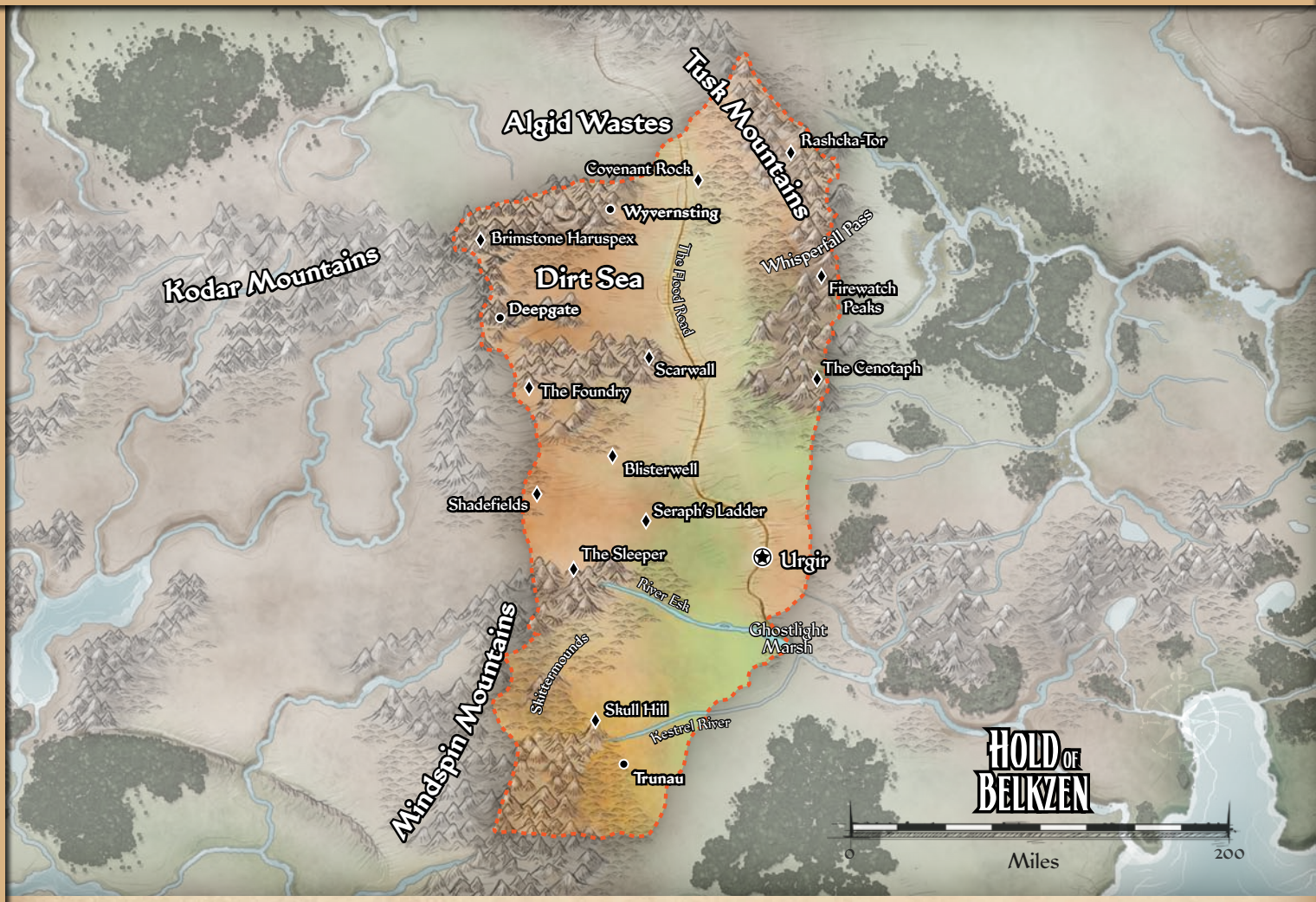
Each tribe, no matter how small, has a single battle standard that depicts the clan's namesake (such as an empty hand, a broken spine, an eclipsed sun, and so on). Such flags normally hang crosswise from a long spear decorated with grim trophies and fetishes. The chief always keeps the flag with him in battle, although he usually assigns a lieutenant to do the actual carrying. Clans almost always immediately divert their attention to the recovery of their flags if taken. While not necessarily magical, many of the tribal battle standards are very old and hold almost religious significance for the orcs.

Gazetteer

Blisterwell: In ages past, this interlocking system of pits was a vast dwarven quarry and strip mine, one of the largest in northern Avistan. When orc invaders grew too numerous for the dwarves to beat back, this was one of the first dwarven holdings to fall as the savages—being children of the subterranean dark—sought the comforting embrace of its dank pits and caverns. Today it is one of the most populous orc settlements, with a vast network of dwellings carved into the walls of its deep shafts and trenches, and at night the fires of its forges reflect off the stagnant lake that has collected in its bottom. This inverted fortress is ruled over by an uneasy and constantly shifting alliance between the Haskodar and One Eye tribes.

Brimstone Haruspex: In the north, the Brimstone Haruspex perches high in the caldera of a smoking volcano, where a group of highly educated (for orcs) oracles of flame and stone offer guidance in exchange for massive tributes. In addition to maintaining the only complete record of orc history—a lengthy series of cave paintings stretching all the way back to their initial emergence—the ascetic oracles breathe in vapors from the active fumaroles in order to form their prophecies. Unfortunately, the fumes that give them their insights are highly caustic, permanently scarring their faces and lungs. It is for this reason that most leaders prefer to send their seconds-in-command with questions rather than attend themselves, as the priests frequently choose to dangle petitioners over the sulfurous pits to gain their revelations firsthand.

The Cenotaph: At the southernmost tip of the Tusk Mountains, a windowless pillar of black stone rises menacingly from a narrow cliff on a mountainside, its only adornment a massive pair of 50-foot-high metal gates wrought with strange and unnerving murals. This is the Cenotaph. During the reign of Tar-Baphon, the Whispering Tyrant, the doors in this ancient obelisk stood open to accept hordes of elite warriors and terrible



war beasts that entered upon the tyrant's orders and were rarely seen again. With the lich's defeat by the Shining Crusade, the great doors swung shut, and they have remained sealed ever since. Legend holds that when Tar-Baphon returns, the doors will fall open and unleash his dark armies upon the land.

Deepgate: When the orcs were driven forth onto the surface, they emerged from numerous locations across Avistan. The first and largest of their tunnels, however, emerged deep in the Kodar Mountains. Here, in a rare feat of cooperation and engineering, several triumphant tribes banded together to erect an enormous fortress of stone and iron over the tunnel mouth, one of the greatest examples in Belkzen of orc architecture and design. With this fortress, fortified against attack from both above and below, the orcs sought to control all subterranean races' access to the bountiful new surface world. Though ultimately ineffective, the fortress remains the most convenient route to the world beneath Belkzen, and its hotly contested walls fall to a new tribe of attackers every generation.

Dirt Sea: Underground aquifers and particularly fine sand have combined here to create a vast, salty expanse of quicksand, up to 50 feet deep in some places. Nominally controlled by the orcs of Wyvernsting, the sea in actuality belongs to anyone with the stomach to pilot a boat across its deceptively calm surface, braving the strange creatures that swim and scuttle beneath it. Barges across the Dirt Sea frequently prove the fastest means of traveling to Deepgate or the Brimstone Haruspex.

The Flood Road: This seasonal riverbed is central to life and commerce in Belkzen. For 10 months out of the year, its cracked and parched mud serves as the primary road between Urgir and Wyvernsting, as well as an important route for caravans headed north into the Realm of the Mammoth Lords. In the spring, however, the melting snow of the Tusk Mountains sends a muddy deluge pouring down the Flood Road. This flash flood travels at breakneck speed and makes being the last caravan of the season a deadly gamble, yet its rumbling waters nourish the surrounding badlands, waking dormant creatures and luring the migratory aurochs. Few orc tribes make war during this annual time of plenty, and the "Flood Truce" is a common time for orcs to seek mates in other tribes.

Scarwall: Although Belkzen is scattered with ruins, one in particular bears a legacy that still haunts most of northern Avistan. Nearly 700 years ago, a desperate Ustalavic border count, his defenses thoroughly exhausted by the building orc hordes, prayed to Zon-Kuthon for salvation. The Midnight Lord's blessing came in the form of a man named Kazavon, a great general who used the count's meager army to press the orcs back into the north and west, cleansing much of lower Belkzen with sword and flame. In the crags of the Kodar Mountains he built a great gothic fortress called Scarwall, and the civilized nations rejoiced. Yet Kazavon didn't stop there. He pushed south and east, slaughtering wantonly, his lust for carnage leading him to ever-greater acts of depravity. Although he was eventually defeated—and revealed in death to be a disguised blue dragon—his great castle of Scarwall remains, haunted by the shades of history and avoided by superstitious orcs.

Skittermounds: These tall, sandy mounds stretch for miles across the foothills of the Mindspin Mountains, and are avoided by all but the truly desperate, as they represent the openings to a vast and complex series of ankheg nests. For the most part, the warring ankheg armies are content to battle each other in their leagues of underground tunnels, noticeable to those above only as a low buzzing, though foolhardy travelers might occasionally witness a colony raising a new mound entrance with frightening speed and efficiency. Every few years, however, runoff from intense storms in the mountains floods the plain, causing the colonies to erupt from their holes by the thousands and press eastward, consuming all in their path.

Trunau: When the Hordeline was breached 200 years ago and the borders of Lastwall receded to their current position, most farmers in the disputed area abandoned their homes with haste. Not so the residents of Trunau. Instead, they dug in, surrounded their crude ramparts with pits and stakes, and met the triumphant orc raiders with matching ferocity. Eventually the stymied conquerors found the town too tough a nut to crack and merely swarmed south around it, taking their fill from the vacated settlements. Called "Manhome" by the select few orcs with whom it trades, Trunau is keenly conscious of its position as a lone island of humanity in a sea of savages. Every resident, regardless of gender or profession, is ready to take to the walls at a moment's notice, and the proudest moment in any child's life is the presentation of her hopeknife on her twelfth birthday, at which time she's shown exactly which arteries to cut should she or her loved ones be taken alive by the enemy.

Urgir: Although Belkzen has no true capital, Urgir is the largest city in the region. A vast, mountainous hodgepodge of dwarven monuments and warrens layered on top of each other, the former Sky Citadel has fallen into disrepair under the orcs. Its current ruler, Grask Uldeth of the Empty Hand, rules the city with cunning and savagery, and in recent years has begun looking to the human rulers of neighboring nations and exploring the benefits of trade. As a result, although hardly safe, Urgir is one of the few places in Belkzen where the "pinkskin" races can do business, provided they procure protection from one of the tribal chiefs. Merchants, scholars, and adventurers come from far and wide to purchase slaves and hire mercenaries in Urgir or explore the fallen dwarf city's many undiscovered secrets.

Wyvernsting: After Urgir, Wyvernsting is the most populous permanent orc settlement in Belkzen. This palisaded town was constructed to exert control over one of the region's few miniscule mountain forests. Because of the town's easy access to valuable lumber and relative proximity to the Flood Road and the megafauna of the north, Wyvernsting's leader, Hundux Half-Man, is second in influence only to Grask Uldeth himself.

ORC RANGER OF THE EMPTY HAND

Brevoy

STRUGGLE BETWEEN FEUDING NOBLE HOUSES

Alignment: CN
Capital: New Stetven (32,850)
Notable Settlements: Brunderton (1,120), Eagle's Watch (1,980), Grayhaven (5,880), Highdelve (4,502), Port Ice (13,260), Restov (18,670), Silverhall (3,952), Stoneclimb (2,244), Winterbreak (5,840)
Ruler: King-Regent Noleski Surtova
Government: Hereditary monarchy
Languages: Common, Draconic, Hallit, Skald, Varisian
Religion: Abadar, Gorum, Pharasma

In the far northeastern reaches of Avistan, the land and its people become harsh and unforgiving. Winters are long and deadly here, forcing common folk to scratch out a meager existence farming the near-frozen soil and fishing its rivers and lakes during an all-too-short spring and summer. All the while, the lords of the land plot in their keeps and strongholds, jealously eyeing their neighbors' domains. This is the nation of Brevoy.

The northern half of Brevoy consists of the once-independent nation of Issia. A stark landscape of sparsely vegetated, rugged hills, the region exhibits a uniformly poor quality of the soil that makes it nearly impossible to grow anything here. The people live primarily on fish from the Lake of Mists and Veils, a diet supplemented by food shipped up from Rostland or areas farther south. In centuries past, the people of Issia were infamous raiders, and their river-raiding craft were feared along the length of the Sellen. South of the Gronzi Forest lies Rostland, a vast rolling plain of fertile grasslands, dotted with farms and small villages, and serving as breadbasket of the north and homeland of the Aldori swordpact.

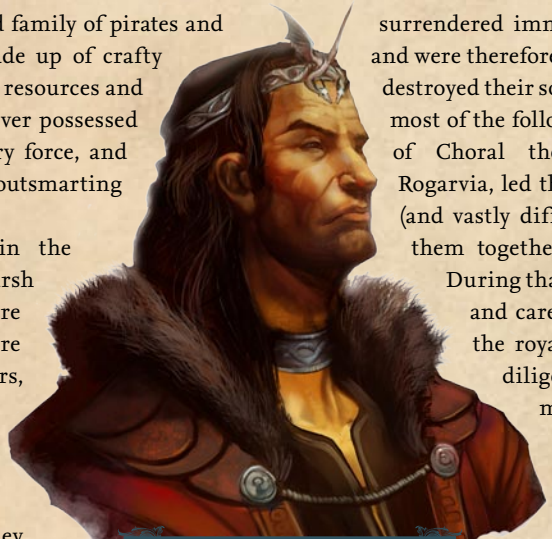
On the whole, Issians are a reclusive and enigmatic bunch. Each village has its own traditions dating back hundreds of years. Outsiders find themselves distrusted and shunned. Rumors of bloody rituals and human sacrifice remain unsubstantiated, but in the faraway cities of Restov and New Stetven, people whisper that the true masters of Issia remain hidden beneath the waters of the Lake of Mists and Veils, emerging in the dead of night to strike terrible bargains with the villagers.

The people of Rostland are mainly farmers, craftsmen, and tradesmen. Most are outgoing, happy, and welcoming of strangers—as long as the strangers are willing to conform to the local customs, of which there are many. This apparent welcome is somewhat misleading, however, as the people of Rostland are obsessed with honor and personal standing,

and take offense at the slightest provocation. One wrong word is likely to find the offender in front of the local magistrate or facing a prospective duel. But if outsiders take the trouble to learn their customs, Rostlanders prove to be fast friends and staunch allies.

History

For more than a thousand years, the Surtovas ruled the lands of Issia along the central southern banks of the Lake of Mists and Veils. This long-lived family of pirates and scoundrels is known to be made up of crafty schemers. Lacking both natural resources and a large population, Issia has never possessed anything like a mighty military force, and has traditionally survived by outsmarting its enemies.



KING-REGENT NOLESKI SURTOVA

While the Issians toiled in the northern reaches of this harsh landscape, the much more forgiving southern plains were colonized by Taldan explorers, arriving under the leadership of Baron Sirian First, a fiery, impulsive noble forced to emigrate from Taldor after losing one too many duels. They named this realm Rostland. In the early days of the colony, bandits struck from hidden camps in the River Kingdoms, nearly destroying the budding colony before it had a chance to get started. The bandit leader was himself a master swordsman and challenged the baron to a wager: half the baron's fortune against the bandit's head. Unable to pass up the challenge, Baron First took the wager and was broadly humiliated by an ignoble defeat. After he paid the bandit, he disappeared for several years. Most assumed he had fled to another land, too ashamed to show his face after such a defeat.

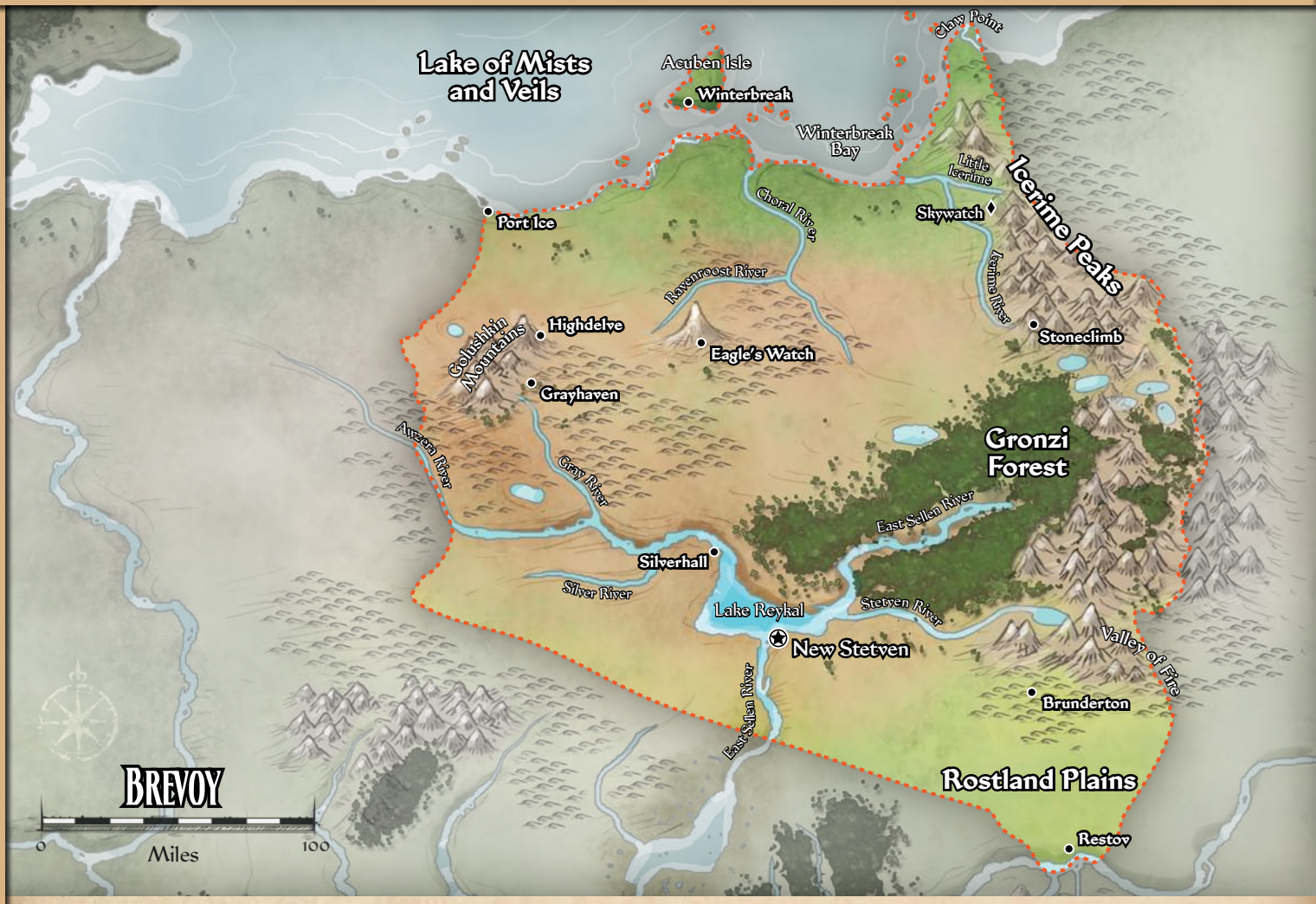
The people were surprised when the baron returned several years later a changed man, a swordsman the likes of whom the world had never before seen. Calling himself Sirian Aldori, he promptly challenged the bandit lord to a rematch, whereupon he disarmed and defeated the bandit in seconds. Reestablishing his rule, Baron Aldori issued an open challenge of 100,000 gp to anyone who could beat him in a duel of swords. Thousands answered the challenge from across the world. Some were earnest and honorable duelists, while others tried to cheat with magic or other tricks. It didn't matter. Sirian defeated them all, forever cementing his reputation as the greatest swordsman in the world. At first, Sirian refused to teach his techniques, but eventually he selected a small group to train. He made them change their names to Aldori and to swear an oath not to reveal anything they learned to someone not of the swordpact. Through the generations that followed, Sirian's pupils became known as the Aldori swordlords, a force feared throughout the continent.

Then, in 4499 AR, the delicate balance of power between Issia and Rostland fractured as a mysterious Iobarian warlord named Choral the Conqueror stormed into the region at the head of an army and with the allegiance of several red dragons. Choral confronted the Surtovas on the shores of the Lake of Mists and Veils, and they surrendered immediately to the powerful warlord and were therefore spared the retribution that nearly destroyed their southern neighbors in Rostland. For most of the following 2 centuries, the descendants of Choral the Conqueror, powerful House Rogarvia, led the people of two formally separate (and vastly different) nations, gradually welding them together to forge the nation of Brevoy. During that time, the Surtovas worked, slowly and carefully, to advance their position in the royal hierarchy of Brevoy—and their diligence paid off when the Rogarvias mysteriously disappeared nearly a decade ago.

Government

In the middle of winter in early 4699 AR, every member of House Rogarvia vanished without a trace. Rumors flew of palace coups and sinister plots, but it quickly became clear that what had occurred was something altogether stranger than a mere rebellion. There was no evidence of foul play or struggle within the royal palace, nor in any of the noble villas owned by the Rogarvias throughout the land—the nobles were simply gone, leaving empty manors scattered across Brevoy. A brief period of chaos and panic followed, but by the end of the year, the Surtovas had made their move. Citing their age-old ties with the Conqueror's line, they were quick to seize power in New Stetven and extend their reach across Brevoy. With all of Issia seemingly backing the move, Rostland (whose standing army and defenses had increasingly been shifted north during Rogarvian rule) had little choice but to bend its knee again. Today, King Noleski Surtova holds the Ruby Fortress and the Dragonscale Throne, yet it remains to be seen how long he can maintain his rule over a kingdom growing increasingly fractious.

Today, seven great noble houses dominate Brevoy's political landscape. Most of these date back to before the arrival of the Conqueror, when they existed as powerful tribes of raiders and barbarians. Choral apportioned lands and titles to those lords willing to pledge fealty to him, reordering the houses into their modern forms. The current houses of Brevoy are listed on the following page, along with a short description of each.



House Garess: Based in the eastern foothills of the Golushkin Mountains, House Garess has many strong ties to regional dwarven clans.

House Lebeda: This house controls much of the plains southwest of Lake Reykal, as well as much of the shipping interests on the lake itself.

House Lodovka: Located on Acuben Isle and the central northern coast, House Lodovka has the strongest presence on the Lake of Mists and Veils, having never abandoned their traditional waterborne ways.

House Medvyed: The easternmost house, Medvyed claims much of the Gronzi Forest. They are a hardy folk who remain associated with the "Old Ways" of worshiping nature.

House Orlovsky: Northeastern Brevoy is controlled by House Orlovsky, a family that traditionally seeks to remain above petty politics.

House Rogarvia: Until recently, House Rogarvia ruled Brevoy. Their recent disappearance has thrown the nation into chaos.

House Surtova: The most influential Brevic house, Surtova is also its oldest. They control Port Ice and much of northwestern Brevoy.

GAZETTEER

Gronzi Forest: The dark expanse of the Gronzi Forest is simply "the Forest" to the people of Brevoy. It extends from the highlands of the Icerime Peaks to the shores of Lake Reykal, forming part of the old border between Issia and Rostland. Although technically the forest belongs to the Brevic crown, hunting and even woodcutting is largely unregulated around its outskirts, particularly in the western reaches. The stretch of forest nearest New Stetven was largely cleared generations ago to obtain wood needed to rebuild and maintain the city, and Brevic woodcutters must delve deeper each year to meet their needs.

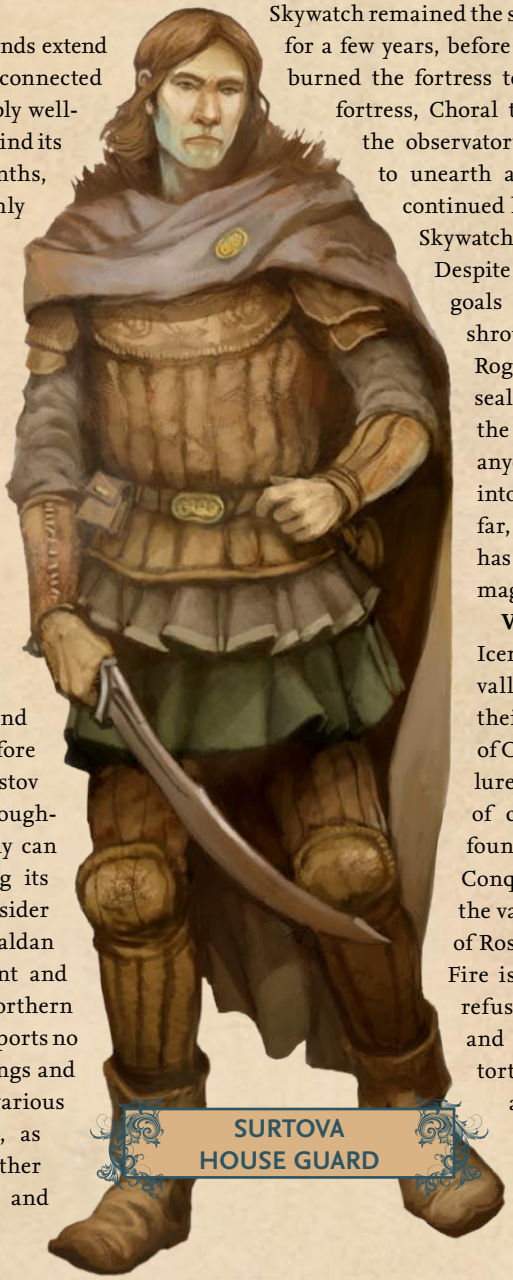
Icerime Peaks: The Icerime Peaks wall off most of Brevoy from the former lands of Iobaria to the east. Their heights are perpetually covered in ice, even in the summer months, when cold rivers tumble and cascade down their sides, forming towering waterfalls and clear mountain lakes. The late spring thaws open what passes there are through the mountains, although few make use of them. Skywatch is by no means the only ancient site in the Icerime Peaks. Tales tell of half-buried entrances to mountain dungeons, some of them outposts of old Iobaria, others even older.

Some of the ruins are said to be haunted by the chill shades of soldiers or miners who perished there, still guarding whatever treasures they found in life.

New Stetven: Choral's rough-and-tumble capital at New Stetven is a bustling trade city despite the recent collapse of its aristocracy. Grain, fish, timber, and ore flow from Brevoy through New Stetven and out to the rest of the north. The food from Brevoy sustains much of the River Kingdoms, Numeria, and Mendev, where constant bandit raids and invading demonic armies make farming difficult, and most of that food passes through New Stetven. In return, exotic goods from all corners of Avistan (and beyond) flow back up the Sellen River to New Stetven. Although bandits and robbers in the River Kingdoms are still a serious obstacle to trade, the market nevertheless offers a wide variety of goods, from Numerian skymetal to Osirian relics.

Port Ice: House Surtova's ancestral lands extend south and east from Port Ice. Although connected to the lakeshore villages by a reasonably well-maintained road, Port Ice is locked behind its walls for much of the cold winter months, mainly accessible by sled and visited only by the occasional foolhardy traveler. The rest of the year, the city's residents stockpile all the supplies needed for the next season. The White Manor is the Surtova ancestral seat, currently in the care of King Noleski's uncle, Domani Surtova.

Restov: Nowhere is the Rostlandic spirit more alive than in the Free City of Restov. The city owes its allegiance to the Brevic crown, and Lord Mayor Ioseph Sellemius must bend his knee before the Dragonscale Throne like any lord, but otherwise Restov belongs to no house, making it a haven for the lost glories of the Aldori swordlords and those who look back to the old days before the coming of the Conqueror. Restov is a city of both refinement and rough-and-tumble manners, as only a colony can be in fondly recalling and imitating its motherland. The gentry of Restov consider themselves sophisticates, although a Taldan visitor would think their ways quaint and touched with no small amount of northern barbarism. Restov's relative wealth supports no small number of idle and titled lordlings and merchants' sons. They frequent the various Aldori and Taldan dueling schools, as well as the alehouses, and fight each other in street corner challenges at dawn and dusk. The schools, salons, and taprooms of Restov are also hotbeds of rebellious talk against the reign of King Noleski Surtova, with young firebrands in search of a leader to rally them to the cause.



SURTOVA HOUSE GUARD

Skywatch: High in the mountains along the eastern border of Brevoy is the city of Skywatch. This city is built around a massive observatory that predates any known settlement in the region. Despite its age, the observatory is perfectly preserved and maintained by powerful magic. Exactly who built the observatory and why are unknown, although the building is clearly meant to accommodate beings much larger than humans. In the early days of Issia, the Surtovas established a small outpost adjacent to the observatory to study it. The Aldori captured and fortified this outpost during one of the long wars between Issia and Rostland. After Choral conquered the rest of Rostland, Skywatch remained the seat of independent Aldori power for a few years, before the conqueror and his dragons burned the fortress to the ground. After razing the fortress, Choral took a great deal of interest in the observatory and began a massive project to unearth and restore it. House Rogarvia continued his work, and the current city of Skywatch was built to serve this project. Despite the scale of the project, its exact goals and much of the work remain shrouded in secrecy. On the day the Rogarvias disappeared, Skywatch sealed itself off completely from the outside world, refusing to allow anyone—even supply caravans—into or out of the settlement. So far, no message sent to Skywatch has received a reply, and divination magic cannot penetrate its walls.

Valley of Fire: In the southern Icerime Peaks lies the mountain valley where Aldori rebels fought their last battle against the forces of Choral the Conqueror. They were lured into the valley with the hope of cornering Choral, but instead found themselves in a trap when the Conqueror's red dragon allies bathed the valley in fire, wiping out the men of Rostland. To this day, the Valley of Fire is an infamous place where life refuses to return to the blackened and melted earth; and here the tortured shades of dead soldiers are rumored to linger, seen in the night as fiery shadows seething with a burning hatred for the living.

Cheliax

DIABOLICAL EMPIRE IN DECLINE

Alignment: LE
Capital: Egorian (82,100)
Notable Settlements: Belde (4,200), Brastlewark (3,500), Corentyn (24,300), Dekarium (3,564), East Rikkan (1,295), Halmyris (2,440), Hinji (14,456), Kantaria (1,200), Khari (2,450), Kintargo (11,900), Laekastel (14,690), Longacre (1,590), Macini (13,600), Misarias (2,450), Ostenso (14,200), Pezzack (4,800), Remesiana (19,450), Senara (5,200), Taggun Hold (6,780), Vyre (17,300), Westcrown (114,700), Westpool (1,350)
Ruler: Her Infernal Majestrix, Queen Abrogail II of the Thrice-Damned House of Thrune
Government: Imperial bureaucracy of noble families
Languages: Common, Infernal
Religion: Abadar, Asmodeus, Erastil, Iomedae, Zon-Kuthon

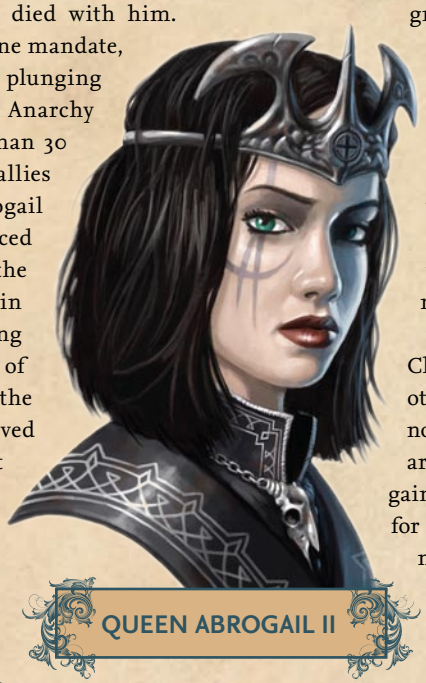
Aroden's death just over a century ago changed the empire of Cheliax forever, as vassal states quickly rebelled and Cheliax itself fell into a bloody 30-year civil war that was quelled only by the kingdom's current diabolical aristocracy—the Thrice-Damned House of Thrune. Today, Cheliax is a nation without hope—a decadent empire weakened by losses in glory and colonial wealth but deluded with pretensions of greatness spurred on by the infernal court and its fell adherents. It is a stain on the face of Golarion and a mockery of what was once the greatest kingdom of mankind. Yet the common folk of Cheliax are grateful for the salvation the House of Thrune engineered for the dying nation, and if an oppressive government and diabolical church are the price of civilization and the prevention of an even greater civil war, most of the nation's citizens are only too glad to pay and serve. Alas, such servitude often comes in the form of slavery. Halflings, in particular, suffer in this regard; known as "slips," they are treated with scorn and contempt. Tieflings are seen as worse than rabble, fleshly proof of a lapse of control over diabolic temptation, and when they appear in public, they do so invariably as exotic slaves or furtive criminals.

History

Imperial Cheliax dominated Avistan for more than 600 years after Chelish King Aspex the Even-Tongued broke from Taldor, diplomatically absorbed Andoran, and conquered both Isger and Galt. These events launched a centuries-long tradition of expansion and glory, propelling Cheliax to the

height of human civilization. The nation soon dominated and subsumed many native peoples and cultures, so that many regions had a ruling elite or caste of Chelish origin, or with a strong Chelish heritage and blood ties running back to the empire. The empire continued to expand, and with the expected return of Aroden, patron god of Cheliax, none of the Chelish people had any doubt that it would eventually attain the power (and riches) of ancient Azlant.

Then the inexplicable occurred. Instead of returning, Aroden died, and a part of Cheliax died with him. With the emperor stripped of his divine mandate, certain powerful noble houses rose up, plunging the imperial heartland into civil war. Anarchy and war plagued Cheliax for more than 30 years, until House Thrune and its allies took and held the throne. Queen Abrogail I, Infernal Majestrix of Cheliax, placed among her armies bound devils from the depths of Hell. She quelled dissent in the empire's heartland and in so doing gained her new regime a measure of respect and legitimacy. Few among the gods-fearing citizens of Cheliax approved of the diabolists' fearsome methods, but wherever they installed themselves, the opportunistic savagery of the last generation soon ceased, and a dark peace embraced the kingdom.



QUEEN ABROGAIL II

Shortly after taking control of the nation, the new government moved its administrative center to the inland port city of Egorian and wasted little time in demanding subservience from Imperial Cheliax's many holdings. For several months, the new regime not only maintained the borders of Imperial Cheliax but also stood poised to expand beyond them. Unfortunately for the Egorian government, though, the infernal blasphemies of House Thrune turned public opinion against Cheliax. The people of Galt and Andoran rose up and threw off Cheliax's imperial shackles. Reluctantly, House Thrune allowed these vassals to secede, focusing its attentions on the lucrative colonies of Sargava in Garund and Anchor's End in distant Arcadia.

Despite losing almost half its holdings, Cheliax remains one of the largest nations on Golarion. The far-reaching influence of Cheliax stretches north to the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, south to the nation of Sargava in Garund, and east into Taldor and Qadira. Elements of Chelish culture appear in all those places and more, mostly in the ports and trading cities of dozens of nations—indeed, art, theater, and music (particularly the opera) have seen a striking explosion in popularity in modern Cheliax, if only because the nation's beleaguered citizens increasingly need an escape from reality.

Government

The diabolists currently in charge of Cheliax serve the empire as its new aristocracy. Many of the ruling houses claim titles such as paracount or paraduke, with the loftiest titles frequently going to those families who only gained nobility with the rise of House Thrune. Noble Houses that existed before the death of Aroden for the most part retained their power and influence over the past century, although those in favor with the ruling House of Thrune saw the greatest increase of prestige and wealth.

Despite their pretensions, questionable morality, and recent rise to power, the noble houses that currently rule Cheliax do so more effectively than their imperial counterparts prior to the civil war. Under the red-and-black standard of Asmodeus, Cheliax once more claims its former glory, if not the righteousness of years past.

The House of Thrune and much of Cheliax's nobility work with devils and other infernal agents. Aristocrats from noble families old and new enter into arrangements with citizens of Hell, gaining from these deals incredible power for a sometimes-unclear price. Not every noble house so eagerly welcomes the influences of Hell, but those that do not wisely remain neutral on the subject or quickly find themselves eradicated. Yet despite this infernal allegiance, the House of Thrune sees itself as the master.

The government in Egorian relies both on its infernal allies and servitors and its all-too-human subordinates to retain and exert power. Among its most powerful mortal tools are the unsubtle, skull-breaking Hellknights. The Hellknights and their infernal allies root out rebellion and dissent in the imperial heartland, and make for the most iconic representation of infernal Cheliax's absolute dedication to law and order. In addition, Cheliax maintains a massive regular army and navy, and is militarily one of the most powerful nations on Golarion.

Despite the government's promotion of diabolism, slavery, and other sinister influences, the common folk continue living their lives much as they have for centuries. Unlike in the past, though, they also mainly live in fear. Most of the major gods remain popular, although every Chelaxian at least pretends to primarily worship Asmodeus, and every house, cottage, and rented room contains a small shrine or holy symbol of the devil-god.

The government's many dissent-quelling policies make the people untrusting and insular. Even citizens with no investment in the diabolic order turn in suspected traitors to achieve wealth and social advancement. Those

who work within the cruel new system—and even those who merely pay it lip service—continue to gain power and prestige within the nation, while those unable or unwilling to play along continue to suffer constant torment and indignities.

Queen Abrogail II, great-granddaughter of her namesake and the sixth to wear the crown since the House of Thrune gained control of Cheliax, is a beautiful and ruthless woman. Her command of the pit fiend Gorthoklek, the same devil who aided her great-grandmother in the conquest of Cheliax 7 decades ago, is but one of her resources to maintain rule over her nation. Queen Abrogail II also counts in her court the Contessa Lrilatha, an erinyes said to have been sent by Asmodeus himself instruct the young monarch. Despite these infernal advisors, Queen Abrogail's quick wit and daring schemes are her greatest resources, and it is as a direct result of her rule that Cheliax today has a real chance at regaining a significant amount of its former glory.

Gazetteer

Arch of Aroden: This monolithic, ruined bridge spans the Straits of Aroden separating Avistan from Garund. The arch rises several hundred feet above the straits and stretches more than 15 miles to connect Corentyn in Cheliax with Rahadoum to the south—Cheliax maintains control of a sliver of land on the far side of the Inner Sea, much to Rahadoum's displeasure. Roughly a third of the immense and ancient structure has collapsed in the center, making it useless as a method of land transport.

Barrowood: The trees of the Barrowood run thick and deep, the forest gaining its name from the fact that it stands sentinel over the graves of many would-be tyrants. Remote druid enclaves are said to lie hidden within, and legend holds that a hidden grove somewhere deep in the forest was the site where Abrogail I made her infernal bargain with Asmodeus.

Brastlewark: Home to a disproportionately large number of alchemists and artists, bards and wizards, Brastlewark constantly shifts in appearance, and the amount of public art and fantastic architecture gives the town a busy, chaotic look. This city, the largest concentration of gnomes in Avistan—and possibly the world—is home to Drum Thornfiddle, the self-proclaimed Gnome King and theoretical ruler of all gnomes (a shameless vassal of Queen Abrogail II).

Corentyn: Prior to the Everwar, when Imperial Cheliax finally established a foothold on Garund, the Nine Forts of Corentyn successfully repelled all attempts by Garundi nations from pushing on to Avistan via the Arch of Aroden.

Devil's Perch: This infamous reach of Avistan's western coast has long captured the imagination of the Chelish people. For untold centuries, gruesome deaths and diabolical shadows have haunted the region's spires, while local folklore weaves tales of winged devils. Strange rock spurs and unnaturally deep abysses make the heights deadly and nearly impossible to reach by land, and those who manage to survive the pitiless environment swiftly discover that the land's inhabitants, the dark-winged strix, do not welcome trespassers.

Egorian: Known also as the City of Thorns, Egorian bristles with towers and minarets, many of which are barbed or capped with sharply pointed conical roofs. The predominantly gothic architecture of the city's public works is mainly covered in a layer of red-veined black marble imported at great cost from distant Arcadia. Old Egorian, one of the few parts of the city not rebuilt to reflect the new diabolic order, caters to foreign merchants and traders and houses all of the temples not dedicated to Asmodeus or one of the other leaders of Hell.

Kintargo: Standing at the mouth of the mighty Yolubilis River, the town of Kintargo acts as the launching point of most Chelish ships sailing north to Varisia or west to Anchor's End. As a result, next to Westcrown, Kintargo is the most cosmopolitan and welcoming of Cheliax's settlements—and a popular place to seek shelter and obscurity for those who plot the downfall of the House of Thrune.

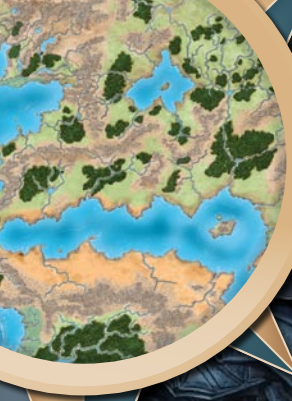
Ostenso: The sprawling docks and piers of Ostenso place nearly a quarter of the city over the water, with another quarter standing upon a line of stone known as Custodisce Break, which extends a half-mile out into the ocean to form the city's famed natural harbor. Home to the largest naval works in Avistan, Ostenso hosts the impressive Chelish navy, the dominant military force on the waters of the Inner Sea. Soldiers and sailors gather in Ostenso to protect Cheliax from its rebellious neighbor to the east, although keen observers note that the military forces assembled look more ready for invasion than defense.

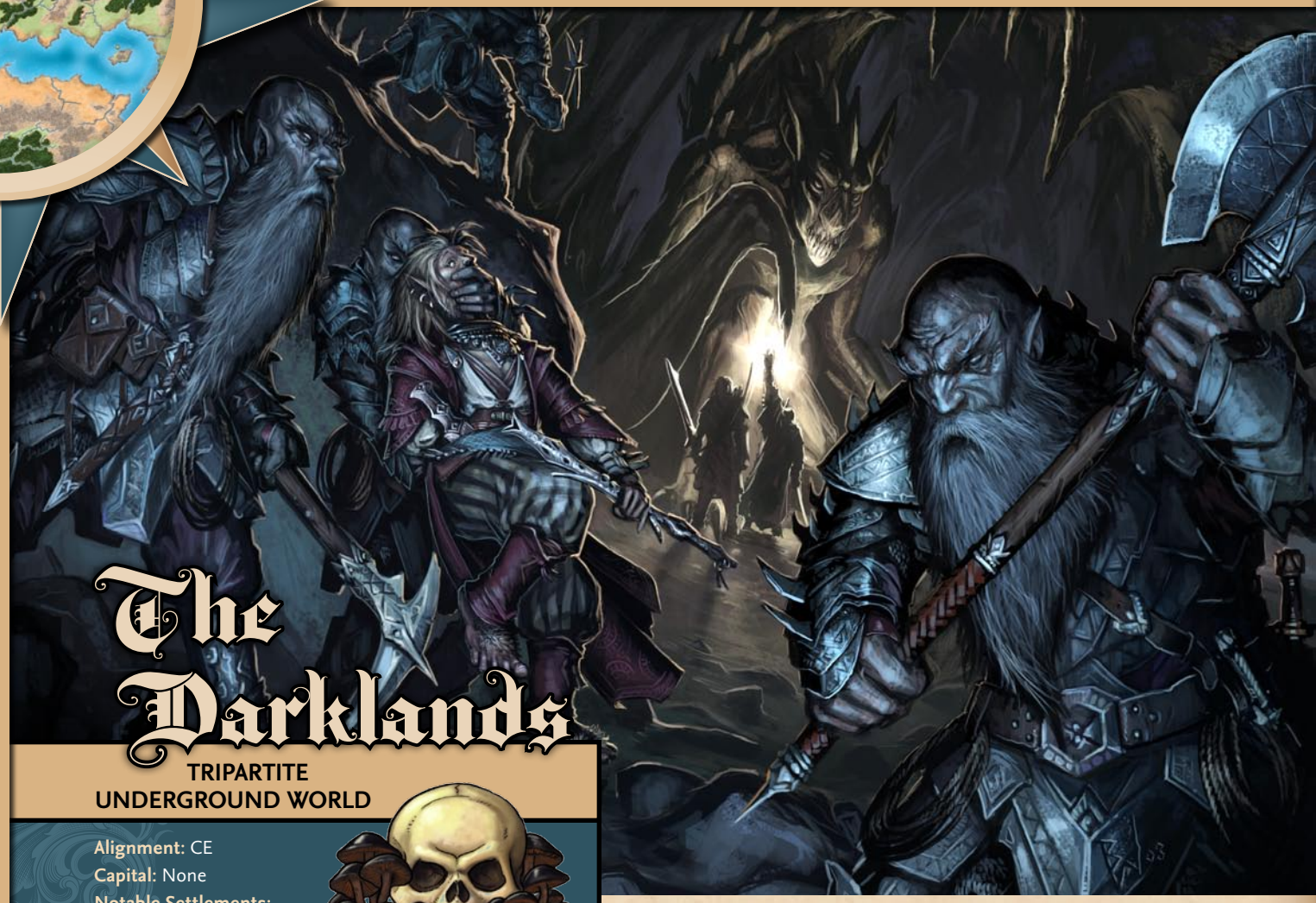
Pezzack: Within the sharp-peaked hills of the Devil's Perch stands the large town of Pezzack, a hotbed of sedition and plotting against the new aristocracy of Cheliax. Strict naval blockades and a years-long siege have cut off Pezzack from the rest of the world.

Westcrown: Once the center of Chelish civilization and capital of the empire, the golden facade of Westcrown crumbles under lethargy and disrepair. The remnants of once-powerful but now-ostracized ancient houses of nobility struggle against one another for power in this city. Shadowbeasts imported from Nidal to hunt would-be rebels in the ancient city stalk Westcrown's streets at night, devouring traitors and supporters alike.

Whisperwood: Rumor holds that a gate to Hell lies gaping somewhere in the depths of the Whisperwood. Certainly, wretched Senara's high population of outcast tieflings and other hellspawn argue for the existence of an infernal influence like an open hellmouth. In another part of the wood lies the legendary vermin and fungus-infested Scar Thicket, said to be an entrance to the Darklands.

THRUNE AGENT





The Darklands

TRIPARTITE UNDERGROUND WORLD

Alignment: CE
Capital: None
Notable Settlements: Blackstrand (4,790), Corgunbier (2,984), Court of Ether (4,890), Delvingulf (15,200), Dwimovel (22,320), Far Parathra (7,040), Fellstrok (3,855), Gakenbode (1,040), Giratayn (13,900), Hagegraf (32,800), Ilvarandin (unknown), Kmlin-Bru (1,558), Krba (1,480), Nemret Noktoria (17,650), Niovengia (42,456), Sverspume (7,300), Telderist (5,200), Umberweb (8,430), Zirnakaynin (55,340)
Ruler: None
Government: Scattered dictatorships, kingdoms, and theocracies separated by vast wilderness stretches
Languages: Aklo, Undercommon
Religion: Rovagug, archdevils, demon lords

There is another world hidden below. A world that slumbers under city foundations, dreams beneath the deepest roots of the oldest forest, and plots in hidden places as far below the surface as the mountains rise above it. The endless caves and twisting caverns of this ever-nighted world are known by many names, but in the world above they are collectively known as the Darklands.

History

Although the Darklands are a place of mystery to most of the surface dwellers of Golarion, the realms below are more ancient than anything above. The Darklands were sheltered in large part from the punishing doom of Earthfall and the Age of Darkness that followed, and the deeper one travels into the Darklands, the more ancient its civilizations become. Yet for all these civilizations, the Darklands remain predominantly a vast wilderness.

The fact that the tunnels and caverns of the Darklands are so extensive has long puzzled and concerned sages and scholars—how could such an extensive network of underground caverns form naturally, and even then, how could it retain its shape over the ages in the wake of world-changing catastrophes such as Earthfall, volcanic upheavals, and divine punishments like Rovagug's prehistoric banishment? The answer lies in the deepest reaches of the Darklands, in the region known as Orv, for here yawning caverns the size of nations sprawl. Within these logic-defying Vaults lie entire worlds of their own, as well as clues to the mysterious "Vault Keepers" said to be responsible for the creation of these ancient caverns so long ago. Of these creators, little is known today, but those who

dwell in Orv speak of them as angels and demons, gods and explorers, villains and heroes. Certainly the fact that the deep Vaults and tunnels of the Darklands continue to exist and remain stable to this day speaks to the expansive power these Vault Keepers wielded.

Although the Darklands themselves have changed little physically over time, three major migrations have changed the political power and feel of the realm quite drastically within the last 10,000 years or so. The first was the defeat of the serpentfolk empire by Azlant—these serpentine humanoids once ruled vast reaches of the Darklands, but their war with Azlant went poorly for them. Today, they dwell in isolated caverns, and their strange cities are in ruins. The second was the Quest for Sky, wherein the dwarves drove the orcs up out of the upper reaches of the Darklands and then settled on the surface world, abandoning their ancestral lands and homes to fate and, eventually, reclamation by more sinister races. The third was the descent of the elves in the wake of Earthfall. Although this descent happened before the Quest for Sky—the elves' eventual transformation into the drow after a combination of exposure to a mysterious force deep in Orv and the elves' own deteriorating kindness and sanity—it wasn't until well into the Age of Darkness that the drow began to colonize and claim great stretches of the central realm of the Darklands once held by the serpentfolk.

DROW MATRIARCH

GOVERNMENT

As a seemingly measureless region that reaches throughout Golarion, not just the region below Avistan and Garund, no one government rules the Darklands. The majority of these caverns and tunnels are true wilderness, with isolated city-states and nations within them ruled by diverse and often warring denizens. While these specific cultures have their own leadership structures, no centralized government exists for the caverns themselves.

GAZETTEER

Numerous intelligent races inhabit the Darklands. Yet while the surface world is relatively safe, the Darklands are a brutal, deadly place, where even the air you breathe or the ground you stand upon can be lethal. This environment has bred its hostility into those who dwell there; kindness and charity are all but unknown in the Darklands. Torment and swift death, unfortunately, are not. The races mentioned herein are not the sum of those who dwell in the Darklands, but they count themselves among the most prolific, dangerous, or legendary.

Although most surface dwellers believe the Darklands to be one continuous stretch of danger, the underground realm in fact consists of three distinct regions, each of which is described below along with several example cities, locations, and sites of particular interest.

Nar-Voth

The caverns of Nar-Voth make up the uppermost reaches of the Darklands, extending from the surface to a depth of 2,000 feet. This is the ancestral land of orcs and dwarves, although both races have largely abandoned these lands since the Age of Darkness. Many dwarves have since attempted to return to their ancestral cities in Nar-Voth only to find the task impossible, for these cities have been claimed by other races and monsters in their long absence. The most common of those who now dwell in these ancient dwarven cities are the duergar—degenerate dwarves who never left their homes and have descended into a violent society of killers and sadists. Other denizens of this uppermost realm of the Darklands include dark folk, derros, mongrelmen, morlocks, troglodytes, vegepygmies, and clots of sinister gremlins and mites.

Corgunbier: Although derros usually dwell in small enclaves (like Krba or Kmlin-Bru), their largest settlement is a mazelike series of tunnels beneath Cassomir known as Corgunbier. Nearly 2,000 derros dwell here, along with half that number of enslaved mongrelmen. Several secret connections exist from here that allow them to reach the sewers and countryside in and around the Taldan city above, providing plenty of stock for their experiments.

Court of Ether: This infamous region is located above an immense rift deep under the Candlestone Caverns of Andoran. While the rift, known as the Endless Gulf, extends all the way through Sekamina into the Midnight Mountains of Orv below, the Court itself is a fantastic city built into the massive stalactites that hang from the rift's roof. Inhabited by all manner of strange and evil fey, xorn, and other elemental creatures, the inverted city is ruled by a sadistic nymph sorcerer named Queen Frilogarma.

Hagegraf: The most well known of the duergar cities, Hagegraf lies deep under the northern extent of the Five Kings Mountains. This fortress city rings an immense cavern, giving the entire place the appearance of a huge arena enclosed by dozens of fortresses and floor-to-ceiling towers. The city itself, a bastion of slavery and toil, is very much the capital of the duergar nation.

Kuvhoshik: Once used by the elves of Celwynvian as an escape passage into the deep, the tangled caves and passageways known as Kuvhoshik are now primarily under

the control of no fewer than a hundred different tribes of troglodytes. Although they live in close proximity, the tribes themselves are not allied, and infighting between groups is commonplace.

Sekamina

The most notorious realm of the Darklands, the region about which the majority of tavern tales and Pathfinder expeditions report, is the middle region known as Sekamina. The caverns of Sekamina range from the foundation of Nar-Voth at 2,000 feet below the surface to depths of 8,000 feet. Numerous races dwell in the caverns of Sekamina, including strangely civilized ghouls, skum, driders, ropers, sadistic wormlike creatures known as seugathi, svirfneblin, and remnants of the serpentfolk civilization from before Earthfall. Yet none of these races can be thought of as the "rulers" of Sekamina. If any race has a legitimate claim to that title, it is the drow.

Dwimovel: The greatest svirfneblin settlement in Sekamina is also one of the region's best-kept secrets. Dwimovel is hidden behind a series of secret doors built into the walls of a secondary passageway deep under Andoran, a tangled network of tertiary tunnels providing the only access to the city. Dwimovel itself is a large collection of caverns that honeycomb the perimeter of a large cavern containing a beautiful and delicate forest of crystal.

The Endless Gulf: Below the eerie Nar-Voth fey city of the Court of Ether yawns a tremendous chasm known as the Endless Gulf, a rift that plummets all the way into Orv itself, punching through the roof of the Midnight Mountains. Massive groups of immense bats, ropers, and cave fishers haunt the walls of this chasm.

Lake Nirthran: The strange body of water known as Lake Nirthran, the Dying Sea, exists deep under the Inner Sea itself, and serves as a border of sorts between the portions of Sekamina under Avistan and Garund. The northern shores of the lake mark the southern edge of the drow empire, while the southern shores mark the lands of the ghouls. The lake itself is the domain of skum who have largely been abandoned by the aboleths to fend for themselves.

Nemret Noktoria: Ghoulish depredations range far and wide across the Darklands and even into the realms above to scavenge among surface cemeteries and abandoned graveyards. However far their reach may extend, though, the center of ghoul culture has always been and will always be the necropolis of Nemret Noktoria, a hidden city of tombs and sepulchers buried far, far beneath the desert sands of Osirion. Here, in lightless caverns supported by columns of whitish stone that resemble the ancient long bones and ribs of some truly titanic creature, lurk the bulk of Sekamina's ghoul hordes.

Zirnakaynin: The drow empire is the largest nation in all the Darklands, with cities spread out under most of Avistan. The majority of these cities, such as Blackstrand, Delvingulf on the shores of the Dying Sea, decadent and profane Far Parathra, Giratayn, Telderist, and drider-friendly Umberweb are notorious enough, but the crowning glory of the drow empire in Sekamina is their greatest city—Zirnakaynin. Built in an enormous three-tiered cavern far under Nirmathas, the metropolis of Zirnakaynin is where the drow first settled after coming to grips with their ancient transformation, and for over 8,000 years the city has grown. With its imposing vistas and deadly crevasses, its twisted iron and bladed heights, this so-called "Last Home of the Elves" reflects its residents' ruthlessness and malice.

Orv

Few on the surface suspect that Sekamina is not the deepest realm of the Darklands, yet there does exist a realm even more abysmal. The caverns of Orv extend to an unknown depth below Sekamina's deepest point, yet many of these tunnels do not succumb to intolerable conditions one might expect so far underground, thanks to ancient and mysterious magic left in place by the unknown Vault Keepers.

The Vaults of Orv are connected by winding tunnels that rarely diverge into smaller cave systems. These Vaults are immense caverns that stretch for hundreds of miles, creating regions that could well rival the size and environmental diversity of many surface nations. Little is known of the denizens of Orv's Vaults, but if the tales of the svirfneblin, drow, and other residents of Sekamina are to be believed, the creatures of Orv are horrors indeed: aboleths, intellect devourers, neothelids, and urdefhans (vampiric humanoids with transparent skin who dwell in haunted cities and venerate the Horsemen of the Apocalypse) being the most notorious but certainly not the only creatures of note. Many of the denizens of Orv are said to have strange magical powers born from thought itself, and to have once been the servitors of the Vault Keepers. What their goals might be remains unknown.

Deep Tolguth: Far under the Realm of the Mammoth Lords lies a Vault filled with expansive trackless jungles, steaming swamps, and cities of ruined ziggurats—Deep Tolguth. A lost world in every sense of the phrase, Deep Tolguth is a place of wonder indeed. The colossal cavern is lit by a brightly glowing sphere of light that burns from the center of the cave's ceiling nearly 2 miles above, and the air itself is filled with clouds and strange mists. The false sun shines for 12 hours at a time before swiftly diminishing to darkness for another dozen hours. Dinosaurs, froghemoths, giant vermin, and strangely intelligent troglodytes rule the jungles and swamps of this Vault.

Denebrum: Deep below Varisia, immense worms writhe and war. These are the neothelids, spawn of ancient gods left behind in the deepest parts of the world, onetime enemies of both the aboleths and the Vault Keepers

themselves. Although the Vault Keepers have moved on and the aboleths have largely abandoned much of their interests in the Darklands, the neothelids remain and rule this shadowy realm of monstrosities.

Doga-Delloth: Perhaps the most widely known and certainly the most notorious Vault in all of Orv is Doga-Delloth, the legendary empire of the vampiric urdefhan race (see the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2*). Said to have been engineered eons ago by the daemon lords as a twisted sort of social experiment, the urdefhans alone have embraced their lot in Orv and have managed to claim the largest presence in this lightless realm. Urdefhan cities, settlements, and fortresses can be found in places as far flung as islands in the Sightless Sea, Ilvarandin, and the Midnight Mountains, and their explorers and patrols can be encountered throughout the tunnels that connect the Vaults together.

Ilvarandin: Lit by pale, glowing clouds of countless phosphorescent spores that waft upon the higher air is the vast realm of Ilvarandin, a sight unlike any other in Orv. Here, the Vault Keepers created a single colossal city of towers, domes, arched bridges, and deep tangled alleyways amid immense plazas, winding streets, and countless stone structures. On the surface, stories of how Ilvarandin can grant those who discover it eternal life are the subject of many poems and tales, but the truth behind this ancient and mysterious city is far more sinister, with rumors that the place is ruled by intellect devourers suggesting frightening truths about the "immortality" explorers might discover there.

Land of Black Blood: Hidden deep under the elven forests of Kyonin, the legendary Land of Black Blood is one of Orv's most coveted Vaults, a place that has seen the ruling hand of countless varied masters over the ages since its creation. Numerous small tribes of strange amphibious humanoids, cloakers, driders, deep-dwelling derros, and even exiled fiends and shaitan genies dwell here, each in control over a small fiefdom of the land, each claiming a small portion of the substance that gave the Vault its name—black, viscous stuff said to have strange powers capable of enhancing necromantic magic.

The Midnight Mountains: This immense realm, one of the largest Vaults in Orv, is lit by numerous moonlike orbs floating near the ceiling, illuminating an enormous range of ragged mountain peaks far below. These are the Midnight Mountains, a deadly wilderness inhabited by driders, morlocks, ropers, and the hairy and bestial giants known as gugs, ruled by shadowy umbral dragons, and watched over by immense and hungry "moons" (actually enormous fungoid mu spores) that float in the "sky" above.

The Sightless Sea: Easily the largest of Orv's Vaults is the Sightless Sea, an immense cavern that sits deep under the Arcadian Ocean and rivals it for size. On the surface of the Sightless Sea, ships captained by denizens of Leng, tieflings, telepathic albino humans clad in jade armor, and other unusual creatures are far from uncommon. Dozens of tiny islands break the surface of the Sightless Sea as well—most of these have been settled by urdefhans, but some are the isolated empires of genie lords, neothelids, dragons, shoggoths, exiled fiends, or huge tribes of strangely advanced skum. Yet the true dangers of the Sightless Sea dwell not on its dark surface but in its dark depths, for it is here that the aboleths still rule. Although their reach is but a shadow of their power in the ancient past, they maintain immense sunken cities in the deepest reaches of the Sightless Sea to this very day.

DRIDER

Druma

MERCHANTS' RELIGIOUS PARADISE

Alignment: LN
Capital: Kerse (18,300)
Notable Settlements: Detmer (8,200), Macridi (3,200), Peddlegate (2,150), Prophet's Home (6,900), Twingate (5,500)
Ruler: High Prophet Kelldor
Government: Mercantile Oligarchy
Languages: Common, Dwarven
Religion: Abadar, Torag, Prophecies of Kalistrade

The rolling hills and lush grasslands of Druma (known to its citizens as the "Kalistocracy of Druma") host many of the most productive gem and precious metal mines in Avistan, granting its doctrinaire leaders—adherents to the Prophecies of Kalistrade—significant influence over the politics and affairs of the entire Inner Sea region. Dream-records of an eccentric mystic from the early days of the Age of Enthronement, the Prophecies dictate a personal routine involving sexual and dietary prohibitions, significant adornment in rich clothing, and the wearing of white full-length gloves to prohibit physical contact with those outside the cult.

HISTORY

While it would seem that traveling "prophets" of Druma would make tempting targets for overzealous thieves and confidence men, knowledgeable denizens of the underworld give them wide clearance, knowing that their untold wealth all too often buys hosts of magical contingencies, powerful divinations, and vengeful assassins. Very little stolen from such a prophet stays stolen for long. The jewel-bedecked traders thus comport themselves with an assiduous arrogance and casual fearlessness that frequently grants them the upper hand in negotiations.

Such negotiations played a critical role in the rise of the prophets more than 2,000 years ago, when their calm mediation at long last united the squabbling dwarf nations of the Five Kings Mountains. The Kerse Accord of 2332 AR—facilitated by white-gloved adherents of the Prophesied Path—also granted these adherents autonomy and significant control over the vast mineral resources of the upcountry south of Lake Encarthan.

As Druma's historical dwarven lieges turn increasingly inward to their ancient mountain vaults to the east, the prophets of Druma consolidate their domestic power by ensuring widespread dedication to the Prophecies of

Kalistrade. Other religions and nonbelievers meet with grudging tolerance in Druma. Nonbelievers almost never achieve positions of rank and influence in the official bureaucracy, and adherents always favor each other in financial dealings.

Those who swear by Kalistrade's writings did not flinch at the disruption to prophecy triggered by the death of Aroden and the advent of the Age of Lost Omens. The most potent prediction of the Prophecies concerns an imminent hour of victory, in which adherents leverage their financial power to, in effect, "own" the world, becoming its masters and achieving a sort of metaphysical immortality. That other prophecies have proven false in recent years gives little pause to believers, who cannily contend that theirs is a secular prophecy immune to the dictates of magic and is wholly up to the faithful to see through to completion. Aroden did not control whether or not the Prophecies would come true, they contend. Adherents to the Prophecies do. Their constant expansion and ever-growing financial holdings inch them toward the ultimate goal of their philosophy.

Government

Although many Drumish dwarves and other non-humans support the self-denying rhetoric of Kalistrade's prophets, official doctrine recognizes only humans as worthy of the universe's ultimate reward. Social status and cultural upbringing do not matter to a Drumish merchant, so long as the adherent is capable of generating wealth, and thus proving her value to the world. Even former slaves are welcome to live by the dictates of the Prophecies, meaning many refugees from Cheliax and Isger seek the fields and mines of Druma as the first step to greater success. While some few escape poverty to become members of the ruling elite, most find their meager accumulations cement them into lowly positions as menials or indentured servants. Some of these unfortunates abandon the dour nation for the "freer" freedom of the River Kingdoms, but many instead join Druma's justly infamous Mercenary League. The league is ruthless, highly trained, and lavishly well equipped in its protection of the Kalistocrats and their most valued possessions. Black uniforms mark the league's members in stark contrast to the white-clad merchants, but the mercenaries are as loyal as golems—and some say more deadly. Although not wantonly violent, Mercenary League members are remorselessly amoral in executing orders. In addition to domestic guard duty, the "Blackjackets" escort Drumish caravans and barges, and traverse the Inner Sea on missions for their masters. Wherever these squads go, the prospect of wealth hovers nearby.

The Drumish think little of their neighbors. The Governors of Molthune display charmingly naive economic policies and their military might is easily bought off. High Prophet Kelldor and his contemporaries secretly own large tracts of Isger as investment, and in fulfillment of prophecy, the merchant-lords plan to buy more. Although a valuable trade partner, Andoran's egalitarian hooligans vex the Macridi merchant houses. Meanwhile, Kyonin represents the greatest untapped market in Avistan. Merchant-lords sail boatloads of goods to Greengold every week, offering the elves anything that might entice them into steady trade.

The highest merchant-lords in the Kalistocracy control the Resplendent Bureaucracy of Druma, but they do not dream of cutting their incomes by doing it full time. That job falls to aggressive middle-earners who use the bureaucracy as a path to greater wealth. Most bureaucrats cycle through every 8 to 10 years, as they find more (or less) lucrative ventures elsewhere. A few career bureaucrats grudgingly settle for plateaued earning, and the occasional apostate enjoys public service more than commerce. High Prophet Kelldor falls into neither camp, atop his unique pyramid of merchants and politicians. Kelldor's wealth and connections make him one of the most powerful men in the Inner Sea region.

At its heart, the Prophecies of Kalistrade encourage adherents to justify their worth in the celestial order through attaining personal wealth. High-ranking merchant-lords and the quasi-religious bureaucracy that supports the official philosophy adorn themselves with gold and platinum chains and glistening gemstones. Pious citizens of Druma know their net worth like their own names. It's easy to tell how wealthy one of the faithful truly is—the more they have, the more they show. Everything is an opportunity to make money: war, peace, famine, plenty, day, night, spring, autumn. No one is ever happy with what she has, so you can always offer someone something else.

Gazetteer

Detmer: On the shores of Lake Encarthan, Detmer is the shipyard where both the merchants' flat-bottom barges and sprightly caravels and the navy's frigates and sloops are constructed and launched. Very little actual export and import of trade occurs here, with the city itself instead focused heavily on the construction and maintenance of Druma's navy, as well as serving as a home port for the frequent patrols these ships make to ensure that pirates, refugees, smugglers, and other undesirables stay out of the Gulf of Accord.

Kerse: An opulent city of manor houses and municipal buildings that also resemble manor houses, Kerse is perched the southernmost reach of the Gulf of Accord. Ostentatious displays of wealth are the standard here: bricks flecked with gemstones, stories-tall statues made of precious metal alloys, and every timber in every home a rare wood. Yet despite the ostentatious display of wealth and wonder, theft is all but unheard of here. As one of

the best-funded organizations in a nation founded on profit, the ruthless Mercenary League is inescapable in the streets, as well as above and below them. If the efforts of the Mercenary League make travel safe for Druma's merchants on the nation's roads and rivers, those efforts are taken to almost ridiculous heights here in the league's home town. No expense is spared by the league to ensure the safety of Kerse's fantastic wealth, with magical wards, bound outsiders, mystical alarms, and full-time scryers on constant watch.

Macridi: This cool, calm, wooded town sits at the junction of the Great Goldpan River and Profit's Flow. Affluent but markedly less gilded than other major Drumish communities, Macridi primarily functions as a lumber town. Macridi's loggers do not simply clear-cut swaths of the surrounding woodlands, however, for only the best and rarest woods are considered worth harvesting. A well-funded lumber town that might only process a few trees in a single day may seem like a strange dichotomy, but the druids and sylvan creatures that dwell in the woodlands have no complaints. Indeed, many of the lumber scouts based in Macridi maintain friendly contacts with some of the woodlands' fey inhabitants, who view the occasional sacrifice of a few darkwoods or paueliel trees to the saw's edge a bearable one in light of the fact that the loggers could easily savage the woodlands with a more mercenary zeal. Certainly, the profits for harvesting a few rare trees a day rather than maintaining an extensive series of lumber mills fits well with the Prophecies of Kalistrade's finer points on conservation of resources.

Palakar Forest: Although the lumberjacks of Macridi have explored large swaths of the Palakar Forest, this sprawling woodland maintains extensive reaches of unmapped and untapped potential. Macridi's alliance with the fey of the Palakar prevents them from penetrating too deeply into the woodlands on their lumber-gathering excursions, and as a result relatively little is known of the deep interior of the forest. Split into three sections by the passage of the Profit's Flow and the Great Goldpan River, the Palakar itself is ruled by three quite distinct fey courts (one dominated by dryads, one by satyrs, and one by nymphs), members of each court rarely traveling far from the central regions of their respective forests. Conflict between the three factions is rather common,

sometimes spilling over into nearby Macridi in strange and unpredictable ways.

Peddlegate: Built around the ruins of an ancient strip mine that has long since played out its ore, Peddlegate is the official embassy of the Five Kings Mountains in Druma. Located on the eastern plains of the nation, Peddlegate is a dualistic city—above, a settlement of tall spires and thick walls surrounding the ruined mine, while below a tangled maze of caves, forges, and living quarters. The dwarves of Peddlegate are even more stoic than their brethren in the mountains, and their patience in dealmaking and bartering is legendary in Druma. Indeed, many Drumish say, "It's better to let the dwarves of Peddlegate have their way in negotiation because waiting for them to change their mind can take years." The Peddlegate dwarves also use the trade city to push unceasingly for open trade with neighboring Kyonin, but such attempts have historically been difficult to pull off due to the tense relations between Druma and the elven nation. Despite this awkward relationship, the dwarves of Peddlegate won't take no for an answer—a stubborn trait that the dwarves either do not or cannot comprehend as perhaps complicating their relationship with the elves.

Prophet's Home: While Kerse may be the home of the Mercenary League, it is not where new members of this elite organization are forged. Prophet's Home is this group's headquarters—its primary purpose to provide soldiers a place to drill, live, and school. Once the lengthy training is complete, they are sent into the field to do the nation's will. The city of Prophet's Home itself is pleasant, with wide avenues lined with enormous oak trees and quaint brick houses built close together. The city's walls are thick and utilitarian, solid gray in color and built for defense and not for beauty. The walls form a rough figure eight that divides the city into its two halves: the martial district and the support district. Where the walls meet in the middle is an impressive fortress of pure white stone, standing tall above the city and glistening in the sun. This structure, known as Thousand Shields, is the headquarters and primary training facility for the Mercenary League soldiers. Its smallest tower, called simply the School of the Arcane and known vulgarly by the locals as the Scar, stands out in its bleak blackness, and also because of the almost constant storms of magical energy that swirl around it. Though the locals don't trust what goes on there, they're not about to question the Mercenary League about it, and they act as though the Scar isn't even there.

Twingate: Nestled against the coast of Lake Encarthan is a semipermanent city of tents, each made almost entirely of white canvas. At the city-sized camp's heart stand the two stone towers that give the site its name. These towers are linked by a bridge at the top floor and surrounded by wooden stairs that can be burned in defense. It is amid the sprawl of these tents that those wishing to join the nation of Druma must go to learn about the Prophecies of Kalistrade and then pledge their loyalty to the prophet and to the nation. The city's population fluctuates frequently, but there are at least 500 loyal Drumans here at any one time teaching up to 10 times that number of initiates. Every morning at sunrise and every evening at sunset, a horn sounds from atop the towers, calling the initiates to rise from their tasks, don their robes and white gloves, and recite ritual tenets of the faith. Though it can take as little as a week to earn the right to leave the camp, some of the camp's hopefuls have been there for years, the goal of enlightenment constantly eluding them.

PROPHET OF KALISTRADE

Five Kings Mountains

FRACTURED DWARVEN NATION

Alignment: LN
Capital: Highhelm (39,917)
Notable Settlements: Coralesian (420), Davarn (2,009), Elistia (500), Kovlar (4,390), Larrad (17,840), Rolgrimmdur (6,875), Taggoret (13,500), Tar-Kazmukh (3,410)
Ruler: Gathering Council, composed of the rulers of Larrad, Highhelm, Kovlar, Taggoret, Rolgrimmdur, and Tar-Kazmukh
Government: Loosely affiliated collection of monarchs
Languages: Dwarven
Religion: Torag

Although most dwarves dwell upon the surface of the world, the tunnels and caverns of the Five Kings Mountains constitute the single largest dwarven nation on or beneath Golarion. Even Janderhoff's massive dwarf population cannot compare to the sheer number of dwarves occupying the mighty Five Kings range. As the site of one of the first Sky Citadels, the Five Kings Mountains hold a special place in the hearts and minds of dwarves throughout Avistan.

HISTORY

The memory of the dwarves is long, yet even they have forgotten much of their origin under the Five Kings Mountains. Torag first forged the dwarves deep in the recesses of the earth as beings perfectly suited to the dark, unfriendly environment. Dedicated to hard work, they were content for a time. Torag was their master, and they strove to earn his approval. Centuries passed, and Torag provided them with a simple prophecy: when the ground shook beneath their feet, they must press upward to the surface in the Quest for Sky. The dwarves saw Earthfall as the fulfillment of this long-awaited prophecy.

The Quest for Sky was fraught with peril and betrayal. Numerous dwarves chose to ignore the Quest altogether; they stayed deep within the mountains and eventually became the evil duergar. The dwarves who pursued the Quest squabbled among themselves and hatched plans to complete their own agendas and gain control of the dwarven civilization. As they climbed ever closer to the surface, they drove before themselves their great enemy, the orcs. Unfortunately, the friction between the dwarves eventually became so great that they splintered into small factions. For 2 decades, they focused on fighting the orcs and each other,

and the Quest for Sky became a tertiary concern. The first great dwarf king, Taargick, was finally able to unite his people through a mix of diplomacy, wisdom, and violent coercion, after which he crowned himself the king of all dwarves and founded the nation of Tar Taargadth in –5133 AR. It was under this powerful empire that the dwarves finally completed the bloody Quest for Sky in –4987 AR.

Upon reaching the surface, the dwarves discovered the orcs they had fought so tirelessly beneath the mountains now flourished on the surface. Instead of ridding the world of the orcs, they had unleashed the horde upon the rest of the world's inhabitants. To aid in their epic war against the orcs, the dwarves founded 10 magnificent Sky Citadels. They applied all their engineering experience to create these marvels of architecture. Stony ramparts reached far into the sky and could be seen from miles away. These great cities thrived, tucked safely behind the walls and bulwarks of stone and steel.

For nearly a thousand years, the dwarves used their great Sky Citadels as bastions of civilization in this wild, new surface world. Because of their outstanding tactical advantage, they experienced a rapid growth in population. Even so, dwarves and orcs fought a savage, relentless war. In –3708 AR, the unthinkable happened and orcs successfully invaded Koldukar, a Sky Citadel in what is known now as Urgir in the Hold of Belkzen. In the Battle of Nine Stones, orcs breached the walls and drove the dwarves from Koldukar, slaughtering any who courageously stayed behind to fight. The dwarves' loss of Koldukar is a source of great shame for their entire race, and many dream of retaking it and ending the orc menace forever.

Over time, the power of the dwarves waned again. In 1551 AR, the central government of Tar Taargadth collapsed, and each Sky Citadel was forced to fend for itself. One by one, the Sky Citadels fell to the orcs and other threats, until only four of the fortresses remained: Dongun Hold in the Mana Wastes, Highhelm in the Five Kings Mountains, Janderhoff in Varisia, and Kravenkus in the World's End Mountains. And while all four of these Sky Citadels remain in control of the dwarves today, it was Highhelm that would form the seed for the greatest of the new dwarven nations.

After the collapse of Tar Taargadth, a new dwarven civilization quickly formed with Highhelm as its center. Within the Five Kings Mountains, five separate dwarven nations flourished, each led by a different brother. Unfortunately, each brother had his own agenda, and the dwarf lords feuded almost constantly. In 1571 AR, these feuds escalated into the Five Kings War, a brutal civil war that would endure for 7 centuries. Eventually, the dwarven families grew tired of the carnage, and brought in a delegation from the Kalistocracy of Druma to negotiate what became the Kerse Accord. This treaty ended the civil wars and established a long-lasting peace for all inhabitants of the Five Kings Mountains.

In the years to follow, additional trials faced the dwarves again and again, including more wars with the orcs, minor and petty internal squabbles, and even conflicts with the neighboring human and elven nations. Then, in 3980 AR, Droskar's Crag erupted, and the Five Kings Mountains were shaken to their cores. Entire cities and strongholds crumbled during this disaster, forcing the dwarves to abandon several of their ancestral homes. Many moved to the city of Highhelm, but this eruption, known today as "The Rending," had an unforeseen effect: it did what centuries of warfare and squabbling could not—it destroyed the spirit of the dwarven empire. The dwarves of the Five Kings Mountains fell into sloth and apathy, losing their way and forgetting what it meant to be the chosen people of Torag. For 5 centuries, the dwarves of the Five Kings Mountains carried on, but failed to truly live. Worship of Torag declined and worship of Droskar grew. In 4369 AR, a cleric of Droskar named Ordrik Talhirk seized the throne and attempted to create a theocracy dedicated to the worship of Droskar. The resulting Forge War raged for 13 years, during which time generals loyal to the true crown fought to keep their kingdom. They failed, and in 4382 AR, Ordrik declared himself theocrat and declared that all dwarves must work in Droskar's name. Thus began the dwarves' second era of toil.

For nearly a century, the dwarves of the Five Kings Mountains labored simply for labor's sake. They lost all sense of art and beauty, and their creations became merely adequate. This time is seen as the lowest point in dwarven craftsmanship. Dwarves rushed to build temples, shrines, forges, cathedrals, towers, and workshops for Droskar, but forgot the purpose of such endeavors. Eventually, their mediocrity descended into shoddiness, and their works began to collapse almost before they were completed.

Many dwarves realized they would not be able to maintain their existence in such poorly constructed and maintained mountain homes, and began to flee to the other dwarf kingdoms in the Five Kings Mountains, as well as settlements in Druma and the Mindspin Mountains. Many loyal followers of Droskar took offense at the abandonment of their god's will, and attempted to force their families and neighbors to remain in Droskar's Crag. In the end, the priests could not maintain their hold on the other dwarves; Ordrik's theocracy crumbled in 4466 AR, often with entire settlements being walled off or completely abandoned. Most are now the dens for humanoids and other monsters, but some groups—particularly the Pathfinders—believe that great caches of treasure still exist in these lost cities, resting on the skulls and fingers of long-dead dwarven princes, merchants, and priests.

In the 250 years since the fall of Droskar's Kingdom, a period the dwarves call the Collapsed Era, no dwarf has come forth to successfully unite his people in their old holdings. The remaining four Sky Citadels are robust

metropolises, but none can claim to be more than a city-state; the "kingdoms" of the Five Kings mountains are only so in name. While many dwarves dream of reuniting their fractured empire, none have had the ability, prestige, or willpower to make it so.

Government

The Five Kings Mountains are so named not for the current government, but for the five legendary dwarven kings who signed the Kerse Accord and put an end to the Five Kings Wars. Today, the Five Kings Mountains have yet to reclaim any of their ancient glory as a united nation—each of the various city-states of the mountains functions as a free city with its own monarchy and traditions. The various kings work together in a loosely defined "Gathering Council," and the city of Highhelm serves as the region's capital out of tradition and honor for its status as one of the four surviving Sky Citadels more than anything else.

Gazetteer

The Carved Kings: To commemorate the spirit of cooperation between the five dwarven kings who signed the Kerse Accord, putting an end to the Five Kings Wars, the dwarves pooled their resources and constructed great monuments to their forward-thinking leaders, carving them into the sides of the mountains that overlook the most important passes in the region.

Highhelm: The Sky Citadel of Highhelm is the cultural center of the Five Kings Mountains, where the most prominent dwarven rulers dwell, and all other dwarven leaders come for counsel. Located near Emperor's Peak, Highhelm is one of the oldest Sky Citadels, and the most heavily fortified. It retains a working connection to the Darklands, though it is sealed shut with massive iron gates, secured with locks the size of two dwarves standing abreast. Dwarves throughout Golarion regard Highhelm as the center of dwarven culture, even if their own societies and values are radically different. As one of the few Sky Citadels still under the control of dwarves, Highhelm enjoys both a historical and racial significance; should it ever be attacked, dwarves would march from the farthest reaches of the Inner Sea region to come to its aid. While all aspects of dwarven industry are represented in Highhelm, the city's primary business is trade. As the central city of

the Five Kings Mountains, Highhelm is ideal as a cargo waypoint. Further, High King Borogrim the Hale enforces a lower tax rate for imported goods, thus encouraging merchants to ship through Highhelm, rather than directly to Druma, Andoran, or other human nations.

Iron Gates: Massive iron gates up to a hundred feet high—with great, stylized dwarf faces just above the gates' centers—guard all primary entrances to cities of the Five Kings Mountains. These gates are but an architectural ruse by the dwarves, as none of their tunnels reach more than 20 feet high (they simply don't need that much vertical clearance). The area behind these gates is solid stone, meant to absorb the impact of enemy siege weapons.

Larrad: The dwarf city of Larrad is built up around a cluster of temple-caverns carved out in antiquity by some of the first dwarves to reach the Five Kings Mountains, serving both as a place of worship for the deities who had brought the stout folk to the completion of their Quest for Sky, and as a necropolis where the honored dead could continue to be memorialized long after their deeds had been forgotten. Over the centuries, the shrines grew into temples, then into cathedrals, and finally into vast complexes where many of the dwarven clergy receive their training. In turn, the "support settlements" that cropped up around the various temples eventually expanded and overlapped.

Rolgrimmdur: Built among the ruins of Grakodan by Khadon's engineers as a permanent encampment, Rolgrimmdur now stands as one of the Five Kings Mountains' most fortified cities. Most of its defenses are underground, however—sealing off the city from the upper reaches of the Darklands—though its easternmost region features a particularly sturdy gatehouse, including a high tower that overlooks the pass between Rolgrimmdur and neighboring Highhelm. As befits a city refounded by soldiers, Rolgrimmdur's chief business is war. Dwarven children study combat and tactics before they can read, and undergo rigorous physical improvement programs as soon as they are able to walk. Despite its heavily warrior-based philosophy, though, Rolgrimmdur is not particularly aggressive; rather, it exports mercenaries to Highhelm and the other dwarven cities, and provides siege weapons to the fortresses of the Five Kings Mountains, as well as to the nations of Druma and Andoran. Many human military officers come to Rolgrimmdur to study warfare.

Taggoret: King Taggun and the first settlers followed a trail of lava tubes upward in their Quest for Sky, until they discovered a series of connected caverns that became their new base camp for further explorations. Today, Taggoret is a thriving city, situated at the end of the long trail of dwarven tunnels that run beneath the Five Kings Mountains (though excavation of tunnels that collapsed in the vicinity of Droskar's Crag during the Rending has been underway for centuries). The city's primary industry is iron mining and smelting, and Taggoret iron is known throughout Druma and Andoran as the finest available for hundreds of miles around.

Tar-Kazmukh: Tar-Kazmukh's rather impressive arcane libraries draw dwarven wizards from all over, as well as a few humans, and even an occasional elf from Kyonin. The Blue Warders—dwarven librarians who cover themselves in tattooed counter-sigils against some of the more powerful magic wards in the library—cater to all patrons, but pay particular respect to the local Sages' Guild, a scholars' collective dedicated to the study of arcane and planar phenomena. Much of Tar-Kazmukh's stonework is the work of arcane spells, and navigating the place can be downright confounding. "Lost" libraries are rumored to lie off the outlying tunnels, occupied by fiercely territorial hermit wizards—some of whom may actually be dwarven liches.

HIGH KING BOROGRIM THE HALE

Galt

ETERNAL REVOLUTION

Alignment: CN
Capital: Isarn (42,700)
Notable Settlements: Azurestone (9,300), Dabril (624), Edme (13,600), Halvon (2,100), Litran (4,900), Stavintower (1,320), Tregan (255), Woodsedge (14,200)
Ruler: Citizen Goss, Chairman of the Revolutionary Council
Government: Revolutionary anarchy
Languages: Common, Hallit
Religion: Calistria, Cayden Cailean, Erastil, Iomedae, Norgorber, Shelyn

Galt is a dangerous place for strangers, for in this land of endless revolution, mobs are always on the hunt for traitors—be they real or imagined. There are many reasons, however, an adventurer might risk his neck to enter Galt. When the nation fell into its current cycle of revolutions, people from all walks of life—from nobles and merchants to wizards and clerics—were forced to flee in great haste. Some left behind priceless treasures, irreplaceable heirlooms, or half-finished research; others were separated from friends or relatives; and a few seek to reclaim the souls of loved ones from the guillotines known as the *final blades*. Adventurers might offer their aid in exchange for gold or simply to see justice done, or perhaps they seek to claim as their own the abandoned treasures of those who fled the nation. Many opportunities wait in the chaos of the endless revolution—and just as many dangers.

History

Galt has a long and colorful history filled with brilliant artists, romantic brigands, and philosophers whose unorthodox ideas have altered the landscape of modern political thought. Even after falling to Cheliax in the Even-Tongued Conquest, the people of Galt retained their passion and lust for life. Throughout 6 centuries of Chelish rule, Galt drew freethinkers and idealists to its universities and clever rogues and scoundrels to its woods.

Today, only one color comes to mind when people think of Galt: the bitter crimson of blood. The Red Revolution has held the land in its grip for more than 40 years, and it shows no signs of ending.

The seeds of the Red Revolution were sown when House Thrune rose to power in Cheliax. The poet Darl Jubannich issued the broadsheet series *On Government*, which used Thrune practices as the foundation from which to undermine the basic principle of the divine right of kings. The half-elf philosopher Hosetter took things

even further: his *Imperial Betrayal* urged the common folk to take up arms to defend their shared ideals. These fiery words spread swiftly across the land, and the tales of Queen Abrogail's cruelty only added fuel to the flames. Dissent soon burst into rebellion, and rebellion into full revolt. Tens of thousands answered Hosetter's call, coming together in rowdy mobs to shatter any remnant of Chelish rule and drag the decadent nobles from their manors. Together with other heroes of the people, Hosetter and Jubannich formed the Revolutionary Council, one of the first acts of which was to commission the creation of the *final blades*. Citizen Margaery San Trayne was the architect of these mystical guillotines; she called for a tool that would bring "a swift and humane end, offering no escape through the magics of resurrection—and furthermore, keeping even the vilest Galtan soul from falling into the clutches of a Chelish devil."

Hosetter and Jubannich acted with the best of intentions, but the child they brought into the world quickly grew into a monster. The love of life that once characterized Galt became an endless thirst for blood. Those who criticized the Revolutionary Council found themselves branded Chelish sympathizers and set upon the tumbrel to face the *final blade*. The united front of the revolutionary leaders soon shattered into paranoia and infighting, with new demagogues rising to challenge the established leaders. The collapse of the social order exacerbated these problems, and mobs turned to new leaders in the hopes of miraculous change. Just 5 years after chairing the first session of the Revolutionary Council, Hosetter was executed in his hometown of Edme. Darl Jubannich fled to Andoran, and with his departure the last voice of reason was drowned out by the hungry mob.

Galt has seen more than a dozen governments rise and fall since Hosetter's death, and all they have shared is bloodshed, chaos, and eventual collapse. The beautiful galleries and lofty universities of Galt have been destroyed; its people are driven by paranoia, fury, and a bitter refusal to recognize the cause of their troubles; and the collapse of any organized army has allowed brigands and savage beasts to thrive in the wilds. At the same time, Galt's neighbors fear that the rhetoric of Korran Goss might send the bloodthirsty Galtan mobs spilling out across the borders. In the early days of the Revolution, neighboring Andoran offered shelter to refugees from all walks of life; today it fears the growing darkness, and soldiers spread throughout the Verduran Forest turn back any Galtan who seeks passage into their land, rendering passage through the region via the Sellen River, a heavily used trade route, an increasingly dangerous prospect. A handful of Galtan nobles have taken refuge in the River Kingdoms. There, the "Revenant Princes" amass mercenary armies and dream of retaking their homeland. Lord Halidan Tarne regularly leads raiding parties into Galt, while his cousin Casal and the Lady Dela Morgayn prefer to bide their time and build their forces, waiting for the day when they can overthrow the Revolutionary Council once and for all.

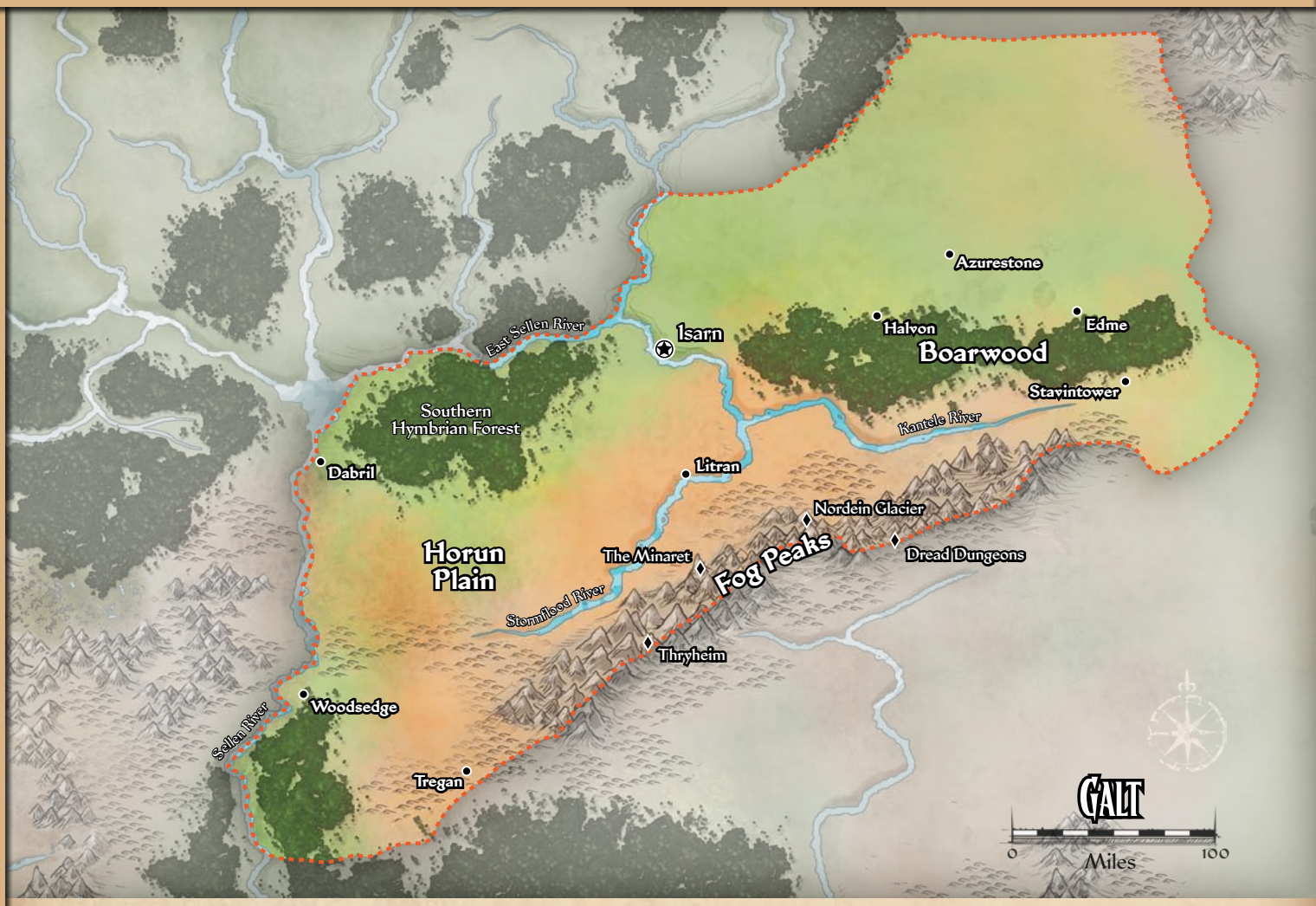
Government

Citizen Korran Goss is the current chairman of the Revolutionary Council. Goss rose to power by revealing the activities of the Cabinet of Skulls, a previous revolutionary government. He is a gifted demagogue talented at redirecting the mob's rage, leading the masses to blame their neighbors for their hunger and poverty: "Why should Andoran prosper when Galt lies fallow?" Nonetheless, the government of Galt is anything but predictable, and a new leader could rise to power in the space of a single day.

Previous incarnations of the Revolutionary Council give a sense of just how odd things can get in Galt. The Cailean Council believed that absolute change was the key to prosperity; it changed everything from the alphabet of the Common language to the names of the days of the week. Chairman Durgan Rane enforced martial law and mandatory conscription, only to be slaughtered by his newly disciplined soldiers. The Common Council asserted that no one with any sort of political background was qualified to lead, and elevated farmhands and beggars to the council. This was followed by the disastrous Eye of Law, when a hag coven led by the monstrous witch Traxyla seized leadership of the Revolution.

While the Revolutionary Council is wildly unstable, Galt has a reliable force in the Gray Gardeners. The members of this order conceal their identities behind hoods and veils of gray silk. The Gardeners serve as justices and executioners, and they maintain the *final blades*. As the anonymous face of bloody justice, the Gray Gardeners are wildly popular among the mobs. The leaders of the order, however, have repeatedly refused to unveil and join the Revolutionary Council, recognizing that anonymous security is the best one can hope for in blood-soaked Galt.

While in practice the Revolutionary Council rules with absolute authority, in theory a senate of more than 300 minor dignitaries represents the direct interests of Galt's common citizens. Revolution has thinned the ranks of these representatives to little more than a hundred, yet the stubborn legislators continue to convene monthly for weeklong sessions of debate, demagoguery, public humiliation, and political posturing. Elections, once held every 8 years, have been delayed since the outset of Revolution, leaving no new politicians to replace those who have lost their heads to the *final blades*. This has also prevented the rotating governors of Galt from packing the senate with their own toadies, so a certain stability exists within the body, even if its power is largely ceremonial. For all that, the squabbles and ambitions of these petty politicians drive much of the day-to-day thrust of the Revolution, and gaining the trust and cooperation of a



senator is a necessary evil if one is to amass any political influence (or safety) in modern Galt.

Gazetteer

Azurestone: Situated in the rolling plains north of the Boarwood, this hardy settlement is named for the massive natural menhir of bright blue rock that towers some 100 feet above the town. Dwarves from the nearby Fog Peaks revere this stone for religious purposes, believing it to be a holy spear cast down from Heaven by the god Torag in the shadows of prehistory. Dwarven pilgrims (and the nervous merchants who hope to profit from their presence) have kept Azurestone relatively isolated from the Revolutionary fervor so common elsewhere in Galt, but tales of secret chambers below the local rock formation have begun to attract desperate treasure hunters, and this influx of newcomers has brought a new Revolutionary spirit to the once-sleepy town.

Edme: Once heralded across Avistan as a center of culture, learning, and enlightenment, Edme today is an example of the dangers of unchecked intellectualism. For the spark of revolution struck first in the lecture halls, dormitories, and salons of Edme's academia, and the arsonists of Edme lit a fire that spread throughout the whole of Galt, burning tens of thousands to ashes as it raged through the decades. Edme was home to the firebrand philosopher Hosetter, who served as dean of the town's influential Torvin Academy. His soul resides in Razor Jenni, a *final blade* situated in the old university quadrangle.

In the last decade, relentless pestilence in the surrounding grasslands has made food scarce and the people desperate. Crime runs rampant in Edme, with formerly honest citizens looting the homes of their neighbors simply to survive. A cunning vigilante known as the Red Raven—a jewel thief of great renown and a hero of the Revolution—keeps watch over the streets of Edme, protecting its common citizens from predatory criminals. Despite his efforts, a growing number of outlaws flock to the city in the hope of claiming it as their own.

Isarn: In Galt's golden age, the finest architects of Avistan and Garund competed for the right to design buildings in the capital city of Isarn. Over the centuries, the city's distinct major structures contributed to a sense of grandeur that hearkened back to the Age of Destiny, a

modern version of the ruined wonderlands choked with Osirian sand or sundered by the old growth forests of Kyonin. Engraved cobblestones and colorful mosaics lined Isarn's streets, winding through grand plazas and sprawling public parks, and across sweeping bridges.

Four decades of revolution have devastated this city of wonders. Giant statues lie toppled in the streets, blood splatters the colorful mosaics, and the parks echo with the cries of homeless mobs that have descended upon the city in search of food. The few senators who do not fully devote themselves to the ruin of their enemies (or to the oblivion of drink and narcotics) do everything they can to retain some semblance of order, but their efforts only barely keep the city under control.

The Gray Gardeners keep Isarn's *final blades* well oiled and slick with fresh blood, following the orders of the fractured government as well as the demands of the bloodthirsty mob, and showing little interest in political affairs not involving public execution. The *final blade* known as Madame Margaery stands outside the Monolith, an imposing black stone keep that serves as both a prison and the seat of the Revolutionary Council.

Litran: Revolutionary fervor exploded early in Litran, a cozy river town key to the transportation of Galt's foodstuffs from farms in the Horun Plain upriver to Isarn and beyond. The unruly citizens of Litran put the town's rich millers and farm magnates to death early in the uprising, and the mob soon threatened to destroy the entire town—and much of Galt's annual crop. The masked Gray Gardeners arrived along with the *final blades*, and very soon indiscriminate executions stopped. Relative peace returned to Litran. The Gardeners adopted the town as their headquarters, setting up a monastery just beyond the docks. Whether from respect or fear, the hungry mobs that wander Galt's countryside avoid Litran and leave the Gray Gardeners to their work. As a result, it is one of the most stable settlements in Galt—but outsiders are not welcome there.

Woodsedge: In Galt's southern reaches on the northern edge of the Verduran Forest, the town of Woodsedge has always possessed an independent character. Whatever government has ruled Isarn, its opposition always seems to be born in Woodsedge. Darl Jubannich was born here, and today the town is a hotbed of sympathy for disgraced nobles, betrayed senators, and outright outlaws who would be considered Enemies of the Revolution anywhere else in Galt.

Foremost among these enemies is Eliza Petulengro, a striking Pathfinder Society venture-captain from Absalom who has returned to her ancestral homeland of Galt to reclaim the Woodsedge Lodge for her organization. Badly damaged and almost completely looted in the early days of the nation's Revolution, the Lodge was once a prominent gathering place for the Society. Its sprawling rear gardens hold the near-legendary Maze of the Open Road, a living hedge said to contain portals leading to locations all over the Inner Sea and beyond. The locals tolerate Eliza's efforts—barely—but her disdain for public executions and her employment of several disgraced nobles as her personal servants has raised the ire of many of Woodsedge's more robust Revolutionaries, making a conflict seem inevitable.

GRAY GARDENER

Geb

DOMAIN OF THE DEAD

Alignment: LE
Capital: Mechitar (42,000)
Notable Settlements: Geb's Rest (180), Graydirge (9,400), Yled (119,200)
Ruler: Geb (ghost locked to the land until convinced of Nex's death)
Government: Undead dictatorship
Languages: Osiriani, Kelish
Religion: Nethys, Urgathoa, Zon-Kuthon

In the final centuries of the Age of Destiny, two immortal wizard kings named Nex and Geb engaged in a legendary arcane struggle that engulfed the east coast of Garund in a millennium of catastrophic magical warfare. The southern sovereign, a wicked Osirian necromancer from an exiled noble house, vowed to survive until the battle was finally won. This he has done, after a fashion, embracing undeath in himself as well as in the culture and government of the nation that bears his name. For like their wizard king, the aristocrats who rule Geb and guide its destiny are all undead.

HISTORY

Signs of the relentless, epoch-spanning struggle with Nex are everywhere in Geb, especially in the north near the blasted no-man's land known as the Mana Wastes. The two archwizards battled on through the early centuries of the Age of Enthronement, blighting one another with vicious magical attacks. At the climax of their conflict, Geb used potent wish-magic to draw the life from the land of Nex, turning that country into a barren wasteland outside a few magically protected cities. Nex responded by calling down a series of cataclysms upon Geb, killing tens of thousands of people. Geb rose from the devastation by animating the bodies of all of his slain subjects, sending them north in vast legions of the walking dead.

In 576 AR, Geb besieged the Nexian capital, Quantium, with banks of bilious yellow fog meant to murder Nex and his eccentric court. Although thousands died in the attack, Nex was not among them; instead, he had withdrawn into his palatial fortress, the Bandeshar, never to be seen again. Uncertain of his triumph, Geb lived the next several decades in bitter anguish, robbed of the victory he so greatly desired. By 632 AR, his uncertainty had grown too intense, and the immortal necromancer ended his life in an act of ritual suicide.

Death offered no respite from Geb's torment. Convinced that Nex had somehow escaped his vengeance, Geb returned

to Golarion as a ghost, chained to the world until he could be sure of his ultimate triumph. Thereafter, necromancy took a prominent role in all of Gebbite society. Neighboring nations swiftly took action, launching raids, naval blockades, and assaults that have plagued Geb for millennia. Even foes from distant Avistan have gotten in on the action, seeking to earn a hero's legend by striking at the "undead kingdom" on the periphery of the known world.

The badly overmatched remnants of the Knights of Ozem conducted one such failed assault in the century following the end of the Shining Crusade. The grandchildren of the heroes of Lastwall responsible for imprisoning the lich-king Tar-Baphon below the shadowed tower of Gallowspire sought to further their legend by defeating another of Golarion's undead tyrants, the ghost-king Geb. In return for their hubristic miscalculation, Geb reanimated the seven would-be assassins as grave knights, ordering them to travel north to Avistan and bring him the corpse of Arazni, the knights' demigoddess patron, slain at the height of the crusade and venerated as a former herald of the god Aroden. Geb reanimated Arazni's corpse as a lich and took her as his Harlot Queen. Over the centuries, his poisoned whispers turned her against the Knights of Ozem and her successor Iomedae, and today Arazni willingly sits enthroned in the city of Mechitar, ruling with cruelty at Geb's side as she has for the last 800 years.

GEB

Since the disappearance of its enigmatic leader, Nex has almost completely ceased its open hostility against Geb. Zombie-harvested crops from Geb are a staple of the nation's diet, exchanged for all manner of goods and certain rare components used in the study and art of necromancy. Although the hatred of their leader for his sworn enemy still burns deep after thousands of years, the common folk of Geb care little for the ancient conflict with Nex, and if not for the treacherous landscape and deadly inhabitants of the Mana Wastes, trade between the two nations might be even stronger than it is today.

Despite what sometimes seems like the hostility of the entire world focused upon it, Geb makes no war upon its neighbors, seeking to influence other nations through the subtle tools of espionage and persistent intimidation. Because the ruling class of Geb no longer ages, the nation's leaders can afford to weave plots that span centuries. The entire kingdom lacks a sense of urgency about nearly everything, and visitors often find a strong gag reflex and a willingness to look the other way among the qualities most required to keep one's sanity during a prolonged visit. Geb has good relations with the neighboring lands of Jalmeray, Katapesh, and Qadira, and the Shattered Range provides an effective barrier against threats emerging from the Mwangi Expanse. Only Lastwall still holds real enmity for Geb, as the Knights of Ozem are unable to forgive or forget the theft of Arazni's body from their blessed vaults.

In the early days of the struggle against Nex, most Gebbites were living humans, descendants of an ancient Osirian colony with perhaps a slight favoring of necromancy to echo the interests of their immortal lord. With the large-scale reanimation of legions of undead warriors and the eventual incarnation of Geb himself as a ghost, the undead grew more and more influential in Gebbite society. Today the undead essentially *are* Gebbite society, with the remaining humans and other living creatures growing more and more marginalized with each year that passes.

Mortal necromancers remain an important exception to this dynamic, guarded as they are by spells, amulets, and rituals that grant protection from the undead, if not outright control of them. The most powerful mortals in the land belong to the coterie of necromancers known as the Blood Lords, personal apprentices of Geb himself trained in the dark arts in Mechitar's foreboding Ebon Mausoleum and tasked with administering the day-to-day affairs of the kingdom. While many of the Blood Lords have embraced undeath to extend their rule by centuries, others remain mortal, nervously defending themselves from poisoned goblets and ravenous specters.

By royal decree, all mortals who die upon Geb's soil are reanimated as mindless undead to serve as slaves in the nation's lush fields or urban mansions. Mortals with sufficient ambition and status circumvent this state of affairs by willingly subjecting themselves to dark rites (or outright murder) at the hands of more powerful intelligent undead, to be reborn as deathless, twisted versions of their former selves. Gebbites characterize this transformation as the ultimate act of fealty, subordinating themselves to the necromantic powers of their undying ghostly sovereign.

A complicated, dispassionate corpus of legal documents protects the rights of Geb's mortals and intelligent undead. These so-called "Dead Laws" also protect the living from

the cruel hungers of the dead, regulate certain aspects of necromancy, prohibit the channeling of positive energy, and dictate the proper treatment and maintenance of slaves both living and dead. Intelligent undead enjoy all the same rights as their living brethren (and sometimes more). Those undead that require sustenance from the living are provided for by specially bred chattel, conferring some measure of protection for mortal visitors fearing skeletal teeth in the dark of night. As in any nation, however, not everyone follows the law with perfect obedience, and more than a few groups, particularly among the ghoulish low-nobility and the aristocratic vampires, openly seek to subvert it. Though Geb is a safer land for the living than most foreigners fear, a wise traveler keeps her wits—and her holy water—close at hand.

Government

In recent centuries, Geb himself has withdrawn to a life of quiet contemplation and psychological self-torment, leaving much of the day-to-day operations of his ancient kingdom to his Harlot Queen, Arazni. The curse that binds his spirit to Golarion forbids him from venturing beyond the borders of his land, so even on the few occasions in which he manifests, he does so exclusively within Geb. Despite his absence, Geb's presence looms large throughout the nation. Thousands of statues in his likeness line the twisted avenues and vaulted balconies of the nation's cities, and his personal glyph adorns the national flag. Most native spellcasters follow his lead by focusing their efforts on necromancy, a national expertise that draws death-obsessed mystics from all corners of Golarion. For nowhere else do the undead walk as freely or in such numbers than upon the streets and fields of Geb, and centuries of rule by the living dead have made the nation's libraries the foremost repositories of necromantic lore in the world.

Aroden's shamed and reanimated former herald Arazni serves as the "face" of Geb to the outside world and manages most of the quotidian political matters faced by the nation. She maintains the grave knights who "rescued" her body from Lastwall as personal servants and envoys, though their ranks have been reduced to five thanks to the struggling but tenacious Knights of Ozem, who relentlessly hunt down their former brothers in an attempt to grant them eternal rest. Worse, the goodly

knights removed many of Arazni's internal organs for use as religious relics before her reanimation, and these widespread artifacts are known to have power over Arazni even today, holding all that remains of her once-benevolent essence. The Harlot Queen fears that enemies will employ these relics against her, and has made tracking them down and destroying them among her foremost personal ambitions.

Highest among Geb's nobility are the Blood Lords, three-score necromancers led by Geb's chancellor, the vampire lord Kemnebi. Once composed exclusively of mortal wizards, the Blood Lords are now overwhelmingly undead, counting numerous vampires, wraiths, mummies, shades, and liches among their august order. Lesser nobles include mohrgs, wights, shadows, and ghouls, piteous creatures fueled by undying hatred. Mocked and disrespected by the Blood Lords and their officers, these cruel villains lash out at the mortals and mindless dead with imperious and contemptuous sneers, clothing themselves in foreign finery and maintaining the pretense of being high aristocracy.

ARAZNI

Gazetteer

Despite the constant threat of invasion by foreign armies or isolated bands of would-be heroes, the greatest internal threats to the folk of Geb come in the twisted forms of hideous, spell-warped creatures emerging from the Mana Wastes in the north. These creatures, along with howling packs of feral ghouls and ravenous fast zombies, make travel between cities treacherous, and account for the strong fortifications surrounding most Gebbite settlements.

Axan Wood: The southern Axan Wood—a twisted "forest" of magic-blasted trees both dead and undead—is home to strange creatures of negative energy and shadow found nowhere else on Golarion, such as undead dryads, canny wolves infused with darkness and hate, and the enigmatic twilight unicorns.

Graydirge: The somber city of Graydirge, in the foothills of the Shattered Range, is itself an ossuary, built with the bones of fallen Gebbites unable or unwilling to be reanimated as undead after their deaths. Graydirge is also home to the Empty Threshold, a temple dedicated to Zon-Kuthon.

Field of Maidens: In 4329 AR, an army of warrior women led by the pirate queen Mastrien Slash threatened southern Geb. Fleeing a conflict in Garund's deep reaches, these brazen warriors attacked in a desperate gambit to carve out a new home. In return for their impudence, Geb turned the entire invading army into stone with a few potent words of power, immortalizing their defeat just south of the border in a region known today as the Field of Maidens.

Mechitar: Geb's capital is a city of pyramids built in ancient Osirian style, each home to one of the Blood Lords or other powerful aristocratic families. The largest of these pyramids, the Cinerarium, is the palace of Geb and his Harlot Queen. Faced with polished jet and obsidian, it towers more than 450 feet high and dominates the city's center. The largest temple in Mechitar is Urgathoa's Cathedral of Epiphenomena, which is staffed by priests both living and undead. Mechitar's harbor hosts ships from many nations and serves as the primary outlet for Geb's food exports.

Yled: The bulk of Geb's undead legions, mostly zombies and skeletons, are stationed in the city of Yled, near the border with the Mana Wastes. The Bonewall, a vast barrier of bleached bones, encircles the city and can be animated by the Blood Lords to defend Yled in case of siege. Yled is Geb's largest city and home to a variety of necromantic colleges and research laboratories. The most famous of these is the Mortuarium, a twisted tower that looms above the city's skyline like a withered, clawed arm.

Irrisen

LAND OF ETERNAL WINTER

Alignment: NE
Capital: Whitethrone (24,900)
Notable Settlements: Algidheart (6,720), Chillblight (12,400), Hoarwood (8,970), Redtooth (3,500)
Ruler: Queen Elvanna, Fourteenth Daughter of Baba Yaga
Government: Monarchy
Languages: Hallit, Skald
Religion: Lamashtu, Zon-Kuthon

Almost every youth in northern Avistan fears the White Witches of the North, who dwell in palaces of ice and steal wicked children in the dark of winter to imprison their souls in eerie porcelain dolls. More terrifying still is the legend of the Queen of Witches, Baba Yaga, who came to Golarion, conquered a nation, and then just as swiftly left. Some say she will one day return to expand her empire far beyond the current borders of Irrisen.

Symbols play an important role in Irrisen in warding away bad luck and the ire of Baba Yaga and her children. Cat, dog, gate, and tree motifs can be found all throughout the nation, adorning its people's doors, lintels, tools, clothing, weapons, armor, and hearths. Cats and dogs are common pets and living symbols of good luck in nearly every settlement; no home ever lacks a gate through which these pets can come and go. While ravens are popular familiars and seen as noble and intelligent creatures, their smaller crow cousins are seen as bad luck and are hunted and killed on sight. Woe be to the archer who, in his zeal to slay a crow, publicly kills a raven instead!

HISTORY

Nearly 1,400 years ago, the territory that constitutes present-day Irrisen belonged to the mighty Linnorm Kings. During one particularly harsh winter, an innumerable host of blue-skinned trolls and cold fey marched down from the Crown of the World, led by the ghastly crone Baba Yaga, an incredibly powerful witch from a distant world. The self-proclaimed Queen of Witches quickly subjugated the region, killing any who resisted and enslaving the rest. The fighting ended just 23 days after it began, and the nation of Irrisen was born—a nation that has been locked in the heart of winter ever since.

Irrisen has few friends beyond its borders. The Linnorm Kings to the west have not forgotten the Winter War that birthed their neighbor, an insult aggravated by the frequent

raids into Trollheim and nearby fiefs by fey and trolls who steal supplies, weapons, and—occasionally—children. Few of the superstitious Linnorm Kingdom warriors are brave enough to venture far into Irrisen. The borders of Irrisen are dotted by small huts. Resting atop closely grouped trunks of trees, these huts, which closely resemble the Queen of Witches' chicken-legged hut, sit atop their perches with a single open doorway facing the lands of Irrisen's neighbors. Those who have approached the huts tell of an unnatural stillness that pervades the area and a feeling of dread. Within the small single room of each hut, a porcelain doll depicting a gray-haired crone stares unblinking out the door from its perch atop a small chair—the hut's only furniture—as if watching for trespassers into Baba Yaga's lands. Popular belief is that the dolls contain the corrupted souls of stolen children, and that they leave their huts during the night to hunt and murder travelers foolish enough to trespass into their mistress's kingdom and doubly foolish to be caught near the dreaded huts after dark. Worse than these tales, often told over campfires and to unruly children, is the fact that every bit of them is true.

QUEEN ELVANNA

Government

Strangely enough, after carving out her kingdom, Baba Yaga seemed uninterested in ruling it, and instead installed one of her cruel daughters to govern in her place. Every 100 years, the Queen of Witches returns to reclaim her child and install a new daughter to rule for the next century. The previous daughter, along with the first generation of her children, leaves with Baba Yaga to explore strange worlds, times, and alternate dimensions. The new ruling daughter quickly goes about installing her own children into positions of power throughout the kingdom. Males assume the leadership of the queen's fighting forces, marshaling squads of ice trolls and packs of winter wolves to protect the realm, while females, even if quite young, see to the government and administration of the land. These granddaughters of Baba Yaga, collectively known as the White Witches, command a level of respect and obedience from their subjects that borders on worship, either out of fear or from genuine adoration.

To herald their mistress's return every century, the Three Riders appear throughout Irrisen to remind her subjects who their true ruler is. The White Rider, a ghostly, gaunt humanoid figure in white robes riding a sleek white destrier, is only seen in the early morning hours. The Red Rider, dressed in crimson robes with a golden sunburst on his breast, rides a reddish-gold stallion and is only seen during the day. The Black Rider wears coal-black robes, rides a black warhorse, and is only seen during the night. It is rumored that the riders each represent a different aspect of Baba Yaga's arcane mastery and can sense her subjects' loyalty or lack thereof, bestowing boons upon those who remain true, and a curse or destruction upon those with traitorous hearts. Baba Yaga's children refer to the riders as Day, Sun, and Night. Of them, very little is known.

With the backing of her powerful mother, Queen Elvanna rules Irrisen with an iron fist uncontested by any. She rarely, if ever, leaves her palace in Whitethrone, but with her numerous sons and daughters acting on her behalf in each of the settled areas of Irrisen, nothing transpires in her kingdom without her knowing of it sooner or later. With her rule coming to an end soon, she and her offspring work furiously to leave their mark on Golarion long after they leave—erecting massive statues of themselves, siring and birthing hordes of children to carry on their names, and imposing the harshest taxes ever known in the history of Irrisen.

For centuries, an underground resistance group known as the Heralds of Summer's Return has fought a guerilla war of attrition against the White Witches and the unnatural winter that cloaks Irrisen. Made up of descendants of the original Ulfen inhabitants of Irrisen and idealistic freedom fighters, the Heralds include many druids among their ranks. They form more of a loose brotherhood of like-minded revolutionaries than an organized movement, to better protect themselves when the White Witches' agents inevitably unmask one of their members. The Heralds' stated aim is to overthrow the White Witches and restore the normal course of seasons to the ice-locked land, but they have yet to prepare a viable strategy to deal with Baba Yaga if they succeed.

Gazetteer

Irrisen is subject to a lasting, supernatural cold. Spells that alter or change the weather only last for a number of minutes equal to the caster's level or half the spell's normal duration, whichever is shorter.

Algidheart: The city of Algidheart is composed of buildings stacked one atop another that stretch across a confusing jumble of bridges spanning a narrow portion of the river, soaring to staggering, vertigo-inducing heights. A maze of stairs, ladders, ramps, flyway bridges, and wooden platforms connect the buildings to each other.

Chillblight: A breathtakingly beautiful town carved entirely out of shimmering ice by strange and twisted fey creatures, Chillblight is home to the largest concentration of cold fey in Irrisen. Here, the borders between Golarion and the First World blur and grow thin, and the fey can easily jump back and forth between worlds, fading in and out of view on the streets, seemingly at random. Most of the humans in Chillblight are slaves of the fey, save for a few foreign merchants possessing trade licenses from the city of Whitethrone.

Crowtop: This isolated hamlet in Hoarwood Forest, whose original name is all but forgotten, sits abandoned by all inhabitants except for the thousands upon thousands of crows that roost on the ramshackle rooftops. No one knows what happened to the villagers, who seem to have vanished in an instant. Inside the abandoned cottages, things are left just as they were, with food on the tables and laundry hung out to dry, as if the owners had just stepped out. Ironically, Crowtop is one of the few places in Irrisen where crows can be found in large numbers, as they are considered bad luck and killed on sight elsewhere. As a result, no Irrisen native has set foot in the hamlet in years, and the mystery of the villagers' disappearance has never been solved. Common belief holds that the crows are psychopomps—a few say the birds took the villagers' souls safely to the Great Beyond, but most believe that their souls were taken by the White Witches for some fell purpose, and that any who venture inside the deserted hamlet risk suffering the same fate.

Frozen Fog: An unnatural mist cloaks the southern shores of Glacier Lake, a permanent weather phenomenon that has endured since the Winter War almost 1,400 years ago. Within the mist, the temperatures plummet below even that of the supernatural cold that hangs over all of Irrisen. Any living thing touched by the tendrils of mist freezes solid in an instant, and is flayed by the fog's icy, razor-sharp droplets. Occasionally, the mist expands, capturing creatures unlucky enough to be caught too near the fog's borders. When the fog recedes, it reveals dead, frost-rimed trees and the frozen, lacerated carcasses of those unfortunate creatures caught in its icy grasp.

Hoarwood: Sitting at the center of the snow-covered Hoarwood Forest, Hoarwood is carved from the trunk of an immense, dead tree. The White Witch Anelisha and

her brother and incestuous lover, Ghrathis, while away their waning rule in one garden party after the other, with each party exceeding the previous in the magnitude of debauchery, bloodiness, and savagery.

Holvirgang: In the far north, where Irrisen's icy tundra meets the Crown of the World, lies the fortress of Holvirgang, where the frost giant jarl Grunginnir and his white dragon companion rule over all the frost giants of Irrisen, at least in name. Behind the walls, the caverns of Holvir stretch under the glacial ice to unknown depths, restricted to the giants and their closest allies. The outer bailey of the fortress is open to other races, however, and Holvirgang does brisk business as a meeting point for barbarian traders from the Realm of the Mammoth Lords, fey peddlers from Irrisen, and traveling merchants from the Crown of the World. Jarl Grunginnir is a staunch ally of Queen Elvanna, sending regular levies of frost giant *druzhinniks* (household warriors) to serve in the queen's armies. Popular rumor holds that Grunginnir, well known as a devotee of the demon lord Kostchtchie, chafes under the rule of "mere women," however, and has his own designs upon the throne of Irrisen.

Hope Lost: The Ice Mines of Hope Lost are one of the most feared destinations in all Irrisen for those who fall afoul of the White Witches, second only to Queen Elvanna's royal palace in Whitethrone. The sadistic White Witch Grinnelise runs the mines, where brutal ice troll overseers drive human slaves ever deeper in search of a rare form of blue quartz known as "ice diamonds." The lucky ones die quick deaths in the harsh conditions of the freezing mines; the less fortunate are summoned to Grinnelise's palace above the mines as guests of honor at her cannibalistic orgies.

Redtooth: The district of Whitethrone known as Howlings is not the only place in Irrisen where winter wolves take on the shape of humans. The village of Redtooth, near Irrisen's southwestern border, enjoys the same enchantment. Redtooth's inhabitants all have silver or white hair, making it difficult to tell during the day who is human and who might be a winter wolf in human form. At night, however, the streets echo with the frightful howls of the winter wolves that have returned to their true forms. The human residents have a self-imposed curfew, and bar themselves indoors as dusk falls. Nearly all of Redtooth's buildings bear carvings of dogs and wolves, and every home has a sturdy gate leading into the yard, for by ancient pact, the winter wolves cannot pass a closed gate without permission. The village's sole inn, the Open Claw, is conspicuous for its lack of a gate; passing travelers who choose to spend the night there seldom reach their final destinations.

Whitethrone: Whitethrone rises from the frozen cliffs along the eastern shores of Glacier Lake. Spires of white marble and domed buildings sculpted of ice that never melts surround a palace perched precariously at cliff's edge over the frigid, turbulent waters of Glacier Lake. The main street running from the city gates to the queen's palace, aptly named the Bone Road, is paved with the skulls of the Linnorm Kingdom warriors slain by the Queen of Witches and her minions during the Winter War. It is occasionally widened with the skulls of traitors, failed invaders, and citizens who incur the wrath of the White Witches.

Winterwall Glacier: Although technically not part of the land of Irrisen, the vast icy reach of Winterwall Glacier is strongly associated with the frozen land. Indeed, the exact boundary between the immense glacier and Irrisen can, at times, be difficult to note. This immense glacier extends north into the Crown of the World, and is the home of frost giants, white dragons, ice linnorms, and worse.

BABA YAGA

Isger

THRALL OF CHELIAX

Alignment: LN
Capital: Elidir (11,900)
Notable Settlements: Dustpawn (1,250), Gillamoor (127), Haugin's Ear (1,200), Logas (4,300), Saringallow (2,110), Umok (2,540)
Ruler: Hedvend VI, Steward of Isger
Government: Vassal State of Cheliax
Languages: Common
Religion: Asmodeus, Erastil, diabolism

It is said in Elidir, Isger's capital city, that "every devil has its servitors." Regrettably for Isger, its devil is Cheliax, and as such Isger's servitude is often dark and unwelcome.

HISTORY

Thralldom is not a new concept for Isger—even the nation's name was bestowed upon it by its first conqueror, the empire of Taldor, back in 2133 AR. Taldor named its newest conquest Isger in recognition of the Isgeri tribe, which fought against the Taldans with remarkable tenacity before being overrun and pacified. Taldor ruled over Isger for almost 2,000 years, until the Even-Tongued conquest of 4081, when Cheliax broke from Taldor and acquired Isger by force as the first holding in its new and expansive empire. While several other lands conquered in that era eventually freed themselves, Isger was not among them, and it remains in thrall to Cheliax to this day.

Many argue that Isger's fate as an acquisition is not a coincidence, but rather a geographical imperative. The trade routes through Isger provide access to Druma and the invaluable markets ringing Lake Encarthan. Today, Isger's Conerica River serves as a well-used trade route that slashes across the state from Cheliax in the southwest nearly to Druma to the northeast. First Taldor and then Cheliax stripped away the few natural resources Isger possessed, so that modern Isger provides little to its patron-state apart from its value as an essential trade route. Thanks to this strategic importance, Cheliax requires Isger to maintain a small standing army to protect the empire's interests and keep the roads open. Despite the vital task placed upon it, Isger's army receives little material support and no training from Cheliax. Undermanned and underarmed, Isger's brave army nonetheless has proven its resolve against external threats time and again.

Unfortunately for Isger's army, the most recent national threat came not from abroad, but from within, when the

savage humanoids of Chitterwood organized and attacked. Amassed by powerful hobgoblin commanders, the likes of which were never before seen in Isger, hundreds of hobgoblin tribes, augmented by legions of goblin slaves and thralls, exploded from the forest. The goblinoids murdered an untold number of travelers and merchants along the Conerica Rover before their momentum carried them to the foothills of the Five Kings Mountains. The immediacy of the threat posed by this slaughter gave rise to what might otherwise have been an impossible three-part alliance: a small order of Hellknights from Cheliax, a contingent of Druma's Mercenary League, and a regiment of Eagle Knights of Andoran all coordinated efforts to strike back at the goblinoid hordes. Each group sought to stem the goblin tide before it could overflow into the group's home nation. The Goblinblood Wars became a campaign most remembered for the sheer number of dead on all sides. In the end, much of Chitterwood was put to the torch, forcing the goblinoids that survived to seek refuge deep in the twisted caverns below.

Today, what little of Isger's army that survived the Goblinblood Wars remains depleted. As such, Isger's steward, Hedvend VI, elected to allocate the remnants of his forces entirely to the defense of the Conerica River and the roadways that skirt its banks, guarding the precious flow of trade goods. As a consequence, he surrendered much of the surrounding hinterland to banditry. The steward's agents posted bounties on brigand leaders, hoping to solve his problems on the cheap by luring in warriors desperate for work to save the burnt-out villages scattered around the countryside. The verdict is still out as to whether Isger's attempt to contract out its security can improve its desperate situation, but as long as trade along the river continues to flow, the steward does not seem overly concerned.

The Goblinblood Wars left behind hordes of Isgeri orphans, and the ensuing years of unchecked bandit raids only served to further swell the number of unwanted, homeless youths. Tragically, the only institution to respond to the mounting crisis was the church of Asmodeus. Cheliax's House of Thrune installed a number of monasteries across the Isgeri countryside to collect, feed, and clothe orphaned children, all the while co-opting them into their dark fold.

The most prominent of these monasteries is the Sisters of the Golden Erinyes. The sisterhood baptizes rescued youths with unholy water and drills them from an early age in the basics of infernal politics and philosophies, eventually extending their training to exotic, difficult-to-master martial arts. Upon reaching adulthood, female orphans often aspire to join the ranks of the sisterhood itself, while males tend to either seek admission to an order of Hellknights or find their calling in the priesthood of Asmodeus.

In the shadow of the Goblinblood Wars, however, a new peril seems to be building in war-torn Isger—a plague of undead. Numerous small villages that border the wilderness have already fallen to various plagues of unlife, and rumors persist that while the nation was distracted in the fight against the hobgoblins, powerful necromancers or priests of Urgathoa took advantage of the chaos to entrench themselves in various remote ruins and caverns. The most conspiracy-minded of Isger's citizens look no further than the mysterious and sinister Lady Kaltessa Iyis, a powerful diabolist rumored to have more than familiar ties to the archdevil Mammon. Rumors that Lady Iyis has seized magical control over the nation's leaders and has been turning the dead of the Goblinblood Wars into a secret undead army seem to gain more traction with each new village that falls to the growing plague.

Government

Hedvend VI rules the Isgeri court in Elidir under the title of steward, but the court's status as a sham aristocracy beholden to Cheliax's ruling house, Thrune, is well known. Like his fathers before him, Hedvend VI makes regular trips to Egorian in Cheliax, summoned like a mere pageboy. It is fitting that the steward's symbol of office is a finely jeweled but expended *rod of rulership* set to crumble to dust if called upon once more.

Gazetteer

Chitterwood: Chitterwood has always held a reputation for danger, primarily due to the large number of goblinoid tribes that dwell within, but it wasn't until the recent Goblinblood Wars that the denizens of this tangled woodland achieved true notoriety in Isger. By the end of these conflicts, the forest had been drastically reduced as Isger's army burnt away great swaths of vegetation to drive back the goblinoid host. Yet while Isger technically won the Goblinblood Wars, Chitterwood and the countless warrens and caverns beneath its roots remain breeding grounds for an intricate web of goblinoid tribes, most notably the True Hoard, the Spine Threshers, and the People of the Stirge. Unusually crafty and organized, these hobgoblins and their goblin minions are slowly breeding their way back from the brink of extermination during the Wars.

Citadel Altaerein: This citadel was the headquarters of the Order of the Nail Hellknights before they moved their operations to the Varisian frontier near Korvosa in 4682. Now fewer than three dozen Hellknights live here, keeping watch over Isger in case the goblinoid tribes rise again.

Citadel Dinyar: As the base of operations for the Order of the Godclaw Hellknights, this temple-fortress is a bastion of righteous devotion to law. Its bells can be heard for miles, and its central location gives the citadel's residents the ability to quickly ride into Cheliax, Isger, or even Andoran should the need arise.

Dustpawn: This former mining town switched to goat herding when the iron mines were exhausted in the early years of Cheliax's rule of Isger. Now it is fairly prosperous—as far as Isgeri villages go—and sells goats, hides, meat, butter, cheese, and even dung to other settlements in Isger and even Druma. The old mine tunnels provide ample hiding places for bootleggers, outlaws, and smugglers, as well as occasional goblinoid tribes and large animals (especially snakes). One noteworthy smuggler and propagandist is Elladas Demos, a human woman with thin noble blood who claims Abrogail II is a bastard and consorts with demons. Elladas has a secret arrangement with the mayor of Dustpawn, preventing bandit raids in exchange for supplies and news, and may have an arrangement with the Druman government as well.

Elidir: Isger's capital is a common waypoint for merchant caravans, which often stop in the city to resupply. Located at a distance from Chitterwood, Elidir escaped much of the terror and mayhem of the Goblinblood Wars. This kept the nation's government safely away from the front lines, but had the unfortunate side effect of engendering a fair amount of bitterness toward the government from soldiers and those whose hometowns were overrun—the perception being that were Elidir in more danger, the nation's army would have won the Goblinblood Wars much more quickly.

Finder's Gulch: This haunted place is overrun by wights led by an undead Urgathoan priest named Illcayna Alonnor. Warped and transformed into an ogre-sized monstrosity called a daughter of Urgathoa (see Chapter Seven), Illcayna leads her goddess's cult in Isger, raiding her homeland, Cheliax, and Molthune to swell the ranks of her growing undead army.

Gillamoor: This village was lucky enough to survive the Goblinblood Wars and the fire that claimed much of the nearby Chitterwood, but is now severely threatened by a plague that has turned most of its inhabitants into disease-carrying zombies. The Isgeri army has placed the area under quarantine for fear of the plague spreading, killing on sight those who violate this restriction, yet the army secretly hopes that the steward's posted notices of a 5,000 gold piece reward for cleansing the town of infection will take care of the problem for them. However, there are hundreds of fast, brain-eating plague zombies wandering

the region. The undead siege of Gillamoor has been at a delicate standstill for months, with a few groups of stubborn survivors barricaded within the village's core behind walls of rubble and trenches filled with oil-soaked wood that can be ignited at a moment's notice by fire arrows.

Haugin's Ear: This fishing town ekes out a meager existence by selling salted fish, ice, and tamed firefoot fennecs (see page 254) as pets to trade caravans, and by serving as a trade post for a few miners panning for gold in the Aspodell foothills. Its most noteworthy feature is a rocky outcropping on the riverbank side of town that resembles a horizontal giant head, half-buried and 30 feet tall. The ear of this "giant" (according to local legend, a nasty man-eater named Haugin who was petrified by a Taldan wizard long ago and whose shattered remains litter the area) is visible at some distance along the river and serves as a landmark for traders, signaling that they're close to a place where they can rest. The locals also claim that the stone head contains a hidden chamber and can somehow lure children to it; while none claim any knowledge of the interior of the head, at least one child disappears from the village every year.

Iron Rose: Situated in a lush valley between Isger and Druma, this lavish palace belongs to the centuries-old noblewoman Lady Kaltessa Iyis, also known as the Widow Queen. Gifted with long life by an infernal pact with the archdevil Mammon, she rarely travels without her barbed devil, kyton, and imp attendants. Lady Iyis is, in truth, the high priestess of Mammon in the Inner Sea region, and her mysterious plans for the region are in large part influenced by those of her diabolical master.

Logas: Nestled dangerously close to the Chitterwood, the city of Logas keeps a fresh supply of dead goblins mounted on pikes along its walls at all times. The corpses act as a constant warning to the goblin hordes that quietly multiply in the caves beneath the woods. For good measure, trebuchets hurl giant rocks into the forest at random intervals, just to remind the goblins that Logas's vigilance has not relaxed. Located within spitting distance of the Chelish border, Logas's aristocrats quietly maneuver toward the day they can restore it to its former glory as the Isgeri capital.

Saringallow: Originally called Sarini's Hollow, this village was founded by Cheliax's House Sarini (at the time a very minor noble house) as a garden estate for more influential members of the family, with peasants brought in to farm, ranch, and work for the nobility. Decades before the rise of the House of Thrune, these nobles dabbled in diabolism and witchcraft, and when local virgin daughters began to turn up exsanguinated, the villagers rose up, hanged all the Sarinis living there, and renamed their village Sarini Gallows. Though the locals corrupted the new name over the next hundred years, they never forgot what happened, and while they are grimly tolerant of Chelish nobles who buy land and build homes in front of the scenic hills, they make it a point to never let a known member of House Sarini stay too long.

Umok: This gnome settlement fared poorly both before and during the Goblinblood Wars, and only a visiting gnome paladin allowed the town to survive the final battles at all. Now, to keep fire-loving goblins away, the gnomes forbid the use of fire within 500 yards of the village, using alchemically heated stones for cooking and warmth, and *dancing lights* to illuminate the streets instead of lanterns or torches. The gnomes have also befriended, charmed, or domesticated many wild animals living nearby, creating a network of mammalian spies to warn them of hostile creatures approaching. These animals often wander through town, acting like pets when only gnomes or nonthreatening visitors are present.

Wolfpoint: This reserve garrison of the Isger army holds about 300 soldiers and assorted officers, many of them veterans of the Goblinblood Wars. The fort consists of several barracks surrounded by a wooden palisade wall; the wall was broken down and burned during the war and has since been repaired by the soldiers, though several sections are still black from fire and old goblin blood.

LADY KALTESSA IYIS, THE WIDOW QUEEN

Jalmeray

KINGDOM OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

Alignment: CN
Capital: Niswan (10,300)
Notable Settlements: Padiskar (8,200), Prada Hanam (6,880)
Ruler: Kharswan, Thakur of Jalmeray
Government: Colonial Princely State
Languages: Vudrani
Religion: Irori, Nethys, numerous Vudran religions

For thousands of years, the Vudrani have controlled this large island nation in the Obari Ocean. A gift to the mighty Maharajah Khiben-Sald from the archmage Nex, Jalmeray is the westernmost of Vudra's so-called Impossible Kingdoms. Here, genies serve humans who live in massive gold and marble palaces, indoor fountains circulate wine instead of water, and sprawling but perfectly symmetrical monasteries of Irori instruct hundreds of skilled monks.

HISTORY

Roughly 4 millennia ago, Khiben-Sald, greatest maharajah of the eastern empire of Vudra, arrived at Quantium in a fleet of 101 exotic ships. The bizarre foreigners—at this time relatively unknown in the Inner Sea region—became fixtures in the court of Nex, and Vudrani culture influenced the art and dress of the nation. Nex granted Khiben-Sald's traveling court dominion over the Isle of Jalmeray, where they erected dozens of temples to their numerous gods and attracted a wide variety of strange elemental creatures to the isle in an effort to increase its considerable natural beauty and charm.

Distant Vudra swiftly became part of the regional sphere, with ships of merchants, prophets, and explorers regularly appearing over the horizon of the Obari Ocean. When Khiben-Sald finally returned to his homeland, he left behind only a handful of glorious monuments and bound genies as a sign that he had ever been on Jalmeray at all. A few centuries later, Nex himself abandoned Golarion, and several centuries after that the ruling Arclords of Nex fell from grace and were exiled. The shamed Arclords put in at Jalmeray, using the nearby island as a remote outpost from which to subtly influence the affairs of their homeland.

Then, in 2822 AR, familiar ships once more appeared on the high Obari and set anchor in the wave-ravaged harbor of Niswan. Hundreds of Vudrani rajahs came to Jalmeray, curiously wondering at the audacity of the Arclords and their perversions of the wonders Khiben-Sald had brought

upon the island. Was he not the greatest maharajah of Vudra, they asked? Did he not dwell upon Jalmeray at the bequest of Nex himself? The Vudrani nobles produced improbable but nonetheless apparently accurate genealogical information proving their familial ties to Khiben-Sald, calmly inviting the Arclords to abandon their island home. When the stodgy wizards refused, the rajahs summoned an army of genies, who battered the island with relentless storms that sank all but one of the Arclords' ships. More than a millennium after the departure of Maharajah Khiben-Sald, the Isle of Jalmeray once more belonged to Vudra. The Vudrani nobles immediately unsealed their ancient monuments and stirred their otherworldly guardians to life.

The many impossible splendors of Jalmeray, while certainly spoken of by those who have seen them, are less well known across Avistan and Garund than are the island nation's dozens of monastic orders. The three greatest monasteries on the island—collectively known as the Houses of Perfection—constantly spread word throughout the Inner Sea region of new forms of physical and mental discipline from the distant east. All who can survive the journey are welcome to venture to Jalmeray and endure a series of seemingly impossible challenges. Those who pass all the challenges are accepted in one of the Houses of Perfection, where they develop physical mastery, spiritual balance, and an unusual magic of the opened mind.

The challenge has stood for centuries—those willing to brave a race against a djinni, wrestle a shaitan, outwit an efreeti, or perform similarly difficult tasks are accepted into the monastic orders of wondrous Jalmeray to learn the secret arts of a distant people. Few residents of the Inner Sea understand these strange disciplines or the even stranger folk who teach them, but the adherents of the Impossible Kingdom command respect—if not trust—throughout the nations of the Inner Sea. Wealthy merchants, powerful aristocrats and cunning war-leaders occasionally send their youngest sons and daughters to Jalmeray to be trained in the legendary fighting techniques of the Monastery of Untwisting Iron, the Monastery of Unfolding Wind, or the Monastery of Unblinking Flame. These children often form bonds upon the Isle that transcend the mortal concerns of their earthly parents.

Even those who fail Jalmeray's legendary challenges might find a lesser monastery or instructor willing to instruct them in one of the disciplined fighting styles known to monks, assuming they prove themselves worthy of such attentions during their trials. Those who prove themselves unworthy are respectfully asked to leave the island—once—after which they are forced off.

Once per decade, the three Houses of Perfection meet in friendly competition. Their best apprentices, students, and masters test against one another in a grand tournament that measures knowledge of history, swordplay, unarmed fighting techniques, archery, mastery of the self, arcane ability, and more esoteric strengths. The three monasteries each give tests of cunning, speed, and skill at all tasks, while the thakur and his Maurya-Rahm advisors sponsor many more, including the Solemn Sky Duel of Masters. Those who dwell within the Monastery of Untwisting Iron are the reigning champions of the Challenge of Sky and Heaven, having proven victorious now on the past two challenges.

Government

Kharswan, the smiling thakur of Jalmeray, understands all too well that his rule extends no farther than his voice carries. In truth, it is the ancient mystics, the noble Vudrani families, the strange masters of the monasteries, and the complex ties of duty to the powerful spirits of the Impossible Kingdom itself that command the obedience of the people. Thus, the thakur graciously allows the day-to-day execution of rule, such as matters of shipping and collection of taxes, to be carried out by the Maurya-Rahm, his vast legions of advisors. Kharswan himself occupies the majority of his days gently tending to his garden and his many wives, reading poetry, and setting his advisors against one another.

Gazetteer

Gho Vella: This tiny island northeast of Jalmeray has a very specific reason to be shunned, for this is where the afflicted of Jalmeray are sent. In a land where genies and powerful spellcasters are commonplace, strange diseases and curses often claim those too unfortunate or poor to afford a cure. When these afflicted souls have no where else to turn, passage to Gho Vella can be secured on one of several tiny boats operated by a caste of generous philosophers who do their best to see that those who seek to live on the island have a method of reaching it. These philosophers, known as the Curse Shepherds to locals, take this task quite seriously, but do not share their reasons for serving in such a dangerous role with outsiders.

Grand Sarret: The island of Grand Sarret was originally set aside to serve as the site for Maharajah Khiben-Sald's harem—a cluster of buildings known as the Conservatory. This impressive building complex sits at the center of the island's rolling hills of wildflowers and hauntingly beautiful tropical foliage, while the isle's coast consists of jagged cliffs—the only method to reach the island itself is via flight, teleportation, or a dangerous climb (although rumors persist of a hidden, well-defended underground route that connects one of the Conservatory's tower basements with a sea cave). Today, the Conservatory's legacy as a harem is just that, for it now serves as a highly specialized school where men and women from the Inner Sea learn the arts of seduction, music, cooking, and manipulating the tenuous threads of court politics and intrigue. Graduates of the Conservatory go on to be renowned bards, consorts of queens and kings, seneschals, or other important court

figures. Few outside the Conservatory know or even suspect that its graduates keep the school regularly updated with detailed reports of the kingdoms and empires they serve. The Conservatory's vaults have become an enormous library of state secrets—one of the greatest in the Inner Sea region.

Kaina Katakka: When Nex gave Jalmeray to the Maharajah Khiben-Sald, neither ruler consulted the native inhabitants of the island for their opinion. These natives were simple folk who lived in harmony with the land and sea, but they fought valiantly against what they perceived as an invasion until Nex and the maharajah bought off their leaders with magic. This left many of the common folk with two options—serve Jalmeray or leave. Many who chose to avoid lives as slaves fled to the island of Kaina Katakka, a move that intrigued the Maharaja. He left these tenacious survivors to the island, treating it almost as a preserve and its few remaining indigenous peoples as his private collection of exotic natives. It wasn't until the maharajah left the region and the rule of Jalmeray fell to the Arclords that these last islanders perished, for the Arclords brooked no squatters in their new region. Their magic reduced Kaina Katakka to ruins and ash, and to this day the isle remains a barren reminder of the island's past. Rumors hold that spell-wracked ghosts haunt the island, but this does little to dissuade smugglers from using it as a place to hide their ill-gotten goods.

Niswan: The colorful, many-tiered pagoda city of Niswan is breathtaking when seen from the great seas that surround its harbor. The silk banners that furl in the cold wind are all the more beautiful when beheld from the winding, red stone streets that crisscross the forbidding landscape. A city of quiet majesty, Niswan is home to travelers and scholars from across Golarion and beyond. In the High-Holy District, gold-draped eunuchs sweep refuse from the streets while dark-skinned princes with trains of virgins in tow make offerings of wine and poetry to great marble idols of exotic gods. Along the streets of the Grand Chronicler's Circle, scrolls and parchments in dozens of tongues are drafted, bought, and sold by perhaps the wisest and most learned minds in the world.

Padiskar: Once called the Shimmering Jewel of Jalmeray, Padiskar is now little more than a ring-shaped community of fisherman and farmers. Teeming orchards

and unpaved roads linking the widespread farms surround an abandoned pleasure-city and center of arcane learning that dates back to the time of Nex himself. It was here, within the high-domed halls that line the empty streets of Old Padiskar, that the Arclords of Nex turned back in terror. What they discovered in the vaults beneath could not be named. Something howls in the winding darkness beneath the ruins at the center of Padiskar. Frightened locals whisper that it is a spirit or a god, brought in secret from the eastern empire by the Maharajah Khiben-Sald to the holdings of Nex in ancient days.

Prada Hanam: The residents of Prada Hanam claim their city was a small farming village until 2821, when an enormous structure mysteriously appeared one morning just outside the city proper. The enigmatic building's large central dome sits within the embrace of four domed, octagonal corner towers that stand twice as high as the central dome itself. The dome's interior consists of a single cavernous room with tiled floors, while the towers each contain nothing more than flights of stairs winding up to a room in which a single window looks out to the east, some say, toward Vudra. The structure is known as the Murmur Dome of Prada Hanam, and the small fishing village has now become a thriving city. The mystery of the Murmur Dome's arrival has never truly been explained, but some adventurers claim to have explored a strange, spiraling maze beneath the dome. Unfortunately, all who have made such claims died soon thereafter of a strange affliction that seemed to petrify flesh and turn bone to iron.

The Pure Temple of the Maharajah: The River Sald nearly splits the island of Jalmeray as it flows from the small hills on the island's east coast westward to the ocean. A beautiful white and gold temple caps the spring from which this river flows. The temple is maintained by bound genies and a small army of slaves led by a small group of duty-bound masters. Once every 4 years, thousands of the island's citizens make the pilgrimage upriver from Niswan to the temple to pay their respects to the memory of the mighty Maharajah Khiben-Sald—although the maharajah is not buried here (many believe that he yet lives elsewhere on Golarion), the people of Jalmeray revere the site as if it were his tomb.

Segang Jungle: The verdant Segang Jungle is home to a variety of plants and animals imported from distant Vudra by generations of travelers and druids. Rumors tell of long-abandoned shrines to unknown gods hidden beneath the dense foliage, though no active cults are known to exist in the jungle at present. Expeditions from Niswan into the deep jungle cater to wealthy foreigners who hope to experience traditional Vudran hunts, and several isolated hunting lodges vie to capitalize on the burgeoning industry, often employing insidious methods to secure customers.

Tiger's Eye Monastery: The Tiger's Eye Monastery is a remote building decorated with images of tiger-headed humanoids. Rumors hold that the monastery is now under the control of a group of bandits. The truth of the matter may not be resolved until a group of brave adventurers or mercenaries investigates, for the monastery itself lies far from trade routes.

Veedesha: Veedesha was once the largest port on Jalmeray. Its opulent magisterial court received many of the earliest rulers of the Inner Sea, and the island's enormous crops of sugarcane and coffee made it a wealthy and important center of trade. But when the focus of power in Jalmeray moved to the city of Niswan, Veedesha was all but abandoned. Very few visit the place today, and the ruined city has become a favorite haunt for bandits, monsters, and other such dangerous denizens.

MAURYA-RAHM
ADVISOR

Katapesh

BAZAAR OF THE BIZARRE

Alignment: N
Capital: Katapesh (212,300)
Notable Settlements: Bug Harbor (1,545), Chiron (840), Driftwood (1,280), El-Fatar (1,230), Finderplain (1,958), Okeno (13,700), Solku (4,900), Tiven's Reed (520), Yavipho (1,021)
Ruler: The Pactmasters of Katapesh
Government: Anarchic plutocracy
Languages: Common, Kelish, Osiriani, Vudrani, Tien
Religion: Abadar, Irori, Nethys, Sarenrae

There is only one law in Katapesh: Do as you will, but do not interfere with trade. Business is Katapesh's lifeblood, as it has been for centuries. Bards say Absalom boasts the finest markets in the world, but those markets pale in comparison with the weird bazaars of Katapesh. The city's busy markets sell all manner of goods, ranging from the mundane, prosaic, and familiar to the illicit, dangerous, and outright bizarre. Buyers from all over Golarion come to Katapesh's great bazaars, which attract traders from as far away as Vudra, Tian Xia, and even other worlds. On any given street, one might meet a Katapeshi gnoll slaver, a dwarven jeweler from Druma, an oni from Minkai, or an erinyes assassin from Hell.

Katapesh's lax trade policies allow it to offer delights and wares unavailable anywhere else on Golarion, including its most iniquitous export: pesh, a powerful narcotic distilled from the spoiled milk of a rare cactus found in the country's southern desert. Addicts from across the world flock to the lurid pesh parlors of the capital to wallow in their degenerate indulgences. Even life is for sale here—Katapesh is a cornerstone of the lucrative Inner Sea slave trade. Its bustling slave markets host a bewildering variety of chattel from all corners of Golarion: tattooed Varisian ecdysiasts, elven rhapsodists from Kyonin, Qadiran geniebinders, Tian acrobats, fierce Arcadian barbarians, janni mercenaries, and even intelligent apes from the jungles of the Mwangi Expanse. Trade in Katapesh generally avoids the nation's interior, moving in a circle around the borders along the cities and towns found there.

HISTORY

In 2216 AR, a vicious tribe of gnolls led by a matriarch and powerful geniebinder named Kinroth was defeated by a band of heroes. Legend holds that this "band of heroes" was known as the Templars of the Five Winds, a group of janni led by an exiled djinni named Nefeshti, who had

come to Katapesh to seek out and punish those who would enslave her kin.

Not a year later, a number of Sarenrae's faithful, led by a devout priestess named Vedie, fled a pogrom in Osirion. Once in the wilds far south of Osirion, Vedie instructed her followers to build a settlement called Sarenrae's Bastion, but a splinter group broke off to search for a "golden land." This group discovered a lush coastal valley surrounded by golden sands and full of thriving plant life. A massive sphinx stood at the center of the valley, but there was no other sign of habitation. They settled in the valley and named it the Golden City.

Over the next few centuries, these two settlements endured raids, scorching droughts, devastating sandstorms, and other trials, but they did not give up their new homes. Encounters with the Templars of the Five Winds periodically brought fortune or ruin to these early settlers, and Nefeshti's genies soon took on a legendary status among the colonists as savior or scourge, depending upon the tale. In time, the Golden City was renamed Sandstar after a particularly deadly sandstorm nearly buried the city, and soon thereafter, the rise of pesh as a popular export revolutionized the budding nation forever.

NEFESHTI

Additional towns and settlements began appearing in the desert, hills, and savannas of the region around pesh farms and fields. After a number of particularly horrific conflicts with gnoll slavers over several years, the citizens of Sarenrae's Bastion renamed their home Solku, feeling betrayed and abandoned by their goddess. Sandstar fared little better, as a powerful bandit named Jade-Eye captured the city and renamed it Katapesh. By this time, that city's wealth and power had grown to such an extent that Jade-Eye was able to annex the other settlements, Solku included. The region of Katapesh formally became a nation in 3250.

Katapesh continued to grow, ruled for a time by a conclave of bandit lords and disreputable merchants, then eventually by a mysterious group of robed creatures known only as the Pactmasters. The transition from merchant to Pactmaster was swift and nearly seamless, but details on how the transition occurred remain a mystery to this day.

Not long after Katapesh came under the control of the Pactmasters, a new threat rose in the deeper deserts when a geniebinder lost control of his enslaved efreeti. This efreeti, a powerful warlord named Jhavhul, took control of the geniebinder's army and led a bloody march through northern Katapesh. Jhavhul's army grew as he recruited more genies, and striking from his hidden fortress on Pale Mountain his forces disrupted trade with Osirion and threatened Solku's livelihood. The Pactmasters of Katapesh were slow to react to this distant threat, and so the Templars of the Five Winds rose to the challenge. Nefeshti led her own army of genies against Jhavhul's on the slopes of Pale Mountain, and after a tremendous battle, the efreeti warlord was banished to parts unknown and his army shattered. The Templars of the Five Winds disbanded some time thereafter, their own forces savaged during the clash of geniekind. Travelers in Katapesh's outskirts still sometimes report chance meetings with the djinni Nefeshti, who is said to scour the back country today for those who would abuse jann and djinn with magic.

Government

Power in Katapesh rests firmly in the hands of a mysterious, inhuman merchant council known as the Pactmasters, an elite ruling caste who have never been seen to leave Katapesh. While they actively participate in Katapesh's diverse bazaars, the Pactmasters rely on hired human agents and friendly merchant princes in their dealings with outside nations. These bizarre beings wrap themselves in flowing veils and robes that completely cloak their spindly, 7-foot-tall frames from head to toe. Ornate masks conceal their featureless faces and muffle their deep, alien voices. Conventional wisdom holds that to look upon the face of a Pactmaster is to court madness. As a free port, Katapesh has good relations with its closest neighbors, Osirion and Nex, and with Qadira and the Isle of Jalmeray across the Obari Ocean. Katapesh has economic ties throughout the Inner Sea kingdoms as well. The one notable exception is abolitionist Andoran, which seeks to curtail the slave trade in which Katapesh plays a substantial role—Andoran's Gray Corsairs sank three Katapeshi slave galleys in the Inner Sea in 4705.

Katapesh's plutocratic merchant council has a strictly laissez-faire, almost anarchic, attitude. The Pactmasters impose few laws on their subjects, but they effectively have absolute power should they choose to wield it. Although it has no standing army, Katapesh is protected and its laws are enforced by the inexorable aluums, metal-shod golems powered by the bound souls of elderly slaves. The Pactmasters devote much of their attention to business and other more inscrutable pursuits, leaving the day-to-day management of Katapesh's affairs in the hands of their factor, Pactbroker Hashim ibn Sayyid. While he has ambitions of his own, ibn Sayyid is content to serve the Pactmasters as long as their gold continues to fill his personal coffers.

GAZETTEER

Bug Harbor: Perched upon countless stilts above the swampy banks of the Elemion River, Bug Harbor is so named because of the many dragonflies, water striders, mosquitoes, and black flies that infest the marshy region. These same swamps are unusually fecund with exotic components valued by alchemists, spellcasters, and herbalists, ensuring that despite its relatively small size, Bug Harbor is never at a loss for trade opportunities.

El-Fatar: This sprawling ruin stood crumbling and empty for centuries before an intrepid Pathfinder discovered an enormous set of catacombs beneath it. In the years that followed, more adventurers came to the ruins to explore these ancient tunnels, emerging with tales of foul undead, monstrous inhabitants, and incredible treasures.

Katapesh: The teeming metropolis of Katapesh, second in size only to Absalom, consists of closely packed stone tenements interspersed with wide stone plazas. These plazas provide space for the city's ever-changing temporary bazaars and fairs, as well as more permanent markets like the Peculiar Emporium and the infamous Nightstalls. Anywhere else in the world, such a place as the Nightstalls would be an underground black market, forever at risk of discovery and closure. In Katapesh, however, the Nightstalls can display its wares openly and proudly. While commonplace contraband like information, drugs, poisons, and smuggled relics can be found in the Nightstalls, most of its patrons come seeking more exotic and vile wares: diseases, diabolic contracts, cursed and corrupt magics, and even such rare magical components as the tears of a new moon, a madman's dreams, or the screams of a thrice-slain virgin. Near the city's center, clusters of twisting marble minarets capped with shining, onion-shaped iridium domes tower high—these are the homes of the mysterious Pactmasters themselves, the entrances guarded night and day by faithful and vigilant aluums. The most influential temple in Katapesh is the Immaculate Repository, where the clergy of Abadar—under the leadership of Master of the Vault Jalal Abdul-Abadar—offer banking, storage, and surety services to the city's merchants.

Kelmarane: This small, ruined town lies at the westernmost edge of the Brazen Peaks. Once a thriving trade post that helped to link Osirion and Katapesh, the town succumbed to a mysterious darkness some time

ago. With the town's loss came the loss of the once-vital western trade route between Solku and Osirion, yet another blow to the already beleaguered city. The ruins are now held by the gnoll tribes of Pale Mountain, and serve as a place where the gnolls can trade with bandits and other disreputable locals.

Lightning Stones: The Lightning Stones are a line of 20-foot-tall pointed menhirs in the southern reaches of the Barrier Walls mountains, near the border with Nex. Lightning strikes these menhirs with unnatural regularity, causing otherwise invisible runes and glyphs within the stones to briefly glow after every strike. Garundi legend says this is where earth and air elementals square off in combat. Dwarven legend says the stones funnel lightning deep into the earth for aberrant purposes.

Okeno: The city of Okeno boasts the most profitable and varied slave markets in the hemisphere, known as the Fleshfairs. Okeno's notorious, yellow-sailed slave galleys regularly ply the sea-lanes, carrying living cargo from Avistan, Garund, and beyond.

Pale Mountain: Located near the junction of the Brazen Peaks and the Barrier Wall of northwest Katapesh, Pale Mountain has long been avoided by travelers, as it is well known to be the haunt of numerous tribes of gnolls, many of whom have abandoned their traditional veneration of Lamashtu for the violent teachings of Rovagug. In recent years, a mysterious new ruler has come to lord over the Pale Mountain tribes—the Carrion King. While he has yet to organize the region's tribes in any coordinated assaults on the nearby lowlands, many believe it is only a matter of time before such an event occurs.

Solku: The walled town of Solku lies in the western reaches of Katapesh. Gnoll tribes from White Canyon besieged the city in 4701, but their attempts to enslave the population were rebuffed at the Battle of Red Hail by paladins of Iomedae, who all perished in the battle. Today, a small but dedicated band of paladins of Sarenrae, the Dawn Vigil, remain on guard against further gnoll incursions.

Stonespine Island: This sizable island in the northernmost reach of the Obari Ocean is under the rule of Katapesh, with the city of Okeno on its southern shore serving as the focus of Katapesh's influence. So named for the jagged ridge of barren mountains that runs along the island's length, Stonespine is often attacked by zealous Gray Corsairs from Andoran, who are eager to try to undermine the island's reputation as a slaver's paradise. Rumors that the inland mountains hide cruel fortresses where slaves are bred and trained for various duties remain unconfirmed, as Okeno and Katapesh are masters of bribery and diplomatic maneuvering to prevent outsiders from penetrating too deeply into Stonespine's notorious interior.

PACTMASTER OF KATAPESH

White Canyon: White Canyon is the second-largest gnoll hold in Katapesh. While neither as large nor as dangerous as Pale Mountain, White Canyon still poses a serious threat to travelers and settlers in the area. Despite the fear and hatred they engender, these gnolls have not been an organized threat since the Siege of Solku nearly a decade ago. Persistent rumors out of the west speak of Noor, the Red Sultana, who gathers a horde of warriors under her blood-soaked banner to retake Solku before sweeping eastward across the plains.

Zolurket Mines: When the mines of the dwarven outpost known as Tar-Urkatka ran out, the dwarves who worked there vacated the area. The mines and dwarven ruins left behind gained the name Zolurket, Keleshite for "Dark Death." The few brave explorers to venture to Zolurket and return report that most of the mines remain intact, but are haunted. Stories differ, though, as to the nature of the haunting. Some blame ghosts of dead miners, others a burial ground uncovered by mining, and at least a couple report a lich infestation. Other rumors also whisper that the mine isn't played out at all, and that the dwarves left for some other reason.

Kyonin

KINGDOM OF THE ELVES

Alignment: CG
Capital: Iadara (56,340)
Notable Settlements: Avennara (810), Erages (5,200), Greengold (10,400), Omesta (2,390), Riverspire (3,450), Siavenian (420)
Ruler: Queen Telandia Edasseril
Government: Monarchy
Languages: Elven
Religion: Calistria, Desna, Nethys, several obscure elven deities

Filled with pastoral beauty and picturesque landscapes, Kyonin is the largest nation of elves on Golarion. Although even their own scholars are hard-pressed to say when and where the elves first arose, all agree that the rolling fields and deep, vibrant forests of Kyonin are where their hearts lie. For countless thousands of years, the elves lived in harmony with the land, building elegant settlements that seemingly grew from the landscape itself, or else festooning the land with monuments and fountains, orreries and sculptures of unknown meaning and function. The ancient, abandoned ruins of these structures still dot the Fierani Forest north of the Five Kings Mountains. These idyllic times came to an abrupt end just before Earthfall, when elves from across the world gathered in Kyonin to step through the gate created by the sacred *Sovyrian Stone* and abandoned Golarion to the coming cataclysm, traveling across unknown distances to their mysterious community of Sovyrian—the unknown country or world from which they are whispered to have originated. What transpired in this far-off land is unknown to outsiders, but for thousands of years the elves remained missing, leaving behind only a few stragglers and stewards to watch over their former homes during their long absence.

These days Kyonin is a standoffish realm, a serene place where the elves can seek refuge from a human-focused world paced far too quickly for their tastes. While gnomes, being closely tied to nature and the fey of the First World, are largely tolerated by the elves, the few visitors from other races allowed within Kyonin's borders are pointed toward the human-run community of Greengold.

HISTORY

Where the vast majority of Golarion's elves fled to just before Earthfall remains one of the great mysteries of the Inner Sea region. This mysterious elven retreat, known as

Sovyrian, may merely be a hidden bolthole, or it may be the true elven home world. Although long-lived, no elf living today was alive when the elves returned to Golarion during the Age of Enthronement, and the truth of what Sovyrian may be is one of the race's most closely-guarded secrets.

During the long centuries of elven abandonment, those who had been left behind gradually grew away from their traditions, becoming erratic hermits or assimilating into the barbaric human societies as the long-lived Forlorn. Those loyalists who remained in Kyonin kept primarily to Iadara, their illusion-shrouded capital, and carefully protected their racial lore. Locked up behind their graceful walls, the residents of Iadara could only watch in frustration as their abandoned communities were looted by vandals and bandits, their former homes annexed by tribes of squatters. Artifacts and treasures stolen from fallow communities flooded the markets of Avistan, and to this day many elves of Kyonin consider their sale a slight against elvenkind.

AIUDARA (ELF GATE)

Yet sprawling human nations were hardly the greatest threat to beset Kyonin during the dark years of the elves' absence. In 2497 AR, the great demon Cyth-V'sug, Lord of Filth and Pollution, exiled his minion Treerazer, the self-styled Lord of the Blasted Tarn, to the Material Plane in a fit of rage. Suddenly finding himself among the lush, carefully tended trees of the southern Fierani Forest, Treerazer quickly realized that his prison could also be his playground, and immediately set about sucking the life from the forest, poisoning the very earth with his fecund filth. At his touch, the wilderness grew twisted and dark in southern Kyonin, and men and elves alike feared to tread within its borders. As the demon pressed north and encountered Iadara, however, he discovered the true scope of his opportunity. With whispered feelers probing the minds of the remaining elves, he learned of the *Sovyrian Stone*, and set about trying to corrupt it, attempting to break its connection to the elves' strange refuge and use its power to bring Golarion in line with the Abyss, opening its gates to the demonic hordes.

In faraway Sovyrian, the elves felt the shift and took action. In a great procession that took weeks to complete, the elves marched back through the portal and into Golarion, the sun shining on their armor and flowing pennants. With sword and spell they descended on the corrupted woods, cleansing the land and driving Treerazer back into the southern reaches of the forest. There, however, the demon entrenched himself, and despite their best efforts, the elves were unable to truly slay the Lord of the Blasted Tarn. Instead, they wrote off the tainted groves as lost, naming the dark section of woods the Tanglebriar and setting guards to watch it, lest the demon attempt to stray beyond the polluted vale's borders once more.

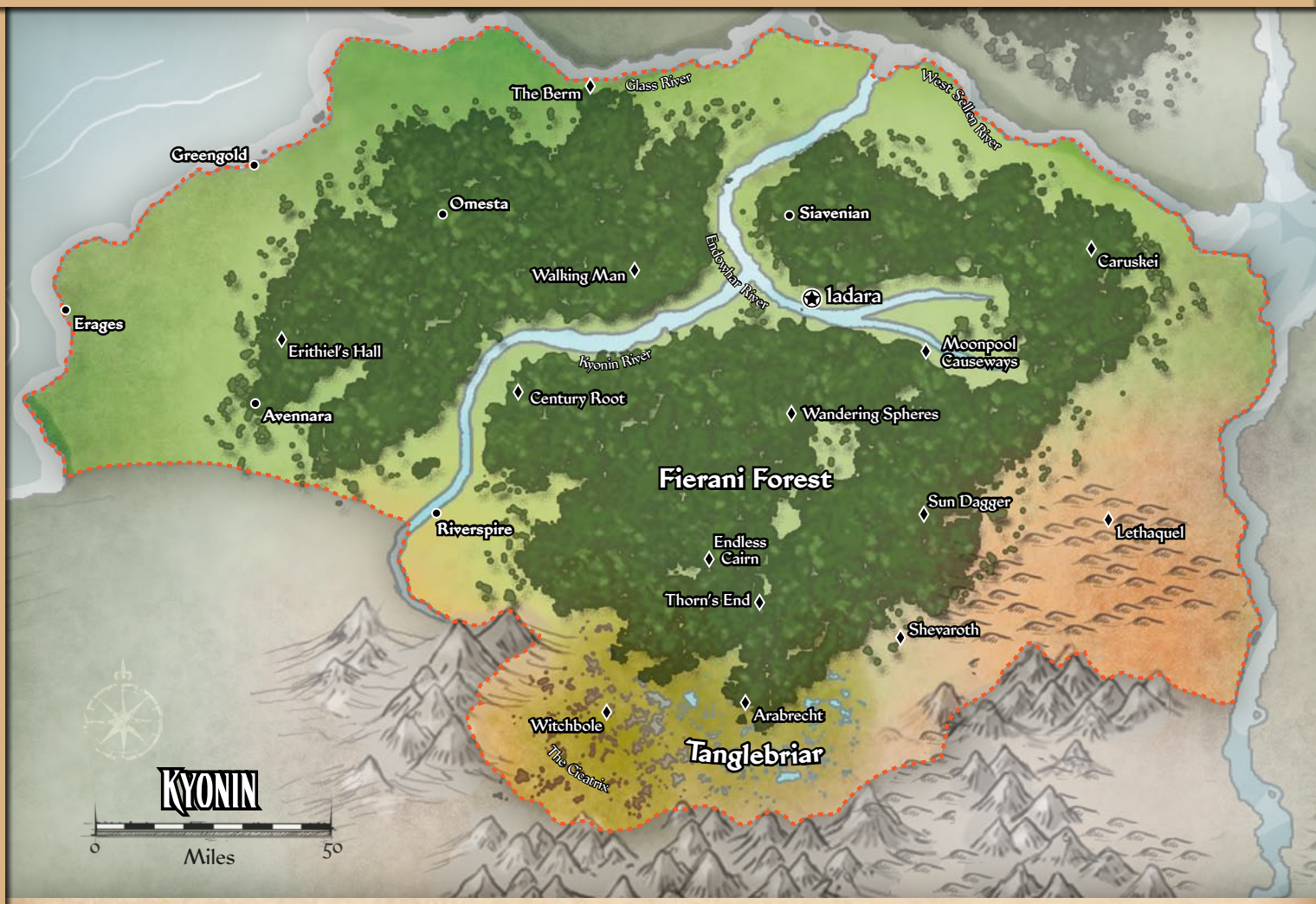
The demon dealt with, if only temporarily, the elves looked around for the next threat, expecting at any moment to be descended upon by teeming hordes of humans. Instead, they found the land had recovered from the Age of Darkness following Earthfall far more quickly than they had projected, with their former human adversaries now deep in the Age of Enthronement—an era of relative civilization and refinement. Believing these new human nations capable of reason, the elves elected not to use the *Sovyrian Stone* to leave once more, and instead proceeded to go forth into the world, intent on retaking former holdings and resuming their residence among Golarion's green places, starting with the abandoned communities in Kyonin.

Government

Kyonin is ruled by Queen Telandia Edasseril, the current bearer of the Viridian Crown. Although her serene beauty and calm authority cannot be questioned, there are many within her elaborate councils and courts in Iadara who grow dissatisfied with the current state of affairs, urging the queen to reopen more of the ancestral holdings across Avistan and Garund, or else pushing for a more permanent solution to the problems of Treerazer and their dark cousins below the surface.

One of Kyonin's most significant advantages over other nations is the magical network of *aiudara*, known to non-elves by the vulgar term "elf gates." *Aiudara* appear as elaborately sculpted stone arches that allow anyone to step easily between settlements on opposite sides of the globe, although only the portal deep in Kyonin is capable of reaching fabled Sovyrian. Powered by the same artifact, the *Sovyrian Stone*, these portals represent a huge part of the elves' power, as resources can be called instantly from across continents.

The elves of Kyonin would like to be good neighbors with the humans living around them, with the key word being



"neighbors"—the desire to live intermixed with humanity is relatively slim for most non-Forlorn elves. Despite their huge leap forward in civilization over the last few thousand years, humans still have a ways to come before their bizarre panoply of religions and governments has any hope of matching elven refinement. As a result, the elves' natural tendency toward isolationism continues to hold sway in Kyonin, and its closed borders are patrolled with deadly effectiveness by wraithlike bands of rangers.

Gazetteer

The Cicatrix: This wasteland was once part of Tanglebriar. It was here that the returning elves, finding their magic and strength of arms insufficient to rout Treerazer from his entrenched position in the swamps, sought to burn out the demon's infection with cleansing flame. Although they succeeded in forcing the demon out, their victory brought them little joy. Centuries later, shattered trunks and charred, black stumps are all that stand on the dead, open ground. Oozes, camouflaged to resemble the barren earth, creep along its dusty borders, consuming elves and Treerazer's demonic minions with equal indifference.

Erages: Here, on the shores of Lake Encarthan, the almost entirely half-elven populace of Erages draws its living from fishing and occasional smuggling. The village itself is constructed among the ruins of several great stone towers of ancient elven origin; most of these towers have crumbled to just a few stories above the ground, and their blocks have been scavenged for use as building material. Entrances beneath the rubble suggest that the towers may be connected to each other via subterranean passages, but after a few curious explorers went missing in years past, most townsfolk saw fit to let any secrets stay buried.

Greengold: While many small hamlets and farming communities lie scattered across Kyonin, it remains a nation too small for its borders, and many ancient settlements sit uninhabited due to its people's slow population growth. As a result, the largest city save Iadara is, ironically, the human-run trading town of Greengold. The elves view the city as an ongoing experiment to determine whether they can trust other civilized races to help rebuild their fallen empire.

Iadara: A glorious affair of wood and crystal spires, Iadara's structures are built in perfect harmony with the trees and streams of the forest. Its beauty, however, is

deceptive—the walls and structures of Kyonin's capital are shrouded in layer upon layer of artistic illusion, their constantly shifting edifices making it hard to tell where the magic ends and reality begins. In ages past, these illusions transformed the entire city into a canvas, but of late the illusions reflect the citizen's isolationist tendencies, and magical fog and vines frequently shroud the city. Towers of silver and crystal thrust high above the treetops, and elven crafters are always decorating or enchanting some new aspect of the city. Indestructible roads and soft earthen paths open into large, circular courtyards, and elven laughter mingles with birdsong to provide a constant backdrop of nature and joy.

Omesta: During the elves' long absence, a small enclave of gnomes adopted this city. Yet instead of inhabiting the elegant, vacant buildings on the forest floor, the gnomes instead made their homes in the trees, crisscrossing them with zip lines, winch-and-basket arrangements, and windmills set at odd angles from the treeline. The gnomes seem impervious to suggestions that they might be trespassing—after all, they haven't touched the elves' buildings, but merely neighbor them from above—and their audacity and humor appeals to elven sensibilities. Since the Fair Ones hardly have the numbers to fill the cities they currently occupy, their leaders have seen fit to treat the gnome community as another, less formal investigation of cohabitation with non-elves.

Riverspire: This was originally a single stone tower housing a family of elves known as the Morgethais, yet a rash of unusual fertility saw the inhabitants of Riverspire quickly needing to expand their structures, and children worked alongside great-grandparents to expand the tower and its outbuildings until the simple ivy-coated spire came to resemble a proper town. Elves marrying into the family frequently moved to the compound, bringing members of their own clans with them, and today the town is host to a bustling community, of which roughly two-thirds are related somehow to the original Morgethai family.

Shevaroth: In the days before Earthfall, Shevaroth was one of the most populous cities in Kyonin. When Treerazer arrived, the depopulated city was caught completely defenseless, and despite several attempts on the part of Kyonin's government to liberate the city, Shevaroth continues to remain staunchly within Tanglebriar's borders. Demons and vengeful, corrupted ghosts whisper and wander the empty streets as the ruined buildings around them slowly wear down to nothing. Only the temple itself is inhabited—a group of Rovagug cultists have repurposed the temple for their own ends, making use of Treerazer's influence to work their own dark magics in a foul mockery of Calistria's sacred rites.

Tanglebriar: When the elves defeated Treerazer and his minions, their strength proved insufficient to uproot his malignancy entirely, forcing them to cede control of a portion of southern Kyonin to their enemy. Twisted plants, warped animals, fiendish satyrs, and displaced outsiders share the area with demons and a maddeningly consistent stream of cultists who bring Treerazer news and supplies from the outside world. A gigantic, twisted thorn tree called the Witchbole serves Treerazer as a palace. On great writhing roots, this living fortress lurches ponderously through the woods, its shattered crest sometimes twisted into the vague outline of a face and its branches lined with the impaled corpses of brave elves who sought to confront Treerazer directly.

QUEEN TELANDIA EDASSERIL

Lastwall

WATCHFUL BORDER NATION

Alignment: LG
Capital: Vigil (9,780)
Notable Settlements: Castle Firrine (540), Hallein Town (980), Roslar's Coffer (435), Three Pines Ford (1,440), Vellumis (12,340)
Ruler: Watcher-Lord Ulthun II, Bearer of the Shattered Shield of Arnisant
Government: Military Dictatorship
Languages: Common, Varisian
Religion: Gorum, Iomedae

Lastwall's people are a hardy folk. Although they live in the shadow of great evils, they are warm and friendly to outsiders, especially those who have come to help hold the line against the orc menace of Belkzen. Yet in recent years, the number of knights-errant and glory seekers visiting Lastwall has greatly diminished, due in large part to the call to arms in Mendev against the growing hordes of demons that infest the Worldwound. Many in Lastwall's capital of Vigil grow concerned that they might not have the strength to hold off the orcs of Belkzen for much longer if this trend continues. Nevertheless, the newly anointed Watcher-Lord Ulthun II has great ambitions to secure or even expand his nation's borders. Having already demonstrated valor on the battlefield and vision and drive in leadership at just 22 years of age, the line of suitors for his hand often stretches well outside Castle Overwatch in Vigil.

HISTORY

Nearly a thousand years ago, Taldor launched the Shining Crusade against Tar-Baphon, the Whispering Tyrant, who unified the orc tribes of Belkzen and ruled central Avistan for 5 centuries from his doom-shrouded, haunted domain of Ustalav. From all of Taldor's provinces along the Inner Sea crusaders assembled, dedicated to destroying the lich-king and his minions. Commandeering the Ustalavic town of Vellumis, the forces of Taldor (aided by the dwarven kingdom of Kraggodan and the Knights of Ozem) spent 26 brutal years hacking their way to the lich's capital of Gallowspire. Just outside the rotting city, the Shining Crusade met the forces of the Whispering Tyrant in a final titanic battle, achieving victory when Taldan General Arnisant sacrificed himself to imprison Tar-Baphon beneath his own tower at the evil city's heart.

With the Shining Crusade victorious at last, Taldor decided in 3828 AR to create a permanent presence to

watch over the lich's prison in Gallowspire's haunted ruins. This province became Lastwall—a bulwark against one of the greatest evils humanity had ever known. When Cheliax later broke away from Taldor, Lastwall declared its neutrality, citing the need to maintain its sacred duty free from political concerns. Cheliax quickly agreed while Taldor protested, but the crippled empire lacked the power to prevent its distant province from severing official ties and becoming an independent nation.

Over the last 700 years, Lastwall's focus has shifted somewhat away from Gallowspire and toward the savage hordes of Belkzen. The fiercest action faced by Lastwall's defenders is typically found in the battle-plains on the Belkzen frontier, but patrols still make monthly journeys into the Hungry Mountains to inspect the ruins of Gallowspire. Dismissed by some younger crusaders as merely ceremonial, this mission resonates with veterans as the heart of Lastwall's very reason to exist. Crusader doctrine holds that the troubles with Belkzen are simply the residue of the malice and menace of the Whispering Tyrant, and ensuring the seals on his prison remain inviolate is the uppermost duty of every crusader.

The onslaught of Lastwall's heavy cavalry is legendary. Its impact has broken many an enemy line with the combination of its splendidly trained mounts and riders' skill in maneuvering horses in very close formation, like an onrushing tide of hooves and steel. Oftentimes, a contingent of heavy cavalry need only appear at a battlefield in order to turn a battle in Lastwall's favor. The last major heavy cavalry charge conducted by Lastwall occurred against the orc Warlord Graukrad in 4695, when 173 knights rode down and routed an orc force estimated at more than 2,000 infantry.

Government

The watcher-lord is appointed by the Precentors Martial of the War College. Age and experience are less important in selection than proven skill at arms, purity of heart, clarity of mind, and embodiment of the crusader ideal. The watcher-lord stands first among equals in command councils, taking advice but with final decision-making authority. Since nearly every aspect of life in Lastwall pertains to the prosecution and upkeep of the crusade, the watcher-lord's authority is theoretically absolute, but tyranny has never been an issue. Watcher-lords are chosen carefully and are never so arrogant that they fail to understand the need to delegate and work together for the greater good.

Lastwall enjoys good relations with Nirmathas, its newly formed southern neighbor, although it has found the Nirmathi unreliable, undisciplined allies, easily distracted and apt to disobey orders. Some in Lastwall would prefer to recruit Molthuni allies, but they cannot afford to arouse the ire of Nirmathi partisans along their otherwise secure southern border. Relations are cordial with the other nations around Lake Encarthan. Lastwall keeps a cautious eye upon the mad theocrat of Razmiran, not wanting the seditious priests of the so-called "Living God" meddling in Lastwall's hinterlands while its defenders' eyes are focused on the battlefront. Relations with Kyonin are civil but cool, as the elves have refused annual entreaties to aid in what Lastwall views as its defense of the entire region.

Gazetteer

Castle Everstand: One of the many border forts between Lastwall and Belkzen, this place keeps a constant eye westward for signs of orc troops, and its soldiers frequently clash with these tribal savages. Like its sister structures, this fort contains chapels to Iomedae and Gorum, but here on the frontier, Our Lord in Iron is more favored. The castle's commander, Captain Thaum Gauntwood, believes the leaders in Vigil care more about preserving the status quo than pushing back the bloodthirsty horde—and he is not the only commander who feels this way. Barring additional support or at least propaganda from the capital city, the border soldiers may decide to take the war to the orcs, needlessly wasting lives. Castle Everstand has something of a unique history—it was built not by labor but by magic when a desperate sergeant used a lucky draw from a *deck of many things* to create the fortress from nothing, just in time to defend against a surprise orc invasion.

Castle Firrine: Not so much a town as a heavily fortified mustering station and supply depot, Castle Firrine stands sentinel in the midst of the battle zone. Here, clerics of Iomedae tend the wounds of recovering soldiers as well as those of mounts and beasts of burden, while expert artisans and engineers repair equipment and materials of all kinds. The Battlemasters of Gorum rouse the fighting ardor of the crusaders, although they have felt considerable consternation at the recent appearance of large numbers of Gorumite warpriests among the half-orc legions across the battlefield.

Dortort Ranch: Owned by the same family for 11 generations, this 6,000-acre horse ranch is on a long, fertile strip of land in eastern Lastwall. They raise Lastwall palfreys (a breed known for its smooth, ambling gait), Taldor jennets (known for their gentle disposition), Dort chargers (second only to Vigil's breed for use as warhorses), and a small number of mixed-breed workhorses. The family patriarch, Chap "Old Man" Dortort carefully manages his land and rotates his pastures, rarely keeping more than 2,000 head in any particular year. In recent years his land has suffered a plague of various kinds of mites (both of the vermin variety and the more dangerous fey variety), and he welcomes any assistance in protecting his precious horses from these pests.

Hallein Town: While but a relatively tiny settlement downriver from Vigil, Hallein Town is nevertheless an important component of the nation. Virtually inaccessible

by land, Hallein Town hosts the workers for the salt mines in the Virlych hills. In generations past, salt was carried down the road along the river by mule, but this became a dangerous route in winter because of Kaltia, the Haunter of the Hills. This haggard ghost from a long-lost dwarf-clan was accursed and murdered by her own people for trying to make peace with the orcs of Belkzen. Though she's been slain repeatedly by the crusader knights, her resting place has never been found, and she returns again and again to menace the salt-bearers, especially in the winter months.

Hammer Rock: The people of Lastwall discovered the foundation of a dwarven structure at this low hill, unfinished and abandoned for unknown reasons countless centuries before. The humans built their own fort on top of it and named it "Hammer Rock" for the inscriptions on the cornerstones. Despite its whitewashed exterior, the fort looks squat and gloomy, but the soldiers here enjoy a clear view into Ustalav's Hungry Mountains and plentiful small game animals, as well as a grove of fruit-bearing trees. The ground occasionally makes loud cracking sounds, and there are doubtless undiscovered dwarven tunnels running below the site.

Northern Fangwood: The vast woodland known as the Fangwood extends far beyond Lastwall's southern border, deep into Nirmathas. And as with the southern reaches, a dark and dangerous influence seems to be growing within this woodland. The northern Fangwood has long been avoided by the people of Lastwall, for the forest is particularly dense with thick undergrowth and dangerous wildlife. Yet as one travels deeper into the woods, the dangers grow worse, for not only do several isolated tribes of orcs rule swaths of the inner woodlands, but somewhere within the verdant depths lies the lair of the green dragon known as Zedoran. Would-be dragonslayers have attempted to locate Zedoran's lair many times throughout Lastwall's history, but none of those who survived to emerge from the Northern Fangwood have reported any success at locating the site. Neither have flyovers of the forest been successful in discovering the lair, which is said to consist of an immense, circular sinkhole that drops hundreds of feet into a swampy mire of fungus and mud. It seems likely that Zedoran utilizes a fair amount of illusion magic to hide the exact location of his lair. While not prone to making retaliatory strikes against Lastwall in response to

the intrusions of hopeful dragonslayers (perhaps because so few of these heroes actually survive to reach the dragon's den), the great wyrm does emerge from the woods every few decades to ravage and ruin towns in Lastwall, Nirmathas, or Ustalav. The orcs of the Northern Fangwood seem to have some sort of alliance with the dragon, for when Zedoran emerges, so do the orcs, using the dragon's rampages as a distraction so they can raid numerous smaller villages.

Roslar's Coffer: This village was overrun by orc raiders several seasons ago, driving off the local residents. Although the rampaging orcs were eventually put to the sword, in the survivors' absence a strange creature known as a red reaver has settled in the area, claiming the village's burnt shrine of Sarenrae as its lair. The villagers have tried to return to their homes, but every time they get too close, the red reaver chases them off. Rumors that at least three orc tribes have been attempting to secure the red reaver's allegiance (all such attempts have, so far, ended in misery for the orcs) have finally started to pique the interest of Vigil's crusaders. Whereas before, recovering such a remote village may have seemed a waste of resources, the idea of defeating the dangerous monster before the orc host figures out how to recruit its aid is rapidly gaining favor at court among many of Vigil's commanders.

Three Pines Ford: Nestled on the Tourondel River to the east of the Fangwood, this town is a meeting-place for Lastwall officials and Nirmathi recruits for the great cause. Because it is only a few miles beyond the ambiguous border between the two countries, the village is also a hiding place for heroes of Nirmathas who are high on Molthune's list of priority targets. The three pines of the town's name are said to be dryads' trees; though none have seen the fey sisters in a hundred years, the townsfolk believe it is true, and forbid anyone from harming those trees in any way.

Vaishau Ruin: Located on the main pass between Vigil and Gallowspire, this scorched, gray, stone ruin was once a fortress of the Whispering Tyrant's forces. Overrun by the mortal general Iomedae just 3 years before Tar-Baphon's defeat, it was torn down by her army and seeded with powdered silver and cold iron. Despite these precautions, evil finds itself drawn to the ruin—or perhaps there is some lingering physical residue of the lich's power that creates new evils in this storied site. As a result, Vigil sends patrols every few months specifically to clear out the strange creatures and spectral undead that gather there.

Vellumis: The oldest and largest city in Lastwall, Vellumis is a scenic port, with many buildings marble-clad, domed, and colonnaded in the once-popular Chelish Old White style (characterized by whitewashed walls, ornately decorated eaves, and massive arched windows). It both serves as the point of entry for goods and soldiers making their way to the front lines and also hosts all foreign embassies and diplomats, in an effort by Lastwall to keep potential spies far from the front.

Vigil: Known to some as the Holy Citadel of Light, the aptly named Vigil is the seat of the watcher-lord. The high spires of Castle Overwatch afford a commanding view of the blood-soaked westward plains on the Belkzen frontier, as well as the mist-shrouded highlands of Ustalav to the north. The horsemasters of Vigil breed and train the mighty destriers and swift coursers that bear Lastwall's finest into battle, and the pastures around Vigil are known for the quality of their bloodlines. Vigil also hosts the Crusader War College, where crusader tacticians wrestle with how to best marshal magical and military resources to defeat their numerically superior enemies.

KNIGHT OF OZEM

Lands of the Linnorm Kings

FRIGID VIKING HOMELAND

Alignment: CN
Capital: Kalsgard (72,080)
Notable Settlements: Bildt (6,730), Halgrim (26,340), Jol (9,500), Losthome (4,320), Trollheim (12,120)
Rulers: Ingimundr the Unruly, Opir Eightfingers, Sveinn Blood-Eagle, White Estrid
Government: Loose confederation of barbaric tribal monarchies
Languages: Skald
Religion: Desna, Erastil, Gorum, Torag

The Linnorm Kings rule, in name at least, Avistan's extreme northwest—a frigid, rugged land of rich taiga, treacherous marshes, and great boulder-strewn moraines left by departed glaciers. The coastline is bracing and cool, and it rains half the year and snows heavily during the rest. Further to the east, the land grows increasingly colder, up to the frozen borders of Irrisen, which seized the eastern reaches of this domain 1,400 years ago and shows no intention of returning them.

Life is hard for the natives of this realm. What land is not frozen marsh is heavily seasoned with stones and boulders, and starvation is often a grim specter in the depths of winter. As a result, many able-bodied adults engage in trade in the summer months, bringing from the south additional food, luxuries, and various oddities of the Inner Sea. Such travelers also pack their axes and small, circular shields, in case an opportunity to plunder presents itself. Every citizen is a viking at heart, and distant lands are less dangerous than this cold homeland.

It is not only the cold and the creatures of the wild that make this land so perilous. The wilderness between the steadings is also dominated by fey creatures and linnorms, for rifts between Golarion and the First World run through this land. Fey creatures are common here, along with gnomes, azatas, trolls, and nature spirits. There are enchanted animals that can both plead for their lives and utter dire curses against their attackers, and more deadly creatures as well. The most dangerous of these otherworldly creatures are the legendary linnorms, vast beasts said to be Golarion's first dragons, and the beasts a warlord must slay if he is to become a Linnorm King.

History

The vast reach of land occupying the northwestern corner of Avistan has long been the home of the Linnorm Kings. No one is quite sure where the first Linnorm Kings came from—they were certainly in power long before the first explorers from the south ventured into the rugged northlands. The Linnorm Kings are not only masters of this harsh realm, but of the sea itself. As early as –473 AR, Linnorm King Ulvass led a fleet of barbarians west to discover Arcadia and establish Valenhall as an earthly paradise. Through the ages that followed, stories of exceptional Ulfen have emerged—but for most of Avistan, the legends and tales of Ulfen raiders on dragon-headed longboats are what haunt dreams and capture the imagination.

WHITE ESTRID

The single greatest defeat and shame to visit the Lands of the Linnorm Kings remains the Winter War of 3313. It took less than 30 days for the Queen of Witches, Baba Yaga, to carve away the eastern reaches of these lands and claim them as her own nation of Irrisen, a defeat that the Linnorm Kings still seethe over. Yet Irrisen's borders are well defended, and as long as the Linnorm Kings remain divided, they have no hope of reclaiming their lost lands.

Government

The Linnorm Kings themselves are a collection of petty rulers who dominate the few large settlements in the region. They take their names from the tradition that only a king can carry the head of a linnorm through the city's gates. The head is usually then displayed above the king's throne as a sign of prowess and power, but some Linnorm Kings prefer to display their triumphs in other ways. Given the difficulties of hunting linnorms, the number of active kings at any time varies, from as few as two to as many as seven at any one time. Only Kalsgard has an unbroken line of heroes stretching back before the Winter War. Each king is considered the ultimate law within his domain, and conflicts between the petty kingdoms are solved either by arbitration, the paying of weregild, or tests of adventure by the various kings' champions.

Sveinn Blood-Eagle is the oldest and most powerful of the current kings, and the skalds whisper that soon he will step down and make the journey to Valenhall in far-off Arcadia. He is only waiting for a suitable candidate to come through his gates, bearing the traditional head of a linnorm. Jockeying has already begun among the younger warrior princes, who both seek allies in court and hunt the wilderness for the elusive monsters.

Gazetteer

Bildt: Bildt is ruled by Ingimundr the Unruly, a brawling, argumentative leader who publicly condemns the soft living of his southern brothers. Bildt is second only to Kalsgard in the quality of its shipyards, and many independent captains and second sons of old families still make raids out of the city, as Ingimundr turns a blind eye to their activities, except to take a share of their profits. Unlike Kalsgard, Bildt is decidedly unfriendly to non-Ulfen visitors.

Blackraven Hall: Trollheim's elite border guards, the Blackravens, ride from this granite-walled fortress on the frozen border with Irrisen. The keep's walls are topped with the burnt and severed heads of ice trolls and other monstrous servants of the Witch Queen who have crossed the border and fallen prey to the Blackravens' vigilant patrols. The hotheaded young huscarl Stenvast Trollkiller, second-in-command of the Blackravens, would like nothing more than to use Blackraven Hall as a base from which to launch an invasion of Irrisen to retake the lands lost in the Winter War.

The Black Tarn: Legends differ about what exactly lurks below the dark surface of this remote mountain lake—an ancient linnorm, a powerful troll-king, or a fearsome fey sorceress—but all tales agree that a wealth of treasure lies on the bottom of the tarn. At the very least, it is well known that the Ulfen hero Arnlaugr the Fearless walked into the tarn in search of his destiny and never came out again, his famed linnorm-scale armor and magical sword *Rixbrand* likely joining the hoard of whatever fell creature lairs beneath the black waters.

Halgrim: Situated on the Ironbound Archipelago, Halgrim is led by a female king (the term is used for both genders) named White Estrid, a pale warrior with almost white hair and striking blue eyes. Estrid does not possess the traditional linnorm head hanging over her throne, but instead has a live linnorm coiled up behind it. The linnorm, Boiltongue, does not speak, save to confirm that yes, it was defeated fairly by Estrid, and has traded its service for its life. Although Estrid's choice to spare Boiltongue's life was initially greeted with skepticism by the other Linnorm Kings, the significant increase to Halgrim's defenses granted by the linnorm has done much to force a re-thinking of the value of certain old traditions. Seven years ago, Estrid led a fleet of 15 longships in a raid against the Nidalese port at Nisroch, slipped through a Chelish blockade at the Arch of Aroden, and put in triumphantly at Absalom with her plunder, further increasing her legend.

Icemark: The northern reaches of the Lands of the Linnorm Kings are known as the Icemark, and are home

to the Varki, a tribe of semi-nomadic people believed to be descended from Varisians who traveled north in the distant past and mixed with Tian exiles sent across the Crown of the World. The Varki make their livelihoods through fishing, fur trapping, and herding reindeer across the frozen tundra. An independent and traditional people, the Varki pay no fealty to any Linnorm King, and pay little attention to national borders. They follow the reindeer herds wherever they roam, even eastward into Irrisen (apparently freely and without hindrance from the Witch Queen or her minions) and the Realm of the Mammoth Lords.

Ice Spire: For centuries, the Linnorm Kings, as well as their neighbors in Irrisen, have obsessed over an ancient ruin called Ice Spire. Rising from the frozen plains along the land's northern border, Ice Spire was once the lair of an ancient linnorm named Vyalldehun. While the spire rises jaggedly to a mere 40 feet, frozen steps lead down into level after level of monster-infested dungeons and ice caves still redolent of their former draconic occupant. No one has ever delved far enough below Ice Spire to find its bottom, although explorers who lived to tell of their experience say the deeper halls and chambers take on a vastly different, alien appearance.

Jol: Jol is nestled in the rugged uplands south of the Grungir Forest. Its king is Opir Eightfingers, who as a young man stumbled into the city during a snowstorm with the head of a linnorm lashed to his back. The rotted state of the head might have been due to his travails, but certain unwise individuals whisper that Eightfingers is more scavenger than hero. As a result, his rule is more tenuous than the others, with local steadings regularly ignoring his pronouncements.

Kalsgard: Kalsgard, on the northern bank of the Rimeflow River, is the largest settlement among the Linnorm Kings, and the seat of government of Sveinn Blood-Eagle. It is the most cosmopolitan of the Linnorm Kingdoms holdings, and hosts a diverse population of native Ulfen, dwarves, and gnomes, as well as traders from Varisia and points south. Kalsgard is the most open of the cities of this region to outside trade, and even supports a sizable Tian population in one waterfront district, for this city represents a terminus of the treacherous but highly profitable trade route over the Crown of the World between Avistan and Tian Xia.

Kalva: Legend says that the gods themselves cut the channel between Kalva and the mainland to keep their residents segregated. Modern Ulfen respect their wishes, for the Kalvamen are cannibals. Known for their berserkers and milk-white eyes, the Kalvamen keep to themselves, but rumors suggest that they are the sworn guardians—or servants—of unknown beasts in the island's interior.

Kopparberget: The far western peaks of the Kodar Mountains are home to a vast, open-pit copper mine that provides a significant portion of the Lands of the Linnorm Kings' wealth. The mine has been in existence for centuries, and often changes hands from one Linnorm King to another. Although the mine is closest to the kingdom of Jol, Sveinn Blood-Eagle of Kalsgard was able to wrest control of it away from Opir Eightfingers. Dwarves allied to Kalsgard now work the mine, a fact that has doubtless contributed to that city's prominence among the many kingdoms of the realm.

Lair of Fafnheir: The dark interior of the Grungir Forest remains unsettled by the Ulfen natives of the region, for it is the demesne of Fafnheir, a legendary linnorm who has resided in the depths of the forest for as long as the Linnorm Kings have reigned. Indeed, the very first Linnorm King of Kalsgard, Saebjorn Arm-Fang, met his doom when he ventured into the forest to kill Fafnheir. Legend holds that whoever finally slays the powerful serpent and claims its head will become King of all the Ulfen, and finally unite the petty, squabbling kingdoms into a mighty nation.

Losthome: Originally settled during the Winter War by Ulfen exiles from Irrisen, the town of Losthome still offers succor to refugees fleeing across the border. The inhabitants of Losthome keep a close eye on the border with Irrisen to the east, for they have neither forgotten nor forgiven the horrors of the Winter War. Losthome is an important source of timber from the Grungir Forest, sending felled trees down the Thundering and Rimeflow Rivers to the shipyards of Kalsgard. While Losthome has no king of its own, its economic importance places it firmly under the protection of Kalsgard.

Nithveil: Those versed in northern lore know that a rift between Golarion and the First World exists in the frigid Lands of the Linnorm Kings, and nowhere is this rift more visible than in Nithveil, the Faerie Kingdom. A city of strange, contorted architecture and narrow, twisting alleys that defy all attempts to map them, Nithveil is not located on any map, instead appearing in random locations across the land with each new moon. Nithveil is home to a bewildering variety of talking animals, nature spirits, inscrutable fey, eerie trolls with unusual magical powers, and even stranger denizens—to say nothing of those who have deliberately sought out Nithveil as a place to live and learn. Many of these folk are worshipers of the Eldest of the First World, with only a rare few actually hailing from the Lands of the Linnorm Kings. Despite Nithveil's ominous reputation, those who find their way to the city and brave its tortuous paths can encounter wonders aplenty that are not to be found anywhere else on Golarion.

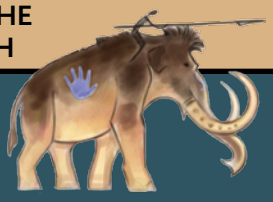
Orthost: The smaller island that makes up the southern half of the Shield, the land masses that protect the Broken Bay, this land is considered sacred by locals. Even the raiders of Bildt refuse to cross the narrow and dangerous strait between the two islands except to bury their dead in Orthost's many low necropolises, after girding themselves with arms and magic against the spirits of the ancient dead.

Trollheim: Trollheim has no king at this time—its throne is currently empty. Its castellan, Freyr Darkwine, is the ruler and commander of a large military force, which patrols the frigid territories along the haunted border with Irrisen. The patrols, known collectively as the Blackravens, hunt ice trolls in particular, but any natives of the Witch Queen's lands are fair game.

ULFEN SHIELDBEARER

Realm of the Mammoth Lords

LOST LAND OF THE DISTANT NORTH



Alignment: N
Capital: None
Notable Settlements: Hillcross (8,400), Icestair (11,300), Tolguth (3,900)
Rulers: Mighty Kuldor, Herdsman of the Bearpelt Following
Government: Loose alliance of primitive, mostly human, tribes
Languages: Giant, Hallit
Religion: Desna, Gorum, Rovagug

In the far, central north of Avistan stretches an ancient land where prehistoric beasts still roam. This region, the Realm of the Mammoth Lords, is a savage no-man's-land, a wilderness as yet unclaimed by would-be conquerors. The hostile nature of the realm and its natives has so far kept those who would seek to invade at bay.

As befits its name, the Realm of the Mammoth Lords is best known for its great beasts. Here, explorers can find several varieties of mammoths and mastodons, as well as herds of aurochs, bison, and stranger beasts grazing on the windswept prairies. Armored glyptodons and giant ground sloths browse on the tough, woody brush, stalked by cave lions and smilodons. Even dinosaurs occasionally range the Tusk lowlands, for many of the canyons in the Tusk Mountains are freakishly warm, creating perfect, albeit isolated, environments for the great saurians.

Incredible rumors suggest that the beasts that make the realm famous somehow emerged from an impossible underworld with its own false sun, a savage microcosm of dinosaurs and primitive humans. The Pathfinder Society has mounted five expeditions to this rumored inner world, but none have ever returned from the country alive.

HISTORY

Despite its remote location, the Realm of the Mammoth Lords sees a great deal of travel from other lands. From the south come the orcs of Belkzen, seeking to capture mammoths and other great beasts for use in their endless wars. From the west come servants of the hated Witch Queen, who are constantly seeking to expand Irrisen's borders into this realm. The greatest danger lies to the east, where the Worldwound pulses and slowly expands the borders of its Abyssal influence. The exact border between these two realms is inexact, but is known in the native

Hallit tongue as *hrungara*—the point beyond which the mammoths do not go willingly. The lack of civilization and the relative strength of the region's tribes and great beasts work well to prevent the swift spread of demonic influence, for the masters of the Worldwound see little in the Realm of the Mammoth Lords to tempt them at this time.

It is from the north that the realm sees its most traffic, and it is here that the realm's largest settlement can be found. Icestair marks one of two locations where trade routes over the Crown of the World connect to Tian Xia. Where most of the trade from Minkai moves along the trade route to Kalsgard in the Linnorm Kingdoms, trade from the northern Successor States tends to come through Icestair.

WAR MAMMOTH

GOVERNMENT

The Mammoth Lords do not possess a central organization. Tribes gather along family lines, combining with other tribes to form "followings" of powerful warriors and leaders. Upon the leader's death, a following chooses a new leader, seeks to join another charismatic leader, or breaks apart into smaller tribes. Leadership is determined by great and risky deeds, guile, and acts of heroism, so the turnover is high.

Currently, the most powerful of the Mammoth Lords is Mighty Kuldor of the Bearpelt Following—which boasts several thousand tribesmen. Mighty Kuldor makes his winter home in the ranges southeast of Icestair, and his followers profit greatly from the trade that comes down over the Crown of the World. He is a muscular giant of a Kellid, even in a land that requires brawn to survive. It is said that no human can match the heroic strength of Mighty Kuldor, who lords over his savage followers from atop his woolly rhino mount.

Other important groups are the Greattusk, Ice Chasm, Raptorscale, and Slothjaw followings, and tribes like the Night Hunt and now-deceased Six Bears. There are anywhere from 10 to 30 major followings at any time, with about 200 smaller followings that range from outcast family clans to bandit groups. Tribes and followings travel on foot, although they do haul their fur tents and possessions on travois pulled by mammoths and other domesticated beasts. When dealing with such groups, wise travelers do well to remember that Mammoth Lords' word is both bond and law, and that they are particularly suspicious of magic that outstrips their traditional shamanic ways.

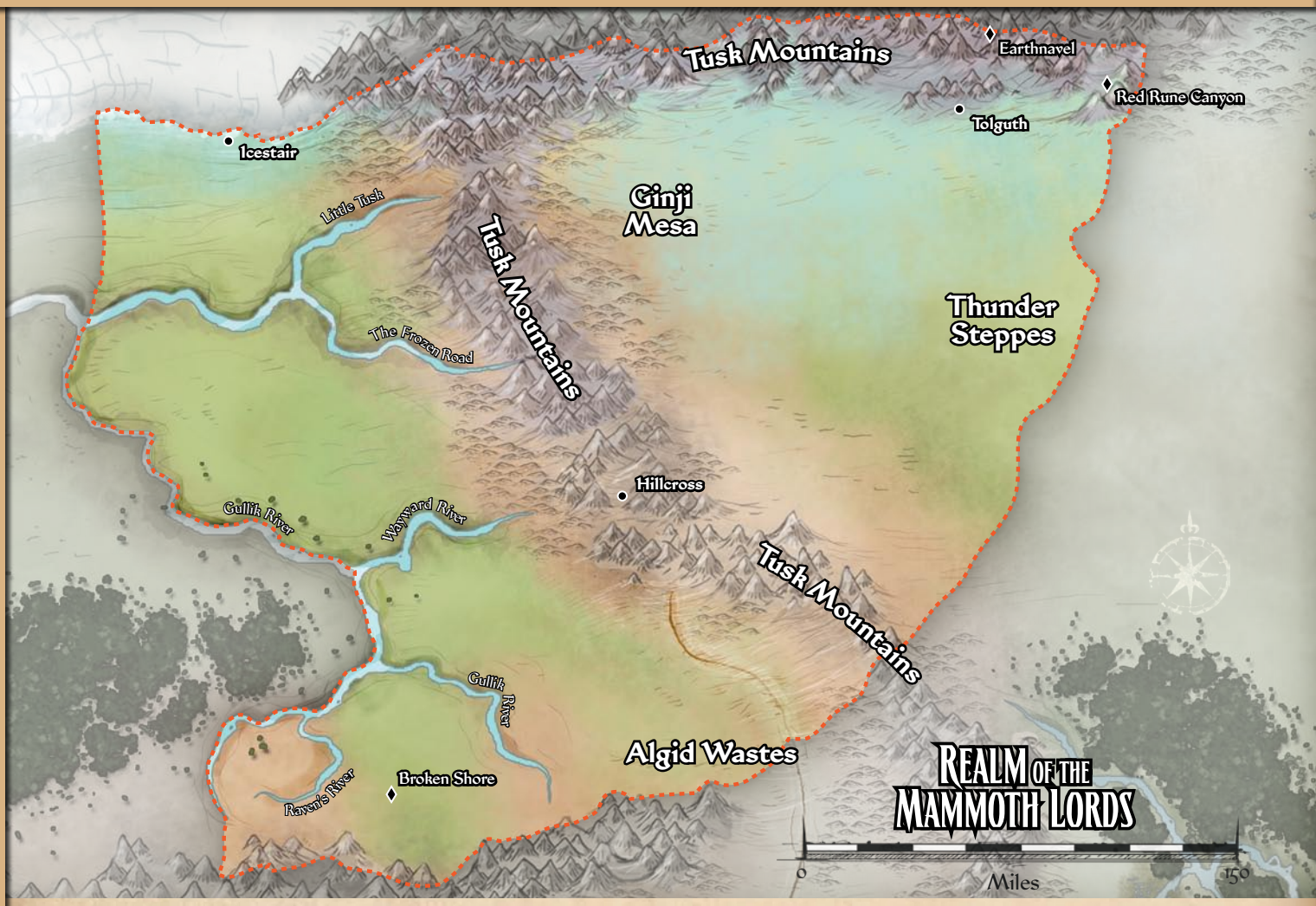
The Mammoth Lords have no capital city, nor even a cultural gathering-place. Instead, the natives of the land follow the various herds of great beasts and return to what passes for civilization only when they must. The Realm of the Mammoth Lords has few towns, and most of those exist as a concession to travelers. For the Kellid tribesman of this land, home is only a temporary camp, to be abandoned when prey moves on.

Mammoth Lord Kellids have a strange combination of hatred and respect for giants—they raid and war against giant tribes constantly, but have been known to take in the giant young they orphan as their own. Possession of enslaved giants is a sign of the power among Mammoth Lord followings. Heroes among the Mammoth Lords raid south into the Kodar Mountains or throughout the Tusk Mountains, seeking glory through destroying the giant tribes found there. They do not kill all they meet, but rather enslave young giants, teaching them the ways of the great open plains and treating them as honored brothers—some mystics revere these foundling giants with a near-religious fervor. In time, the foundlings come to see their captors as their family, and fight to the death to protect them and their leaders. The more giants that are placed into a lord's service, the greater the lord's power. Mighty Kuldor has nearly a dozen such beings in his thrall.

The Mammoth Lords move easily among the great primeval beasts that inhabit their lands, taking the ones they need for meat, fur, and beasts of burden. Part of their success is due to their deeply held belief that they are the chosen natives of their lands, but they are also aided by magical talismans created by their druids. These *zoic fetishes* (see Chapter 6) are collections of hair, stone, and fibrous twine bundled together in loose approximations of the creatures they are supposed to affect.

GAZETTEER

Earthnavel: Nestled within the crags of the Tusk Mountains are many deep valleys that open onto vast caverns, and at the center of this network of caverns and vales lies a great, tiered pit called the Earthnavel. The walls of the 13 levels of this pit are decorated with the skulls of dire bears and other fierce beasts, as well as the massive bones of creatures that trod the lands of Golarion long ago in another age. At the bottom of the pit is a small, human-sized opening that the locals call the *sipapu*, or Earthnavel, a stony umbilicus to an older, more primordial world. This series of tunnels is inhabited by feral beasts and the ghosts of fur-clad warriors from a bygone age—those who follow the Earthnavel to its deepest point come to a mysterious realm far below known in certain works as "Deep Tolguth"—a lost world ruled by dinosaurs, troglodytes, and stranger beasts.



Ginji Mesa: Though all flat areas in the Realm have their dangers, the tribes who walk and ride through this part of the land keep their eyes to the sky as well as the horizon, for the place is the territory of the Nightsnake. This legendary creature is said to look like a gigantic serpent with bat wings and to have the power to transfix its prey with a dire gaze; other stories about the creature lead some to believe that it is similar to the beast known as the Sandpoint Devil. The creature is blamed for countless disappearances of lone hunters, scouts, and livestock.

Gullik River: The western portion of this river marks the border between Irrisen and the Realm of the Mammoth Lords. The Kellid tribes frequently clash with the witch-guided Ulfen warriors in this area, making this place bloody, lonely, and prone to hauntings by the ghosts of dead warriors unready to give up the living world. Furthermore, packs of trolls—both of the common and ice varieties—range the low country along the river, picking off Ulfen and Kellids alike, though more often than not, the creatures are in the service of the sinister Winter Witches, acting as a regenerating bulwark against the barbarous Mammoth Lords.

Hillcross: Hillcross is the closest thing the Mammoth Lords have to a common meeting ground. It is situated in the largest of the passes that cross the Tusk Mountains—a deep ravine that remains free of ice even in the coldest winters. It is more of a permanent camp than a city of any reasonable expectation, but its location is used by a number of southern traders seeking to deal with the Mammoth Lords and with other travelers throughout the region.

Icestair: The largest permanent settlement in the realm, Icestair exists at the base of a glacial wall that links to the Crown of the World. The wall is marked here by a wide set of human-sized steps, carved into the ice and overlaid with heavy blocks of volcanic stone, that wind up the face of the sheer ice sheet. Great winches are mounted at the glacier's edge above, and are used to lower wagons and sledges that survived the perilous crossing from the Successor States. Icestair is run by Po La the Bureaucrat. Po La claims to have been a civil officer in the service of the Fire Empress Zai Ming until he ran afoul of that ruler's daughter and was forced to flee for his life. Whether or not this tale is true, he and his assistants arrange for well-armed guides to aid merchants in traveling through the hostile regions

that surround the Realm of the Mammoth Lords, and also oversee the upkeep of the Icestair, carving new steps when the old ones erode, and replacing those winches that collapse. In the perennial cold of the region, strengthened by the cryomantic enchantments of the Witch Queen, such collapses are not as common as they might otherwise be. The recent loss of Sarkoris to the Worldwound has significantly hindered the once-lucrative trade route through Icestair, for now there is no reliable or safe route to civilization. Po La constantly works to secure arrangements with the orcs to the south for safe passage, often allowing them to hunt megafauna in return.

Red Rune Canyon: Significantly farther west than the border with the Worldwound, the walls of this series of connected canyons have started to turn red and black, sometimes bubbling like mud or weeping a bloodlike fluid, and the local animals have turned ugly and aggressive. The tribal leaders suspect this is some new underground infiltration from the Worldwound, for the mammoths hesitate to approach this place and some parts have a definite stink of evil. Visitors (mainly foreigners) have noted that the layout of the canyons resembles a demonic rune (especially when viewed from the air or the nearby mountains), though opinions vary on exactly which rune and what its significance might be.

Thunder Steppes: A vast tundra, the Thunder Steppes reach all the way from the foothills of the Tusk Mountains to the Worldwound. Before the fall of Sarkoris, this region was inhabited by countless Mammoth Lord followings and tribes, but today the steppes are home only to herds of megafauna that grow increasingly hostile and mad with terror as the foul demonic taint from the east slowly spreads.

Tolguth: Tolguth, like Icestair, is situated at the foot of the Crown of the World, but it is, surprisingly, a warmer place, with great tropical ferns, rhododendrons, and cycads growing in the deep valleys carved by the glacier. The land is warmed by the hot springs and volcanic vents that run through this part of the realm, and the valleys are filled with great saurians. The area is also overrun with predatory creatures. As a result, Tolguth is a walled settlement, although creatures frequently breach those walls. The greatest danger to Tolguth is not the native creatures, but the strange and twisted creations that spill out of the Worldwound. Just as the western reaches grow ever colder under the enchantment of the Witch Queen, the eastern border comes closer with each passing winter, and someday Tolguth itself might fall under its spell.

Tusk Mountains: The Tusk Mountains both divide the land and shelter it from the worst of the Crown of the World's brutal storms. This rugged, snow-topped range is notable for its myriad passes and passages, yet it often rivals the Kodar Mountains for danger or height. To the west, the land is cold and snowy year round. The lands to the east of the mountains are free of snow most of the year. The Tusk Mountains themselves are well known to be the domain of the frost giants, and their legendary leader, Jarl Gnargorak, has long waged war against the various barbarian tribes. Jarl Gnargorak claims to be the rightful king of all frost giants—a claim that few frost giants are willing to dispute.

JARL GNARGORAK

Mana Wastes

MAGIC-DEAD WASTELAND

Alignment: LN
Capital: Alkenstar (53,600)
Notable Settlements: Dongun Hold (1,900), Martel (10,300)
Ruler: Grand Duchess Trietta Ricia
Government: Constitutional monarchy
Languages: Dwarven, Kelish, Osiriani
Religion: Abadar, Erastil, Irori, Torag

The ancient war between Nex and Geb did more than shatter nations—it shattered reality itself. Along the shared border between these two powerful realms, the nature of magical assaults between them escalated steadily in the centuries between –892 and 576 AR. What began as traditional skirmishes bloomed over the course of centuries of conflict into vast battles between wizard armies, legions of constructs, potent summoned monsters, and ravenous undead.

Eventually, the war reached an apocalyptic climax—mere armies of magical creatures and spell-slinging platoons were replaced by *wish*-powered devastations and necromantic cataclysms. When Geb sent his killing mist into the city of Quantium in 576, Nex vanished and countless of his followers died in that abominable assault. Geb then retreated to his own capital to brood and worry that his arch-rival might not have perished, but may instead have escaped. A tremulous peace settled over the two nations, but not over the border they once shared. Here, a new land was born—a place of devastation and ruin, where magic, when it works at all, seems to writhe with a chaotic life of its own. This land is the Mana Wastes.

HISTORY

For thousands of years after its creation, the Mana Wastes remained unexplored, empty of any real attempt at establishing civilization. Strange and deadly monsters that had adapted to the reaches of dead and uncontrolled magic periodically crawled or flopped or flew out of the wasteland to menace either the nation to the north or the one to the south, and bizarre survivals and curious shapes sometimes floated down the waters of the Ustradi River, which were prone to exhibiting unnatural colors or poisonous vapors. But very little was known of what quickened in the wasteland's heart.

Yet there were once cities along these borders, and some of those cities endured the devastation. One in particular, the fortress city of Dongun Hold, was originally a dwarven Sky Citadel located on the border between Geb and Nex. Dongun Hold played an extensive role during the war as a fortress alternately under Nex's or Geb's control. As the borderland war escalated, however, the dwarves of Dongun Hold finally had enough and used strange explosives and divine magic to seal off their fortress and lay waste to the region surrounding it. The interaction between the powerful dwarven magic and the much more potent magical energies wielded above by Geb and Nex may well have resulted in the first of the extensive dead magic zones so common today in the region. In any event, all outside contact with Dongun Hold vanished, and the dwarves who sacrificed their lives to save and preserve their Sky Citadel seemed to vanish completely.

ALKENSTAR FIREARMS

Yet recently, things have changed. In 4588 AR, a somewhat eccentric and ambitious man named Alkenstar, nearly captured for crimes against Nex, fled his hometown of Quantium and sought safety in the only place he could—the Mana Wastes. Here, not even the powerful divination magic of his enemies in Nex could find him, and certainly the nation's wizards and other magic-dependent enforcers were hesitant to follow. To them, flight into the Mana Wastes was as good as a death sentence. Yet for Alkenstar, a tenacious and creative man who had long since abandoned his interest in magic for the more trustworthy and workable sciences of technology, flight into the Mana Wastes would prove to be fortuitous indeed.

When Alkenstar, against all odds, found his way to the northern bend in the Ustradi River, he came upon the ruins of Dongun Hold. Amid the scarred surface buildings that had survived the centuries, he found others who had fled from the magical persecutions of Nex, Geb, or even farther abroad. In the ruined city, soon to be renamed in honor of its savior, these men and women survived against the strange monsters and unstable magic of the Mana Wastes. At the time of Alkenstar's arrival, these desperate fugitives were little more than feral scavengers, but to Alkenstar they were a nation. That he managed to organize these desperate souls into what would soon come to be known as the Grand Duchy of Alkenstar, a place where those fleeing from magical enemies and supernatural oppression could find safety, would have been sufficient to secure his name in the books of history. Yet when Alkenstar reestablished contact with the isolated dwarves of Dongun Hold, an even greater and perhaps more world-shaking source of fame awaited him. For deep under the Mana Wastes, in a realm where magic itself had died, the dwarves had invented a terrible new category of weaponry—firearms.

Since that day, Alkenstar has grown into a small but powerful nation of its own. It weathered the death of Aroden with very little impact—the strange storms that wracked the world being of little import to a community forced to endure unusual weather in daily life. And while many of Alkenstar's leaders worry about Geb or Nex attempting to annex their duchy, to date the only significant attacks on the fledgling nation from beyond its borders have come from the west in the form of raids by strange giants or attacks by the charau-ka armies of the Gorilla King. These latter conflicts came to a head in 4690, when the Gorilla King led his armies through a series of tunnels under the Shattered Range to make a surprise attack on Alkenstar. The Grand Duchy attempted to use its largest weapon against the Gorilla King—an experimental bombard. But when the bombard misfired, it fell into the Gorilla King's clutches, and while Alkenstar's army managed to finally defeat and drive off the Gorilla King and collapse the tunnels to the Mwangi Expanse, they lost more than just their pride.

Government

In a strictly legal sense, the Grand Duchy of Alkenstar belongs to Nex, and in theory the current Grand Duchess answers to the leaders of that nation. In practice, though, Alkenstar acts independently of its northern neighbor, and retains a careful balance of neutrality between Nex and Geb. Its location along the Ustradi River, deep within a zone of dead magic, makes it an ideal place for diplomatic meetings not just between aristocrats of Nex and Geb, but between any two powerful groups that might fear magical treachery from their counterparts. The Grand Duchy has grown rich on tithes and taxes from offering "safe" diplomatic venues in this manner, but with the rising interest in firearms and other technological engineering feats and inventions, the nation seems poised to become a major player in the Inner Sea region—if only it can avoid the dangers inherent to such sudden growth, as well as the dangers inherent in the surrounding Mana Wastes themselves.

Gazetteer

Alkenstar: Alkenstar stands atop the Hellfallen Cliffs overlooking a narrow valley where the massive Alken Falls cause the Ustradi River to drop hundreds of feet on its

journey into Nex. Alkenstar is forever shrouded in plumes of white steam and black smoke from the never-ending churn of the strange city's industry. Visitors to the city often note the omnipresent soot covering the frequently shined brass decorations and brick-and-iron buildings. A High Parliament of 73 ministers represents the numerous factions within the three cities and the small rural sections of the duchy. Engineers of these factions and guilds design intricate clockwork machines and breathtaking structures, while the city's metallurgists continue to refine the world's strongest alloys. Many serve tours of invention and duty in Alkenstar's impressive Gunworks upriver near Lake Ustradi, a massive factory responsible for the majority of the firearms that are slowly trickling into the Inner Sea region. Thanks to the expense of the weapons, their relative fragility, and the danger inherent in working with such explosive materials, the actual number of firearms exported remains relatively small—even against a growing demand. Most of the weapons are destined to remain within the city itself to aid in its defense—both from the dangerous creatures of the Mana Wastes itself, and from fears that another nation might someday seek to take the duchy's secrets by force.

Cloudreaver Keep: Cloudreaver Keep stands on the westernmost banks of the Ustradi river near the Nexian border, and is connected to Dongun Hold and Alkenstar via an impressive roadway known as the Bridge of the Gods that often spans gulfs and ridges along the river's ragged bank. It was originally built to guard the duchy's northern border, and the fortification bristles with powerful bombards and well-trained firearm snipers and musketeers. All trade upriver from Nex must pass through Cloudreaver Keep.

Dongun Hold: The nearly 2,000 dwarves who live in Dongun Hold work several veins of high-quality metal ores, as they have for nearly a millennium. A thin vein of gold runs through the mines as well, but it is the vast rivers of quartz and other crystals grown up around the gold that make the dwarves most of their wealth—thanks to lucrative trade agreements with Nex, the dwarves export their crystals east to Vudra.

Gunworks: Despite its size and its continuous operation, Alkenstar's massive Gunworks (which looks more like a small castle than anything else) produces very few weapons. Instead, much of the work and toil in the Gunworks is of the theoretical variety, as engineers and metallurgists

constantly toil to perfect the science of firearm production. The second-largest bombard ever created, a massive cannon known as the Great Maw of Rovagug, constitutes much of the Gunworks' defensive strength. With a range measured in miles, the bombard has mostly seen use in defense against giants and other incursions from the mountains to the west; it is relied on as a defense against the possibility that the Gorilla King may send a second army into the Mana Wastes from this direction.

Martel: Midway between the Gunworks and Alkenstar stands the small town of Martel. Composed mostly of two immense buildings joined by impressive metal and stone bridges over the river, Martel is where much of the Grand Duchy of Alkenstar's wealth is kept, deep within vaults below and guarded by all manner of strange clockwork and explosive traps.

Spellscar Desert: The majority of the eastern Mana Wastes consists of rocky deserts, plains of strangely colored sand mixed with shards of raw glass from ancient, fiery cataclysms, and jagged furrows and clefts in the wounded earth. The elements are deadly enough, with little water, blistering heat by day, and bone-numbing cold at night, but the instability of magic is the core of the desert's true danger. While much of the landscape is normally empty of magic, unpredictable currents of raw magic flow through the region like shifting dunes or ghostly windstorms. Often, these magical storms pass over with no physical manifestation, but just as often powerful storms of shrieking ghost-wind, shifting sands, hungry lightning, geysers of unbridled magical power, and worse erupt from the landscape.

Despite these savage conditions, creatures dwell even here. The majority of this life consists of mindless vermin mutated to strange shapes and sizes or lingering undead or constructs left over from the ancient wars, but isolated tribes of survivals can sometimes be found in the Spellscar. Most notable are the coastal tribes of six-armed, freed calikangs (see page 307) that once served Nex—with the loss of that nation's ruler, these calikangs fled into the Mana Wastes. Over the centuries, they have come to see the Wastes as a scar upon reality and have taken it upon themselves to "repair" the ravaged land by periodically traveling out of the desert and into neighboring lands to harvest magic, then returning to the interior to release the undamaged energy into the wastes in the hope that eventually they'll "refill" the emptied container of magic that is the modern Mana Wastes. Most scholars believe that this entire effort is futile, and that the damage done to the Mana Wastes is of a permanent nature, but the calikangs persist in their quest nonetheless.

Although less dangerous individually, the most numerous threats in the Spellscar Desert are wasteland mutants. Once, these were nomadic humans, gnolls, dwarves, goblins, and other humanoids who dwelt in the borderland between Nex and Geb, but with the manifestation of the Mana Wastes, entropic and destructive warpings of magic transformed them. Today, the descendants of those doomed tribes are a collection of deformed monstrosities who follow the rule of might. Those among the wasteland mutants fortunate enough to secure a working firearm gain significant advantage over their kin and rise swiftly to the role of wasteland lord.

Western Ravage: This sizable valley in the Shattered Range constitutes the westernmost reach of the Mana Wastes. Here, the lack of magic has created a haven for several tribes of hill giants, ettins, and ogres who constantly bicker and fight for territorial rights. Periodically, these monsters unite under a particularly intimidating leader—these times invariably end with an ill-conceived raid against the Gunworks, but a few of the raids have been successful enough that the canniest tribes now count a few firearms and even cannons (which the largest giants can wield almost as immense rifles) among their treasures.

GNOLL MUTANT

Mediogalti Island

LAIR OF THE RED MANTIS

Alignment: LE
Capital: Ilizmagorti (20,500)
Notable Settlements: Cuttle (420)
Ruler: Blood Mistress Jakalyn
Government: Secret society of assassins
Languages: Common, Infernal
Religion: Achaekek, Besmara, Norgorber

Mediogalti is the largest of the many islands off the coast of Garund. For many centuries, the island was little more than a remote location that, despite its size, couldn't be found on most maps or nautical charts. Yet with the formation of the Eye of Abendego, the western trade routes have had to change their traditional course, sailing now not along the western coast of Garund but swinging out and around the permanent hurricane. In this way, the Eye has dramatically increased trade to Mediogalti, yet an increase in trade is not something the island's sinister rulers, the Red Mantis assassins, necessarily sought.

The majority of Mediogalti is covered with lush tropical jungles that are home to an unusually large number of reptilian creatures. Anyone brave enough to explore the jungles finds thriving tribes of kobolds and lizardfolk, not to mention an abundant population of various breeds of dinosaurs, none of whom are well disposed toward mammalian trespassers.

HISTORY

The deep lagoon on the northern shore of Mediogalti served as a haven for pirates and freebooters for centuries before there was ever a permanent settlement here. Many of the pirate tombs and buried treasure caches on Mediogalti Island date from these times, when possession of the lagoon's anchorages passed back and forth from one pirate lord to another according to the tides of death, conquest, or retirement.

The Red Mantis first came to Mediogalti in 2559 AR, when their first leader, a priestess named Ximena, received a vision from the Mantis God that spurred her to flee Rahadoum just before the enacting of the Laws of Man and to relocate her fledgling assassin's guild on Mediogalti. There, she and her assassins began construction of the now-infamous Crimson Citadel, deep in the jungle-choked interior of the island. Even with significant magic and conjured aid from the elemental

planes, it took the Red Mantis nearly 4 decades to complete the construction of the towering structure. Yet with its completion, Ximena knew that never again would the Red Mantis be forced into exile.

The Crimson Citadel complete, the Red Mantis turned to their next problem—they needed a major city to serve as a convenient point of contact with potential clients. Ximena founded the town of Ilizmagorti on the shores of the island's northern lagoon, choosing the site already favored by pirates and freebooters. Because Ilizmagorti was kept free from the laws of neighboring countries, the pirates that had been using the lagoon for centuries started arriving in even greater numbers to restock their ships, sell their ill-gotten loot, and generally enjoy all the benefits of a free port. So long as they didn't get in the way of the Red Mantis's operations, the Red Mantis didn't interfere with them.

Since then, Ilizmagorti has grown from a small seaside town into a thriving pirate haven and a city in its own right. The reputation of the Red Mantis is such that no sovereign nation has yet gathered the courage to attack the city in force, and the appearance of the Eye of Abendego a hundred years ago has only further strengthened Ilizmagorti's defenses.

SIGN OF THE RED MANTIS

Government

Everything and everyone on Mediogalti fall under the jurisdiction of the Red Mantis assassins, a powerful organization itself ultimately ruled by the decisions of the Vernai (a ruling council of senior assassins) and the Blood Mistress. Only members of that elite organization can even hope for the chance of contacting them directly. The Red Mantis remain secretive even on Mediogalti, donning their iconic crimson-and-black armor and mantis masks only when on a mission. At other times, they blend with the crowds, maintaining the rightful fear among the public that anyone in Ilizmagorti could be a member of the assassin's guild. The use of the guild's signature weapons, sawtooth sabres, is allowed throughout the island and beyond as a form of implied threat, to keep the reality of the Mantis presence in mind at all times. As a result, for a region that caters to pirates and killers and worse, crime is relatively moderate.

Apart from the Red Mantis, the only other figure of authority on the island is the mysterious Mayor of Ilizmagorti. No one knows the mayor's name, nor even if the mayor is a man or woman—or even human. Every citizen of Ilizmagorti knows where to find the mayor, though: in a lonely room atop the never-used lighthouse that stands overlooking the port. Anyone with a complaint, question, or request for the mayor need simply go to the lighthouse and wait in whatever line is there. Every person in line is eventually admitted to an audience, regardless of time of day. All audiences are one-on-one, with no exceptions, and no audience lasts for more than 30 minutes.

Gazetteer

Crimson Citadel: The Crimson Citadel is the headquarters of the Red Mantis. Stories about the fortress constantly flow from the island's heart, like the waterfall of fresh blood supposedly found in the heart of the Crimson Citadel. If the most common rumors are to be believed, the Crimson Citadel has dozens of floors whose halls and rooms are filled with deadly traps. The lower levels—training grounds for Red Mantis assassins, filled with lethal snares, venomous beasts, and fiends from the Outer Planes—are often called Ruvari (or the Ruby Halls) because their walls and floors are purportedly stained red with the blood spilled there. The central levels, called Sivlamlik (the Honeyed Gardens), are supposedly a series of pleasure gardens filled with a near-endless variety of foods, narcotics, and pleasures of the flesh for the cult's assassins to use to refresh their bodies and spirits after successful assignments. The citadel's spires, called Odalis (the Lavish Heart), serve as homes for the elite members of the Red Mantis, including the Blood Mistress and all members of the Vernai. Hidden somewhere on the grounds is Faynas (the Iron Heart), a sanctum available only to the Blood Mistress that houses the Sarzari Library, said to be among the largest and most complete collections of ancient knowledge anywhere.

Crypt of Angus Amberleg: The most notable of the numerous hidden pirate crypts on Mediogalti is the Crypt of Angus Amberleg, the final repose of a dwarf pirate who sailed the Inner Sea 300 years ago. Amberleg's marauding remains legendary among sailors, as he sank and plundered no fewer than a hundred ships, including a pair of Taldan corvettes. His treasure is said to contain artifacts from ages past, as well as jewels the size of an ogre's fist. Rumor says the treasure lies in a stone crypt beneath the Mediogaltian jungle, built by slaves from the pirate's own galley who were then buried alive on the site upon its completion. Those few explorers who survived the foolhardy search for the crypt report the site is guarded

by the ghosts of those slaves, not to mention the undead pirate captain himself.

Cuttle: While Ilizmagorti is considered the sole city on Mediogalti, the island does hold another settlement on its western coast. Little more than a ramshackle collection of buildings clustered along a beach at the jungle's edge, the village of Cuttle is an outpost for the whalers who hunt the mighty behemoths on the Arcadian Ocean. Like all who come to Mediogalti Island, the whalers who visit Cuttle pay the Red Mantis for the privilege of doing business here (usually in casks of rendered whale oil), and many of the village's residents are likely members of the Red Mantis themselves. Still, Mediogalti is the westernmost point of Garund, and provides a convenient way station for whalers plying the southern ocean who hope to resupply their vessels as well as render their catches.

Dinosaur Graveyard: It is commonly believed that when they reach a certain age, the many dinosaurs inhabiting Mediogalti Island instinctively journey to a secluded spot deep in the island's interior to die. Legends claim that among the mighty bones of fallen dinosaurs lie heaps of gold and precious gems, all of the pirate treasure buried on the island but never reclaimed. The tales also say that when the graveyard is intruded upon, the dinosaur bones rise up and reform into undead guardians that kill anyone foolish enough to trespass on the sacred grounds.

Ganda-Uj: High in the canopy of Mediogalti's jungle perches a strange settlement constructed of swinging vines, swaying bridges, and tree bark huts precariously balanced on rickety platforms. This is Ganda-Uj, "city" of the arboreal monkey goblins. Travelers journeying through known monkey goblin territory do so in large, well-armed groups, for smaller parties are easy prey for the monkey goblins, who swoop out of the trees with nets and poison darts to take prisoners back to their treetop city. No one is sure what happens to such unfortunate travelers—it is not believed that the monkey goblins eat their captives, but they may be sacrificed to whatever foul demons the goblins worship. Scholars of goblinkind claim that the present-day Ganda-Uj is at least the fifth such city to bear the name, the fire-loving goblins having accidentally burned down the previous incarnations.

The Hermitage: This barren island off Mediogalti's southern tip has but one inhabitant, a doddering old man

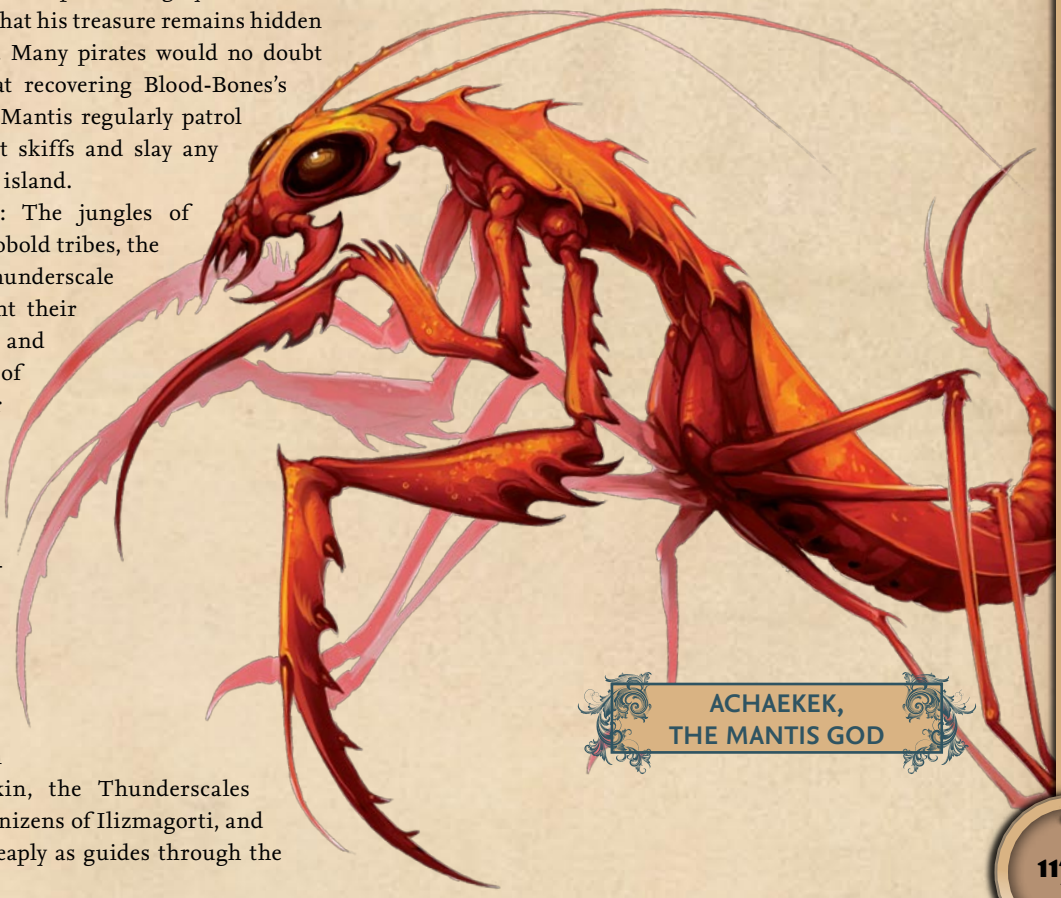
known simply as the Hermit, who lives in a rude hovel constructed from driftwood. The Hermit appears to be both deaf and mute, and apparently has no affiliation with the Red Mantis. No one knows his real name, why he is on the island, what he does there, or even how long he has been there. Some speculate that the Hermit may be related to the mysterious Mayor of Ilizmagorti, or that he has some sort of connection to the Eye of Abendego, as he has been witnessed standing in the open, staring eastward, when storms spin off the giant hurricane and lash the island.

Ilizmagorti: The largest settlement on Mediogalti is the port town of Ilizmagorti. Also known as the Scum Tide City, Ilizmagorti is a wild, unpredictable place that is more a pirate stronghold than a true city. Despite Ilizmagorti's popularity among pirates, no captain can claim control of the city, as all of the local businesses and citizens belong to the Red Mantis. No known way exists of telling which of the barkeeps and serving wenches are, in truth, low-ranking members of the organization and which are highly skilled assassins. Thus, buccaneers and cutthroats who swarm the city are careful to only mistreat one another, never the citizens, property, or other visitors of Ilizmagorti.

Mosquito Island: The Red Mantis use this heavily forested island as a training ground for their assassins, and it is off-limits to anyone else. Before the coming of the Red Mantis, however, Mosquito Island was well known as the stronghold of the infamous pirate-king Tyrax "Blood-Bones," and legend states that his treasure remains hidden on the island to this day. Many pirates would no doubt like to try their hands at recovering Blood-Bones's secret booty, but the Red Mantis regularly patrol the island's waters in fast skiffs and slay any outsiders approaching the island.

Thunderscale Warrens: The jungles of Mediogalti are rife with kobold tribes, the largest of which is the Thunderscale tribe. These kobolds paint their scales in vivid plant dyes and worship the dinosaurs of Mediogalti as gods. Their religious ceremonies are frightful affairs in which captive dinosaurs are released among the members of the tribe—those who escape death at the jaws or powerful feet of the dinosaurs are considered blessed by the gods. Not as ferociously opposed to non-reptilian life as most of their kin, the Thunderscales occasionally trade with denizens of Ilizmagorti, and can be hired relatively cheaply as guides through the dense jungles, whose hidden byways they know expertly. The tribe resides in the so-called Thunderscale Warrens, a vast network of caves less than a day's journey from Ilizmagorti. Popular rumor suggests the warrens contain wealthy gemstone or gold mines, or lead onto even deeper caverns and tunnels far beneath the island's surface.

The Merry Widow: The priesthood of Besmara, the Pirate Queen, claims this half-sunken ship off the southern coast of Slitherfish Island as a temple to their goddess. The priestesses who reside in the scuttled hulk are not associated with the better-known temple in Ilizmagorti, Besmara's House. Instead, The Merry Widows, as the priestesses call themselves, are a splinter sect made up of women who have lost their husbands at sea. The sect teaches that the Pirate Queen herself claimed their men, and that the priestesses have been blessed for their sacrifices. The flooded lower decks of *The Merry Widow* are home to a frightening variety of sharks and devilfish, and Mediogalti women who have grown tired of their men have been known to make "donations" to the temple-ship, handing over their unfortunate mates as sacrifices to the hungry servants of Besmara.



ACHAEKEK, THE MANTIS GOD

Mendev

CRUSADER THEOCRACY

Alignment: LG
Capital: Nerosyan (64,700)
Notable Settlements: Egede (39,410), Kenabres (12,330), Valas's Gift (220)
Ruler: Crusader Queen Galfrey
Government: Monarchy
Languages: Common, Hallit
Religion: Iomedae

Tales of demonic monstrosities spewing from the distant north spread swiftly throughout Avistan at the dawn of the Age of Lost Omens. The "Song of Sarkoris" related the fall of a wicked barbarian kingdom to horrors from the Great Beyond. "The Ballad of Prince Zhakar" told of the brave march into a chaos-warped land by a band of Mendevian heroes who died one by one fighting their way to the center of the blight, a "wound in the world." Ministers of congregations shaken by the death of Aroden seized upon songs like these and reports of vile creatures from the north, whipping their followers into a frenzy of religious fervor. A crusade surged north to Mendev to combat the demon-plague of the Worldwound, but in their fervor to save the world, these self-same crusaders may well destroy the nation of Mendev in the process.

HISTORY

Before the crusades, most northerners knew nothing of Mendev, a proud kingdom descended from Iobarian exiles and ne'er-do-wells. As related in the tale that still fuels new recruits to the crusade, Mendev's last prince died in the ruins of Sarkoris, near the rupture in reality known as the Worldwound. During the first few years of the Age of Lost Omens, the Worldwound's growth stood unopposed—yet as word spread of the demonic incursion, crusaders took up the call to defend the land. The clergy of Iomedae led the way, stepping out from the shadows of their bewildered masters in the faltering church of Aroden. Nobles in Cheliax, Isger, and Andoran, fearing growing domestic discontent fueled by dispossessed nobles and idle mercenaries roaming their countrysides, joined with the Iomedaean church to sponsor the first Mendevian Crusade in 4622 AR. Thousands of pilgrims soon made their way up the River Road from Cassomir to Chesed and across the Lake of Mists and Veils to Mendev,

where they joined battle and the demonic hordes were checked and even pushed back. The crusaders fortified their gains' and for almost a generation the frontier was quiet. The crusade was deemed a rousing success.

Talk of an easy victory was silenced, however, when the demons, having assembled a massive force, renewed their onslaught. The crusaders suffered horrifying defeats as the land itself seemed to shift and change beneath them, and the demons rode a wave of chaos into and through their lines. This disastrous invasion, including the total loss of the northern fortress-city of Drezen in 4638, triggered a Second Crusade. The crusaders once more threw back the demonic onslaught, and with the demons pushed back, the crusaders devised a new stratagem. A string of rune-encrusted menhirs known as *wardstones* was constructed to keep the worst of the demonic land's inhabitants and influence from spreading. The stones must be maintained with careful prayer and ritual, and remain constant points of attack by demons and their servants.

MENDEVIAN WAR BADGE

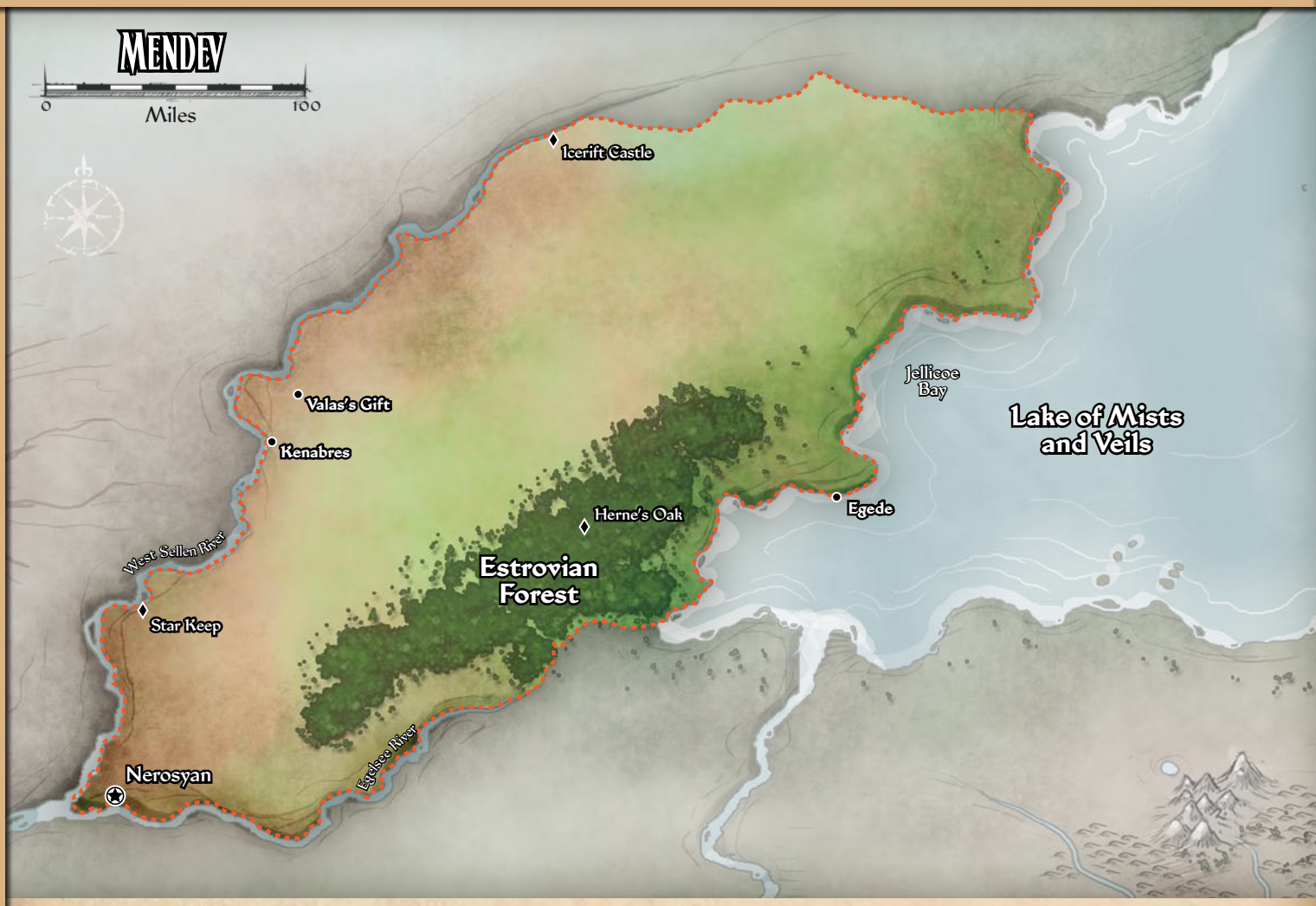
With their armies temporarily contained, the clever demons changed tactics yet again, and through a campaign of careful infiltration, seduction, and betrayal they began to undermine the fragile alliances that held together the crusade. This more subtle campaign produced several crusader defeats, but more importantly it succeeded in inflaming suspicion and paranoia in Mendev. The uneasiness is worst in the border town of Kenabres, where the aging prophet Hulrun leads a zealous pogrom against demon worshipers, and his passion for inquisition remains undimmed by the passing years. In truth, much of the Third Crusade seemed nearly as concerned with purifying the citizenry and the hinterlands of Mendev as with matters on the front lines. As far back as the First Crusade, many immigrating crusaders suspected the native Iobarian culture and its druidic faith of being demon-tainted. Hundreds of indigenous Mendevians and pilgrims have been burned at the stake in Kenabres alone since these trials began. Crusader leaders in the past turned a blind eye to this cruelty, preferring to focus on military matters, but the Order of Heralds instituted with the Fourth Crusade has made considerable strides in curbing the inquisition. Even in Kenabres, the ardor of the inquisition has dimmed somewhat, and many hope it will be utterly extinguished with the death of the aged prelate—but quietly here and there throughout Mendev, the screaming flames still echo the passion of her most fervent zealots.

Today, Mendev is a land of duality, a shining bastion of law and goodness hard up against the Worldwound, a burgeoning sinkhole of evil that threatens all of creation. It is a land of pilgrims, crusaders, opportunistic rogues, and a simmering clash of cultures from south and north. Foreigners engaged in the holy wars against the blight of the Worldwound now outnumber the native people of Mendev, who have been pushed aside and treated as an underclass by the nation's new inhabitants. Queen Galfrey inspires hope that the Fourth Crusade will return attention to the true enemy and the ideals of the crusade—and rid the north of the taint of otherworldly evil. Throughout Avistan and beyond, men and women of strong character and boundless ambition still look to the north with purpose and determination, and in their mouths the Acts of Iomedae are no mere words or stories, but a holy calling. Still, stability is fragile in Mendev, and a real brutality and lawlessness lurks just below the surface. All the while, slowly but surely, the reality-bending chaos of the Worldwound consumes more of the world, spreading its malign influence ever southward. Sooner or later, the *wardstones* will fail. Unless something changes soon, the Worldwound could eventually encompass all of Avistan.

Government

The noble Queen Galfrey wields considerable power in Nerosyan, but farther from the capital her influence dwindles. Individual crusader commanders vary in their loyalty and how many liberties they take on their own authority, and there is often tension between the religious and military leaders of the crusade over priorities. Looming over all are the overzealous inquisitors—Hulrun of Kenabres is the most influential but he has many sympathizers across Mendev. Meanwhile, the Crusade Heralds attempt to mediate and satisfy all groups in the best interests of the crusade.

The queen and her councilors know that the quality of the crusaders flocking to Mendev has become highly questionable, and yet they are desperate for troops and loath to turn away anyone. Still, they hear the cries of persecuted native Mendevians at the hands of inquisitors and thuggish "low templars" alike. With Mendev's resources stretched to the breaking point and division within the crusade even in the face of the dire threat of the Worldwound, there are few to spare to quell these internal problems.



All crusaders nominally fight under the white-and-gold banner of Iomedae and the adopted coat of arms of the Mendevian Crusade. Because crusaders are drawn from so many nations and noble houses, every fortification and field of battle in Mendev is a riot of color, as pennons, streamers, gonfalons, ensigns, and standards of all shapes, sizes, and colors snap in the ever-present northern winds. Some represent entirely invented titles, as unknowns from the south seek to create status and privilege for themselves in the north, since it is impossible for the Iomedaean Heralds to check every claim to nobility or knighthood as they mediate precedence and pride of place. The most honored banners, however, are those awarded for service on the field of battle—blazoned with sword, shield, or sunburst—which can be earned by a soldier of any rank, from the lowest to the highest.

Gazetteer

Egede: The port city of Egede in the southeast, on the Lake of Mists and Veils, is Mendev's gateway to the rest of the world. Most crusaders, pilgrims, and traders arrive by way of the River Kingdoms and nearby Chesed in Numeria. Trade with Brevoy has also blossomed with the recent fall of House Rogarvia. Many new arrivals, bankrupted by their long journey to Mendev and unscrupulous merchants along the way, settle in Egede and spend their time in support industries to aid in the war, or in constant prayer and fasting in support of the soldiers. Exhausted units are often rotated from the front to Egede for rest and relaxation, and many covert brothels and bawdy houses have sprung up, much to the consternation of the more puritanical crusader factions.

Egelsee River: Flowing out of the Estrovian Forest, the Egelsee River marks most of Mendev's southern border with Numeria, although the frequent Numerian raids across the river in Mendev's past have ebbed since the crusaders' arrival. For a relatively short river, its strategic importance to Mendev is immense, and not solely as a source of pure water and fisheries for the capital at Nerosyan.

Estrovian Forest: Southern Mendev is dominated by the Estrovian Forest. Long a source of timber and game, the forest acquired a fell reputation during the First Crusade. A great huntsman from Andoran named Herne Vilhaur was mortally injured while hunting a sacred white

stag in the druid groves of the Estrovian Forest and was abandoned by his companions, who named him a deserter and a turncoat to cover their own absence. The druids of the forest, their people being steadily dispossessed by the influx of well-armed foreigners, found in Herne the tool of their vengeance. They hanged him from an ancient oak in the northern reaches of the forest and laid upon him the "curse of the winterthorn," transforming him into a stag-horned avenging spirit. Warped by the druids' magic and his own undying hatred for them and for his faithless companions, Herne made his creators his first victims and soon forgot all but his own name, his burning malice, and the urge to hunt. In the years that followed, Herne's predations gave native Mendevians and southern interlopers alike a new name for fear in the chill winter night, passing down his awful curse to create a race of stag-crowned dark hunters who live amid winter wolves or great snowy owls. At his passing, these "hernes," who bore his name, buried him at the foot of the very oak where he had his unholy rebirth. This ground is sacred to the hernes, and while their progenitor's barrow is said to be rich in funerary treasures, travelers in the Estrovian Forest venture near Herne's Oak only at grave peril.

Icerift Castle: Mendev has relatively few traditional dungeons that have not already been plundered, thanks to a century of crusaders motivated both by piety and by greed. One little-touched location, however, dates from the First Crusade, when crusaders began construction on a fortress on the high ice near the Crown of the World to command the extreme northern frontier. Icerift Castle was abandoned when only partially complete, as it was decided it would be too difficult to resupply and reinforce. When the workers and garrison were to return home, crusaders sent to escort them discovered all had been slaughtered and their hearts torn out, without evidence of demonic taint. The native Mendevians blamed the slaughter on the legendary wendigo, and the site was placed under anathema and stricken from crusader records. Fell rumors persist of what lurks within.

Kenabres: The small city of Kenabres in the north is the epicenter of the radical zealot and witch-hunting faction under the leadership of the aged prelate Hulrun. Kenabres is also responsible for managing the defenses along the northern frontier, and the crusader generals Dyre and Marcovina constantly struggle with Hulrun's demands for crusaders to deal with internal enemies.

Nerosyan: Nerosyan is a fortress city, constantly being built and rebuilt. It guards the confluence of the Egelsee River, arising in the Estrovian Forest, and the chill waters of the West Sellen River, flowing south from the high tundra and the eternal northern ice fields beyond. The city is laid out in a diamond pattern in the angle between the rivers, with perpendicular bastions partitioning it to slow the progress of invaders. Dozens of towers surmount the walls, capped with slit-pierced screens sloped at high angles to shed heavy snowfall and to guard its defenders against flying horrors. The fourfold gates of the Cruciform Cathedral at the city's heart allow the crusaders to respond quickly to threats from any quarter. For those who know where to look, Nerosyan retains a subtle residue of its piratical past, but in general it is a city with clarity of purpose, indomitable strength, cool beauty, and a sharp edge poised against the corruption just across the river, fully earning its nickname—"the Diamond of the North."

MENDEVIAN CRUSADER

Molthune

TERRITORIAL EXPANSIONISTS

Alignment: LN
Capital: Canorate (27,450)
Notable Settlements: Braganza (5,870), Cettigne (9,300), Eranmas (11,970), Fort Ramgate (2,200), Korrholm (8,950)
Ruler: Imperial Governor Markwin Teldas
Government: Military Oligarchy
Languages: Common, Varisian
Religion: Abadar, Erastil, Iomedae

Surrounded by strong neighbors, the nine General Lords of Molthune champ at the bit to expand their nation. The devils and shadows to the south and west are hornet's nests Imperial Governor Teldas longs to knock down, but the mountains ringing the southern half of the nation are both defensive boons and offensive hindrances. A flurry of treaties maintains peace among the three strong military powers, but Molthuni diplomacy is always secondary to Molthuni conquest. To the east, Druma handily outpaces Molthune's coarse economic manipulations and remains too strong a trade partner to invade. Annexing Isger would draw ire from both Cheliax and Druma, so the generals instead quietly fund a number of bandit gangs there, keeping the region suitably unstable. This leaves Nirmathas, a geographically and politically insecure nation to the north of Molthune. Once part of Molthune, Nirmathas rebelled not long after Molthune declared its independence from Cheliax, and the General Lords are bent on reclaiming the Fangwood, even if they must burn every tree to do it. Yet despite the loss of nearly half its landmass to the war, Molthune is still a vast swath of land with a variety of terrain and resources, including mining, lumber, and agriculture.

History

Shortly after Aroden's death, regions and ethnic groups in Cheliax splintered. Chief among them was the frontier colony of Molthune, which declared independence in 4632 AR. Its success in this endeavor emboldened Galt and Andoran to follow suit. Using ancient maps of the territory to define new boundaries, Governor Kellon attempted to restore order and safety to his beleaguered people. Independence, however, does not equal stability.

Less than a generation later, the independent folk of the Fangwood further splintered, breaking away from the old traditions that treated them as little more than indentured servants. Acts of sabotage at the various lumber camps

throughout the region eventually led to open rebellion, and in 4655, the Fangwood rangers announced their own secession, creating the new nation of Nirmathas. The intervening years have seen six new governors drawn from the Molthuni Army, all of whom have served in the ongoing war with their neighbors to the north.

Government

The military oligarchy understands maneuvers and discipline better than civilian governance. Yet however blunt their statesmanship, the nine General Lords run effective, capable offices. Promotion to the rank of Imperial Governor is bestowed by the General Lords, and the position is held for life or until abdication. The current governor, Markwin Teldas, is intelligent, educated, and aggressive—loved by few, but respected by all. He adds an economist's flair to his strategy—many of his tactics appear obtuse, even counterintuitive, but more often than not, they increase Molthuni sovereignty and financial liquidity.

Most residents of Molthune fall into one of two distinct groups: city dwellers and laborers. The city dwellers, almost all of whom live in Eranmas or Canorate, are considered imperial citizens. Citizens may participate in local governance and foreign trade and move freely about the country. Most of the rest of the populace are laborers—indentured servants who till the great fields of the central plains and perform the common work that powers the Molthuni economy. While many laborers resent their position, most take pride in their work, seeing it as one part of a greater whole that allows Molthune to maintain its proud traditions while forging a new, independent future.

Imperial Governor Markwin Teldas recently proclaimed that any laborer can become a citizen by serving in the armies of Molthune for a 5-year period. While this decision enjoys strong popularity with the working masses, the elite consider it an abomination. Teldas, however, has bigger plans. For while Molthune has extensive resources, it has relatively few people to effectively tap them.

Under Teldas's direction, territorial governors began offering monetary bonuses for extra children in families. Immigrants are promised land in exchange for military service or labor for the state, and slavery is not only permitted, but encouraged—within strictly defined and lawful boundaries, of course. In Molthune, slaves are relatively fortunate; a careful slave with an understanding of the law can advance to citizenship in time—a road completely blocked to slaves of most other nations.

Although pragmatic, this population drive was born of avarice. Simply put, Molthune needs more people to increase its riches. More laborers, more soldiers, and more citizens ramp up every aspect of the Molthune economy. Teldas's plan to swell the army's numbers could allow him to retake Nirmathas, deter potential Chelish and Drumish predation, and increase the nation's wealth within few years if all goes well, thus quieting his critics (or at least, some of them).

Ancient law and tradition, tempered by military pragmatism, define most aspects of life and conduct in Molthune. Some wonder that anything gets done under such a system, but once activated, the Molthune Imperial Army moves with stunning agility, speed, and force.

Although overwhelmingly human and primarily of Chelish descent, the Imperial Army easily absorbs foreigners, and even monstrous troops, so long as they follow orders. Hobgoblins, centaurs, lawful lycanthropes, and even a few nagas serve the army of Molthune in highly specialized units.

Gazetteer

Backar Forest: The Imperial Army finds the reaches of the Backar Forest impenetrable. The sprites, satyrs, twigjacks, grigs, and odder denizens refuse to take orders, and frequently steal, trade, or vandalize imperial property for no discernible reason. Although the local army contains druid and ranger units, they have little more success than regular troops in enlisting or subduing these capricious creatures.

Braganza: The city of Braganza is ruled by a Prince-Archbanker of Abadar named Cole Ravnagask, although he leaves responsibility and authority over the city's militia and military matters to his brother Terandar, the city's bailiff. The Prince-Archbanker considers all of Lake Encarthan to be under his religious influence and views Braganza as the capital of Abadar's worship in the region. The city itself is mostly walled, though it constantly seems to be outgrowing its walls and expanding in size. The reason for this expansion comes not from an overwhelming influx of new citizens, but from a passage in *The Order of Numbers* that directs cities under Abadar's influence to "frequently shed the skin of the old and clothe itself in the finery of the new." Lord Cole claims to have the original copy of the famed book inside the Golden Glory of the Lawgiver, the local cathedral-bank to Abadar. Cole assumes that he need only build new homes and businesses to attract new citizens, but so far his efforts have resulted in more empty buildings than actual population expansion.

Canorate: A city of impressive architecture and public works, even the poor in Canorate live among splendor. Broad avenues, pointed spires, frequent fortifications, and a circular layout combine architectural beauty and canny defensibility. Citizens allow select laborers to live in fine (but wholly separate) accommodations as enticement to live and work in the city. Riffraff may not enter the walled Sweet Orchard section of town (where the wealthiest citizens live) without work or travel permits, and imperial enforcers are exceptionally strict on this point. In the Imperial Castle at the center of town, Teldas has an immense war room with a scale model of the Inner Sea region built on a yards-wide

table. The General Lords meet here quarterly to plot their movements and tactics across the region.

Cettigne: Cettigne was once a city-state, free of Molthune's rule and proud of its independence. This changed several years ago when the city's crops began to fail and its people fell ill. Starvation and plague soon thereafter hurled the city into chaos and lawlessness. Molthune offered its vast resources to save the city, but demanded Cettigne's loyalty in payment. The free city's rulers had no choice but to concede. Though the leaders of Molthune followed through on their word and helped restore Cettigne to order, the appointment of the nation's youngest General Lord as the city governor forced its traditional rulers into lesser positions of leadership—and the free people knew they were free no more.

Cettigne itself is a city of tradition and honor. Despite its recent period of instability, it proudly holds true to tenets the city's founders inscribed on the gates of the First Castle: Duty, Honor, and Trust. The city's flag displays four white castles on a field of green—the castles representing the four periods of Cettigne's history and reflect the four fortifications around which the city is built. A fifth castle is under construction, in the Molthuni style, to represent the latest period under which the free city finds itself. The city itself is surrounded by an enormous moat spanned by several impressive bridges. Despite its new obedience to Molthune, Cettigne is still patrolled by its traditional guard—the Free City Citizen Militia. With each new day, however, this militia slips closer and closer to outright rebellion as they continue to find increasingly creative and (to the city's General Lord) frustrating ways to ignore or undermine his attempts to send the militia to war against Nirmathas. Whispers that the General Lord may soon resort to more violent methods of persuasion abound, and many of Cettigne's citizens worry that they may have simply replaced one scourge for another dressed in finer clothes.

Eranmas: Molthune's greatest and busiest shipyards can be found in impressively walled Eranmas—this city is also home port of the largest military fleet on Lake Encarthan, a claim that may soon be rivaled by Detmer in Druma. Other lake nations are understandably wary of Eranmas's increasingly powerful navy, but Governor Lord Resket is vocally and materially only interested in using his fleet as a

blockade around Tamran—he has yet to use his increasing nautical power against any other nation on the lake.

Fort Ramgate: The settlement of Fort Ramgate grows visibly by the week. Commanded by General Hakar, a Kellid-born barbarian in uniform, Ramgate's defenses are magically and militarily state of the art. This serves the fort well, as Ramgate comes under daily attack from Nirmathi skirmishers—the fort is constantly in a state of frenzied repairs as a result.

Korholm: Seat of the First General Lord and home to Molthune's most elite soldiers, Korholm is both the gateway to Molthune and the nation's primary defense. Those traveling into Korrhom by land enter via the city's famed Green Gate, an enormous bronze and brick structure. A well-defended avenue stretches from Green Gate to the city center and the city's marbled Hall of Governance. The Hall of Governance stands proud in the middle of the wide avenue, forcing the road to split north and south around the marbled structure. Atop the hall rises a thin tower that stretches nearly a hundred feet above the city—this structure is topped by a working clock and an enormous gilded statue of Imperial Governor Markwin Teldas. The western third of Korholm is called the Arsenal District, and it is here that the nation's elite soldiers and officers drill and train before being sent to the front to face Nirmathas.

Plains of Molthune: The great Plains of Molthune host the nation's vast reserve of crops. With a labor shortage, farmers cannot allow their scarecrows to just idly stand by, and those who can afford the cost pay spellcasters to animate these figures into constructs to aid in patrolling the fields, protecting them from crows and saboteurs alike. The government dismisses the grim tales of scarecrows gone rogue and attacking laborers as ridiculous rumors—but the tales persist.

Shrikewood: Northeast of the city of Canorate lies the Shrikewood. The soil in this region of Molthune has never been particularly fertile, and as a result the trees of Shrikewood only very rarely grow to heights over 10 feet. The soil doesn't support much undergrowth, but the jagged and twisting hills make travel through the region relatively exhausting. The Shrikewood is only lightly inhabited, and the numerous gulches and nooks make it an attractive place for those seeking to avoid society to hide out. Many of those who live in the Shrikewood are deserters, criminals, or anarchists—people who, for whatever reason, seek to avoid being conscripted into Molthune's armies. Life in the Shrikewood is far from comfortable, for not only must these folk scrounge for every bit of sustenance in a region where little grows well, but numerous tribes of mites and kobolds infest the deeper furrows in the southern woodland along the banks of the Hungry Maw River. Giant vermin, small tribes of ogres, packs of worgs, and the occasional griffin make for additional, although less common, dangers.

IMPERIAL GOVERNOR MARKWIN TELDAS

Trilmsgitt Towers: Some time ago, three specialist wizard brothers—Nyl, Fedge, and Ciuq Trilmsgitt—built these three towers within a few miles of one another. The towers all featured similar construction, and all three were to be connected by a series of teleporters to allow the three wizards to more easily compare notes and research. Yet with the towers' recent completion, nothing has been heard of the three brothers—nor has anyone been able to penetrate the strange violet wards that have mysteriously appeared around the towers' entrances. The local governor would like to know what's become of the brothers, but mostly because of his interest in whether Molthune stands a chance to claim their estates if they're dead.

Umbral Basin: The pass between Molthune and Nidal is a wild and dangerous place. Tales of shadowy giants, roving bands of mute murderers with their mouths sewed shut, and a storm of black fog that twists reality are never far from the lips of anyone who knows of the basin. Whether or not the tales are true, the merchants of Molthune who travel weekly into Nidal despite that country's harsh conditions always do so with a train of wagons a mile long protected by no fewer than 500 mercenaries or down-on-their-luck adventurers.

Mwangi Expanse

UNEXPLORED JUNGLE WILDERNESS

Alignment: N
Capital: None
Notable Settlements: Bloodcove (5,281), Elokolobha (1,100), Jaha (5,600), Kibwe (3,800), Mzali (36,900), Nantambu (14,500), Osibu (9,800), Senghor (26,430), Usaro (8,790)
Ruler: None
Government: Countless tribal strongmen, isolated utopian enclaves, lost kingdoms, bizarre cults, unorganized nomad bands, and one enraged gorilla king
Languages: Polyglot, regional dialects
Religion: Angazhan, Gozreh, Lamashtu, Ydersius, ancestor worship, demon lords, the Green Faith, regional traditions

Some of the oldest ruins in the world lie throughout the interior jungles of Garund, cracked through by powerful roots and rubbed smooth by the passing of millennia. The reclusive tribal inhabitants from whom the forests and wildlands take their name trace their heritage to forgotten kingdoms of no little advancement, but they have fallen far since the days of their zenith, and their glorious past remains a mystery not just to the outside world, but also to themselves.

No totally accurate maps of Garund's interior exist, and the Mwangi human, elf, lizardfolk, and less-recognizable tribes of the Expanse seldom declare formal borders. Some nomadic groups wander the jungles and valleys without ever settling anywhere for long. Several locales within the trackless wilds attract potent malevolent spirits, sentient plant colonies, juju zombie cults, or similar hazards, making them shunned by right-thinking natives and explorers alike.

HISTORY

Chelish explorers first penetrated the Mwangi Expanse when the insidious Aspis Consortium established a beachhead at a scurvy port known as Bloodcove at the mouth of the powerful Vanji River, from whence its meticulous agents penetrated and exploited the near-limitless exotic resources of the vast Mwangi interior. Centuries later, during the reign of the expansionist Prince Haliad I, another wave of explorers arrived, establishing the colony that would come to be known as Sargava.

The sea west of Garund was quieter in those days. Outcast Mwangi and exiled pirate lords managed a mostly bloodless coexistence in the Shackles, but had not yet

developed into a serious naval threat. The vast wealth suddenly traveling north from Bloodcove, Senghor, and Eleder, however, attracted more and more pirates, and the coming of the Eye of Abendego in the first weeks of the Age of Lost Omens largely cut off the colonization effort from the rest of the world.

Stories of those early explorers and colonists still filter north to the ears of opportunistic merchants, excitement-starved treasure-seekers, and wily Pathfinders. The tales speak of lost cities and gorilla kings, of religions grown ancient by the time of Earthfall, and of riches undreamed of by the most fecund minds of the civilized north.

Government

While the mighty Ruthazek, the Gorilla King of Usaro, might claim to be the center of all power in Mwangi, the territory called the Mwangi Expanse has no traditional "capital." Neither does the Expanse lay claim to a unifying government, states, or even borders—it is a wild, uncharted, shifting place composed of wandering tribal bands, lone mystics, and despots who rule collapsing cities with sword in hand.

With the lack of any strong centralized government, Ruthazek's claims of command over the Mwangi Expanse are frighteningly legitimate. The monolithic, ruined city of Usaro is the seat of power of the mighty Gorilla King, a shockingly intelligent but brutal monarch of a society of coldly intelligent, bloodthirsty simians known as the charau-ka. King Ruthazek, himself the latest in a long line of awakened gorilla-gods, is the most honored earthbound servant of Angazhan, demon lord of beasts, and is a major threat to all humans in the Expanse.

Gazetteer

Bandu Hills: Sectioning off the southeastern corner of the Expanse, the desolate Bandu Hills are reputedly home to hungry spirits, the angry dead, and predators warped by the ruins of ancient, forgotten peoples. As the highest points in the aged and otherwise heavily eroded range, Mount Nakyuk and its surrounding foothills have long drawn native and foreign explorers seeking to mine their stone for the rich mineral veins that run beneath them, producing large amounts of gold and a significant amount of small but frequently flawless emeralds and sapphires.

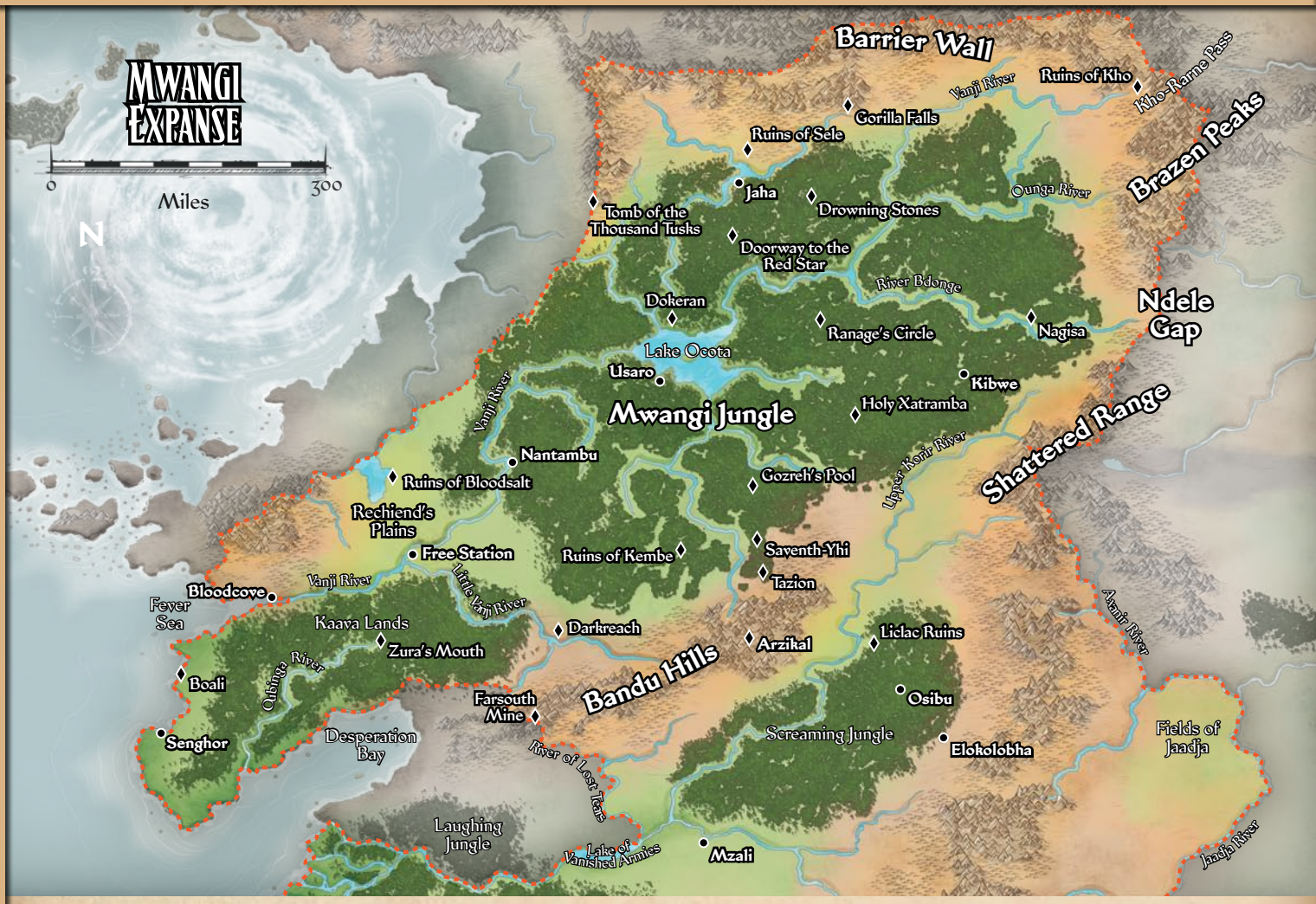
Bloodcove: Combining the worst aspects of Mwangi's brutal, kill-or-be-killed wilds with the cruel depredations of frontier pirate law and the dog-eat-dog philosophies of the Aspis Consortium, this scattered city growing amid the roots of dozens of huge mangrove trees churns out great wealth stolen from across the Mwangi Expanse. Agents of the Aspis Consortium, who range up and down the Vanji River, ever search for fresh plunder even as they continue to deliver an unending supply of treasures from throughout the Expanse.

Doorway to the Red Star: This mysterious ring of magnetic crimson stone hangs humming in the empty space of a collapsed courtyard, and lends its name to the twisted, long-overgrown cathedrals that surround it. The Doorway was once the seat of power for an ancient cult called the Throat-of-Nothingness, but the vanished lords of that nihilistic religion abandoned the winding buildings to rot. In later centuries, the Doorway to the Red Star was the stronghold of the King of Biting Ants, a sorcerer neither living, dead, nor undead, but somehow composed entirely of innumerable poisonous insects. The white-masked arcanist used this strange place as a stronghold from which he sought to devour the sun and rule the world, but it is said that even he did not truly comprehend the power of the Doorway.

Jaha: Stories speak of Jaha, the great crumbling city at the heart of the northern jungles—a bewildering array of terraced fortresses and irregular courtyards. This vine-covered, many-terraced wonder-city is said to have been raised from the black earth in an age before humans, or even elves, by unknown beings of great height and singular proportions now long since dead or departed. The crumbling city, which teems with life above silent tombs that predate the Earthfall, is ruled by the paranoid, wild-eyed astrologer-remnants of the Lergeni, a people wiped from the face of Golarion by disaster, madness, and suicide. The star-seeking mystics of Lirgen had spoken of Jaha in prophecy and dogma, recognizing the ruin's importance to the past and the future. After the Eye of Abendego destroyed Lirgen and most of its orthodox theocrats, a rogue faction of Lergeni astrologers led a splinter group of refugees to Jaha. By sword and axe the Lergeni pacified the degenerate, primitive lizardfolk inhabiting the city, before reclaiming the ruined structure from the jungle.

Kaava Lands: Comprising the jungles of the Mwangi Expanse south of Bloodcove and east of the Bay of Senghor, the Kaava Lands have long been a deathtrap for foreign explorers and natives alike. Teeming with predators and vicious, bloodthirsty humanoids, the region remains poorly explored and generally avoided despite the various temptations of natural riches and lost cities dotting the interior. For every dozen adventurers out of Bloodcove who return from the interior of the Kaava Lands laden with raw gemstones and half-worked golden idols gleaned from the jungles, a hundred more never return. Though the lower humidity and more solid ground underfoot make travel easier here than in some of the region's other jungles, tribes of demon-worshiping halflings and hostile pygmy charau-ka, as well as other, more bestial predators, more than compensate for that advantage.

Kibwe: The rune-walled oasis-city of Kibwe breathes ever in and out with tribes of humans, elves, giants, kobolds, scorpionfolk, and stranger beings who journey here to trade in food, clothing, and odd treasures from across the Expanse and beyond—including darkwood from the



Screaming Jungle, sunken gold from Lake Ocota, magical glass from the Ruins of Kho, and even stolen firearms from Alkenstar. The lone power-center in a nightmarish wilderness of jungle, mountains, scrubland, deserts, and arid hills larger than Isger and Druma put together, Kibwe is the default meeting point for tens of thousands of scattered peoples. The city's center is the petal-draped, tapestry-hung Adayeniki, a sweeping pavilion where courtship dances, multi-tribal weddings, and fertility rituals are held with every full moon.

Lake Ocota: Many miles south of Jaha spreads the treacherous Lake Ocota, home to swift, reptilian-toothed, flightless birds and mysterious aquatic beasts from antediluvian times. These long-necked predators occasionally range the numerous rivers of the Expanse, stretching heads full of needle-like teeth upon muscular, serpentine necks to hungrily snatch prey from rafts, docks, and riverbanks.

Mzali: At the southwest edge of the jungle lies Mzali, possibly the oldest of the ruined cities of the Mwangi Expanse and the most heavily populated by far. About a century ago, the population of the great overgrown city exploded when pilgrims from across the Expanse came to see a bizarre phenomenon for themselves. The shamans of a strange religion both enticingly new and unthinkably old produced the mummified remains of Walkena, a boy prince of the near-mythical original Mwangi society. Within the last 30 years, the manikin mummy sprang to cruel life, issuing orders to his prosperous cult that whipped his followers into rage against the colonists of Sargava and all outside influences in the Expanse, and open warfare has been the rule ever since. In the steaming-hot ruins of Mzali, the word of the Child-God Walkena is law—and it is the all-knowing shamans of his faith that bring the word of Walkena to the people. If the measure of a god's might can be judged by the swiftness with which he answers prayers or metes out punishment to those who disobey him, then surely Walkena must be counted as the most potent of deities—the rocks themselves cry out, and the waters boil, and the skies tremble in the hallowed presence of the Child-God and his advisors. Those favored of these shamans prosper in all regards, from skill on the battlefield to trade in the marketplace, while those who displease Walkena are staked out in the deserts for the Punishment of Seven Angry Suns.

Nantambu: The colorful agricultural river town of Nantambu, called the Song-Wind-City, where the men laugh and tell stories as they catch fish and the women weave sparkling glass beads into their curling hair, is home to one of Golarion's oldest academies of arcane learning, the Magaambya. Wizards trained here in the arts of spellcraft trace the lineage of their lessons back to –3502 AR in the Age of Anguish, when Old-Mage Jatembe and his Ten Magic Warriors first brought the light of learning back to a world overcome with fear and despair. Wary of the flying Tempest-Sun mages of Magaambya, even ape-warriors bearing the crimson marks of Angazhan hesitate before crossing the Buunta Flow into Nantambu's lands.

Osibu: Within the gold-laid streets of Osibu, surrounded by the glittering ring of statues called the Circle of Twice-Honored Women, the calls of the surrounding jungle are briefly abated, and the carnivorous plants that roam nearby turn back in confusion. The people of Osibu know neither thirst nor hunger—the rains bring fresh water with each morning and the fruits of the jungle are plucked easily from the trees. The great Dimari-Diji, Final Tree of the Elder World, watches over the ancient, democratically ruled city of Osibu. Here, the great hunched treant guards over the Nemesis Well and recounts to all who listen the Echoes of the World-Name. In Osibu, the wise-women practice a form of medicine unknown in the outer world, a rare art of mingling sweet herbs that seems to elongate a life for centuries and stave off the most virulent of diseases.

Ruins of Kho: One of the most infamous ruins found in the Mwangi Expanse is the corpse of the fantastic Shory city of Kho. The first of that powerful empire's storied "flying cities," Kho was also the first to fail. Legend holds that the tarrasque played a role in sending the city crashing into the Barrier Wall ages ago, and that evidence of this catastrophic event can still be read in the claw marks upon some of the ruin's larger buildings.

Screaming Jungle: South of Lake Ocota, across the spirit-haunted Bandu Hills, the Screaming Jungle looms like a wave of verdant terror on the horizon. The confounding tangle of towering trees and sentient, man-killing plants gets its name from the constant screeching of millions of monkeys that inhabit the canopy. The cacophony can be heard several miles in all directions of the forest, and most travelers notice the screaming before the woodland itself comes into view.

Usaro: Its walls decorated with tattered standards and human-skin drums, benighted Usaro has been ruled since time out of mind by the Gorilla Kings. The city's grim terraces hunch over the banks of Lake Ocota, a sight that inspires both tears and fright in those unfortunates brought to the city as captives or by the Gorilla King's charau-ka minions. The current gorilla god-king Ruthazek, self-proclaimed Master of Mwangi and Favored Son of Angazhan, considers mercy the most valuable of treasures, the rarest and sweetest of gifts, and he does not share it lightly—only the strongest prisoners receive mercy, while the weak are reduced to dancing in cages and performing tricks for the amusement of the Court of Hateful Smiles.

RUTHAZEK, GORILLA KING

Nex

MONUMENT TO A LOST WIZARD-KING

Alignment: N
Capital: Quantium (60,000)
Notable Settlements: Ecanus (23,400), Khulo (1,310), Oenopion (8,900)
Ruler: The Council of Three and Nine
Government: Bureaucracy led by a council of representatives from various political factions and arcane traditions
Languages: Common, Kelish, Osiriani, Vudrani
Religion: Abadar, Calistria, Irori, Lamashtu, Nethys, Norgorber, Pharasma

The Age of Destiny spawned countless heroes who left an indelible mark on history. Aroden himself walked Avistan as a mortal in those distant days, when each new century seemed to spawn a legend of its own. One of the greatest of these legends emerged on the east coast of Garund in the ancient city-state of Quantium, a wizard-king of peerless arcane skill possessed of unheralded creativity and eldritch genius: the archmage Nex. That hero's arcane legacy survives to the modern day in the form of a nation that shares his name.

Nex boasts one of the most cosmopolitan and refined cities of Garund's east coast, with the capital at Quantium rivaling the extravagance of Oppara in Taldor or Sothis in the era of the legendary God-Kings of Osirion. Monumental palaces and impossible spires crowd the city's chaotic streets, which also wind past hanging gardens, open-air mazes, and bustling souks. The crumbling statues of Nex and the ancient heroes who traveled with him and forged his kingdom look out upon the city's roofs and balconies, a constant reminder of the man who made Quantium and the surrounding land his own.

HISTORY

In his time, Nex traveled the world and the Great Beyond, established important tenets of magical theory that remain influential today, and vastly enriched his private nation through his adventures and the judicious application of *wish*-level magics. Territorial ambitions in the south eventually brought Nex into conflict with another arcane warlord, the calculating necromancer Geb, inheritor of a rich magic tradition tied to a lost colony of ancient Osirion.

Nex's conflict with Geb spanned centuries, with each wizard-king extending his life through the application of certain poultices and the imbibing of powerful arcane elixirs. During these struggles, a series of foul workings by Geb blighted the rural lands of Nex. In response to

the disastrous touch of Geb, plants refused to thrive in Nex's wildlands. The wastelands have lain barren ever since, inhabited by outlaws and the descendents of great magical beasts summoned during the years of conflict with the south.

As the war dragged on, Nex finally achieved true immortality when he created a personal demiplane at a fluxpoint of multiversal energy, a domain the wizard-king dubbed the Crux of Nex. The immortal archmage carved a shard from the Crux to erect the impossible spire from which he launched an unsuccessful siege of Absalom, and again at his palace in Quantium to form the mysterious Refuge of Nex, a last-resort bunker to shelter himself from his enemies.

Nex vanished after a disastrous Gebbite attack bathed his capital in a cloying, poisonous fog more than 4 millennia ago. Somehow, the confused remnants of his authority managed to keep Geb at bay. In the centuries since, the nation of Nex has fallen into the hands of a succession of arcane fraternities and cults of personality that purport to represent the departed archmage's plan for the subjects he left behind. The contentious Council of Three and Nine is an attempt to build consensus within Nex's infamous factions, and while the nation remains characteristically crippled with bureaucracy, it nonetheless has never been conquered, despite the best efforts of Geb and political forces from within and without.

ARCLORD OF NEX

The ancient war with Geb left an eternal stain upon Nex and its culture, but open warfare with the necromancers of the south faded into reluctant trade centuries ago, and these days Nex imports most of its foodstuffs from Gebbite plantations worked by zombie slaves. Obstinate factions in the capital, notably the star-crossed Arclords of Nex, argue that the current state of détente would enrage the wizard who gave his name to the kingdom, but Nex last appeared on the world of Golarion centuries ago, and history marches ever forward without him.

Government

Immediately following Nex's disappearance, the scheming political factions only he could balance fell into a siege of assassination and opportunism that threatened the nation's existence. After centuries of disastrous infighting, the ever-present threat of Geb's undead hordes unified Nex's sects into the squabbling Council of Three and Nine. Holding court in the Bandeshar, Nex's opulent abandoned palace, the 12 administrators decide the fate of the nation, regulate trade and the forbidden arts, adjudicate treaties and legal appeals, and manage military affairs.

The Three dominate the council, and any agreement by two of them is sufficient to veto the consensus of the Nine. While assassination and skullduggery keep the lower ranks of the council in constant flux, the Three remain firmly entrenched, having not changed their membership in more than a century. Their ranks include the archmage Agrellus Kisk, master of the Arclords of Nex and the newest member of the Three. Long on the outskirts of Nexian politics, the Arclords trace their origins to the household servants of Nex himself, and claim to represent the purest form of his intentions in the modern world, culling clues of his opinions and schemes from a variety of personal diaries, magical workbooks, and scrolls (some, it must be said, of highly controversial provenance). Beside Kisk upon the Central Dais in the Bandeshar sit Iranez of the Orb, a scheming witch of unparalleled beauty and arcane mastery, and the pech Elder Architect Oblosk, Castellan of the Bandeshar and the only member of the Council of Three and Nine to have known Nex in life. Oblosk personally designed Nex's grand palace and a number of other important structures in Quantium, and his knowledge of the city's history, secret passages, and forbidden chambers serves the Council well, though the taciturn creature is slow to take sides in purely political matters.

Membership in the lesser chamber of Nex's ruling council shifts constantly, but a few notable personages have managed to carve out stable positions for themselves. Foremost among these are Borume, master alchemist of Oenopion, and Dunn Palovar, chief Fleshforger of Ecanus. These legendary rivals represent the interest of Nex's "second cities," building voting blocs of their fellow councilors in an effort to undercut one another. Remarkably, neither councilor physically sits in on the council's irregular meetings; Borume transfers his consciousness into an automaton of his own design, while Palovar channels his personality into an unsettling flesh golem manufactured in his city's notorious fleshforges.

Other representatives include Master Phade, an unfailingly polite invisible stalker dressed in a distinctive full-body suit of leather armor who is thought to be Quantium's Master of Assassins; Gen Hendrikan, chief Riddler of the capital's sprawling Temple of Abraxas known as Scrivenbough; Elemion, Third of the Manymen, a tripartite creature who represents the largest roving tribe of wasteland mutants; as well as high clerics of Nethys and Pharasma, an agent of Nex's powerful Merchant's League, and an ever-changing array of politicians serving one or more of the nation's numerous squabbling factions.

Gazetteer

Ecanus: South of Oenopion lies the sprawling city of Ecanus, a fortress town created to fuel the war effort against Geb and the hub of Nex's awe-inspiring military. Battlemages trained in warfare and tactical evocation form the backbone of the mobile force, backed up by nightmarish monstrous beasts churned out by the city's monumental fleshforges. Building-sized artifacts created by Nex himself, the fleshforges are responsible for many of the murderous creatures that haunt the wastelands between Nex's cities, the Barrier Wall mountains, and even the eastern jungles of the Mwangi Expanse. Capable of generating quasi-living minions ranging from simple house-golems to titanic warbeasts equal in power to the greatest dragons, these looming monuments date back thousands of years, and in that time they have become increasingly unreliable.

The Miasmere: East of Quantium lies the Miasmere, a soiled expanse of water so choked with foul chemicals, arcane runoff, and natural pollutants that its odor clouds the city streets and its caustic chemicals eat at the hulls of unprotected ships. In times of crisis, elementalists churn the befouled waters to bring scalding waves down upon enemy ships, whose wreckage and melted human debris contribute to the mess.

Oenopion: Deep in the barren interior of Nex, the alchemists of Oenopion toil at the creation of the eldritch elixirs and potions so important to the nation's economy. The craftiest, most reliable homunculi come from Oenopion, which also boasts an impressive golemworks and an immense ooze colony. The latter dominates the town's miasmatic central lake, forming a sentient hivemind useful for potent divinations and the utter disposal of faulty magical items, renegade constructs, and enemies of the state.

Quantium: Society in Nex centers around Quantium, as it has for countless centuries. The city attracts a wide assortment of inhabitants, from ambitious wizards seeking to perfect their craft in one of Quantium's vaunted arcane universities, to outsiders summoned to Golarion by long-dead mystics, to merchants from Druma, Jalmeray, Vudra, and even Tian Xia. The city thrives upon its diversity of thought, trade, and influence and shows little tolerance for xenophobes. A creature considered a monster or worse in the ports of the Inner Sea is merely a citizen in Nex, where legend holds almost anything is possible.

Notable marvels of the capital include the Bandeshar, an architectural masterpiece that retains its glory despite millennia of magical disasters and political intrigue. The lower dungeons of the Bandeshar contain an entrance to the fabled Refuge of Nex, an unpredictable demiplane that offers escape without the opportunity of return. Thousands of explorers, refugees, and thieves have become trapped in the Refuge over the centuries, not the least of whom is Nex himself. The central parade ground known as the Warlock's Walk features numerous impressive sights. A massive, multi-sculptured marble fountain dominates the center of the vast public space, its living waters dancing to the delight of onlookers.

Two immense iron golems, one of greenish hue and the other crimson, silently circle the perimeter as they have since Nex's time. The stoic warriors, armed with swords and clad in archaic armor, halt for nothing as they march at opposite sides of their great circuit. Legend suggests they will fight in the city's defense in a time of great struggle, but since prophecies no longer hold the power they once did, expectations regarding the golems of Quantium are no longer certain.

Valkus Isle: Despite its toxic waters, the Miasmere is not the most reviled pollutant east of Quantium's harbor. That distinction belongs to Valkus Isle, the immense mountainous island off Nex's coast, which for centuries has served as an inescapable prison colony for the worst killers, monsters, political prisoners, villains, and would-be conquerors to threaten the nation. Valkus Isle's single harbor town of Khulo was once the most exclusive neighborhood of Quantium, hosting the immense retreats of Nex's high nobility. The wizard-king himself erected a pleasure palace deep in the island's rugged interior. Here he conducted some of his earliest experiments in dimensional warping, stealing creatures, landscapes, and environments from throughout the Great Beyond and binding them to the island. It didn't work as planned, and the unpredictable warp and abducted creatures turned upon the vacationing nobles and plantation workers, overrunning Valkus Island and threatening the capital at Quantium. Nex and his greatest apprentices initiated a failsafe known as the *Stalwart Wall*, a magical barrier surrounding the island, trapping everything within. They ensured, however, that this barrier worked in only one direction, and since then Valkus Island has been a prison and depository for the most heinous criminals and most dangerous magical experiments to haunt the capital.

The Well of Lies: Deep within a vast rift at the center of Nex's wasteland lies an ancient dungeon complex thought to have been built by the cyclopes who ruled much of Garund in the murky centuries of prehistory before the fall of the *Starstone*. Nex and his mortal companions first explored this locale following up on leads discovered chiseled into the walls of ruined cities in the Mwangi Expanse, and the Arclords whisper that the unique scrying pools in the lowest depths of the caverns are what convinced the archmage to found his kingdom here in the Age of Destiny. Following the directives of the mysterious pools and their tormented spiritual guardians eventually led to ruin, and the caverns, called Golanoth by the cyclopes, became known as the Well of Lies, sealed and forbidden by the decree of Nex himself. In the years since his disappearance, the enforcement of this interdict has lessened, and now the Well lies open for the few brave souls willing to plumb its depths and tempt its questionable interpretation of fate.

QUANTIUM GOLEM

Nidal

SHADOWY SERVITOR STATE

Alignment: LE
Capital: Pangolais (18,900)
Notable Settlements: Albatross (388), Brimstone Springs (794), Nisroch (24,320), Orolo's Quay (1,280), Ridwan (11,400)
Rulers: The Umbral Court
Government: Militaristic theocracy
Languages: Common, Shadowtongue, Varisian
Religion: Asmodeus, Desna, Zon-Kuthon

Ruled by divine decree enforced with lethal powers of darkness and horror, Nidal is almost perfectly controlled by the Umbral Court—but "almost" is never enough. Eternally fearful of losing its mandate from the Midnight Lord, the court tightens its grip ever more firmly around the blasphemers who sing praises to Desna, who trade in diabolical secrets, or who would dare usurp the supremacy of Zon-Kuthon.

HISTORY

When Earthfall cast Golarion into a thousand years of darkness, the warrior clans of ancient Nidal cried out for the protection of their long-forgotten gods. Their pleas instead reached the ears of a malignant entity from a distant corner of the Great Beyond who uniquely appreciated their predicament and delighted in their fear of the dark. The immortal being—a powerful being from the Plane of Shadow known as Zon-Kuthon—offered the terrified humans succor from the darkness in exchange for unquestioned obedience for eternity. Facing extinction with the blotting out of the sun, the proud warrior-lords of Nidal relented, ensuring the nation's eternal survival while enshackling its freedom. Thus did the rulers of Nidal become shadowbound to the Midnight Lord, an eternal bondage revealed by the dull black eyes of Nidal's Umbral Court.

GOVERNMENT

The balance of power within the Umbral Court remains impenetrable to outsiders—how much sway the creeping voice of shadow has over the affairs of state is unknown. Lesser citizens of Nidal know only that opposition to the Umbral Court means death and swiftly defer to the orders of even the most minor of their lords. Some members of the aristocracy are more powerful and influential than others, of course, and the most powerful include the Black Triune of Pangolais; the dark druid Eloiander of Ridwan; and the

persuasive sorcerer Kholas, adviser to Queen Abrogail II in Egorian.

Shadow-wielding arcanists trained in Ridwan and Pangolais support the diabolical legions of Cheliax's transformed government. For centuries after their humiliation in the Everwar, the folk of Nidal bristled at Chelish occupation and influence, but that all changed not so many years ago. During the struggle for the throne following Aroden's death, the Umbral Court threw its support behind the House of Thrune, which rewarded the act by withdrawing Chelish agents from Nidal once its own power was assured. Now Nidal stands once again as its own sovereign entity, yet remains intimately entwined with the darkness at Egorian.

Among the gray-clad intelligentsia of Pangolais, it is widely assumed that their own subjugation to Cheliax was merely a clever gambit by the Midnight Lord, for does not the pale and tiny spider invite the great and glistening dragonfly into his home, the better to make a meal? As the diabolical majestrix relies more heavily upon the grim power of Nidal to maintain her rule, those who whisper in the shadows of the Uskwood quietly prepare to make slaves of their onetime masters.

In the north, roving wild among the unnamed foothills near Conqueror's Bay, hidden agents of the goddess Desna toil ceaselessly to undo the black works of Zon-Kuthon's faithful. Here, worship of the Song of the Spheres is a hushed and illegal practice, carried out in extended familial rites beneath the open stars. If the humble, longhaired priests and priestesses of Luck and Dream can somehow break the stranglehold of the Umbral Court, it is hoped that the Midnight Lord himself will be swept back into his prison in the Great Beyond, as shadows retreat before the dawn.

Gazetteer

Albatross: This quiet port town leans over ragged coastal cliffs like a contemplative suicide. While home to fewer than 400 people, the town's namesake sea birds congregate in a population several times that. The traditions of the stormy point's simple fisherfolk hold the birds in high regard, with the eldest residents claiming to be able to foretell coming storms, deaths, and ill omens in the flights of the dusky flocks.

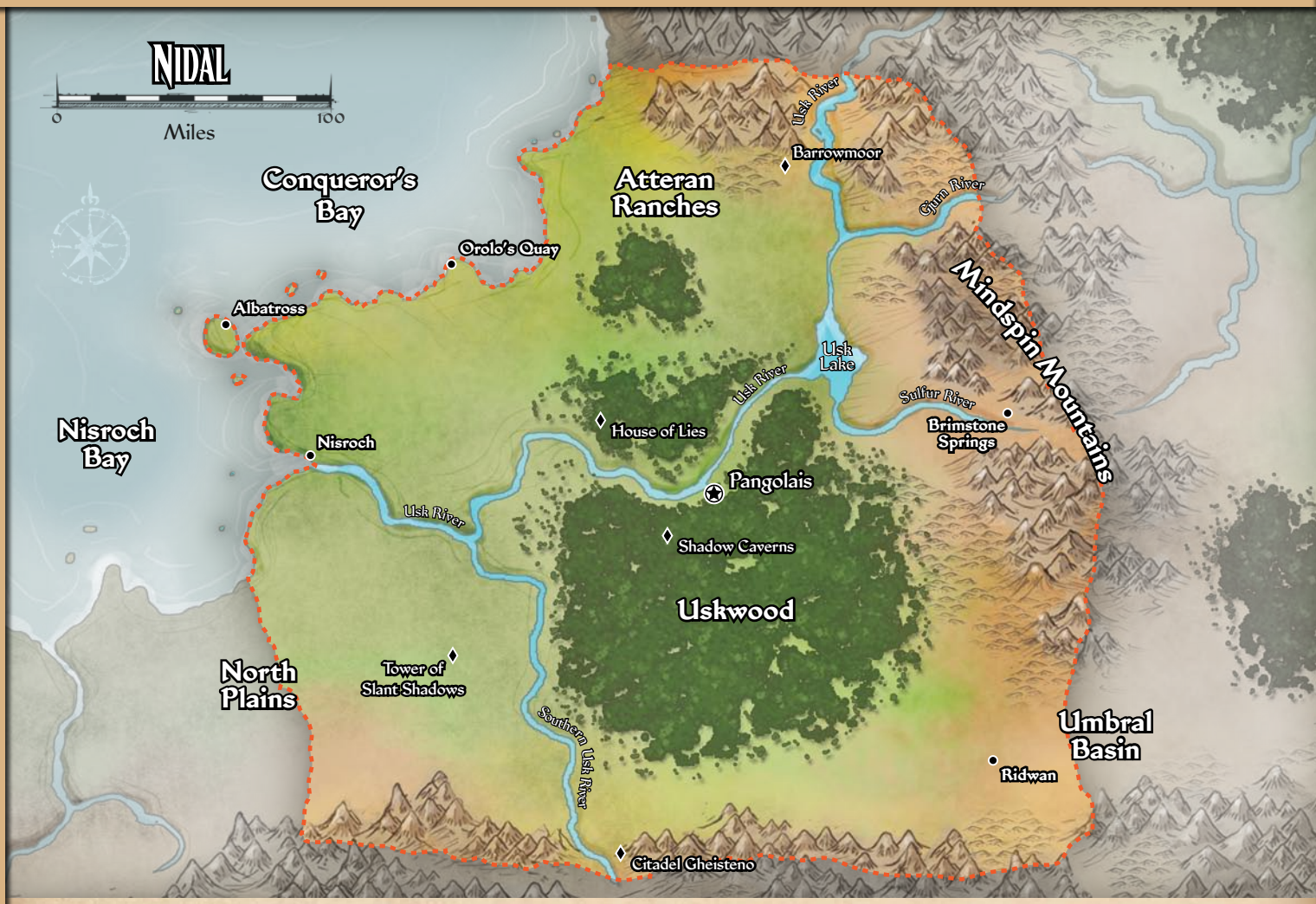
Atteran Ranches: A confederacy of horse ranchers, breeders, and trainers, the proud, hard-living families of northern Nidal trace their heritage back over the centuries to the mounted tribes that once dominated the region. Maintaining the traditions of their ancestors, these stoic folk wield spears with deadly aptitude and raise a dark, disciplined breed of horses known as nidarrmars, while also guarding the hill country's coveted herds of swift wild horses called chiardmars. With most of the farms and ranches isolated by miles of scrub plains and gray hills, the prosperous but territorial Atteran family protects the countryside from interlopers and thieves, but also polices the business practices of lesser families. Vaide Atteran, charming patriarch of the Atteran family, claims that his family merely seeks to keep the Umbral Court and foreigners from exploiting the honest ranchers—a challenge several generations of Atterans have proven remarkably adept at confronting—yet none can deny that the largest and most lucrative contracts remain in his family's control. Recently the Umbral Court has come to suspect several families in the region of harboring Desnan dissidents. The Atterans have managed to keep the Court's agents out of the region, but only by promising to expunge Desna's worship in the area themselves, leading them to hire outside muscle and form posses locally dubbed "dream hunters."

Barrowmoor: Among these rocky hills rise the overgrown burial mounds of hundreds of ancient Nidalese horselord heroes, chieftains, and tyrants. Regional taboos forbid intrusion upon the ancient charcoal-encrusted mounds, with tales telling of all manner of forgotten curses and ancient dooms, yet the brave and foolish still dare to trespass in search of legendary treasures. Some locals claim that the mounds cannot be reliably counted, and that new mounds appear every few years.

Brimstone Springs: High in the Mindspin Mountains lies the village of Brimstone Springs, a community existing primarily to serve visitors to the famed (or rather infamous) Soulsheen Baths. This collection of natural cascades and hot springs reeks with the waters' high concentration of sulphur and several toxic minerals, yet hundreds visit the springs yearly, a regime of short baths ostensibly healing a wide variety of aliments. The springs gain their greatest notoriety from the "golden dream," a daylong poison immersion that, if it doesn't kill the bather, grants him a vision of his afterlife—at the price of leaving his skin with a permanent yellow stain.

Citadel Gheisteno: When the murderous Hellknight rebels known as the Order of the Crux fell to their brethrens' swords in 4663, their infamous citadel was put to the torch. Yet a scant 25 years ago, three undead knights bearing the standard of the Crux reappeared in southeastern Nidal, along with a terrifying perversion of their charred citadel. With deathless patience a legion of horrors gathers within the haunted spires of Gheisteno, an army of the dead and worse obedient to the vengeful command of the poison-shrouded Lictor Shokneir.

House of Lies: Beneath the sharp gables of this fortress-like estate lies sequestered one of Avistan's most expansive collections of legends, myths, false histories, fictions, and outright lies. Here meet the members of the infamous Guild of Liars, a society claiming to be a union of storytellers, but that also counts several of history's most notorious con artists among its members. Every 5 years, guild members brave the swift waters of the river to gather at the mysterious island estate to share tales of dubious adventure and tell



impossible truths. The year's most believable raconteur wins the rank of "truth maker," along with supposed access to the House's storied cabinet of curiosities.

Nisroch: The most populous city in Nidal, Nisroch is also the least controlled. Here, the lesser nobility of the Umbral Court contend against one another as often as they hunt out apostates and other traitors. Although Nisroch's ports are inspected with obsessive, military regularity, agents of Desna slip through the cracks to establish safe houses and underground cults that work quietly against the powers that be. This immaculate port city serves as the public face of Nidal. Traders from Cheliax, Korvosa, and northern Varisia sometimes put in to Nisroch to trade or repair damaged vessels, but strangers seldom linger long there, finding the city's people inhospitable and suspicious of outsiders. Art, revelry, and music are all but forbidden in Nisroch, and much of the nation's culture involves military theory, poetry, and esoteric mysticism related to shadows and darkness. Recent reports from spies amid Andoran's Gray Corsairs suggest that pirates from the Shackles dock in Nisroch with increasing frequency, but little is known of the reasons behind their visits and the implications they might have for Nidal's relationship with Cheliax, which constantly wars with the pirates along Garund's western coast.

Law in the city of Nisroch is enforced by a terrifying organization called the Silent Shroud. Under the absolute authority of the Shrouded One, a sweeping force of brutally violent monks scours the city of criminals. These Silent Enforcers harvest their agents from the lower class, abducting them as children and torturing and training them into absolute servitude. Made mute by surgical alteration, Silent Enforcers carry no weapons and wear no armor—for they need neither to carry out their relentless mission to keep the law in this shadowy city.

Orolo's Quay: Once the last port before the frontier, this sea fort was all but abandoned with the settlement of coastal Varisia. With few ships needing to provision before reaching Korvosa, only the most desperate vessels or captains with clandestine cargoes bother to drop anchor at the crumbling stone wharf. The Chelish fortress here now sags under the weight of neglect, its keep's first floor converted into a spartan trading post and inn, and its stables serving as a sorry livery. Rumors tell of smugglers

frequently harboring here, paying to store all manner of contraband in the fortress's dilapidated dungeons.

Pangolais: The softly glittering, rarely glimpsed shade city of Pangolais is the personal demesne of the mysterious Black Triune, a legendary three-in-one council whose membership has remained unchallenged and unchanged since the onset of the Age of Darkness. Their grim enforcer, the soft-spoken vampire general Mykos Roarik, veteran of the Everwar and Right Hand of the Triune, ranges with his Adamant Company far from the shadow-cloaked Uskwood to set the Triune's will in blood. Those who wish to enter the city surreptitiously without the permission of the Triune must seek out hidden worshipers of Desna or the rare diabolists who make their homes in the haze-shrouded halls of Pangolais. Senior members of the Umbral Court convene thrice annually in Nidal's secluded capital, which sprawls below the eternal shadow of the Uskwood. So little light reaches the white-cobbled streets of Pangolais that it is nearly impossible to distinguish day from night, and strangers to the city soon find themselves lost without a guide. Such a service demands outlandish fees, for outsiders are forbidden from walking the winding ways of Pangolais. Here, in quiet cafes and pale gardens, a sinister aristocracy plays dark games of strategy and sacrifice with beings of an unnamable void.

Ridwan: Along Nidal's eastern border the fortress city of Ridwan serves as the center of worship for the faithful of Zon-Kuthon. The walled military city of Ridwan is ill suited, in many ways, to support life, surrounded as it is by blasted volcanic fields of blackish, crumbling powder and jutting rockfalls—only the power of the divine can bring forth food or water to this terrible place. It was here that the people of Nidal beheld the emergence of their savior, the Midnight Lord. And it was here that the blessed of that faceless god nourished more than 10,000 devoted souls. In the wastes, the mighty soldiers of Zon-Kuthon train on shattered soil to defend his lands and to extend with guile and steel his power into the rest of the world. Adherents believe that the twisting rift limned with black flame and cloying smoke in the city's central square is the spot where the Midnight Lord first emerged upon Golarion. The site is a powerful gate to the Deeping Darkness, a particularly vile chasm at the heart of the Plane of Shadow, from which Zon-Kuthon's clerics pluck legendary nightmare beasts. Once sufficiently dominated and broken to the will of the Umbral Lords, the otherworldly shadow-spirits serve Nidal at home and abroad. Since the fall of Nidal 373 years ago in the Everwar, "abroad" has most often meant Cheliax.

Tower of Slant Shadows: Jutting diagonally from the umber grasslands like a mis-sewn stitch, this rugged iron tower stands as a dual testament to ancient miracles and blasphemous evil. Few know that the ominous pillar numbers as but one of numerous hidden and mostly forgotten Star Towers, gigantic spikes forged by the god Zon-Kuthon as his part in binding the monstrous deity Rovagug. Although the tower awkwardly juts many stories into the air, rumors claim it sinks several times that height into the earth below. Tales also tell of terrible dooms meted out by Mother Ravel, an immortal guardian and ever-expanding weaver in flesh.

SILENT ENFORCERS

Nirmathas

WAR-TORN WILDERNESS

Alignment: CG
Capital: Tamran (9,730)
Notable Settlements: Crossfen (130), Crystalhurst (1,182), Glimmerhold (6,200), Kassen (750), Skelt (5,400)
Ruler: Forest Marshal Weslen Gavirk
Government: Meritocracy
Languages: Common, Varisian
Religion: Erastil, Gorum, Iomedae

In war and in everyday life, the people of Nirmathas are fiercely independent, defining themselves largely by opposition to their regimented and bureaucratic former masters in Cheliax and Molthune. Great generosity and charity of spirit abide in Nirmathas, but the ideals of freedom, self-sufficiency, and liberty reign above all else. Even the best ideas are ignored or rejected if they bear the faintest hint of compulsion. To infringe upon individual rights and freedoms is to invite blood feud. The partisans of Nirmathas have learned well how to survive. Whether they can succeed in forming a nation remains to be seen.

HISTORY

During the years of turmoil following the collapse of Cheliax, the governor of Molthune claimed all the Fangwood to the then-current southern border of Lastwall as part of his newly independent nation. Soldiers from the regional capital at Canorate ensured political stability, but the woodsmen, rangers, trappers, artisans, and fisherfolk who depended on the forest's bounty soon realized that, just as Cheliax had pillaged the region of resources while providing little in return, the new mandates from Canorate were simply changing the flow of exploitation from one city to another. Resentment flared as the promise of a new era collapsed, and what started as a few minor acts of sabotage soon blossomed into a guerilla war for independence.

Spilled blood and chaos defined the early years of the fledgling nation's revolt against Molthune, with bands of woodsmen and other irregular troops acting independently. This changed when Irgal Nirmath, a half-elf trapper, united several separate groups into one sizable force. As his victory-count mounted, his legend spread, and Nirmath drew more rebels to the banner of Irgal's Axe—as his force came to be known—and even Molthuni

commanders found themselves respecting his cunning. After 7 years, a border of sorts solidified, and the rebels declared victory and independence in 4655 AR. Yet on the very night of Nirmath's triumph, an assassin's blade took his life. His followers clamored to name their newborn nation Nirmathas in honor of their fallen hero. In the years since, Molthune has repeatedly invaded its wayward province, and every time, its armies have eventually been forced back across the Marideth River after pyrrhic campaigns against foes who refuse to stand still or stay down.

GOVERNMENT

Prominent Nirmathi leaders and soldiers gather every 4 years to elect a Forest Marshal to lead their military forces. The current marshal, Weslen Gavirk, is a compassionate and determined man well acquainted with the jack-booted oppression enacted by Molthune in its repeated conquests of his home city, Tamran. He hopes to duplicate Irgal's feat of uniting the Nirmathi, but his is a difficult task, as every Nirmathi considers himself an army of one, with every household and village an independent company. While they usually respond to the Forest Marshal's call to battle, disparate groups of Nirmathi often ignore battle plans in favor of their own ideas. The Fangwood is filled with such merry bands, each considering itself the embodiment of the true Nirmathi spirit. These bands fight injustice (real or perceived) as they encounter it, although they often spend as much time feuding with rivals as stymieing Molthuni incursions. Their efforts hack at the limbs of injustice without piercing its heart, and amid these individual acts of heroism, the Nirmathi as a whole struggle to merely survive.

The role of Forest Marshal is primarily a military position, with those who fill the role selected for skill in battle and tactical acumen. As a civil ruler, the Forest Marshal is no more than a symbol or figurehead. Actual governance is entirely a local affair, from village elders or exiled nobility to the oldest, wisest, wealthiest, or most eloquent speakers—there is no organized system of rule spread throughout Nirmathas. Some Nirmathi advocate for a leader skilled in diplomacy, trade, and negotiation, but in an unstable land where freedom, liberty, and individuality are paramount, centralized leadership and the common good are elusive concepts. Alliances and coalitions are ephemeral and often deeply personal, and Nirmathi are quick to recoil when they perceive someone overreaching his authority.

FOREST MARSHAL WESLEN GAVIRK

GAZETTEER

Chernasardo: Along the southwestern edge of the Fangwood lies a region known as the Chernasardo. Marked by tall trees, wind-swept hilltops, and deep forest glades, the Chernasardo is also home to Nirmathas's most devoted defenders—a host of backwoods huntsmen, trackers, and trappers willing to defend their host nation to the death. The people of the Chernasardo have long acted as an independent region—though many governments have ruled them over time, none have conquered the forest people, and many have lost much in attempts to do so. The rangers of the Chernasardo, particularly, are known throughout Lake Encarthan as skilled trackers, expert marksmen, and scholars of the forest. What most folks don't know, however, is that there are 10 times as many rangers as anyone outside the forest thinks—a secret the Molthuni have learned all too well in their war against Nirmathas.

Crystalhurst: Deep inside Fangwood lies the small town of Crystalhurst, a strange settlement of tree houses, caves, simple huts, and hard-packed earthen streets, all amid a serene setting of blooming flowers, towering trees, and babbling brooks. Wild animals wander the town, living peacefully with its residents, for Crystalhurst is ruled and governed by a circle of druids who dwelt in Fangwood long before Molthune claimed the region. The druids are more concerned with the constant threat of the Darkblight deep within the forest (see the entry for Fangwood) than they are with Molthune's attempts to "reclaim" the forest, but they do count the people of Nirmathas as allies, and when called upon, the druids of Crystalhurst rarely deny their beleaguered neighbors aid in defending the region. Of course, this aid is provided not because the druid council that rules Crystalhurst feels any true allegiance to Nirmathas, but because they worry about what Molthune might do to their beloved woods if they reclaimed them—or worse, what an accidental Molthuni assault might release from the darkest and most dangerous reaches of Fangwood.

Deadeye's Haunt: While there have been countless lesser skirmishes between Molthune and Nirmathas over the past several years, none have yet matched the scale and violence of the battle of Deadeye's Haunt. Until the battle, the site was known as Deadeye's Gulch—a narrow valley at the edge of Fangwood where hunting had traditionally been good. A small shrine dedicated to Erastil stood at the southern entrance to the gulch—a lodge where hunters could rest during extended forays. The initial Molthuni plan was to

use Deadeye's Gulch as a staging ground for a particularly large invasion force that could then send smaller units out to strike at various locations along the forest's edge, and eventually even against the city of Tamran. Yet what the Molthuni were not prepared for was the Nirmathi devotion to preserving this site. When the Molthuni army arrived, they were set upon by small, fast-moving groups of skirmishers and archers, and even several groups of druids that commanded their own armies of birds and beasts. The resulting clash between Molthune's well-trained army and Nirmathas's highly mobile defenders has since come to typify the major battles between these two nations, but at Deadeye's Gulch this sort of warfare reached its violent height. The battle of Deadeye's Gulch actually consisted of a series of battles that spanned nearly a week—by the time the remnants of Molthune's army fled back to the south, they had slaughtered many Nirmathi, but their own numbers had been reduced by an even more significant amount. Where once stood a verdant valley sacred to the god of the hunt, there now sprawled a charred scar of devastation littered with thousands of bodies. The battlefield's location on the border made it difficult for druids and priests of Erastil to attempt to reclaim the land, for whenever they tried, Molthuni snipers and patrols quickly struck from the south. Over the years, both nations have come to regard the region as cursed—and indeed, the unquiet souls and restless bodies of the victims seem to increasingly haunt the place. Today, the undead that dwell here continue to swell beyond the borders of what is now known as Deadeye's Haunt, a growing problem that neither nation wants to address but both fear may soon become impossible to ignore.

Fangwood: The relatively large forest known as Fangwood consists of a mixture of deciduous and evergreen trees—mostly maples, firs, and spruces. In the forest's deepest reaches, where the firs grow tall and close, the Fangwood takes on a shadowy, primeval feel that chokes the air and sends many skittish creatures into noise-induced panics. As the fir groves give way to sparser mixes of spruces and relatively rare pines, the underbrush thickens even as the feeling of oppressive dread slackens. Most Nirmathi who live in the forest dwell in these moderate belts between the firs and maples.

As Nirmathas is utterly dependent upon the forest for its livelihood, its economy, its safety (as a retreat for its

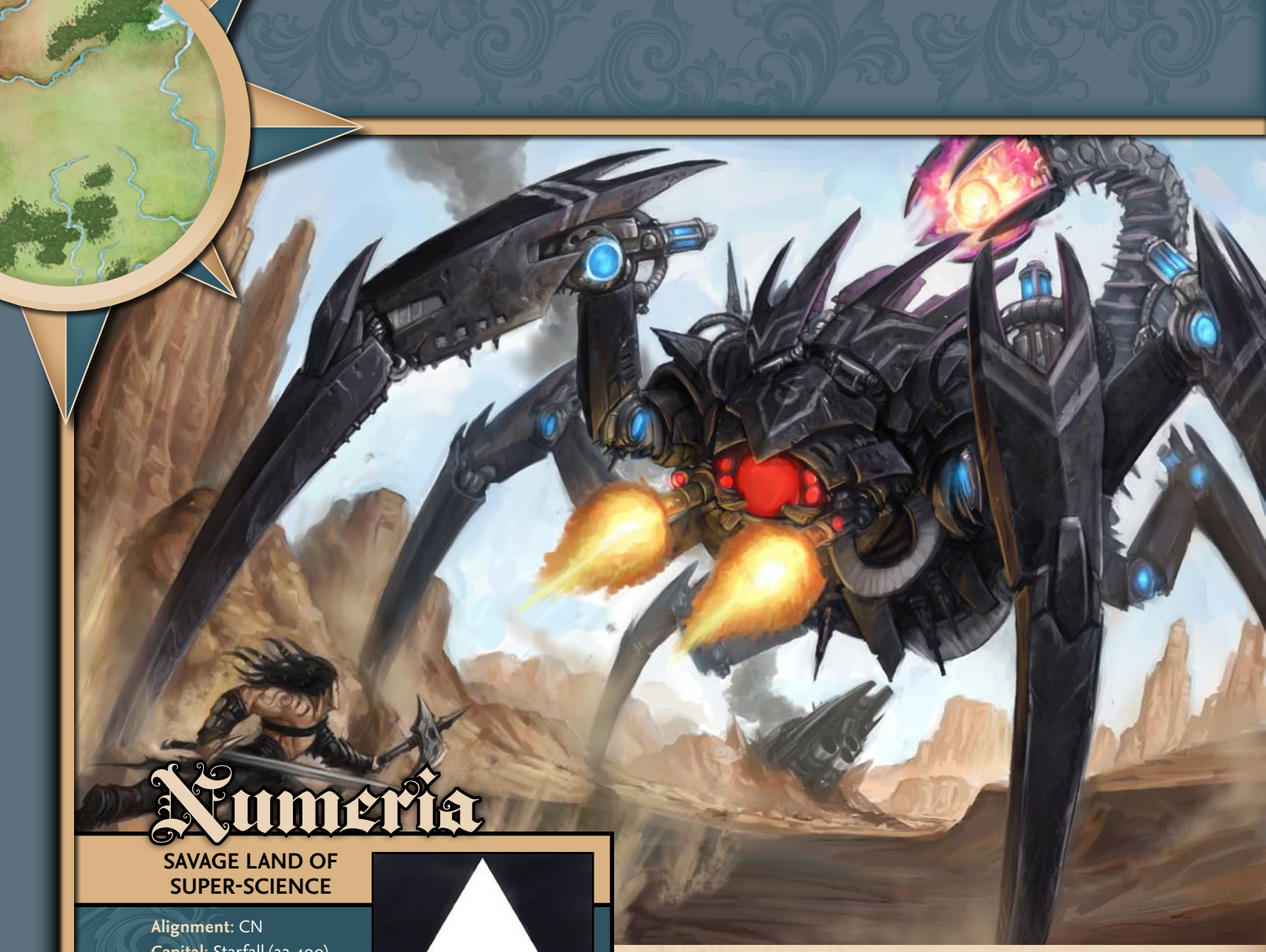
soldiers), and its very identity, a threat to the forest strikes at the land's very soul. Yet in the depths of Fangwood, a strange blight has begun to spread, the trees blackening, rotting, and spreading seeds of death. The dead trees are the spirit-homes of twisted, sadistic fey, the accursed offspring of the corrupted dryad Arlantia. This dryad, rumored by some to be cursed by the demon lord Cyth-V'sug, is said to be fond of binding her victims in the moldering vines of the most diseased of the trees, turning those unfortunate victims into shambling heaps of rot. Whether the curse upon the trees produces Arlantia's army of thorn-crowned dryads, or whether the trees are blighted by their touch, these symbiotes represent an insidious and deadly threat to the Fangwood.

Marching Springs: The narrow plain and foothills between Fangwood and the eastern slopes of the Mindspin Mountains are home to an unusual water feature of unknown origin or cause. Sprays of water not unlike miniature geysers leap up one after another in a slow-moving progression that winds its way throughout a region of roughly 30 square miles. The springs erupt from one of the countless narrow vents that lace the region. Creatures of elemental water are unusually common in the shallow lakes and tarns here, giving support to theories that tiny portals to the Plane of Water riddle a network of water-filled caverns below the region. No sizable entrance to these rumored caverns has yet been found, despite several attempts by curious scholars to do just that—especially since the region's relatively remote location and the large number of oozes and water elementals that prowl the region make expeditions to the Marching Springs a costly affair.

Skelt: Built into a high bluff and accessible only by water-powered lifts and long, exposed ramps broken with multiple drawbridges, Skelt has a strategic position at the falls line of the River Tourondel. The river's dwarf-crafted waterworks power ore-grinders and mine-lifts, while sawmills dot the Tourondel for miles below the town. Skelt long traded with the dwarf-hold of Kraggodan (a neutral party in the war with Molthune), but recent attempts to open nearby Bloodsworn Vale promise a new vista for commerce, replacing rustic muleskinner trails with full-fledged trade routes to Korvosa and Varisia beyond.

Tamran: The ramshackle wooden city of Tamran sits perched at the mouth of the River Marideth, with much of the city built on piers and pilings over the broad marshlands of the estuary, connected by causeways, bridges, and a flotilla of coracles and skiffs. The fortifications that once guarded the approaches to Tamran were torn down by the Nirmathi themselves during the Freedom War when they recognized how the fortifications played to Molthune's advantage in traditional warfare. Such walls could not withstand a Molthuni siege, and indeed made it harder to mount a counterattack. By demolishing the walls, Tamran became a nigh-indefensible open city. Yet whenever Molthune threatened, Nirmathi soldiers could melt into the wild and the populace could surrender, but Tamran's proximity to the river and marshes allowed Nirmathi guerillas to infiltrate the city at will. Molthune has "captured" Tamran on five separate occasions, but each time it found holding the city too costly and fruitless. Even when the Molthuni burned the city in frustration at the end of their last occupation, the Nirmathi rebuilt it within a year. Nirmathi proudly look to their humble city as a symbol of their tenacity, cleverness, and resilience.

CHERNASARDO RANGER



Numeria

SAVAGE LAND OF SUPER-SCIENCE

Alignment: CN
Capital: Starfall (32,400)
Notable Settlements: Aaramor (1,490), Castle Urion (1,240), Chesed (59,690), Dravod Knock (1,288), Hajoth Hakados (6,780), Iadenveigh (2,300), Lackthroat (1,940), Torch (4,320)
Ruler: Kevoth-Kul, the Black Sovereign of Numeria
Government: Barbaric monarchy
Languages: Hallit
Religion: Desna, Gorum, Iomedae, Nethys

Abutting the northernmost banks of the Sellen River system, the harsh plains of Numeria possess a stark, majestic beauty. The greatest of the River Kingdoms, Numeria was a rising power in Avistan, a warlike nation poised to unite several of its neighbors under its rough banner. With the fall of Sarkoris and the coming of the demonic Worldwound, however, Numeria's momentum was broken, and today it is a land of grim barbarians and dark magic, its fierce people ruled over by a cabal of tainted magicians devoted to artifacts they do not understand and secrets not of this world.

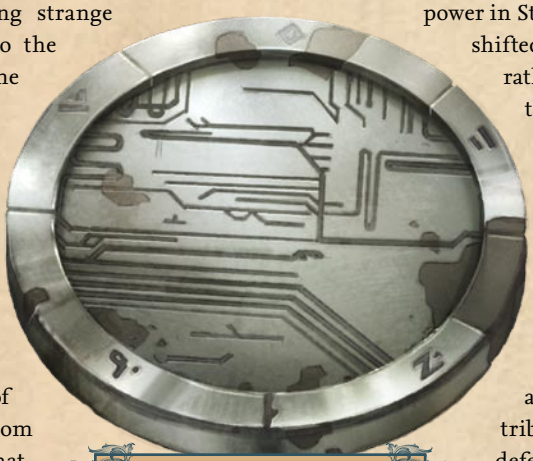
HISTORY

Long before Numeria's recorded history, perhaps even before the Age of Darkness, the local Kellid tribes witnessed one of the strangest events in Golarion's history: a metal mountain falling from the sky in a great fireball. This strange mass, a colossal vessel from the darkest reaches of outer space, broke up in Golarion's upper atmosphere and cascaded down to earth in what the tribes call the Rain of Stars. All across the plains of Numeria, chunks of strange materials as small as fists or as large as cities slammed down and buried themselves in the rocky earth, bathing the landscape in unknown energies that continue to cause weird mutations to this day. The largest of these fragments, known as the Silver Mount, looms over Numeria's capital city of Starfall, and the bizarre knowledge and technology gained from its honeycomb of intact chambers is the basis for the Black Sovereign's firm control of the region.

While its barren landscape leaves little for trade, Numeria is famous in the more civilized southern lands as the primary source of skymetals, seven rare metallic alloys sheared from the hull of the crashing starship, all useful in the creation of unique weapons and artifacts and each with its own distinct properties. Of these, adamantine is the most common, and

word of the wonders of "Numerian steel" has long since spread to the farthest corners of Avistan and Garund.

Since the sudden emergence of the demonic hosts in the region now known as the Worldwound, Numeria has found its ranks swelled by large numbers of holy warriors from southern lands bound for Mendev to join the crusades. These travelers often make their way up the River Road—the route up the Sellen from the Inner Sea to Chesed—and thence onward into Mendev, to join their brothers and sisters on the front lines. Although their influence is somewhat disruptive, bringing strange faces and even stranger ideas to the barbaric Kellids of the region, the Black Sovereign and his allies, the Technic League, happily welcome the pilgrims for the coin they bring, making sure to relieve them of as much of it as possible before sending them north to their inevitable glorious deaths.



NUMERIAN SILVERDISC

Of all the strange artifacts to come from the wreckage of the crashed cosmic vessel, from the oddly etched silverdisks that tribesmen trade like currency to the hallucinogenic ichors seeping from the broken walls of Silver Mount, the most famous are the Gearsmen of the Technic League. Brought forth a generation ago from a previously undiscovered chamber, the strange automatons are human-shaped constructs of steel and other unknown materials that seem unnervingly disproportionate in minor ways, as if sculpted by someone seeing a humanoid for the first time. The Gearsmen speak with shrill voices that all seem strangely similar, but rarely do so save to issue orders or warnings to would-be troublemakers. Other rumors speak of even larger constructs, including strange insectoid behemoths capable of spitting fire and metal from their bodies with devastating power.

While the automatons are capable of speech, few outside the Technic League have ever heard their strange voices. For reasons of their own, the constructs serve the League as shock troops and guards, conducting their business with ruthless and mechanical efficiency. This efficiency makes it all the more unnerving to the League when one of the automatons willfully disobeys a seemingly random order—letting a convict go free or failing to protect its master—and meeting the League's furious questions with inscrutable, alien silence.

Government

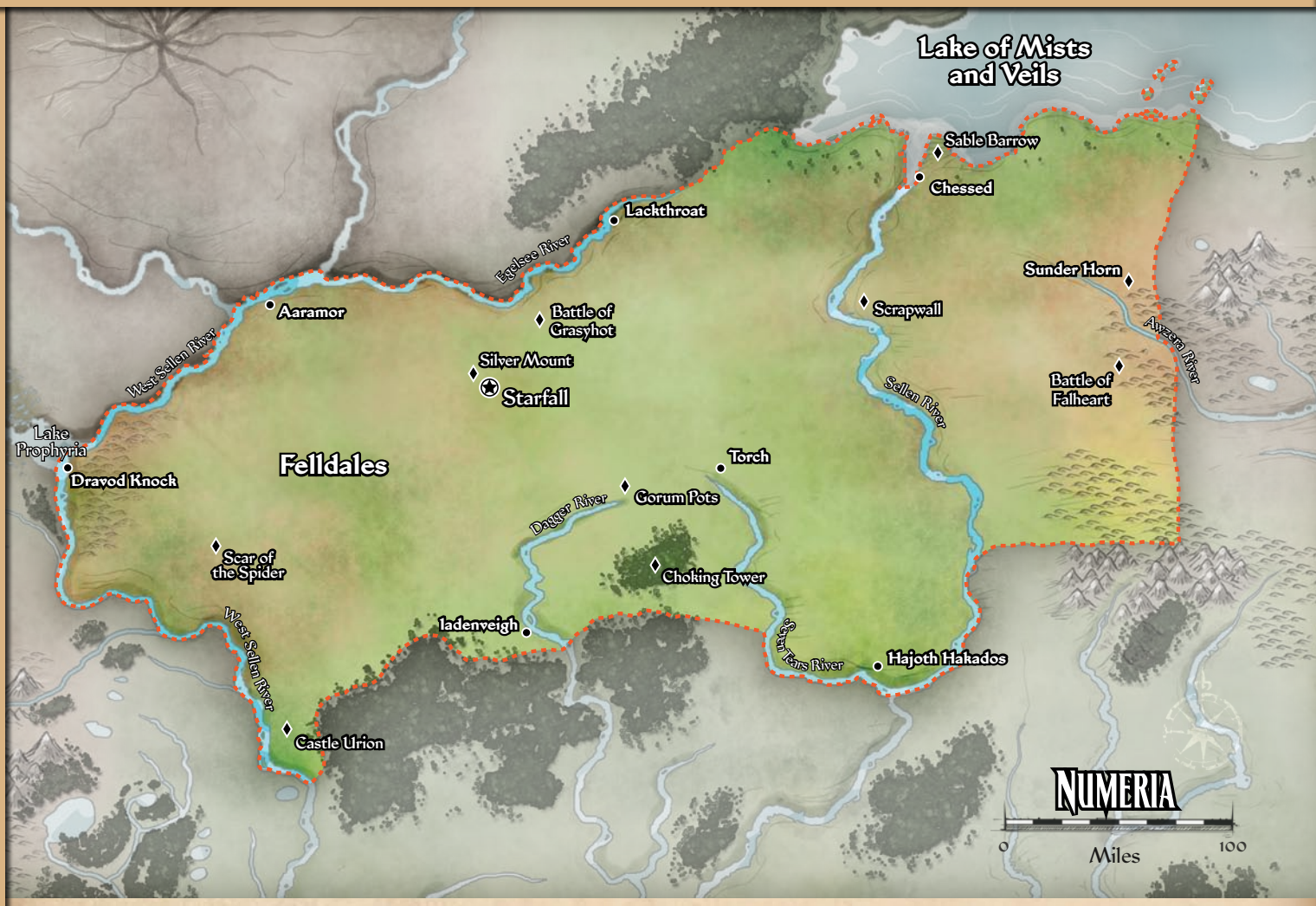
Decades ago, Kevoth-Kul was a great warlord, a warrior many Kellids pointed to as the finest example of their kind. With his massive greatsword he forced alliances between tribes, and although his methods were bloody, his followers believed that he might expand the borders of Numeria farther than ever before. Yet when Kevoth-Kul sought to make the city of Starfall his capital, he found himself listening to the whispers of the Technic League, a band of powerful and debased arcanists who sought to unlock the secrets of the Silver Mount. Although the arcanists possessed only the barest understanding of most of the items they uncovered, it was enough, and with their alliance, Kevoth-Kul's power in Starfall became absolute. Something shifted within the warlord, then, and rather than continue his conquest, the barbarian king grew dark and brooding, naming himself the Black Sovereign and devoting his time to pleasures of the flesh.

Gazetteer

Aaramor: An ancient fortress built by legendary Numerian kings in their endless battles against the giant-kin and enemy tribes of Sarkoris, the citadel now defends against demonic incursions into the south. In stark contrast to the Iomedaean crusaders of Mendev, a legion of hard Gorum-worshiping warriors and glory-seekers man the citadel's walls and maintain the aged battle chapel within—a holy site known to Gorum's faithful throughout the Inner Sea.

Battle of Falheart: It's said that Pharasma herself jealously claims this field, for in 3441 AR, when the armies of Prince Rathhorn and Sabline the Traitor charged into battle, the commanders and warriors on both sides fell dead an instant before clashing. Said to be accursed, haunted, and poisoned against all life, none dare approach the parched plain of gray dirt, for to do so is death.

Battle of Grasyhot: Rugged cairns and gigantic, rusting weapons still lie amid the kudzu tangles of this centuries-old battlefield. In 1288, the Kellid warriors of Queen Boliga Bharsolm clashed with the 30 tribes of the hill giant chief Urgo Axbiter. The Battle of Grasyhot continued sporadically for the next 3 years, seeing advances by both human and giant. When Axbiter was slain in battle, his body was entombed in a great earthen mound overlooking the battlefield so he might continue to inspire his followers. After the final confrontation—a fearsome clash that saw the end of the hill giant horde, but also the fall of the Kellid queen—a second tomb was built over the giant chieftain's, so that in death Bharsolm might eternally revel in the giants' defeat. The tiered burial mound of the ancient rivals still looms over the battlefield to this day, a storied monument to Numerian strength and heroism.



Castle Urion: Castle Urion is the first Numerian holding that most pilgrims traveling along the River Road encounter, yet it is hardly a typical barbarian settlement—although technically under the control of the Black Sovereign, this relatively new castle is watched over by a full detachment of griffon-mounted Knights of Iomedae in order to ensure the protection and spiritual guidance of hopeful demon-slayers.

Choking Tower: Formerly the home of Furkas Xoud, wizard and onetime adept of the Technic League, this soot-stained tower rises above the trees, with a crown of tangled pipes and chimneys stretching even higher. Though none know the infamous smoke-wizard's fate, and most presume him long dead, things still clank, clatter, whistle, and howl within his uncanny fortress, and trails of black smoke endlessly billow from within.

Dravod Knock: Crude wooden shacks, encrusted with generations of silt, cluster upon the mud plains of Lake Porphyria's eastern shore. Here a filthy but indomitable people of hearty Kellid stock tramp the sucking murk daily, hauling clay for bricks or dredging for bulbous-eyed mud fish and stranger catches. Impoverished but proud, the villagers cling to aged traditions and look to the mud for all things—including the burial of their dead and the punishment of criminals.

Felldales: Hundreds of broad valleys mar this expanse, the earthen scars of a centuries-old rain of fire and iron. Although the ages have erased most evidence of this ancient, unnatural hail, stories among the dales' numerous secluded villages still tell of strange monoliths, rich deposits of skymetal, predatory waves of color, and accursed forms of life alien to Golarion.

Hajoth Hakados: While crusaders from the first two Mendevian crusades followed the Sellen northwest through Ustalav and up to the border holding of Storasta, that town's fall and subsequent absorption by the Worldwound left most holy warriors flowing east to the near-independent trading city of Hajoth Hakados (practically a River Kingdom in its own right). From there, pilgrims can once more follow the east fork of the Sellen until they reach the fog-shrouded port city of Chesed on the Lake of Mists and Veils. The Technic League knows that Chesed is Numeria's last chance to milk zealots for their coins, whether via swindling merchants or bandits on the river, and many are

the crusaders who pass over the border into Mendev with only their weapons and their faith.

Iadenveigh: Fierce devotion to Erastil and a loathing of the Technic League's "blasphemous" trappings unites this secluded town of hunters and woodsmen. While the people accept magic, any who possess technology—otherworldly or otherwise—are condemned as Technic League heretics, facing mock trials in prelude to crude but effective mortal punishments.

Lackthroat: The seclusion and affordable vices of this rough, walled village make it a favorite stopping point for soldiers of fortune and mercenaries. While brawls, illicit deals, and all manner of other criminal dealings take place in plain sight, many mercenary legends have their start here, drawing adventurers, heroes, and cads of all walks from across Numeria and beyond.

Scar of the Spider: Though shunned by man and beast alike, something lurks amid the gray stone spears and thick fungi of this scarlike vale. The strangest tales describe a cavernous maze, wherein an enigma dances and whistles within a coffin of glass, yet the most heeded warnings tell of an arachnid terror of steel and hellfire, whose screams can tear even the strongest warriors to ribbons.

Scrapwall: This 3-mile-long junkyard of broken metal and strange debris stands in testimony to ages of scavenging and strange ambitions. Although the wreckage was depleted of any trace of skymetal or weird relics centuries ago, the forlorn and ambitious still scour the debris, following dubious rumors and desperate hopes to this plain of otherworldly disappointment. Even grimmer, bandits and deadly beasts regularly prowl the scrap mounds, preying upon the weak and unprepared.

Silver Mount: Of the countless half-ruined and fallen hulks that scar Numeria, the massive scarred edifice of Silver Mount is by far the largest. Heavily guarded by the servants of the Technic League, the jagged metallic peak is riddled with intact cabins and passages, its secrets the source of the dark sorcerers' power (as well as the strange substances to which many of them are addicted). Despite the high security surrounding the mount and certain death for any who dare challenge the Black Sovereign and his minions, demand for knowledge from the stars is high among sages from across all of Golarion, and adventurers willing to brave the mount's perils can undoubtedly make a fortune—should they survive.

Starfall: Numeria's capital of Starfall is a grim and brutal place, a decadent mockery of the royal courts of the south. Here the barbarian king known as the Black Sovereign reigns unchallenged, supported by the perverse sorcerers of the Technic League and their Gearsman servants. In its filthy streets, strange metal men from the Silver Mount enforce the dictator's decrees, while those who revel (or pretend to) in the king's carnal celebrations grow fat on the toil of others or become addicted to the vile intoxicating liquids seeping from the wreckage of the Silver Mount.

Torch: Wrapping in a crescent around a steep hillock of shiny black stone, Torch takes its name from the violet flame that endlessly burns atop this landmark mound. Visible from much of the town, the fire is typically little more than a man-sized bonfire, blazing ever on with no perceptible fuel. Residents claim these flames are hotter than any natural fire and are the only way to smelt some of their lands' miraculous skymetals. Yet unpredictably, several times a year and always amid a weird thrumming in the earth, the blaze explodes into a furious pillar, burning a heliotrope tract miles into the sky. Lasting seconds or hours, these holocausts leave not even ashes in their wake, scouring the hilltop to a steaming, glassy ruin.

TECHNIC LEAGUE CAPTAIN

Osirion

LAND OF THE PHARAOHS

Alignment: LN
Capital: Sothis (111,989)
Notable Settlements: An (38,200), Eto (9,500), Ipeq (12,730), Shiman-Sekh (6,680), Tephu (19,480), Totra (52,360), Wati (7,300)
Ruler: The Ruby Prince Khemet III
Government: Celestial Monarchy
Languages: Osiriani
Religion: Abadar, Irori, Lamashtu, Nethys, Norgorber, Pharasma, Rovagug, Sarenrae

History remembers the pharaohs, the God-Kings of Ancient Osirion, as tyrannical heralds of progress, ushering in the Age of Destiny. With vast slave armies at their disposal, the pharaohs delivered staggering advances in warfare, technology, and architecture. As Osirion ascended to supremacy, so too did its need to expand. Osirion once controlled much of what are now the nations of Thuvia, Rahadoum, and Katapesh, and indeed, the kingdom of Geb was once but an Osirian colony answering to the city of Sothis. Today, the phenomena of Osirion's dramatic rise from barbarism is intensely studied by specialist sages known as Osirionologists, who postulate several different theories to account for the empire's sudden and otherwise inexplicable spike in cultural and military success. Although dismissed by more responsible academia, some treatises hypothesize that Osirion's advancement was accelerated by a visitation from outsiders—possibly from unknown entities from beyond the vast gulf of space.

Osirion is the home of one of Golarion's most expansive deserts, luckily punctuated by a dynamic source of fresh water: the famed River Sphinx. Fed by two tributaries from the Brazen Peaks, the Crook and the Asp, the River Sphinx serves as a lifeline for huge swaths of Osirion's population. The river, however, brings many trials to test the people who live along its banks, including black-scaled crocodiles known as *hetkoshu* (advanced dire crocodiles) and seasonal flooding. Beyond the River Sphinx lie endless dunes of harsh sand, constantly reshaped by the powerful storms that wrack the region. Despite the weight of these physical hardships, it is here that civilization in the Inner Sea region at last began to regroup and flourish after the cataclysmic setback caused by Earthfall in the Age of Darkness.

History

Regardless of the disagreements pertaining to Osirion's founding, Osirionologists more widely agree that complacency ultimately ended its reign of cultural and martial supremacy. After 5,000 years of pharaonic rule, Qadiran agents from across the Obari Ocean infiltrated the corrupt bureaucracy underpinning Pharaoh Menedes XXVI's regime and quietly neutralized it, creating a state of paralysis. Unable to respond effectively, Osirion soon experienced a series of empire-wide—but ultimately leaderless—slave revolts, each clandestinely engineered by the Padishah Empire of Kelesh. The revolts forced Menedes into hiding while Kelesh staged a mock rescue and subsumed Osirion as a satrapy. Expanding into their newest colony, Keleshite migrants set about transforming Osirion, destroying any monuments of the pharaohs they could find that might otherwise blasphemously betray the truth of Osirion's history.

RUBY PRINCE
KHEMET III

The Keleshite migration brought with it the seeds of the satrapy's own destruction, however, for it was the Keleshites who first introduced Osirion to the faith of Sarenrae. Over the next 700 years, the rays of Sarenrae shone down upon both the Osirians and the lower classes of the Keleshites, and ultimately fostered the establishment of the Cult of the Dawnflower—an unusually militant but ultimately well-meaning subset of the church. In response to the dangerous growth of the colony's newest faith, the satrap was forced to banish the cult's leadership to the neighboring deserts of Thuvia. The exile was short lived, however; in 2253 AR, the satrap's body was discovered in his courtyard fountain, with sunflowers blooming from his mouth. The Dawnflower had returned to Osirion and the ensuing power vacuum gave rise to a series of independent Keleshite sultans.

Regardless of whether the sultans exercised leniency or brutality, however, they still held no answer to the fact that the Osirian people still maintained an ethnic majority as well as a fiery nationalist pride—a pride still not suppressed even after more than 2 millennia of foreign rule. Thus, when the powerful cleric of Abadar Khemet I, the Forthbringer, emerged and purported to offer proof that he could trace his direct lineage to the Azghaadi Dynasty of Osirion's First Age, he was quickly instated in a tidal wave of populist enthusiasm. Khemet's brief demonstrations of his divine ability to recruit the elder elementals of Osirion's desert to his banner persuaded the remaining sultans to evacuate and return to their homeland, paving the way for a near-bloodless coup.

Shortly after the Forthbringer secured control of Osirion, he reinstated Sothis as the nation's capital and constructed the city's now-famous white-walled palace. Thereafter, he became notably withdrawn, with his public appearances fewer and farther between. This was a product, some whispered, of Khemet's devotion to maintaining the secretive contracts he had made with the elementals that catapulted his family to power. True or not, the Forthbringer's power remained unquestioned, and after his 40-year reign of uncontested power ended with his death, the throne passed to his eldest son, Khemet II, the Crocodile King. While Khemet II shared his father's considerable magical talent, he possessed little interest in governing, preferring to spend his days in harems supplied with slave-girls from around the globe. Indeed, it was almost with a sense of relief when, 3 decades later, following a summoning accident for which few details were released, Khemet II was superseded by his son, the Ruby Prince, Khemet III. The full character of the Ruby Prince's rule has yet to be established. He is as withdrawn as his grandfather, and like the first Forthbringer, is already widely feared. He rarely takes advice from his court of advisors, preferring instead to consult with Janhelia, his ever-present fire elemental companion, whose agenda is still unknown.

Government

The youthful Ruby Prince Khemet III, the Forthbringer, is unquestionably a powerful spellcaster. Although he speaks little, visible demonstrations of his power punctuate his public appearances. Khemet III is slowly swelling Osirion's military, but observers of the Forthbringer dynasty have little insight into what the Ruby Prince intends to actually use his army for.

Although thanks to its natural invisibility, the reigning Forthbringer's fire elemental companion, Janhelia, has never actually been seen, no one ever questions whether it actually exists: the heat from the unique elemental's body makes the creature's presence known whenever it is near. Indeed, many who venture inside the Palace of the Forthbringer first pay for an *endure elements* spell to ensure they can tolerate Janhelia's presence rather than risk slighting the Ruby Prince should his favored elemental join him. The prince's enemies often whisper, however, that Janhelia's heat is the least of what makes them uncomfortable about the creature. They theorize that the tight bond between Janhelia and the Ruby Prince signals

that Khemet III is poised to make the tragic mistake of involving Osirion in the complex and timeless politics of the elemental clans that savage the desert.

In addition to the undoubtedly formidable Janhelia, the Ruby Prince is protected by an elite Sothan military unit called the Risen Guard. Each member of the Risen Guard has died at least once and was raised by order of Khemet III—if not by a casting from the Ruby Prince's hand, personally. As a result, the fanatic vigilance with which the Risen Guard protects their Forthbringer (as well as his treasury, which funds their continued ability to return to life) is unquestioned. The leader of the Risen Guard, the otherwise nameless Khopeshman of Sothis, has also assumed the dual role of managing the capital's city watch. The Risen Guard also protects the Ruby Prince's family, and consequently, is frequently tasked with the dubious honor of hunting down and ensuring the safe return of Ojan and Jasilia Khemet, the throne's younger twin siblings, who frequently disappear to explore the hidden corners of Osirion's desert.

The Council of Sun and Sky governs Osirion's domestic policy and runs the nation on a day-to-day basis. While the council maintains the appearance of independence, most Osirians well understand that this body is always subject to the whims of the Forthbringer. The council, at present, is a divided battleground of politics between corrupt bureaucrats and idealistic crusaders. First Speaker Dahnakrist Phi, a former slave, rides a tidal wave of popularity, but his tendency to publicly criticize the judiciary suggests that his term as First Speaker—if not his life span—might be short.

Gazetteer

An: Known also as the "City of Triangles, An was founded in –107 AR by Pharaoh Hirkoshek I to serve as a worker city to house the laborers and artisans tasked with building his tomb. An's skyline is dominated by several pyramids, the most notorious of which is the tomb of Kamaria, the only one of Osirion's pharaohs to openly worship Rovagug. The Pyramid of Kamaria is commonly believed to have been looted, although rumors of deeper, unopened levels persist.

Ipeq: Legend states that Ipeq was created by the legendary Pharaoh of Blades in a single day as the culmination of multiple *wish* spells provided by a conscripted army of

noble djinn and efreet. It is said that one day the pharaoh's web of binding pacts will simultaneously expire and the genie host will suddenly return to sweep Ipeq away into nothingness. Ipeq's army is equipped with more than 100 scorpion boat tokens (*swan boats*), which are used in emergencies to suddenly sail down the River Sphinx and swell the Sothan garrison should reinforcements ever be needed in the capital.

Ruins of Tumen: Although Sothis was both Osirion's first and current capital, it was not always so. During the Second Age of the Black Sphinx, the Four Pharaohs of Ascension ruled from Tumen. Carved into multiple tiers in the side of a stony escarpment, Tumen was said to possess a magical source of water, and when this source vanished, the city quickly perished. Despite its remote location in the trackless depths of the Underdunes, Tumen is still a frequent destination for treasure hunters and Osirionologists alike.

Shiman-Sekh: Shiman-Sekh was founded by the Song Pharaoh after the self-proclaimed goddess overthrew the Pharaoh of Forgotten Plagues in the early centuries of the Age of Destiny. Built on the western edge of the Golden Oasis, the city represents the last bastion of civilization before the seemingly endless desert of northwest Osirion.

Sothis: Osirion's capital, the metropolis of Sothis, has grown around the molted shell of a titanic beetle, the earthly remains of Ulunat, spawn of Rovagug. As the nation's political and military center, Sothis overshadows a trio of smaller sister-cities to the south that line the banks of the River Sphinx as it meets the Crook and the Asp: An, the City of Triangles; Tephu, City of the Reed People; and Wati, the Half-City.

The Sphinx Head: Osirion's largest sphinx carving is found between Shiman-Sekh and the Junaria, staring straight toward the heart of Sothis. Although Keleshites completely chiseled off the gigantic creature's facial features during the 700 years that marked Osirion's tenure as a satrapy, the face has since been accurately restored using a combination of *stone tell* and *stone shape* spells. Osirionologists speculate the face is actually the likeness of the Sky Pharaoh, Menedes I. A hidden door atop the head's center leads inside a hollow cavity and possibly into the rest of the Sphinx's body, which is thought to be buried beneath the sands. Prior expeditions into the Sphinx Head yielded no survivors, and it is widely assumed that the air inside is too foul to breathe. Now that Khemet III has opened parts of Osirion to foreign treasure hunters to raise additional funds and rediscover lost pharaonic lore, the Sphinx Head has once again drawn the interest of outsiders who can afford both the permit fees and the imminent risk of death.

Totra: Osirion's largest port outside of Sothis, Totra was first established during the An dynasty and served as the launch point for the Great Atoqua, the slave fleets that rapidly conquered much of what is now Thuvia and Rahadoum. Today, Totra loyally accepts the rule of the Ruby Prince, although its nobles quietly bemoan the heavy state of taxation.

Underdunes: Osirion's most unique geographic feature is perhaps its Underdunes: gigantic trenches of sand created by the passage of air and sand elementals. While the risk of sandslides makes traveling within the Underdunes perilous to the inexperienced, skilled travelers can take advantage of the dunes' shade to increase their rate of travel.

RISEN GUARD

Qadira

GATEWAY TO THE EAST

Alignment: N
Capital: Katheer (132,450)
Notable Settlements: Dimayen (4,890), Gurat (8,490), Hatavit (280), Khoka (920), Omash (23,500), Sedeq (89,760)
Ruler: Xerbystes II, Satrap of Qadira
Government: Satrapy of the Keleshite Empire of the East
Languages: Kelish
Religion: Irori, Nethys, Pharasma, Rovagug, Sarenrae, elemental lords

An ancient kingdom of arid deserts and exotic cities, Qadira is the westernmost satrapy of the Padishah Empire of Kelesh. All along the seacoasts, the ships of Qadira ply their trade, carrying goods brought by camel, caravan, and flying carpet from lands farther east: silks, spices, and salt, as well as the exotic magical luxuries for which Qadira is so well known. Qadira is not the wealthiest of lands in the Keleshite empire, but even its relatively enormous frontier cities possess marvels that much of Avistan can only wonder at, from its peacocks and flowering trees to its animated siege engines and well-disciplined elemental mercenaries.

HISTORY

Before the armies of Kelesh came, Qadira was a far more sparsely populated land, empty of the teeming caravans that now dot its sands and plains. The native humans of the region, related to both the Keleshites and Garundi, were a wandering folk, goatherds and gatherers for the most part who abandoned one region when the sands came to wash them away, moving their tents eastward toward the mountains in summer, and westward toward the sea in winter. They often mixed freely with elemental creatures, and that legacy lives on today in the region in the form of native outsiders like ifrits, undines, sylphs, and oreads.

It was in the waning years of the Age of Destiny that merchants first led Keleshite war parties to Qadira. Claiming the land in the name of Padishah Emperor Adalan IV, soldiers of Kelesh raised the empire's green flag of conquest, with the Black Blade of War crossing its field. After 2 years, when word returned from Casmaron that Adalan IV had approved the conquest, they added the Silver Blade of Kings to the flag. Formalizing their rule in –43 AR, Kelesh installed its first satrap, Cerush, and began bringing the rest of the region under its heel.

It took the Keleshites less than a century to settle the Plains of Paresh and expand northward to the border with Taldor, sparking a series of minor conflicts. Fortifying the boundary with a hundred stone watchtowers and the fortified camp of Omash, Qadira's satraps bided their time, waiting for their northern neighbor, this uncivilized "empire," to show weakness.

During the Age of Enthronement, Qadira's satraps again sought to expand the power of the Padishah Empire. This led to the conquest of the mountain settlement of Gurat, further skirmishes with the Taldans, and eventually one of Qadira's most legendary achievements—the subjugation of the nation of Osirion. With this incredible addition to Qadira's growing power, Satrap Xerbystes I struck a now-ancient bargain: he would rule Qadira and its new holdings in Osirion as a hereditary (rather than appointed) satrap and have absolute control over the nation's interior, but the Padishah Emperor would install a vizier to advise Xerbystes and his successors, communicating the imperial will on matters of expansion, war, and trade.

A time of relative peace settled over Qadira, broken periodically by uprisings in Osirion and a few notable natural disasters (including the great earthquake of 2920 AR that killed tens of thousands in northern Qadira). Prosperity enriched many families to the point that they could petition the empire for grants of nobility. In 4067 AR, however, a debate over the successor to the Padishah Emperor turned bloody, and 40 princes left Katheer to contest their rightful claim to the throne of Kelesh. The succession took nearly 15 years to resolve, but when Taldor faced trouble in the form of a power grab by the king of Cheliax, Qadira settled its internal strife to organize a strike into Taldor.

Qadiran armies crossed the northern borders in 4079 AR with a force of more than 40,000 Qadiran and Keleshite soldiers. This proved a greater force than Taldor could contend with, and the northern empire lost much of its influence in the area over the next decade. While most of Avistan notes this period for the Even-Tongued Conquest, in which Cheliax and several other nations successfully threw off the yoke of the Taldan empire, Qadiran histories record these events as the Ghevran Victories. Peace with Taldor would not be achieved for another 500 years.

Government

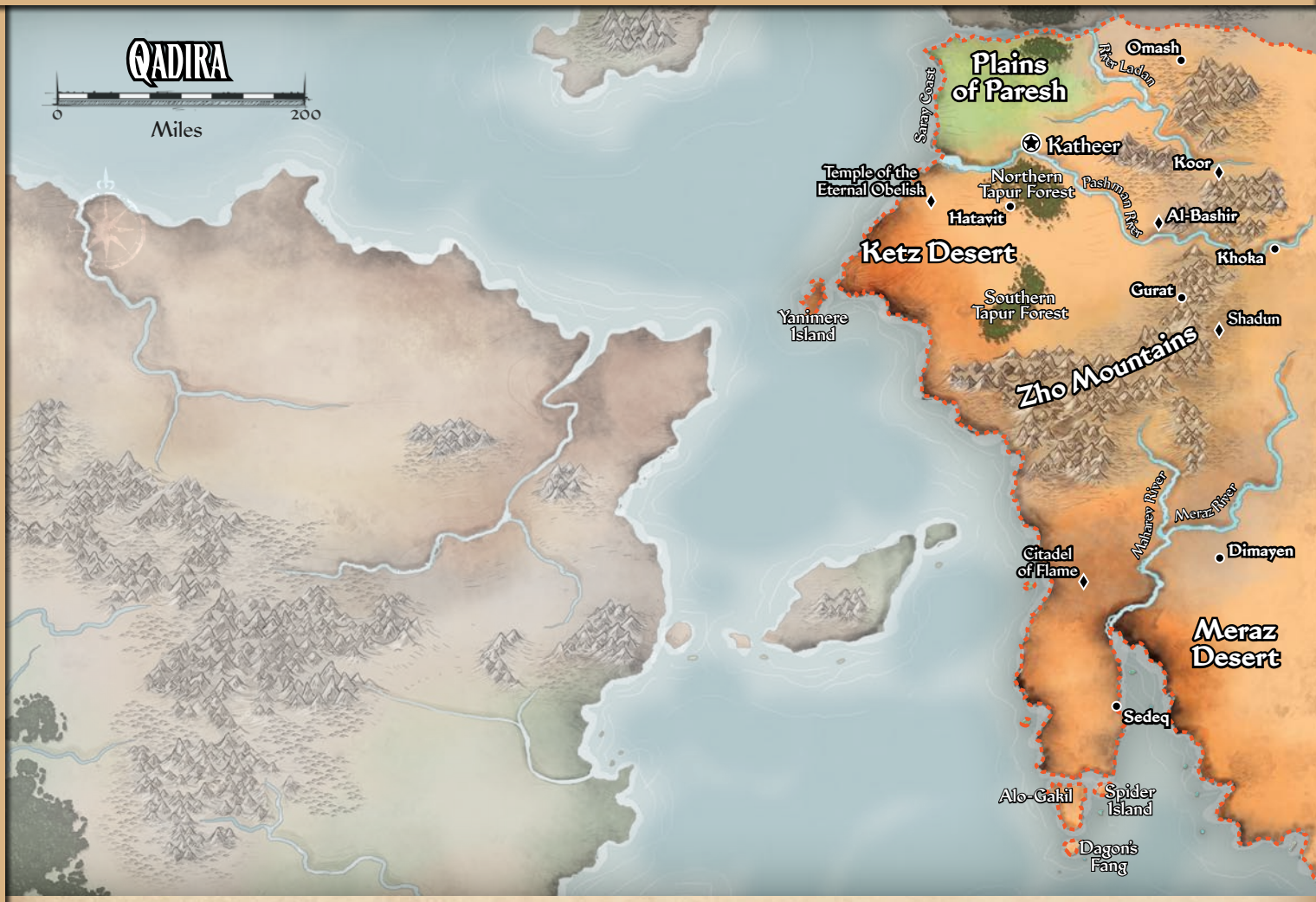
Taldor and other nations on the Inner Sea and Obari Ocean fear the ambitions of the current satrap of Qadira, young Xerbystes II. He works as the hand of Kelesh's emperor, given free rein over local affairs in exchange for an annual tribute of 13 golden bulls and 300 concubines for the vast pleasure palaces of the imperial heartland. Because of Qadira's strategic importance, however, Xerbystes bows to the imperial will on matters outside his borders, such as piracy, trade, and war with Taldor. In those matters, his vizier Hebizid Vraj serves as the emperor's hand. Since Qadira's generals also follow orders from Kelesh, Xerbystes cannot have the war with Taldor he craves. He makes do by giving his heroes—a group of nobles and advisers called the Peerless—ever more difficult tasks in his service.

The Cult of the Dawnflower remains very popular among the Qadiran dervishes and military, and its leaders have long had powerful voices in the satrapy. Indeed, their call for an invasion of Osirion led to Keleshite dominance of that region, and their meddling in northern Garund long ago reshaped the region violently. Sarenrae's followers are much less eager to turn their goddess's wrath against anyone but Taldor these days. A growing number of lower-ranking priests in the church fear that its leadership grows ever more blasphemous and heretical in this lust for war, for Sarenrae's teachings preach tolerance and redemption. War is to be an act of final resort—not a preventative measure against real or imagined threats. A schism is building in Qadira's most powerful church as a result, one that goes unnoticed by the government and the populace at large but could explode at the slightest triggering event.

The arrival of new ideas and cults from the east is almost as common as the arrival of camel trains and silks. A small group calling itself the White Feather Monks recently arrived with such a caravan, teaching peace and serenity to any who would listen. The monks are closely watched by the satrap, who fears any new faith or idea as potentially dangerous. As pacifists, the White Feather Monks face a long struggle to win the satrap's good graces, for he has little use for those who cannot feed his war machine as he prepares his desired offensive against Taldor. The traditionalists in the church of Sarenrae see these pacifist priests as possible allies, yet they too are suspicious of the secrecy that the White Feather Monks maintain regarding their background and true motives.

Gazetteer

Al-Bashir: The greatest ruins in Qadira lie deep in the desert and are often inaccessible when dunes cover them. The one exception is the oasis of Al-Bashir, which lies at the center of many stone walls beneath a towering cliff at the feet of a Zho escarpment where the River Pashman touches those heights. This ruin is avoided by caravans heading to Katheer from points east, for it is home to a roosting colony of hundreds of harpies, whose songs bring herds of antelopes and entire camel trains to ruin. The pile of treasure at its heart is rumored to be immense, although no one has found a way to slay enough harpies to make it possible to carry it home. The satrap has tried to clear the ruins several times with small armies, but has accomplished only the creation of new generations of widows. For now, he saves his strength.



Dimayen: Once a rather large farming community, Dimayen has fallen upon hard times. The collapse of its irrigation network, failing crops, unseasonable dust storms, and most recently a staggering increase in the local ankheg population has the town on its knees. Half of the buildings of Dimayen now lie abandoned, and all that keeps the remaining population on site is a stubborn refusal to allow what is still seen as "a spate of bad luck" run them out of town.

Gurat: The city of Gurat is home to scholarly colleges and a strange prophet. The prophet is the Mouthpiece of Gurat, an ancient cyclops oracle who serves the emperors of Kelesh. Visitors are not allowed anywhere near the Mouthpiece, who is guarded by a thousand deafened eunuchs. The city of Gurat is also known for its weavings, many of which are enchanted as flying carpets of various sizes.

Katheer: Glorious Katheer, the city of a thousand caravans, is a place like no other, full of every spice, race, and magic, and home to the largest population of camels beyond the Kelesh homelands to the east. The palace of Xerbystes II stands here, as do several noted academies of mathematics, philosophy, and learning. In the schools and bazaars, the activity is great and many foreign scholars frequent Katheer's libraries. The busiest places of all, though, are the port and the camel pens. Ships sail to Quantium, Katapesh, and Absalom daily. These include both ocean-going dhows and a small number of enchanted sandships, able to sail above the dunes and powered by elemental winds.

Many different schools contend for students in Katheer. The greatest of Katheer's colleges is the Venicaan College of Medicaments and Chiurgery. Founded in ages past, the healers from Venicaan's halls are one of the advantages that Qadira holds over Taldor, where the healing arts are much less advanced. Both magic and herbalism are combined here in vast halls to save the lives of soldiers, who rest there only so long as is needed before departing to fight once more. The more recent accomplishments in this line are related to the healing of camels and horses, a specialty always in demand, by caravan-masters and cavalry alike.

Within the palace, a hundred princes and princesses contend for the favor of the satrap, for he alone grants the commissions for the most valuable caravans back to the

imperial heartland: salt, spice, silk, *heatstones*, and a dozen other sorts of goods besides. The wealth and strangeness of the place sometimes overwhelm visitors, but the Keleshites laugh and proclaim the city a pigsty compared to the empire's heart. Perhaps this sentiment is mere modesty, but the empire has many satrapies, and Qadira is by no means the largest.

Ketz Desert: This high desert is inhabited by numerous nomadic tribes of human slavers who often recruit the aid of creatures like bugbears, jann, or barbaric giants. As the desert approaches the sea, the land rises until it ends along a several-hundred-mile-long stretch of sheer cliffs that runs from the mouth of the Pashman River south to the Zho Mountains.

Omash: Omash, situated as it is on the northern border with Taldor, is primarily a fortress city—it marks the eastern end of the satrapy's patrols. It is from among the several schools of war here that the satrap personally chooses the guards for his palaces, the elite soldiers of his armies, and even a few of his famed Peerless.

Sedeq: The settlement of Sedeq, south of the Zho Mountains, is a place of warm breezes, lush gardens, and frequent desperate pleas and screams, for it the heart of the Qadiran slave trade. There, captured slaves are broken, shorn, and made ready for sale. What makes Sedeq all the more unusual is that this city specializes in the enslavement of genies and their kin. Jann and elemental races like ifrits and oreads are often put up for sale, and those buyers with enough coin can even purchase bottled djinn or shaitans encased in amber. The genie binders of Sedeq are masters of their craft, yet periodically one of their projects escapes—it is at these times that life on the streets of Sedeq is at its most perilous, for little can compare to an enraged genie unleashed in the heart of a city.

Shadun: The ruined city of Shadun lies somewhat east of Gurat. The people who bear its name abandoned their terrace farms along the hundred green trails and riverbeds of the Pashman watershed long ago, when the Zhonar and Zhobl volcanoes first stirred and threw great clouds of ash and dust over their once-fertile farmland. The fate of the Shadun people themselves is unknown, although strange, shadowy figures with glowing embers for eyes are said to stalk the otherwise empty alleyways of Shadun at night.

Tapur Forest: The shared name for two distinct regions of woodland, the Tapur Forest contains a number of inhospitable fey creatures, the presence of whom likely explains how these woodlands of fruiting trees and palms can exist in such inhospitably arid climes.

Zho Mountains: These ragged peaks, while not unusually high (averaging at a mere 7,500 feet in height), form an effective barrier due not to their terrain but to the large number of feral giants, draconic beasts, and elemental outcasts that dwell within the range's often volcanic caverns. Rumors of villages or even entire cities populated by ifrits, oreads, sylphs, and undines persist, although these settlements must be well hidden—perhaps via magical effects like permanent *mirage arcana* spells, for no such settlements have been discovered by humanoid explorers in these mountains.

ENSLAVED DJINNI

Rahadoum

THE KINGDOM OF MAN

Alignment: LN
Capital: Azir (72,370)
Notable Settlements: Botosani (23,540), Haldun (1,400), Manaket (26,780)
Ruler: Malduoni, Keeper of the First Law
Government: Council of Elders led by the Keeper of the First Law
Languages: Common, Osiriani
Religion: None (see below)

Visitors to Rahadoum often arrive via ship at Azir (known by many as "Port Godless") to trade for the country's fine cloth, exotic produce, and priceless gemstones. Yet despite the lure of trade, visits to Rahadoum are strictly regulated, for the so-called "Kingdom of Man" tolerates no devotion to the divine within its borders. Foreigners must submit to a thorough search by the Pure Legion, a group of trained soldiers who watch for signs of faith in the gods. The black markets of Rahadoum do a brisk business selling and buying divine magical items, but such activities are risky. Possession of contraband (such as holy texts or symbols) results in heavy fines and potential exile, while preaching religious doctrine earns imprisonment or worse.

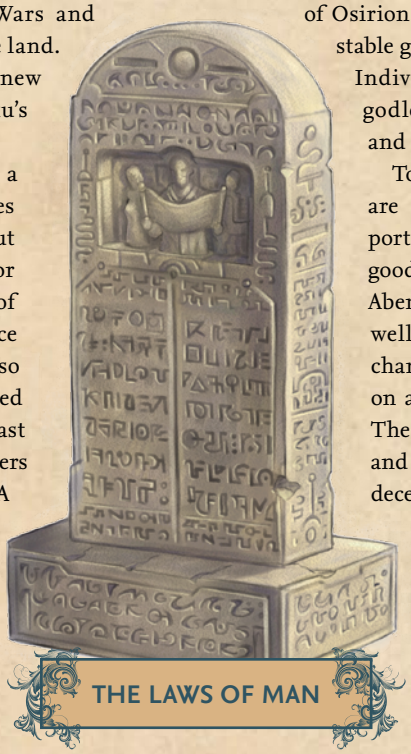
HISTORY

Early in the Age of Anguish, the Jistka Imperium became humanity's first attempt at the recovery of civilization in the Inner Sea region after the horrendous devastation that was Earthfall. Jistka could well have gone on to found much of both Garund and Avistan's modern nations, yet its fate was altogether more ignominious, for another nation—ancient Osirion—would prove to be the victor in that race. Today, little is known of Jistka and their accomplishments, as their ancient traditions were obliterated or absorbed by Osirion.

After ancient Osirion's fall, the region known today as Rahadoum fell under the control of numerous isolated city-states. When the faithful of Sarenrae, spreading their religion like rising sunrays across northern Garund, came upon this region, they met sudden resistance from these independent city-states, who favored Nethys and Norgorber. The Oath Wars—more than 6 ruinous decades of religious war between rival followers of the three gods—followed, devastating the region.

In 2555 AR, the weary militia of Azir put all of the great city's temples to the torch and exiled members of their clergies. Led by the philosopher Kalim Onaku, the militia stabilized the warring city and set down a list of new laws, the first of which was, "Let no man be beholden to a god." Over the next 5 years, the laws of Azir spread across the region, ending the Oath Wars and expelling all forms of religion from the land. Communities willing to swear by the new Laws of Man were welcomed into Onaku's growing nation of Rahadoum.

Since then, Rahadoum has charted a resolutely secular path. No one denies the existence or power of the gods, but their aegis comes at too high a price for the people of Rahadoum. The lack of religion has brought the region the peace it so desperately desired, though it has also brought its own costs. Plague has ravaged Azir and Botosani three times in the past 500 years, and the prospect of famine hovers over the fragile land like a shroud. A century ago, Manaket was among the lushest ports of the Inner Sea. Today, it is choked by encroaching desert sands, and its famous gardens are a memory of the distant past. While few dare speak it aloud, nervous whispers abound that the gods have finally decided to punish the people of Rahadoum for their insolence. Still, the Rahadoumi resolutely hold to their ancient laws and avoid any contact with religion.



THE LAWS OF MAN

GOVERNMENT

Rahadoum is ruled by a council of elders comprising representatives from every major settlement and nomadic group. The council in turn elects one of its members to be the Keeper of the First Law for a period of 5 years. Council members elect Keepers to represent their interests, but ambitious Keepers use the position to sway public opinion toward their own agendas. This tension means Keepers rarely get reelected, and the resultant lack of continuity leads other political powers to wait out Rahadoum's government when it becomes difficult to work with, relying on its relatively frequent changes of direction. Malduoni, a genuinely likable man, has bucked the trend, and is now serving his second term as Keeper and forcing other nations to deal with him.

Rejecting religion has made Rahadoum few allies. Nonetheless, the free ports draw their share of merchants from around the Inner Sea. Money talks louder than most preachers, although the most superstitious sailors won't even set foot on Rahadoum docks for fear of divine disfavor. A lively appreciation of philosophy also draws scholars to the nation's universities and observatories.

Relations are chilly with neighboring Thuvia, where the faithful of Sarenrae still hold power. The long-ago sting of the cult's castigation has faded, but Rahadoum's stern denials keep the grudge alive. Prince Khemet III of Osirion has a pragmatist's appreciation for the stable government and safe ports of Rahadoum. Individual Osirians might distrust the godless traders, but Osirion's government and military find them excellent neighbors.

To the south, the pirates of the Shackles are a continual burden on Rahadoum's ports. The Rahadoumi navy has lost many good ships chasing pirates into the Eye of Abendego, and as a result is willing to pay well for a navigator who can provide good charts or, better yet, lead Rahadoumi ships on a raid around the murderous hurricane. The Mwangi Expanse, across the desert and over the mountains, is too far and too decentralized to be of immediate interest to city dwellers. Nomads, however, cross the borders frequently, bringing treasures to market that command high prices. The Sodden Lands to the south, the mantis-god-worshiping assassins of Mediogalti to the west, and devil-governed Cheliax to the north are stark reminders of why Onaku banned religion in the first place.

Civic participation is a major focus in Rahadoum. Most citizens are well educated, and philosophy and politics are common pursuits. Speeches delivered by government figures are analyzed over drinks in tents and cafes around the country. Self-disciplined behavior is the rule, but within those bounds, morality is largely at an individual's or a family's discretion. Narcotics, enthusiastically imported from Katapesh, are common in cities, although sloppy addicts are not tolerated. Slavery is commonplace.

Rahadoum's enduring atheistic nature has had another, invisible side effect. Outsider servitors of gods use Azir as a neutral ground. The gods certainly watch their dealings there, but without open followers on the ground, the gods lack agents to enact their agendas, leaving room for plain negotiations. Many unexplained supernatural effects that occur within the cities of Rahadoum are due to invisible conflicts between celestials and fiends.

Rahadoumi are sometimes characterized as grim optimists. Although serious, they maintain a backhanded positivity they use to pull through any hardship, simply because they don't have anyone else to rely on. They typically exhibit an ironic, black wit so finely tuned that

they say, "A Rahadoumi laughs at death—but it's a shared laugh, not a defiant one."

Philosophy and rhetoric are valued traits in Rahadoumi culture, as well as self-discipline and family loyalty, especially among the nomads. With no external powers to provide spiritual guidance, the Rahadoumi are serious about their responsibilities to themselves and each other. They expect no mercy from Pharasma after death, so they work very hard to make mortal life worthwhile, collectively and individually.

GAZETTEER

Azir: Azir is a somber city in many respects, but recently, art and architecture have exploded with creativity. New buildings sport improbable angles, as builders strive to "break geometry," while older buildings receive colorful new facades and unexpected gargoyles peering down from their eaves.

Botosani: Hearsay that a powerful cult of Iomedae has taken root in Botosani with the blessing of the locals has recently evolved from mere rumor to an open secret. Routing the nascent cult amid the current famine would be a rough task for any government, but the council intends to try. The Pure Legion hopes to secure outside help to either damage the cult or to create a public spectacle it can heroically clean up.

Eternal Oasis: Neither fed by any river nor producing any of its own, the Eternal Oasis of western Rahadoum is a mystery to even the realm's most learned sages. Here, freshwater springs bubble forth in the thousands, creating pristine ponds and networks of marshes that feed vast, leafy trees seemingly more appropriate to the jungles of the Mwangi Expanse. Perhaps the strangest aspect is that the trees drink the available water so thoroughly as to make the demarcation between desert and forest knife-edged, with no bleed out into the sands. Whether this line is magical or natural remains an open question. Some suggest that this legacy of ancient Rahadoum's fertile bounty is protected by its mysterious residents, or perhaps the forest itself. Certainly something seems to lurk in the shadows of the wood, and many of the merchants who succumb to its lush temptations never return to their caravans.

Haldun: Once the center of trade with Lirgen and other lands to the south, the town of Haldun is now a fortification,

a mud-brick fortress standing in the only convenient pass through the southern mountains. Here, grim warriors and grimmer wizards maintain the Rainwall, a network of sentries and magical wards designed to give Rahadoum advance notice should the curse of the Sodden Lands ever begin to creep northward, and prepared to lay down their lives preventing it if necessary. So far, the job has consisted primarily of defending against cultists and monsters emerging from the storm, but even that is no small task. The lone scouts of the Rainwall, as well as the hardy farmers that feed them, take a certain perverse pride in living on the edge of a cursed land, and its proximity makes them all the more resolute in their conviction that such is the end of all nations who place their faith in deities.

The Last Temple: Rumored to exist somewhere in the eastern foothills of the Napsune Mountains, or perhaps in the trackless dunes beyond, the Last Temple is a fairy tale told among Rahadoum's secret religious circles. According to legend, the Last Temple moves around, never appearing in the same place twice but always showing up just when it's needed most. Surrounded by colorful banners that fly in the wind, the colonnades and stepped pyramids of the temple complex are said to be run by spirits and petitioners of every religion, hidden from the unworthy and devoted to keeping faith alive in Rahadoum. Many an ousted preacher has headed into the desert one step ahead of the Pure Legion, hoping for sanctuary in the legendary temple.

Manaket: The prestigious wizard college in Manaket, the Occularium, plans to reclaim desert land through a shifting series of trenches and dikes carefully designed to hold back the sand. The city devotes significant resources to studying the feasibility of this project, and has even been attempting to entice dwarven engineers from distant Alkenstar to aid in the project.

Nuat: Located 50 miles off the western coast, the island of Nuat is Rahadoum's first line of defense against pirates from the Shackles. The Rahadoumi navy keeps a sizable fleet on the island's eastern flank, and patrols the bay leading to Azir heavily enough that only the bravest smugglers and buccaneers dare try to run the blockade. Much of the rest of the island is given over to small farming and fishing communities, and warm rain showers drifting up from the south make it the most productive farmland in the nation, exporting vast stores of food back to the mainland. Mostly flat—in some stretches just a few feet above sea level—the island is at particular risk for storms, and though its residents are as godless as their countrymen, they harbor a wide range of "superstitions" that find leniency with the Pure Legion. Many of these concern the Thin Men, ghostlike creatures that haunt the cane fields and lurk just out of firelight. Whether these are truly spirits, or some unknown race that predates the Rahadoumi's residency, none can say.

Shepherd's Rock: Despite its innocuous name, this towering citadel is one of the most feared and respected sites in Rahadoum, as it is here that the Pure Legion organizes its operations. Beholden to no one save the First Law, existing both within and apart from the Rahadoumi government, the Pure Legion keeps its most important secrets here, safely away from any cities where faith might suddenly sweep in like wildfire to destroy all they've built. It is from this blocky, cliff-top fortress that Karsakim, the current Sword of Man, looks out over 20 miles of desert, secure in the knowledge that should the weak-minded ever take up arms against the keepers of the First Law, his troops would have plenty of time to set fires in the hidden Vault of Lies, where thousands of confiscated religious texts are carefully analyzed to help the guardians of reason wage their secular war.

KARSAKIM, SWORD OF MAN

Razmiran

THEOCRACY OF THE LIVING GOD

Alignment: LE
Capital: Thronestep (17,340)
Notable Settlements: Pilgrimage (1,020), Whispertruth (690), Xer (9,200)
Ruler: Razmir, the Living God, Lord of the 31 Steps
Government: Theocratic Dictatorship with Razmir at its head, supported by a council of Visions
Languages: Common, Hallit
Religion: Razmir (false god—see below)

The northeastern shores of Lake Encarthan have always been a turbulent place. For centuries, this land was part of the unruly River Kingdoms, changing hands dozens of times from one burgeoning prince to the next. All of that changed 47 years ago, when the living god Razmir came to the shores and claimed his dominion in the world of mortals.

HISTORY

Razmir first appeared to the people of Xer (then part of the Arch-Duchy of Melcat) and told them of his power. He claimed to have taken the Test of the *Starstone* in faraway Absalom, and to have attained divinity through this test. Using his supposedly divine powers, Razmir set about gathering a flock by ousting the local magistrate and the Trades Guild, "exposing" them as a front for thieves and extortionists. Those who came to worship him, however, knew nothing of the truth: Razmir expelled the magistrate by murdering him and disbanded the Trades Guild by incorporating all of its members into his faith. Razmir's biggest lie, however, is hidden from even his most trusted followers—for Razmir is not in fact a god. Although powerful, he is simply a man, and one whose mortal end grows closer with every day.

In the months following his takeover of Xer, Razmir's faith spread across the arch-duchy until it reached the capital of Aerduin on the border of the Vergan Forest. The forces of Melcat refused to bow to Razmir's faith, and on 17 Erastus, Razmir himself came to the city. He made three requests for fealty to Duke Melcat—each one was refused. That night, a terrible cloud of fire and smoke descended upon the city and screams echoed through the night. By morning, the entire city had been reduced to ash and Razmir's takeover was complete. In the years since, Razmiran—as the theocracy came to be called—has expanded its borders five times at the expense of various River Kingdoms.

Today, Razmiran is a society governed by force and intimidation. The faith's ruthless priests control every facet of the state and economy from behind their iron masks (worn in imitation of their god). While the common folk toil at their fields or meager trades, the true faithful take a portion of the commoners' work known as the Tithing Step. The higher-level clergy, meanwhile, enjoy a life of comfort, with their station in the faith granting them a great deal of power and wealth. Those who dare to defy the faith face severe punishment—imprisonment, exile, or even execution. This leads many to join the faith as a path of prosperity, regardless of their belief. Such acolytes are sent to the Exalted Wood for training and come back changed, acting in league with the faith despite any previous misgivings.

Government

A council of high-ranking "priests" known as the Visions handles the actual governance of Razmiran. These gold-masked priests carry out Razmir's erratic mandates, each in their unique way. While some Visions are gifted sorcerers, others are skilled at martial combat, and still others use honeyed words and bribes to accomplish their goals. Since all Visions are identically attired, most citizens obey any Vision's commands without question, for fear of angering one of the more cruel members. Razmir himself consults with his Visions from atop a 31-stepped throne—a reference to the 31 steps he supposedly took to achieve divinity. From there, he hides his mortality behind an ornate ivory mask. As age has enervated him, his greed and lust for power have only increased. He has recently (and secretly) sent agents to Thuvia in hopes of staving off his mortality with a dose of the *sun orchid elixir*. Should this information come to light, his entire kingdom could crumble around him.

MASK OF RAZMIR

Temples dedicated to Razmir appear throughout Razmiran and several nearby River Kingdoms, but some also stand in Molthune, Nirmathas, and even Ustalav, while the governments of Druma, Kyonin, and Lastwall have outlawed them. A typical temple of Razmir houses a large worship chamber arranged around a great set of stone steps that lead up to a gold or silver mask. At first, these are temples set up in the poorest neighborhoods, where the priests give alms and tend to the sick and poor. They use their growing flocks to influence local governments, to extort money from businesses as "protection" from their mobs, and eventually to place their faithful in positions of power.

Those who follow the teachings of Razmir are organized by their loyalty to the faith and accomplishments in the name of the Living God. These orders are referred to as "Steps," in accordance with the number of steps the cleric is allowed to ascend when in the presence of the Living God. Each follower is assigned a simple robe and a mask to denote her station in the faith. The orders are as follows.

Steps of the Living God

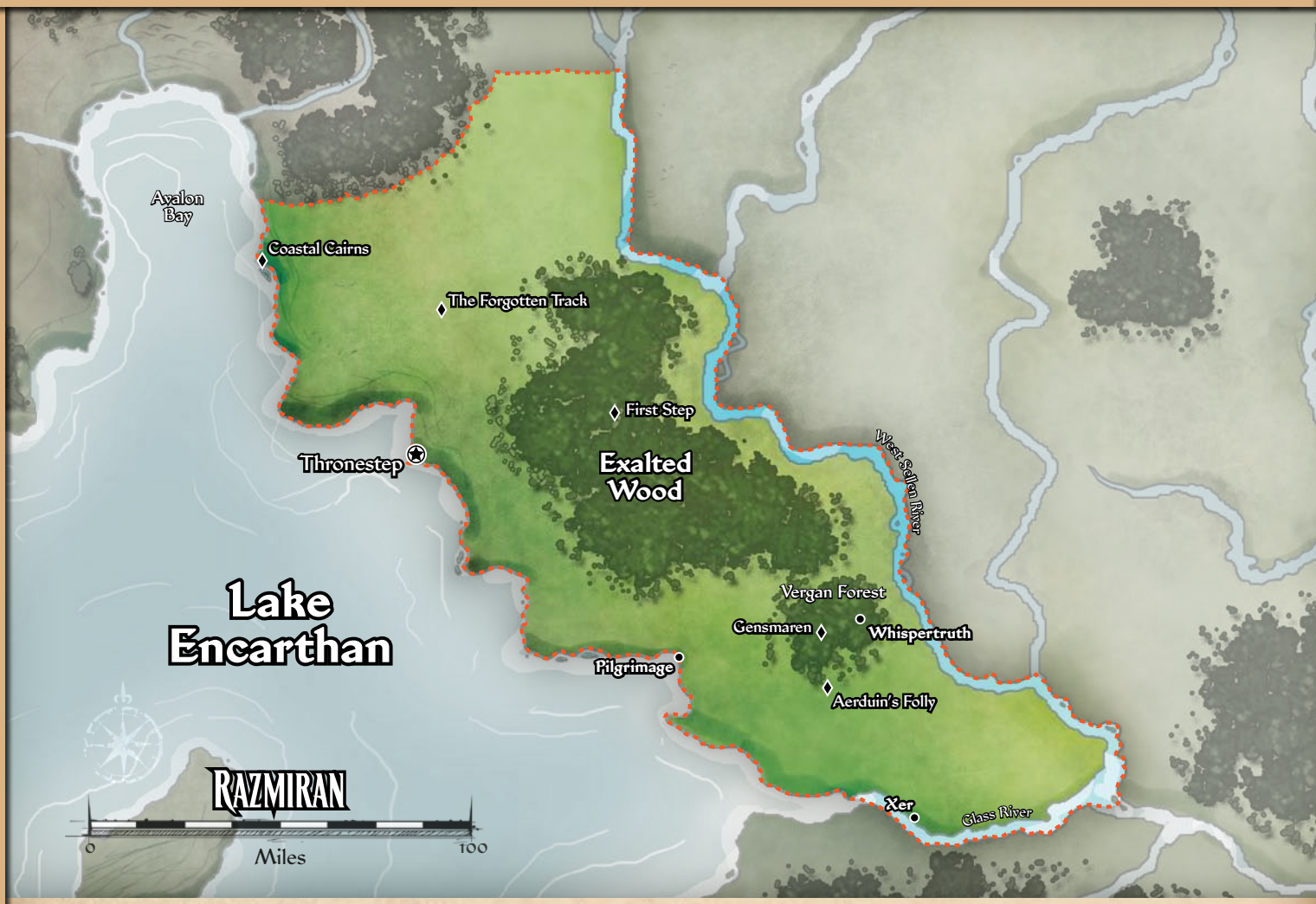
Title	Robe	Mask
Acolyte of the First Step	White	Iron
Priest of the Third Step	Gray	Iron
Herald of the Eighth Step	Black	Iron
Mask of the Twelfth Step	Blue	Silver
Vision of the Fifteenth Step	Red	Gold

Gazetteer

Aerduin's Folly: The old capital of the archduchy, now known as Aerduin's Folly, has been abandoned for nearly 50 years, covered in a layer of ash and dust generated by its destruction at the hands of Razmir. In the years since, no plants have grown here, and the shattered buildings and buckled streets have become a haven for undead. While the first of these undead rose from the spirits of the people of Aerduin, there are rumors that a powerful skeleton lord has recently claimed the ruined city as his realm, and that he has been creating additional undead from the city's ashes. Some say this undead lord is actually the vengeful Duke Melcat, returned to claim his throne.

Exalted Wood: This vast and untamed forest is home to a wide variety of beasts, from the blood boar to large emerald owls. Despite the voracious appetite of these predators, none of them are as dangerous as Razmir's faithful, who dwell in a secret fortress called First Step in the forest's heart. The northern reach of the wood is also home to a curious breed of centaurs who possess human torsos and arms but have the heads of horses. Their unique language makes them difficult to communicate with, and as of yet Razmir's faithful have been unable to subjugate them.

First Step: Located near the center of the Exalted Wood, the fortress of First Step is a massive edifice of black stone. Extending almost twice as far below ground as above, this is where new "recruits" for Razmir's faith are broken and trained to become acolytes. While most emerge as loyal priests (albeit with fresh scars and burns) others are never heard from again. In reality, the church takes every step possible to convert a doubtful member, including coercive magic and even torture. After indoctrination, a new acolyte is assigned his first task. This usually consists of reporting to a new temple somewhere in the Inner Sea region to serve.



Other acolytes are instead assigned to cities or regions in which the church has no influence, and ordered to convert as many of that city's desperate and poor as they can to Razmir's faith.

The Forgotten Track: North of Thronestep lies a region known only as the Tracks—a place of jagged clefts, furrows, and canyons, as if the ground itself were decaying into a complex series of tracks in the earth. At the heart of this region is a particularly large rift known as the Forgotten Track, so named not because it is itself forgotten but because that is the eventual fate of those sent there by the faith. Deep in this rift lies a vast prison and mining complex, a place where the Living God sends those who lose faith or displease him. New prisoners are lowered down to the rift floor in an iron cage. At the bottom, they are released and assigned to one of any number of work gangs, forced to toil until their sentences are served (a rarity) or they perish from exertion (the most common outcome). Although the mines do uncover precious metals and valuable ores, there seems to be another purpose to the tunneling, for Razmir periodically sends directives to the prison's wardens detailing schematics for new directions of tunneling. The Mask in charge of the facility is a gigantic man who goes by the name of Rastagar. Although feared by both the prisoners and the guards, Rastagar grows increasingly nervous himself about the progress of the tunnels, which have recently been intersecting with upper levels of the Darklands and exposing the complex to strange denizens and dangerous hazards.

Gensmaren: When Taldor's Second Army of Expansion swept through the region, it established a regular series of supply forts along the way. Some of these have since seeded the sites of modern settlements, but many, like Gensmaren, were forgotten. By the time Razmir's followers were moving against Xer, Gensmaren had already secured for itself a shadowy reputation. The old fort lies half in ruins, shrouded with thick webs and reeking of decay. Rumors of what lies within range from an infestation of giant vermin to a clot of undead to a cult of demon worshipers. It is this final rumor that is the most accurate, for Gensmaren is the lair of a sizable group of driders who worship the Creeping Queen Mazmezz, demon lord of bindings, driders, and vermin. The driders themselves tend to limit their presence to the ruins, the immediate surroundings,

and the extensive catacombs below the site, knowing from previous encounters with humanity that they are not well-liked on the surface. The long route to the Darklands through which these driders initially came to the surface has long since collapsed, stranding the monsters here forever.

Pilgrimage: This small community has been growing in size of late. Pilgrimage was founded to give those making their way to Thronestep a safe place to rest on the journey from Xer to the capital. What started out as a roadside tavern has transformed in a bustling community with more than a dozen inns, a large temple, and a reasonably sized port. While most of the traffic through town consists of travelers to Thronestep, Pilgrimage has become a frequent meeting spot for those wishing to do business outside the capital city's influence. While most of these shady dealings are done with the knowledge of the clergy, an ever-increasing number of deals and arrangements made here occur without the consent of the faith. Should the "opportunists" involved ever be uncovered, they would certainly find themselves on a one-way trip to the Forgotten Track, or worse. For outsiders wishing to deal with duplicitous clerics or hoping to garner certain contraband items, Pilgrimage is the first place to visit.

Thronestep: Founded in 4672 AR, the city of Thronestep was built to be Razmir's capital—a task that a small army of laborers accomplished with astounding rapidity. Sitting on the shores of Lake Encarthan, the city was meant to be a paradise for his faithful. Built using rich woods and imported stone, the buildings of Razmir's capital feature leering images of his masked visage. Thronestep attracts thousands of the poor, who flock to Razmir hoping for his blessing. Most never leave the city, taking up residence in its growing slums where they hope to one day see the god and personally petition him for aid. As a result, the city can be easily divided into two districts. The first is the Steps district, where Razmir and his faithful enjoy all the delights the world has to offer. The Steps is a place of absolute decadence and debauchery. The second, and by far the largest district, is the Stones, where the poor live in squalor and filth. Many hope that they will be part of the Choosing, a weekly ceremony where five people are chosen to speak with Razmir. Little do the poor know that those chosen are planted by the faithful, and the entire ceremony is a fraud.

PRIEST OF RAZMIR

Vergan Forest: Just south of the Exalted Wood lies the Vergan Forest, a haven for outlaws and those seeking to avoid the cruel and fickle hand of Razmir's faith. When Razmir first launched his bid to seize control of the land, many of his followers used the Vergan Forest as cover—a safe place to hide and rest during the campaign. Today, the people of Razmir have little reason to visit these woods. The forest is littered with ruined buildings never built to last, forgotten caches of weapons and supplies, and in more than a few cases pockets of anarchists, troublemakers, and bandits who, ironically, use the woods for the same purposes Razmir's followers did so many years ago.

Whispertruth: This is a small community of runaways, failed priests, and other malcontents who live in constant fear of discovery by Razmir's Visions. The people of Whispertruth take extreme measures to keep their location a secret, blindfolding visitors before escorting them to the town or setting up fake camps to vex those who seek the village. While they have never been raided by the faithful, this is only because Razmir has decided that this small, manageable group of rebels is a useful tool. His magic long ago determined their location, and he uses scrying regularly to observe the village's leaders. Razmir plans to use this group as a scapegoat for whatever sort of emergency or atrocity he needs to commit in the future.

Xer: Xer is an important port for Razmiran's economy. Those traveling to and from Lake Encarthan must pass by this harbor—for those who choose not to stop are accosted by "faith barges," where Razmir's clergy move from vessel to vessel, spreading the word of the faith (meaning bullying ship captains) and collecting tithes (demanding tribute). There are some in Xer who still remember the early days of Razmir's faith and who know a great deal more than they should. Some even whisper that Razmir might have a few bastards living on the streets of Xer—should word of these children become public, Razmir's reputation would suffer greatly.

River Kingdoms

INDEPENDENT REALMS OF LOW CHARACTER

Alignment: CN
Capital: None
Notable Settlements: Artume (2,650), Avendale (11,280), Bacul Gruii (380), Daggermark (27,460), Deadbridge (4,113), Jovvox (1,450), Liberthane (170), Gralton (9,200), Lockridge (1,810), Maashinelle (2,977), Mimere (345), Mivon (10,870), Mormouth (740), Novoboro (488), Outsea (6,700), Pitax (8,790), Riverton (572), Saad (240), Sarain (414), Seredain (3,539), Sevenarches (4,340), Sezgin (688), Solanas (501), Thom (1,036), Tymon (2,564), Wilkesmont (1,190), Uringen (1,713), Voluse (1,380)
Rulers: Various bandit kings and petty lords
Government: Multiple squabbling kingdoms
Languages: Common, Hallit
Religion: Calistria, Cayden Cailean, Desna, Erastil, Gorum, Gyronna, Hanspur, Lamashtu, Norgorber

The massive Sellen River basin drains all the eastern lands, carrying waters from the Lake of Mists and Veils north of Brevoy, the massive Lake Encarthan, and lakes and rivers all over Galt, Numeria, and Ustalav down to the Inner Sea. As the tributaries pass through the hundred marshes and forests of the River Kingdoms, they seem to carry an especially heavy freight of sin, treachery, and thievery, for the River Kingdoms are where desperate men go to escape their pasts and carve out new lives.

HISTORY

A true history of the River Kingdoms could fill a number of tomes, for the kingdoms that currently thrive or struggle here are but the most recent. Dozens, if not hundreds, of kingdoms have risen and fallen in this region over the past several thousand years—some, like Razmiran, have managed to stabilize and become their own nations, while others have faded forever into obscurity. Yet regardless of each specific kingdom's creed or goal, they all share one rough code of justice called the Six River Freedoms. Not all honor the code, but enough do that it serves as a sort of shorthand for the independence that all people of the River Kingdoms hold dear, the closest thing this region has to a common ground and shared legacy. The six freedoms are summarized below.

Say What You Will, I Live Free: Talk is cheap, and everyone is entitled to speak their own words.

Oathbreakers Die: Those who swear oaths—particularly those of fealty to a River King—and break them can expect any number of painful and lethal fates.

Walk Any Road, Float Any River: Freedom to travel is fundamental. No River Kingdom is allowed to bar traffic on a river or a road, save in times of active warfare.

Courts Are for Kings: The law is always malleable. Who you know and who you can count as friends are more important than what the law says, and a lord can change laws in his territory at will.

Slavery Is an Abomination: Slavers may visit the River Kingdoms, but taking or holding slaves there upsets the many people who were once slaves themselves.

You Have What You Hold: Property laws are weak in the River Kingdoms. Taking something openly by force is different from stealing, and those who can't protect their property don't deserve to keep it.

Government

Each of the tiny River Kingdoms follows its own ruler or council, and each possesses its own idiosyncrasies. Most are city-states of a few thousand souls at most. The River Kingdoms are bound together by the River Freedoms and by the Outlaw Council, a group that gathers each year in Daggermark, a town known for its effective assassins' and poisoners' guilds (and thus rarely a target of conquest). At the Outlaw Council, rulers of the region's various holdings gather to argue, fight, and plan how to keep their freedom for another year against the larger forces arrayed against them. The Riverfolk would be offended at the very idea that their lands have a prime city or ruling principality, although if pressed they might confess that Daggermark comes closest. Others might argue that Gralton is the most central city, or Sevenarches the oldest, but Daggermark is the largest and has long served as the seat of the Outlaw Council.

Gazetteer

Daggermark: With almost 30,000 inhabitants and the deadly guilds that keep bandits and troublemakers at arm's length, Daggermark is large enough to have a substantial amount of crops and livestock, forges turning out arms and armor, and even its own coinage. The city proper has both an inner and outer wall; the inner section is called the Dagger Keep, and is home to the wealthiest and most powerful of the city's captains. The ruler is Martro Livondar, although the dwarven Lord Captain Jallor Clovesh commands half the army, and no one dares ignore the sister guilds of assassins and poisoners. Daggermark fields by far the largest army of the kingdoms, with more than 1,500 veteran foot and cavalry.

Most of all, though, Daggermark attracts applicants to its schools for poisoners and assassins. Those who learn these trades in Daggermark are feared throughout Golarion. The current head of the assassins' guild is Lady Smilos, whose assassinations included the use of magical poisons, curses, and fatal misadventure through monstrous encounters. Her equal partner in the poisoners' guild is the elven druid and herbalist Tragshi, a golden-skinned maiden from the east with a lilting voice and strange notions of what constitutes the worship of nature. She is always accompanied by a dozen venomous snakes, which slither beneath her robes disconcertingly.

Gralton: The poor inhabitants of Gralton consist mostly of the old aristocracy of Galt, all exiled or fled from that land's Red Revolution. Many of these ruined nobles cannot accept their exile, and scheme and plot to regain their lands and wealth from the ruins of Galt. Every so often, a powerful noble gathers an expedition or finds the funds to pay adventurers to conduct a rescue or recovery mission. The nobles grow increasingly desperate, which brings both swindlers and false prophets calling, peddling hope or quick fixes. Many of the citizens in town behave quite strangely—some believe that a spirit of vengeance or an avatar of Calistria controls them. Certainly, the priests of Calistria are always present, preaching revenge, even on the steps of the temple of Cayden Cailean.

Lambreth: In the River Kingdoms, some realms are held together by magic or threats. Lambreth is held together by the sheer physical power of Lord Arnefax, an Andoren knight banished for his excesses and crimes against nature. Leading a company of 50 heavy cavalry (unusual in the River Kingdoms, where bandits rarely use heavy armor or heavy horse), he rules from Maashinelle's small citadel and makes frequent nocturnal visits to his borders riding a powerful nightmare. His people are terrified of both his night riders and their shadowy dogs, and perversely proud that Arnefax is powerful enough to keep their lands free and unmolested by raids. The few occasions when Lambreth has lost livestock, the ensuing retaliation usually involved the death of two people for every cow or sheep stolen—often by lynching and burning. Few dare challenge the Andoren's ruthless rule.

Mivon: Mivon began as a refuge for Aldori swordlords fleeing Rostland during the era of Choral the Conqueror. Today, Mivon is home to a thriving industry in eels and fish harvested from the marshy ponds all around the city. It is said that the eels of Mivon often feed on the flesh of men. Certainly, the swordlord Raston Selline, who rules the city under a guise of gentility but with a network of informers second to none, is sometimes seen walking out into the marshes with some petty miscreant or annoying adventurer and returning accompanied only by his faithful guards. "A walk to the fishponds" has a very particular meaning in Mivon.

Pitax: Ruled by the megalomaniacal King Irovetti, Pitax is a place of garish, trashy art created by sculptors and poets tightly controlled by the city's despot. As long as Irovetti's massively bloated ego remains fed, all is well, but those who oppose him in the most trivial details soon learn that he sees himself as an all-conquering god. Underneath his

mania, the small town struggles to survive in the face of hostility from Brevoy and borderland barbarian tribes of Numeria. Stories claim that Irovetti is himself little more than a bastard son of a minor Numerian lord, hounded from the kingdom by ancestral enemies. He leaves the hard fighting to others, and prefers to use bards and insults to tear down his enemies.

Sevenarches: This ancient elven settlement is named for the elegant stone gateways scattered in and around the forest town. Sevenarches is now a human habitation, and has been for thousands of years, since the sect of Oakstewards claimed the land from the elves who failed it. Indeed, the Oakstewards especially forbid elves and other outsiders from visiting, and are quite strict in who and what they allow to approach Sevenarches. Stories claim that the arches each once led to another world, and the elven council of Kyonin hopes to reclaim them and complete or restore the work begun on them long ago. So far, the elves remain unwilling to use force to oust the human presence there, but at some point the idea of war might carry the day, especially as the Oakstewards grow increasingly rigid and intolerant with each passing century.

Tymon: The half-orc champion Ullorth Ungin, one of the most influential members of the Outlaw Council, controls the timeworn city-state of Tymon. Founded by a Taldan gladiator and hero of the Fifth Army of Exploration who mapped the riverways of the unsettled territory centuries ago, Tymon's gladiatorial college and fabled arena enjoy a reputation that stretches into all lands that thrill to the dance of bloodsport. The insane "living god" Razmir hatches plots against Tymon from his expanding homeland to the southwest, increasingly forcing Ullorth Ungin to turn his trained warriors loose not on the arena floor, but upon the field of battle. Fortunately, a large cadre of priests of Gorum assists him in this endeavor. Each year, Ullorth Ungin pleads for "true champions of the Riverfolk" to step forward at the Outlaw Council to help him as well, and so far each year, various lordlings have pledged their support against Razmir, and the independence of the kingdoms has been preserved.

Uringen: Standing near the Embeth Forest, this strange settlement appears and disappears with the mists. Its travelers are distinctive, with black-and-white garments and unsmiling faces, and the alchemical goods sold are always

welcome for their healing and strengthening properties. The people speak a dialect of Skald, and the city itself seems somehow suspended half in and half out of time, perhaps entangled in fey magic or trapped by horological magic.

Other River Kingdoms

Numerous other River Kingdoms exist in this region—brief descriptions of these other kingdoms are listed below.

Artume: Plagued by assassinations and treachery, Artume is a kingdom without a king. Only unexpected luck or the aid of a powerful new patron can save this realm from becoming the River Kingdoms' most recent failure.

Cordelon: Once used by the elves as a staging ground for their return to Golarion after their self-imposed exile preceding Earthfall, this small kingdom has been claimed by a loose-knit tribe of humans.

Heibarr: Disputes over taxation and the destructive influence of the cult of Gyronna reduced Heibarr to its current status—a ruin haunted at night by ghosts.

Hymbria: This woodland kingdom was established by Kyonin as a base of operations for elven interests in the River Kingdoms.

Liberthane: A glimmer of hope and idealism in the cutthroat milieu of the River Kingdoms, Liberthane is ruled by an old revolutionary who hopes, one day, to save his homeland of Galt.

Loric Fells: Currently unsettled, the wildlands of Loric Fells are a gloomy, troll-haunted wilderness of dense forests and rocky canyons.

Mosswater: Established by an exiled merchant from Ustalav and decorated with strange luminescent paints and dyes, Mosswater now lies abandoned thanks to the rampaging of a family of merrows (aquatic ogres).

Nystra: Once a well-established producer of silk from rare silkworms, the kingdom of Nystra now stands eerily empty after a mysterious night of savage ruin brought down by some unknown, shadowy force.

Outsea: Perhaps the most unusual kingdom in the region, Outsea is as large below the waterline as it is above, and is populated by humans above and merfolk and sahuagin below in the briny waters magically transported here from the sea.

Protectorate of the Black Marquis: This realm is ruled by a single despot guided by the principle of "shared" wealth—shared in that any who wish to do business here must share their wealth with the Black Marquis, paying protection money for the privilege.

Riverton: The people of Riverton follow the teachings of Hanspur the Water Rat with a ferocious tenacity.

Scrawny Crossing: All that remains of this realm is an abandoned ferry landing known as Scrawny Crossing—the site is now the lair of an unseen but sinister force.

The Stolen Lands: This large swath of land along the northeastern border serves as a buffer between Brevoy and the River Kingdoms—traditionally the haunt of bandits and monstrous humanoids, the Stolen Lands are regarded as "stolen" by all nations along its border, even though none have ever been able to keep these realms under their control for long.

Touvette: Touvette's current ruler served the previous king as general. Today, Touvette is a realm where religions are not tolerated and all young men of age are required to serve in the kingdom's growing army.

KING IROVETTI OF PITAX

Sargava

THE LOST COLONY

Alignment: N
Capital: Eleder (8,900)
Notable Settlements: Crown's End (812), Fort Bandu (198), Freehold (1,330), Kalabuto (11,340), Port Freedom (2,950), Stark Point (490)
Ruler: Baron Utilinus, Grand Custodian of Sargava
Government: Colonial barony ruled as independent kingdom
Languages: Common, Polyglot
Religion: Abadar, Gozreh, Iomedae, Shelyn

Sargava is a land being pulled apart at its seams by multiple agendas. As Sargava's ruler, Baron Utilinus has come to discover that none of these agendas are his own.

HISTORY

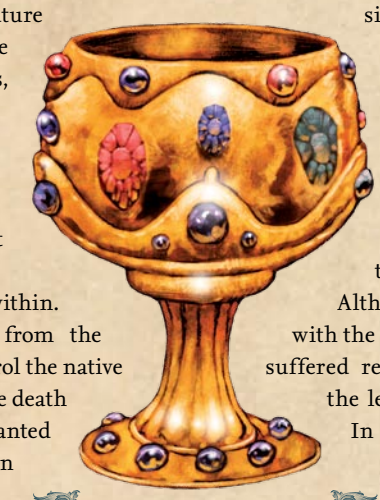
The lush plains of Sargava carve a swath of civilization out of the western coast of the dense jungles of the Mwangi Expanse. Once dominated by Mwangi tribesmen, Sargava was first settled by Chelish colonials in 4138 AR, under the ambitious whims of the mad prince Haliad I. A jewel of the empire, distant Sargava stood as a symbol of Cheliax's sheer might at the height of its power.

With the sudden death of the god Aroden, Cheliax collapsed into civil war and Sargava was isolated from the empire, no longer cut off by just its distance, but also by the addition of the newly formed perpetual hurricane, the Eye of Abendego. Desperate to remain in the empire's favor rather than be left adrift, Sargava's appointed ruler, Baron Grallus, gathered much of the colony's treasury. He then sent it in several shipments, sailing wide around the Eye and then north to Cheliax to finance House Davian, a leading contender in the war, hoping to secure Davian's bid for the fallen throne. Grallus, however, backed the wrong house—as the war progressed, the House of Thrune and its allies ripped apart House Davian in the Battle of a Hundred Kings near Corentyn.

Once word of House Thrune's ascension reached Sargava, Baron Grallus, with the support of his lesser earls, turned to the notorious Free Captains of the Shackles for help, knowing that the colony was in danger. And in fact, once Thrune firmly secured its hold over Cheliax and the throne, Her Majestrix Queen Abrogail I turned her attention to her more distant colonies, dispatching a flotilla of Chelish galleons to Sargava, loaded with diabolic missionaries and sadistic governors loyal to the House of Thrune's new

regime. For the second time in its history, Sargava faced resettlement. As soon as Thrune's imperial fleet sailed into Desperation Bay and had Sargava's shores in sight, however, the Free Captains struck a decisive blow that would become the colony's defining moment. Flying their infamous black flags, the Free Captains ambushed the Chelish fleet and demonstrated their naval supremacy. Cheliax's defeat was total, their galleons wrecked on desolate shores or left resting on the ocean floor, but the price for the Free Captains' cooperation was far from cheap. Baron Grallus promised Port Peril not only Sargava's remaining coffers, but a significant portion of its future bounty as well. As such, in exchange for the continued protection of the Free Captains, Sargava pays a continual if not exhaustive flow of tribute to the pirates. Rarely a day goes by that the steep price of Sargava's autonomy is not called into question, yet the prevailing view remains that no cost is too high.

In the meantime, Sargava rots from within. With empty coffers and no support from the motherland, the colonists' ability to control the native population continues to degrade. With the death of Aroden and the loss of the powers he granted the colonial clerics, the Mwangi tribesmen have stepped up their efforts to reclaim their ancient lands. The Sargavan military has so far managed to suppress the native revolts, but each time the threat grows a little greater.



SARGAVA CHALICE

Government

Today, Baron Utilinus rules Sargava as an independent nation by default, employing the faux-modest title of Grand Custodian. Unfortunately for him, between the demands of the Free Captains and the uprisings in Kalabuto, he finds his nation cracking at the edges. Despite his able efforts, it is unclear how long he can continue to hold Sargava together.

In between reinforcing national defenses, the baron institutes a number of festivals and events designed to bolster citizen morale and the nation's coffers. Foremost among these events is the Sargava Chalice—one of Garund's longest-running and most prestigious sporting events. A marathon-like competition, this footrace spans multiple days, in which competitors traverse dense jungles and scramble over mountain passes. The race is dangerous, and death is not unheard of, but many see having their names engraved on the coveted chalice that commemorates the victors as a form of immortality. Past competitors include adventurers from across the globe, from vainglorious Pathfinders to—in one noteworthy case—a deposed monarch.

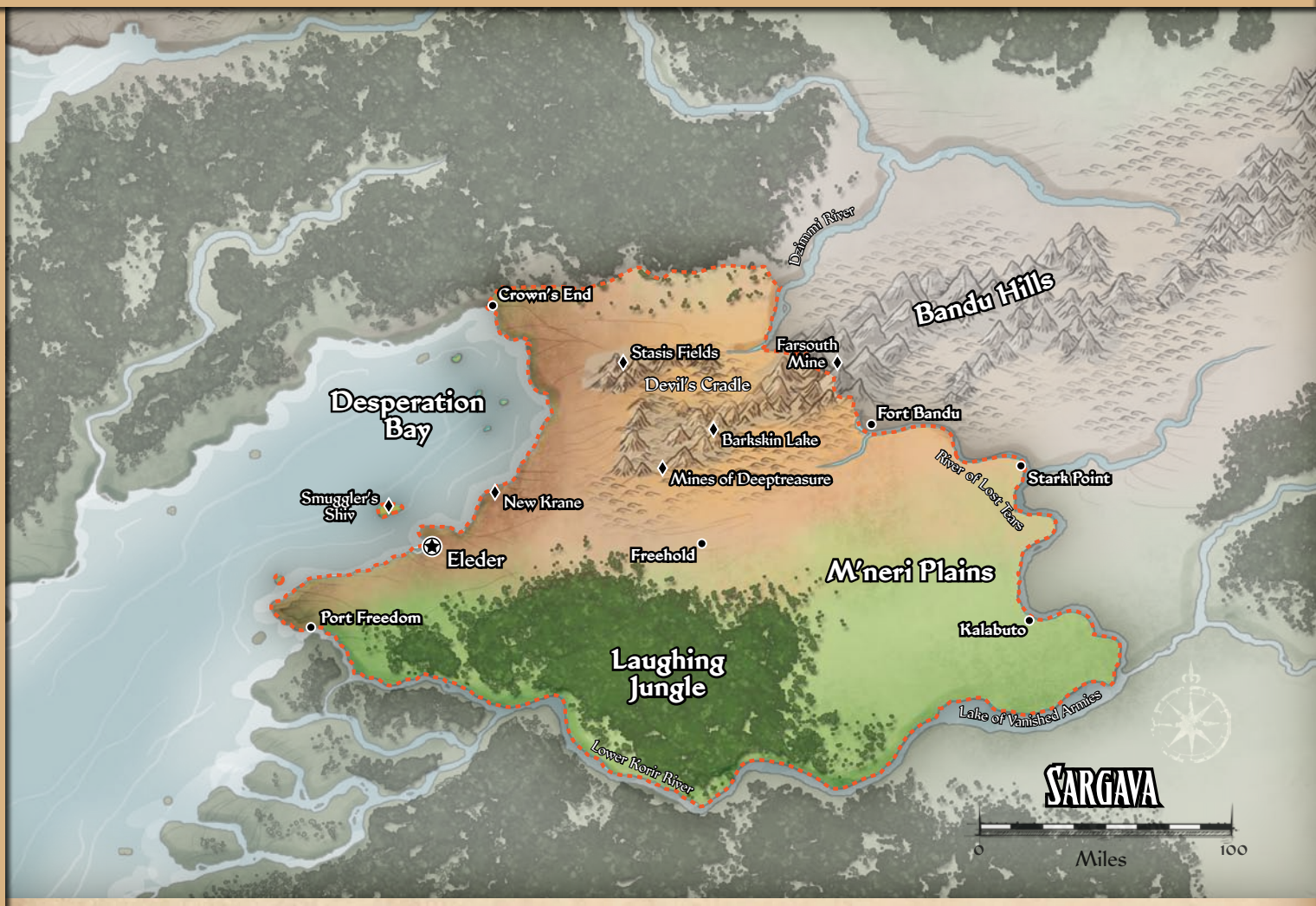
Gazetteer

Barkskin Lake: Adventurers traveling to Sargava often purchase extra canteens and head into the west Bandu Hills searching for fabled Barkskin Lake. At the right time each year, minerals leaching out of deposits under the streams that feed the lake are said to combine in certain remote pools along the shores to create a naturally occurring magical liquid that grants those who drink it flesh that looks and feels like thick tree bark for a few minutes after consumption (treat as *potions of barkskin +2*). Those who seek the lake navigate by following sightings of wood-skinned monkeys and parrots, but they soon encounter the more dangerous predators that also make yearly pilgrimages to the lake.

Crown's End: After the original landing at the harbor in what is now Eleder, a group of Chelish colonials split off and settled on a high bluff overlooking the northern part of Desperation Bay. Although they established friendly relations with the nearby Ijo, a tribe of Bonuwat humans, they suffered regular attacks from jungle predators and the less amiable natives from the Kaava Lands. In time, Crown's End became the port of choice for smugglers, slavers, and pirate ships, and more respectable merchant ships simply stopped visiting—or professed as much to the customs officials in Eleder. Today, Crown's End is a rough-and-tumble town of just over 800 inhabitants, most of whom are criminals or retired pirates. The town is ruled by former slaver Ilina "Icehand" Ysande, who maintains some semblance of order and pays Crown's End's taxes to Eleder on time and without complaint. Icehand's policy toward the rest of Sargava is for Crown's End citizens to take advantage of any opportunity that arises, but to otherwise appear to be contributing members of colonial society—and she deals harshly with citizens who draw too much attention to the port's robust smuggling trade.

Eleder: Sargava's capital, Eleder, is starting to show the brunt of its tribute obligations. Once host to the opulent Grallus Ball, a lack of funds has placed a stranglehold on the city's excesses. On the other hand, Eleder's extensive dockworks are maintained as a top priority, as both merchants and Free Captains alike dock their vessels here for repair by some of the best shipwrights in Garund.

Fort Bandu: Created to protect miners in the Bandu Hills from hostile Mwangi, Fort Bandu has suffered in the last hundred years—much to the consternation of its half-elf commander, Praetor Sylien. Though the aging Sylien rarely ventures outside anymore, he is a skilled commander of his 150-soldier legion, and it is largely thanks to him that



miners and explorers are able to operate in the area at all. Fort Bandu nevertheless still has tremendous difficulties with local tribes, particularly the Bandu, who take every opportunity to attack the work crews Sylien has sent to build a bridge over the River of Tears.

Freehold: Freehold started as a cattle ranch in central Sargava, a vacation estate for one of the colony's earliest Grand Praetors, Olgran Macini. The Macinis have expanded and developed their family holdings to the extent that the original ranch is now the center of a small town consisting of Olgran's descendants and the native Mwangi who help them run the spacious ranch in exchange for homes and a share of the ranch's profits. Part of why Freehold has thrived is the fact that Olgran was progressive for his generation; he always treated the Mwangi as equals—paying them the same wage he paid his Chelish ranch hands—and insisted his children do the same. Freehold is still run according to this philosophy by Olgran's great-great-granddaughter, Mindra, though her cousin Salgarth would prefer to see the ranch run more like businesses in Eleder or Kalabuto, and is trying to maneuver Mindra into giving him control of Freehold.

Kalabuto: A ancient, crumbling city built in the precolonial era, Kalabuto is populated by a huge community of Mwangi tribesmen and governed by a small contingent of Sargavan colonialists. These are troubled times for Kalabuto. The city is under invisible siege by its eastern neighbor, Mzali, which has sacked Kalabuto three times within the span of the last few years alone. Observers agree it is only a matter of time before Kalabuto's lower classes join with their Mzali brethren and support the attacks, instead of dying in defense of the city for their colonial masters.

Lake of Vanished Armies: Although this long and deep lake technically lies just outside of Sargava's southern border, it enjoys a fair bit of notoriety in the colony. When the colonists first attempted to travel up the Korir River, they initially found this lake to be a natural wonder—beautiful scenery combined with a perfect place to settle. Yet on the seventh night, something emerged from the waters of the lake and snatched the entire army away, leaving behind empty tents and discarded gear. Two more armies met this mysterious fate before the colonists turned their attentions northward. The mystery of what befell the three vanished

armies has never been explained—in theory, what caused the vanishing could still dwell in the deep lake to this day.

Mines of Deeptreasure: The Deeptreasure Mining Company consistently mines the largest, most beautiful gems sold in the Eleder markets. Their secret is a platoon of allied xorns who glide through the Bandu Hills searching out the tastiest morsels, then spitting them back up at Deeptreasure headquarters in a hidden compound just inside the hills themselves. The mine bosses promise the xorns a way home to the Plane of Earth if they bring back more gems than they eat. The exact price, however, always remains tantalizingly vague.

Port Freedom: Eleder may be the only deepwater port in Sargava capable of receiving the massive ships required to circumnavigate the Eye of Abendego, but that doesn't mean it's the only port in the nation. Situated farther south, along the banks of the Korir River delta, Port Freedom may not be able to accommodate oceangoing vessels due to its extensive maze of sandbars, but neither can cargos of any significant size make their way upriver without enlisting the services of its rivermen and bargemasters. Though a few brave captains risk running the marshes without help, the people of Port Freedom have a chokehold on river trade with Kalabuto—and they aren't afraid to protect that arrangement with violence when necessary. While Port Freedom is technically ruled by the Grand Custodian, it also has its own local governors: a council of representatives from the various shipping concerns who do business along the river. It's an open secret that the council is controlled by the Rivermen's Guild.

Smuggler's Shiv: Although this island is relatively small, its notoriety along the southern coast of Desperation Bay is legendary. So named not only because of the knifelike reach of its northern half, but also for the treacherous currents and razor-sharp reefs that surround its shores, the island has claimed countless vessels eager to avoid Eleder's navy. Rumor holds that cannibals, ghosts, and worse dwell on the isle—certainly strange glowing forms have been sighted on its shores by ships that drifted too close to the island at night.

Stark Point: Consisting of a large inn, stable, and general store surrounded by a mud-brick wall, Stark Point is a gathering point for explorers, adventurers, and soldiers from Fort Bandu. Stark Point was originally meant to be a mining community overseen by the church of Aroden, but with Aroden's death, the overly large cathedral closed its doors to the public. Soon thereafter, the mines played out, and bereft of spiritual guidance and a ready source of income, most of the locals moved to Kalabuto. Today, the village has little more to offer than a trading post. The temple of Aroden still looms starkly on a hill overlooking the river and village, but no one goes there anymore—although some visitors claim to have seen periodic lights and heard strange sounds of chanting coming from deep within the boarded-up building.

Stasis Fields: Deep beneath the Bandu Hills spreads a frozen penal colony populated by ancient prisoners of war, eternally bound within imprisoning spells. Each prisoner floats within the center of a separate cavern of the massive subterranean complex, slowly turning in space to match Golarion's field of rotation. It is said that the frozen prisoners still wear the distinctive turquoise scale armor and shining blades of their now-forgotten military units. Those who brave the prison's deadly wards can attempt to steal the soldiers' ancient equipment or discover what might happen should a prisoner reawaken.

SARGAVAN PATHFINDER

The Shackles

TREACHEROUS PIRATE ISLES

Alignment: CN
Capital: Port Peril (43,270)
Notable Settlements: Drenchport (9,690), Hell Harbor (9,230), Neruma (5,230), Ollo (7,340), Quent (12,560), Slipcove (1,400)
Ruler: Captain Kerdak Bonefist, the Hurricane King
Government: A council of pirate lords known as the Free Captains
Languages: Common, Polyglot
Religion: Besmara, Calistria, Cayden Cailean, Gozreh, Norgorber, Pharasma

Although scholars argue to this day about possible connections between Aroden's death a century ago and the powerful storms that pummel the Inner Sea region, none can deny the impact these storms have had on the region's inhabitants. The greatest of these storms was the Eye of Abendego, which formed just north of the Shackles. This gigantic, permanent hurricane forever changed the shipping lanes in the region. Most nations abandoned the hope of continuing trade with Sargava, and the buccaneers of the Shackles soon fell to infighting over quickly dwindling resources. Rather than succumb to complete dissolution, however, the pirate lords eventually banded together to form a single, unified pirate fleet. In the spring of 4674 AR, the Free Captains of the Shackles, under the banner of their newly elected Hurricane King, began to ravage merchant shipping far to the north, near the Arch of Aroden.

History

The pirate lords of the Shackles sail from an assortment of outlaw ports, hiding their illicit activities behind the cover of the ravenous Eye of Abendego. Forgotten ruins of the ancient civilization of Ghol-Gan dot the island chain and treacherous coastline, their crumbling stone walls carved with horrible depictions of cannibalism and blood sacrifice. So disturbing are these images that when Chelish explorers discovered these ruins 600 years ago, they marked the region as cursed and haunted on their maps and continued south to found the colony of Sargava.

Before long, raiders began to prey upon the lucrative trade between Sargava and Cheliax, using the countless natural harbors among these islands to hide from Chelish warships. These pirate havens soon grew into small communities that eventually even accepted legitimate merchants and businesses.

Over the past 30 years, the corsairs of the Shackles have enjoyed unprecedented success. All of the Free Captains are skilled at skirting the dangerous fringes of the Eye of Abendego, giving them an easy escape route from less experienced pilots. Foreign powers continue to launch attempts to suppress the pirates of the Shackles, but few meet with any success. The Shackles themselves have endured two major invasions—once by Cheliax and once by Rahadoum—but in both cases the invaders met with disaster, losing most of their fleets to the merciless winds and treacherous currents of the Eye.

The Shackles today consist of a motley collection of bandit and slave ports, where freebooters find safe harbor and trade their ill-gotten plunder with unscrupulous merchants. Their populace is mostly runaway criminals, escaped slaves, and buyers seeking proscribed goods such as drugs, poisons, and other disreputable wares. A powerful Free Captain rules each port, divvying the loot from recent raids and dispensing pirate justice as needed.

Government

The overlord of the Shackles is the Hurricane King Kerdak Bonefist, captain of the man-o'-war *Filthy Lucre*, flagship of the Shackles fleet and one of the few ships in the Inner Sea region to be fully outfitted with Alkenstar cannons. Captain Bonefist's obsession with firearms extends to his personal weaponry—he carries a magic pistol and claims to have shot dead no fewer than a hundred scoundrels, lawmen, and landlubbers since he procured the valuable weapon. He heads a council of pirate lords, each of whom commands his or her own fleet of ships and rules one of the Shackles's numerous islands, ports, or anchorages. While Bonefist is king by virtue of his possession of Port Peril and command of the strongest fleet in the Shackles, in reality he reigns at the sufferance of the council's most powerful lords. Tessa Fairwind, Mistress of Quent and captain of the sloop-of-war *Luck of the Draw*, is a popular figure throughout the Shackles. Rumor has it that Lady Tessa is next in line for the Hurricane Crown, either by acclaim or by force. The mysterious druid-captain known as the Master of the Gales rules Drenchport and commands the xebec *Kraken*, accompanied by his giant squid companion. Avimar Sorrinash, cruel captain of the brig *Blood Moon*, is lord of Ollo. When the *Blood Moon* returns fresh from a successful foray on the high seas, Sorrinash and his werewolf crew often roam Shark Island in orgiastic hunts of celebratory destruction. The disgraced Chelish admiral Arronax Endymion is of lesser importance, but still a force to be reckoned with on the council. He leads a squadron of Chelish mutineers called the Devils' Own from his flagship, the former imperial frigate *Tyrannous*.

Most Free Captains command only a single ship or small flotilla, and are beholden to one of the more powerful pirate lords who control the various ports and islands of the Shackles. These lesser captains have the opportunity to increase their station by entering the Free Captain's Regatta, a grueling annual race among the most treacherous sandbars and reefs at the fringes of the Eye of Abendego. Entrants must be captains of their own ships and pay a purse fee of 500 gold pieces. The course changes every year, and many who enter the contest never return to port, but the rewards ensure a large number of competitors every year—the winner receives the total purse from all entrants, and is awarded a seat on the Pirate Council, as well as lordship of a small island or anchorage. In recent years, the Regatta has not resulted in any changes in the Pirate Council's membership, as the Master of the Gales has won the last 5 years in a row.

The majority of those who dwell in the Shackles are human, although half-orcs and half-elves are more common than elsewhere. Tengus dwell in large numbers in the region, with many of the cities having sizable tengu districts known as rookeries—having a tengu "mascot" on board is thought by many pirates to bring good luck, due to a popular local superstition that tengus "soak up" bad luck. In the wilder regions of the isles, goblins inhabit many of the scattered ruins of the Shackles, as do the race of savage cannibalistic degenerates called kuru, humans believed to be possessed by the spirits of the ruins' original inhabitants. Lizardfolk raiders also make occasional sorties from the swamps of the Sodden Lands to the north. The waters of the Shackles are home to sharks, enormous cephalopods, and scattered communities of locathahs. Sahuagin villages are present near the western isles, particularly around Ollo, while water nagas dwell on the mainland's southern coast. Farther west, feared dragon turtles prey upon ships making the dangerous passage around the Eye of Abendego.

The Shackles have only one true ally—the former Chelish colony of Sargava. In exchange for defending the colony from Cheliax, the Free Captains receive regular tribute of trade goods, including slaves, from the baron of Sargava. Elsewhere, the marauders of the Shackles are feared and hated, particularly by Cheliax and Rahadoum, who bear the brunt of the Free Captains' depredations, as do the wealth-laden ships of the Aspis Consortium out of Bloodcove.

A rumor currently making its rounds suggests that one of the Free Captains has offered to safely pilot a Chelish fleet to the Shackles in exchange for immunity for past crimes. Whether this is true or just a ruse to discredit one of the lords of the council, it's a well-known fact that Cheliax would like nothing more than to see the pirate confederacy eradicated.

Gazetteer

Cannibal Isles: Beyond Shark Island, the westernmost islets of the Shackles are uninhabited by any freebooter or pirate lord. Known as the Cannibal Isles, this scattering of tiny atolls contains numerous ruins of Ghol-Gan, now

populated by degenerate kuru cannibals. By day, the islands seem peaceful enough, but at night, torchlit processions flicker through the jungle trees, and a horrible, guttural chanting can be heard rising into the night sky. Ignorant captains who drop anchor in the atolls' peaceful lagoons find their ships overwhelmed during the night, their crews carried off to some unknown and terrible fate. A legless old beggar in Quent named Strong-Arm Hix claims to be the last survivor of the crew of the *Spindrift Reaver*, which landed on the Cannibal Isles 50 years ago. According to Hix, the kuru took the crew to a flooded temple in an isolated lagoon, where his shipmates were eaten alive as sacrifices to a god the kuru called "The Blood Queen." Hix himself managed to escape in one of the kuru's dugout canoes, but not before the cannibals took both of his legs.

Drenchport: The dour city of Drenchport huddles on Tempest Cay. Its storm-lashed buildings are built of waterlogged driftwood and flotsam from wrecked ships. An infamous tavern called the Drowned Dwarf stands at Drenchport's edge and is known as much for its remarkably high murder rate as for its cheap but strangely delicious black kelp beer.

Hell Harbor: Numerous imps roost on the rooftops of this port, giving the anchorage its name. Hell Harbor is famous as the home of the Shackles' sole opera house, the Three-Horned Hall, which hosts numerous productions of High Chelish Opera in the original Azlanti. Arronax Endymion, lord of Hell Harbor, is well known as an aficionado of traditional Chelish opera (rather than the "new" opera currently popular in Cheliax), and those seeking to curry favor with him are often found filling the seats. Ironically, ethnic Chelaxians are not welcome in Hell Harbor, as Arronax fears retribution from his homeland. The disgraced admiral has even recently introduced a program to exterminate the imps in the skies above Hell Harbor, lest any of the infernal pests be spying on behalf of Cheliax.

Neruma: This trading enclave on the shores of the Terwa River is one of the few mainland settlements in the Shackles. Neruma deals in the shipment of artifacts and slaves from the Mwangi Expanse and the Sodden Lands, providing an extra source of income for the Pirate Council. Unknowingly built on traditional lizardfolk breeding grounds, Neruma has come under repeated attack recently from lizardfolk raiders from the north intent on reclaiming their lost territory.

Ollo: The people of the wretched port of Ollo are sullen and fearful, for the sahuagin that live just off Shark Island regularly raid the town for food and plunder with the permission of the community's unscrupulous lord.

Port Peril: The Shackles's largest port, Port Peril is located on the mainland overlooking Jeopardy Bay. Fort Hazard, the fortress retreat of the Hurricane King, dominates the walled city and its deepwater harbor from the bluffs above the city. The twisting streets of Port Peril are lined with taverns, brothels, gambling halls, and other vice dens. Its teeming market squares do a brisk trade in all manner of stolen goods and contraband, such as Tian silks, Qadiran spices, Nidalese poisons, and Mwangi relics. Untold riches from years of plunder and tribute are said to be hidden away in the sea caves beneath the city.

Quent: The lively city of Quent is perhaps the most open port of the Pirate Isles, and the sacred prostitutes of Calistria at the House of Stolen Kisses are known as the best information brokers in the Shackles for those seeking gossip, blackmail, or revenge.

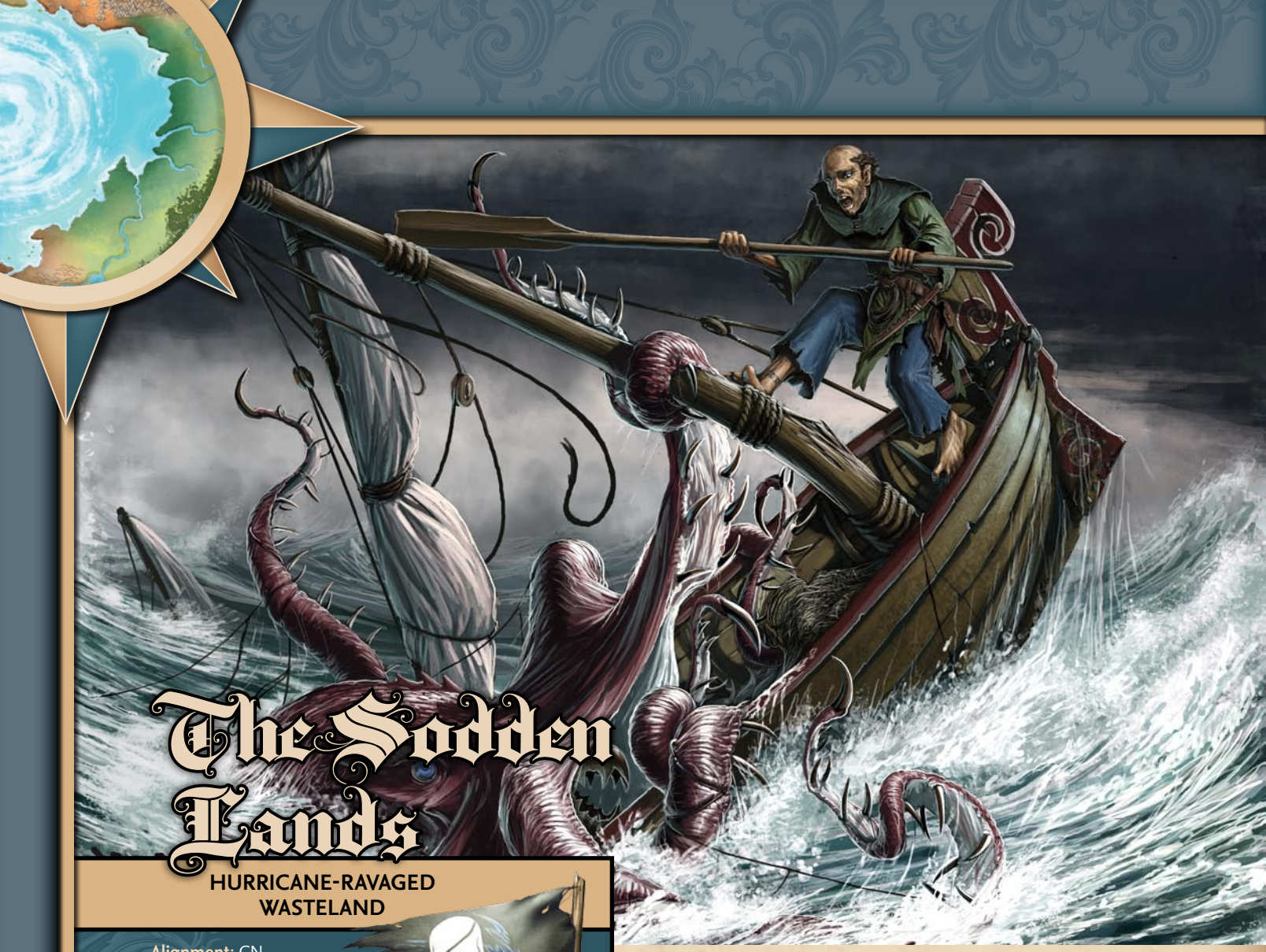
Slipcove: This small port is home to the largest population of halflings in the Shackles, thanks to the work of Jolis Raffles, lord of Bag Island and captain of the former Chelish slave galley *Chains of Freedom*, crewed entirely by freed halfling slaves. A former galley slave himself, Raffles preys only on Chelish slave ships, rescuing their living cargoes and offering them new lives in the free ports of the Shackles. For all the nobility of his cause, however, rumors abound that Raffles makes a tidy profit reselling those slaves who don't wish to join his crew or settle on his island.

Temple of the Ravenous Moon: High in the peaks of the Terwa Uplands stands an ancient ziggurat of bone-white stone, marbled with veins of blood red. The disturbing carvings on the ziggurat's walls give the edifice its name, with graphic depictions of mass blood sacrifices atop the temple beneath a swollen moon with a horribly grinning, fang-filled maw. Even the savage kuru tribes give the temple a wide berth, leading to no end of speculation about what might lie within. The Hurricane King has sent two expeditions to explore the ruined ziggurat and recover any secrets that might be left inside, but none have returned. Whatever their fate, rumor has it that the Pathfinder Society lodge in Nantambu is readying its own mission to survey the temple.

Raptor Island: West of Shark Island lies notorious Raptor Island, a jungle-covered uninhabited land ruled by ravenous packs of deinonychuses. Normally overwhelmed in size by other dinosaurs, on Raptor Island, the deinonychuses are the largest predator. Pirate lords are fond of stranding malcontents upon the shores of Raptor Island—a fate most crews consider to be as harrowing as keelhauling. Rumors of surviving bands of exiles on the isle do little to lessen these fears.

The Slithering Coast: The southern coast of the mainland Shackles is known as the Slithering Coast for the large populations of venomous sea snakes and territorial water nagas that lair in the many rocky inlets along the coastline. While the sea snakes are rarely a danger to humanoids, enterprising alchemists and assassins regularly venture to the Slithering Coast to harvest the snakes' venom. The water nagas, on the other hand, pose a much greater danger, as they are unafraid to attack and kill anyone trespassing near their lairs. The nagas are storehouses of local information, however, and a few Free Captains are known to cultivate friendly relationships with these reclusive beings in the hope of gleaning useful knowledge that might set them above their peers.

CAPTAIN KERDAK BONEFIST



The Sodden Lands

HURRICANE-RAVAGED WASTELAND

Alignment: CN
Capital: None
Notable Settlements: Hyrantam (1,340), Jula (200), Kokutang (2,100)
Ruler: None
Government: None
Languages: Common, Polyglot
Religion: Gozreh, Norgorber, various cults

More than 100 years ago came the Eye. In 4606 AR, at the precise moment the god Aroden died, the greatest hurricane Golarion has ever known suddenly formed in all its fury just off the west coast of Garund. Within days, the Eye of Abendego, as the hell-storm soon came to be named, had completely destroyed the coastline of the neighboring nations of Lirgen and Yamasa. From there, the pulsing floodwaters pressed ever farther inland, forcing a massive and unprecedented evacuation. Today, a century later, the Eye continues to howl, and that which remains of the nations it destroyed is known as the Sodden Lands, a perpetually storm-battered region, largely uninhabitable by the likes of humanity but a haven for savage beasts.

HISTORY

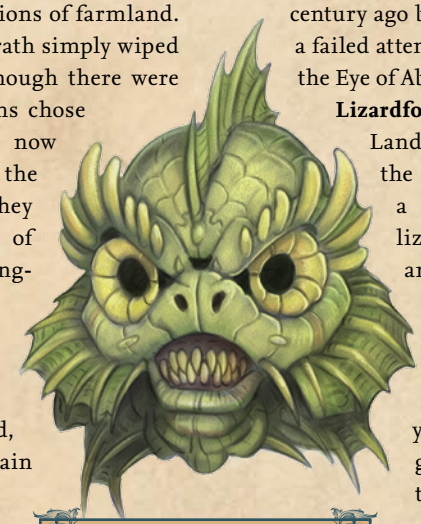
The northern half of the Sodden Lands was once the proud dominion of the nation of Lirgen, a land ruled by a syndicate of astrological philosophers obsessed with prophecy and reading the stars, known as the Saoc Brethren. When the Brethren's teachings suddenly failed following the death of Aroden, the rise of the Eye of Abendego caught Lirgen entirely by surprise—untold thousands died in the horrifying days and months that followed. Lirgen's surviving refugees resettled far from home, and are today scattered widely across Avistan and Garund. A number of descendants of the original Saoc Brethren periodically return to the Sodden Lands, tenaciously searching for methods to at last extinguish the Eye and restore their homeland. Those who survive and return to report to their kin, however, frequently do so with shattered minds, leaving the embittered philosophers no closer to the answers they seek. Indeed, in 4615, the Brethren lost its entire upper tier of leadership to ritual suicide. It is whispered that the

astrologists at last uncovered the true answers behind the source of the devastation, but the secret was more than their mortal souls could bear.

Yet Lirgen was only one of two nations to be destroyed by the formation of the Eye of Abendego. South of Lirgen once stood the nation of Yamasa. Whereas there were a significant number of survivors in Lirgen, the waves and winds that struck Yamasa were even more ferocious, flooding entire tribal holdings and regions of farmland. At first, many believed that the Eye's wrath simply wiped out the entire primitive kingdom, although there were those who whispered that the Yamasans chose to stay behind deliberately. Explorers now report that Yamasa's ruling caste, the Koboto, did indeed survive, and that they have reverted to Yamasa's taboo ways of old, resorting to cannibalism and long-forgotten necromancy.

Government

The Sodden Lands no longer possess large-scale, unifying leadership. Instead, the tiny pockets of civilization that remain bow to their own rulers, typically a local chieftain, a mad warmonger, or a powerful priest or cult leader. Yet despite the lack of centralized government, several significant groups have notable presences in the Sodden Lands.



GOZ MASK

Boggards: Countless tribes of boggards dwell in the Sodden Lands. Originally limited to one of the three sizable salt marshes that once sat along Lirgen's southern coast, the boggard population in the northern Sodden Lands has skyrocketed since the formation of the Eye of Abendego. These boggards see the Eye almost as a manifestation of their deity Rovagug—unlike many other tribes, they do not venerate the demon lord Gogunta, having actively hunted down and slaughtered her priests in a religious pogrom that overwhelmed their tribes in the year following the Eye's formation. Several of these boggard tribes are ruled by half-fiend boggards, or actual hezrou demons. Fortunately, their bickering, self-destructive nature and lack of a real naval force keeps them from organizing attacks on their neighbors, but their fecundity is only just barely kept in check by their internal strife.

Koboto: The remaining people of the lost nation of Yamasa survive today in the southern Sodden Lands as a sizable tribe of nearly feral cannibals led by spellcasters who focus their skills in the forbidden arts of dark necromancy. The Koboto are pantheists who worship Urgathoa, Rovagug, and the demon lord Zura as three linked deities, and hope that by appeasing the anger of these gods, whom the Koboto collectively call the *Sar-gorog* ("The Three Feasters"), they can prevent even further devastation of their homeland. The sacrificial consumption of those who escaped the initial wrath of the Eye of Abendego (to the Koboto, this means all humanoids who are not Koboto) often pushes these aggressive people to raid nearby lands or tribes for fresh victims. Their leaders are primarily clerics of one of their three gods, oracles, rangers, or wizards specialized in necromancy—all of these chieftains wear frightening masks known as *goz masks* (magical items introduced a century ago by a group of Gozreh priests who made a failed attempt to repair the devastation caused by the Eye of Abendego's appearance).

Lizardfolk: Whereas the northern Sodden Lands are infested with tribes of boggards, the southern regions are dominated by a single nation of lizardfolk. These lizardfolk dwell in small villages that are each ruled by a lizard king (usually an advanced lizardfolk fighter) or shaman (usually a druid or oracle). Each tribe supports its neighboring tribes in times of trouble. In recent years, the whole lizardfolk nation has grown increasingly aggressive under the influence of several powerful lizard kings who collectively call themselves the Terwa Lords. The Terwa Lords' violent tribes have been systematically eradicating the more peaceful tribes to build their own strength and thus support more and more raids against the northern regions of the Shackles. No lizard king has yet claimed the crown over all of the Terwa Lords, but one brute in particular—a scarred creature named Girzanje who claims to be able to trace his lineage of warlords back to a primeval era long before Earthfall—may be close to this prize.

Sodden Scavengers: When the Sodden Lands formed, countless cities and villages fell into ruin, and more than a century later, strange secrets still remain to be learned and gathered. The fractious groups known today as "Sodden Scavengers" were originally a highly organized group of Norgorber-worshiping opportunists and looters who had hoped to plunder the ruined cities, yet as time wore on, they grew increasingly naturalized to the wasteland, and their various leaders decided it was better to rule in the ruins than to skulk and hide in civilized realms. Today, the cult has splintered into nearly two dozen loosely-affiliated gangs, each with its own favored weaponry, appearance, and specific goals. Each individual gang claims its own territory, and while they work together to fight against common enemies, they also have strong conflicts between their own gangs. Currently, the largest gang is the Knights of Abendego—members favor dark clothing and scale armor with fish motifs, wield tridents or short iron hooks, and dwell in the ruined city of Jula.

Gazetteer

Fangspire: The Knights of Salvation were a monastic order devoted to rescuing as many refugees as possible following the onset of the Eye of Abendego. To battle their way through the hurricanes and into the reaches of the Sodden Lands, the selfless knights of this order constructed chains of interconnected way stations collectively known as the Abendego Piercing. Where resources permitted, the knights built their stations using permanently affixed magic; they resorted to elevated stone bunkers when their funding and magical supplies ran low. Each station was carefully connected by ropes or chains. By grasping the chain and following along it, a knight could navigate through the blinding storms and relay supplies or information to the next station deeper within the storm. Losing one's grip on the connecting chain in the watery hurricane was the equivalent of getting lost in a blizzard: a knight risked wandering aimlessly to his death, even if only a dozen steps from the shelter he had just left. After almost 30 years of service, the order at last disbanded, persuaded that no one who was left truly wanted to be saved. Many of the knights' shelters remain in place, testaments to their hardy construction. Since the knights departed, though, the aberrant monsters that now make the Sodden Lands their home have converted several of the shelters into lairs. One fortress in particular has become known as Fangspire. This magically constructed tower of stone and metal has withstood the elements over the last centuries, although the ground below has not been so fortunate, with the result that the tower leans toward the open sea at a precipitous angle. Fangspire is the traditional home of the largest boggard tribe in the Sodden Lands, although as the frog men war among themselves, which tribe claims this honor and home varies from year to year.

Greenblood: Because the Sodden Lands are entirely without law, they have the dubious honor of hosting the most savage pit fight in all of Golarion: Green Blood on a Black Rock. Located not far from the southern border with the Shackles, this site has grown into a sizable town populated by the roughest and wildest thugs and brigands the Shackles has to offer. The gladiatorial event that made the town of Greenblood infamous began as a Free Captain tradition in which pirate vessels pitted captured monsters (traditionally captured scrags) against one another by depositing them on

a huge spire of ash-colored rock that juts from the harbor, with the surviving scrag earning the right to swim away to freedom. The betting sums exploded as the contest grew in popularity, and it didn't take long for ships to start acquiring actual trolls for an edge. This was followed by a nearly unstoppable half-black-dragon troll, who in turn was ultimately defeated by a magically controlled froghemoth. Today, the tournament knows no limits to the types of beasts that partake in the battles; the only rule is that each slave-monster must stand alone. As the Green Blood's notoriety spread as far as Avistan, it became something of a guilty viewing pleasure for diviners and the few elite with the wealth to own a *crystal ball* or other scrying device. Some troubadours even make their living by bribing their way aboard a Free Captain's ship attending the tournament. Afterward, these "blood-bards" earn coin traveling far and wide, recounting authentic, blow-by-blow tales of the current year's savagery.

Hyrantam: This ruined city was once the capital of the now-destroyed nation of Lirgen. During Hyrantam's founding, the Saoc Brethren constructed hundreds of sky-reaching towers to host huge observatories for their nocturnal sky watch. As a result, small surviving islands of tower tops jut from the water of this otherwise flooded city. Those tower tops are now interconnected by crude networks of rope bridges and pulleys built by the last of the Lirgeni who still remain behind, determined to survive. Unfortunately, the same ancient observatories somehow now act as a draw for forgotten aberrations from the depths of the Arcadian Ocean, so Hyrantam is no safer today than when the Eye first hit.

Jula: A coastal sanctuary that welcomes refugees from all walks of life, this town lies situated on a low, rocky bluff that puts it well above the flood line but perpetually exposes it to savage winds—only the stoutest of stone buildings remain above, but numerous smuggler's tunnels in the rock below remain quite habitable. Those who struggle to subsist here have their own reasons to stay behind. Their leader is Father Heveril, an expert mountaineer and fallen paladin of Erastil who chose the survival and shepherding of Jula's desperate people as his path to redemption. Since increasing swaths of the city are falling under the control of the expanding Knights of Abendego, though, Father Heveril will soon be faced with the impossible choice of leading his flock to some new home or being enslaved by violent scavengers.

Kokutang: Once the capital of Yamasa, Kokutang is now the seasonal gathering place of the Koboto and their reconstructed tribes. Visitors are never welcome, and in fact risk becoming sustenance. While Kokutang includes a wind-washed village on the surface, much of what remains of the capital is now a complex of subterranean caves interconnected by flooded passages. Many of the hidden caverns are accessible only to those with the breath control (or magic) necessary to make the dangerous trip.

Oagon: The flooded ruin of Oagon, a lost city of Lirgen at the mouth of the Black Flow, provides a frequent destination for explorers. In particular, Oagon was reputed to be the host of the famed magical vaults of the Hundred Halberd Consortium, a once-opulent but now vanished merchant company that dealt in both magic items and exotic creatures. To access the sunken streets, Avistani explorers and the Knights of Salvation constructed a series of cunningly engineered giant diving bells. The cables that lower the crude submersibles permit expedition teams to slowly descend to the ground and explore the flooded streets below. The bells are far from safe, however, and accidents are common. Worse, there are recent reports of slender, long-tailed aquatic creatures that snatch divers and then disappear in the maze of underwater streets.

KNIGHT OF ABENDEGO

Steaming Sea

REMOTE NORTHERN ISLANDS

Alignment: CN
Capital: None
Notable Settlements: Mordant Spire (2,120), Promise (6,300)
Ruler: None
Government: Varies by island
Languages: Azlanti, Common, Elven, Hallit, Skald
Religion: Desna, Erastil, Gorum, Gozreh, Torag

The portion of the Arcadian ocean situated just off the northwestern coast of Avistan, the Steaming Sea stretches from Cheliax's border up into the frozen reaches of the Crown of the World, where glaciers the size of nations shatter upon each other and low-hanging mists give the sea its name. Despite its abundant marine life and relatively temperate lower reaches, the Steaming Sea is a forbidding place where fast-moving squalls can swallow the largest ships. Many who set out to cross its waves never make it more than 50 miles from Avistan's shore.

History

No single nation rules the whole of the Steaming Sea, and for most residents of the region's lonely shores and scattered islands, its waters are neutral territory, belonging solely to those who fish them. Some of their havens are little more than wave-swept rocks, yet several notable settlements exist here, and many of those who make their home so far from the mainland's sheltering embrace have been doing so unchanged for thousands of years.

Two regions in particular, the Ironbound Archipelago and the island nation of Hermea, have particularly important places in the annals of the Steaming Sea.

The Ironbound Archipelago

By far the largest grouping of land masses in the Steaming Sea, the Ironbound Archipelago extends from the westernmost arm of the Kodar Mountains, rising up from the seafloor to form a chain of massive islands more than 300 miles long. While it contains innumerable unnamed and uninhabitable islets home only to birds and the wildlife that flies or swims between them, many of the islands are large enough to support multiple small fishing and whaling villages, and even full-fledged agricultural communities. Over the centuries, many of these communities have been claimed by various leaders from the Linnorm Kingdoms, but such acquisitions often revert to independence when a given leader dies.

Hermea

More than 150 years ago, the gold dragon Mengkare grew fed up with humanity. For generations, he had watched members of squabbling nations and religions swarm over each other like ants, fighting and loving and dying in an endless series of poor decisions, always refusing to realize their natural potential. Yet even as he deplored their lack of foresight, he was fascinated by their dogged resilience—he saw how easily, with a little guidance, they could be prodded and shaped into something truly worthwhile. A magnanimous, high-minded creature by nature, he decided to make the perfection of the human race his personal mission.

MORDANT SPIRE ELF

Mengkare immediately relocated to an uninhabited island in the southern Steaming Sea, where his experiment could go forward without fear of contamination. He then began soliciting volunteers from among humanity's best and brightest to participate in what he dubbed "the Glorious Endeavor," a utopian dream that began with the founding of the island's only city, Promise. Here, safe from warfare and ideological struggle, these paragons of the human race could perfect their arts and bodies, making each successive generation healthier, smarter, and more talented than the one before it. Under the dragon's careful (and unchallenged) guidance, the small population has grown and thrived. Life is easy and fulfilling in Hermea—or so its ambassadors claim.

GOVERNMENT

More than half of the hidden fjords and bays in the Ironbound Archipelago, with their terraced mountain farms and impregnable redoubts, are claimed by the clans of the Linnorm Kings (detailed beginning on page 102). The rest are inhabited primarily by dour, independent men and women who recognize no nation, committed to their homes and rarely worth any kingdom's trouble to root out with fire and sword. When the longboats approach, the residents melt into the mountains, or rain fire from the sea cliffs until the attackers turn south toward softer lands.

Such is not the case on Hermea. Here, the government is a massive, sprawling meritocracy, with practically every citizen wielding some sort of official power depending on her area of expertise. While Mengkare alone has final say over every decision made within his nation's borders, the dragon is wise enough to allow his subjects to govern themselves in all but the most crucial matters, and to this end he formed the Council of Enlightenment. The 13 elected members of the Council handle most of the day-to-day duties of governance, gathering information and advising the dragon on important matters.

The shores of Hermea are heavily defended, and outsiders are only rarely allowed access beyond the carefully regulated trading docks. Immigration is strictly controlled by Mengkare himself, and the only way for an outsider to become a citizen is to be recruited by one of the nation's traveling undercover scouts, who follow the exploits of every nation's heroes and report back to the Council of Enlightenment, delivering invitations to those foreign notables deemed worthy. These invitees are granted a one-time offer to join the nation's slow march toward perfection and live a life of comfort and security. All that's required in return is for the applicant to cede all personal authority to Mengkare, agreeing to abide by the dragon's considerable wisdom in all matters.

Children born in Hermea are given every advantage—educated in magic, art, science, and the martial disciplines according to their interests—until they are 16 years of age. At that point, they are tested by the Council and frequently offered the chance to become citizens. Children who refuse or are deemed unworthy are sent away and never permitted to make contact with Hermea again. Mating and partnering among citizens is encouraged, but the courtship process is long and frequently guided by government officials in charge of helping to naturally breed beneficial traits. While the island is primarily populated by humans, Mengkare occasionally allows in members of other humanoid races if they distinguish themselves adequately in a given field, or if he feels they could be an asset to the community's genetic pool. Adding the occasional elf, for instance, tends to ensure a long-lived and physically attractive population.

While Hermea's few dealings with the outside world are always fair and polite, if standoffish, not everyone agrees with the country's goals. To many, the idea of breeding humans like horses or dogs is inherently distasteful, and several major religions (particularly the faiths of Desna, Erastil, Sarenrae, and Shelyn) have condemned the nation's mission, though their ire may be more inflamed by Mengkare's staunch refusal to allow any form of organized religion on the island. Yet for Hermea's residents, the nation remains a shining bastion of virtue, humanity's best hope of transcending its petty conflicts and achieving lasting greatness. Every decision in the country is made for the greater good, as determined by Mengkare, who genuinely believes in his goal and therefore remains righteous and pure, even when forced to order distasteful actions such

as the termination of citizens who prove disappointing or threaten to disrupt the system. The dragon strives to give his subjects as much free will as he feels they can handle—after all, he's picked the best and brightest, and believes they ought to be allowed to follow their passions toward greatness—but he has no problem enforcing absolute law when the need arises. What's more, since all who accept an invitation to join Hermea are required to sign a contract ceding all free will to him before they're allowed to enter, Mengkare knows his authority is just and legal, and any subjects unwilling to lay down their lives for the cause should have read the invitation more closely.

With its lofty goals and comfortable, progressive society, Hermean citizenship is coveted the world over, and many are the disappointed applicants who sail far across the ocean only to be politely but firmly turned away at Promise's sandstone walls. (Occasionally, the disenfranchised try to land elsewhere on the island and infiltrate the community via stealth, but these hopeful souls are rarely heard from again.) Invitations to join the community are not issued lightly, and each year only a few men and women from across Golarion are welcomed to Hermea's shores. Each of these is the result of careful study by agents of the Council of Enlightenment, who sometimes follow a prospective citizen for years before finally revealing themselves, often posing as cohorts, advisors, or bards seeking to chronicle a hero's deeds. Once an invitation is issued, the recipient has as long as he or she desires to respond, but all decisions are final once made. Once an invitation is accepted, the new citizen is showered with gifts and transported at the nation's expense to her new home, where she signs the infamous Contract of Citizenship in the presence of Mengkare himself, and is then set up in the city with everything she needs to begin her new life of enlightenment.

Occasionally, for whatever reason, a citizen falls from grace or a child born on Hermea fails to pass the tests required to prove his exemplary status. When this happens, the Council does its best to work with the citizen to resolve any problems that might be leading to disenfranchisement or sub-par performance. If its efforts are not successful, the offending party is quietly sent away in disgrace, and the community does its best to move forward. Hermean society's understanding in these cases is that the undesirables are returned to mainland Avistan

with enough supplies to make their way in the world, and any charred corpses that wash up on the island's shores are generally believed to be the work of pirates.

Life in Hermea, whether in Promise proper or on one of the farms that support it (for agriculture has its innovators as well), is just as wonderful as the stories tell. And if those few sailors allowed to trade there whisper of an undercurrent of fear, of rebels hiding in the forests on the far side of the island or infiltrating the Council of Enlightenment itself, then they must surely be mistaken.

Gazetteer

Gogpodda: In the blue vastness of the Steaming Sea, swirling ocean currents pull together flotsam, jetsam, and driftwood, binding it with seaweed and the bloated corpses of dead animals to form a morass miles wide and dozens of feet thick. While such conglomerations are not unknown to sailors, the debris field known as Gogpodda has something unique: terrestrial residents. Shipwrecked long ago after a mission of exploration ran afoul of the garbage patch, the gnomes of Gogpodda quickly realized that large swaths of the floating debris were stable enough to support their weight, and that what appeared to be nothing but junk was in fact teeming with life, from shrimp and fish that made homes in the wreckage to plants that had sprung up from gull droppings. While many of the gnomes eventually repaired their ships enough to return to the mainland, several of the crew members decided to stay and explore their new floating home, telling those who left to spread the word that all were welcome on newly settled Gogpodda.

MORDANT SPIRE

Irrere: When they fled the First World for the Material Plane long ago, a small group of gnomes banded together in the Ironbound Archipelago to create a lamasery for meditation and research. These towers became known as the Shay Citadels, and the nearby town of Irrere quickly grew to support them. Nestled at the base of a waterfall on a mountainous island between Halgrim and the Mordant Spire, much of the Shay Citadels is hidden by the constant mists, but the twisted spires of the translucent, rainbow-flecked glass monastery rise above the haze on even the foggiest days. Gnome pilgrims, especially those suffering from the Bleaching, often come to Irrere seeking answers or new experiences, and though the monks have little interest in the outside world, they depend heavily on those who have established homes in Irrere.

Mordant Spire: Mortal enemies of the ancient Azlanti (now dead) and the aboleth (still very much alive), the bizarre, masked elves of the Mordant Spire adapted quickly upon their return from Sovyrian, rebuilding their home at the westernmost tip of the archipelago—and then cutting themselves off from the rest of the world. Generally refusing to speak anything but Azlanti with outsiders, these pale-skinned elves have a disturbingly alien manner, rarely looking at each other when speaking and often cutting off mid-sentence or angling their heads as if listening to far-off sounds. From their massive tower and its small, rocky beaches, as well as anchored platforms on the sea itself, these elves exist as a closed society, fishing, diving, and defending the artifacts and ruins of lost Azlant, which they claim as theirs by right, as the true inheritors of the Azlanti's legacy—though they refuse to give any further explanation. This last issue sometimes leads to conflict with treasure hunters, but the elves' impossibly quick sailing vessels make short work of those who dare defy their frighteningly masked commanders.

Promise: The only settlement of note on Hermea is surrounded by red sandstone walls so high as to make its buildings invisible from the sea, with only the extensive docks in its harbor offering sanctuary to brave, blue-water sailors. Inside, its spires and domes are marvels of modern architecture, and its streets and arching skybridges are kept meticulously clean. Commerce is virtually nonexistent, as citizens are encouraged to take whatever they need and give freely to others, with those who abuse the system regulated by their neighbors and the Council. Atop a low hill rests the palatial capitol building, its walls gleaming with gold, which houses the Council of Enlightenment and Mengkare himself.

Taldor

DECADENT FAILING EMPIRE

Alignment: N
Capital: Oppara (109,280)
Notable Settlements: Cassomir (32,340), Dalaston (3,512), Demgazi (1,220), Elbistan (906), Elsekulp (4,300), Faldamont (921), Golsifar (2,144), Karakuru (1,758), Kozan (2,430), Lionsguard (436), Maheto (11,790), Merciful Bay (2,310), Mut (5,996), Old Sehir (994), Ortalaca (568), Ridonport (6,307), Sardis Township (3,423), Stavian's Hold (4,311), Tribulation (399), Wispil (8,670), Yanmass (6,900), Zimar (17,540)
Ruler: Grand Prince Stavian III, Emperor of Taldor
Government: Decayed bureaucratic empire
Languages: Common, Kelish
Religion: Abadar, Aroden, Calistria, Cayden Cailean, Norgorber, Sarenrae, Shelyn

The mighty empire of Taldor once stretched from the Arcadian Ocean to the border of the Padishah Empire of Kelesh. Aroden himself was said to walk among the people of Taldor, and his religion, a shining beacon unto the world, radiated outward from Taldor's gilded capital of Oppara. Taldor's ancient Armies of Exploration established footholds for the empire throughout Golarion, and during the Shining Crusade, its mighty phalanxes marched for thousands of miles to beat back the Whispering Tyrant and imprison him in Gallowspire. Yet despite these legacies, modern Taldor is a stunted remnant of its old glory, a declining empire that seems destined for little more than a footnote in the ultimate annals of history unless something can be done to reverse its fate.

HISTORY

The first half of the Age of Enthronement was the Golden Age of Imperial Taldor. It was in this era that Taldor formed the first of its now-legendary Armies of Exploration. Composed of thousands of soldiers, scholars, diplomats, surveyors, spies, and adventurers of all specialties, the Armies of Exploration were instrumental to Taldor's expansion throughout southern Avistan and the Sellen River basin. The first of the Armies of Exploration began in 37 AR in Oppara and headed north along the Sellen River, eventually reaching Sevenarches in the River Kingdoms. The Second Army used the success of the first as a stepping stone, extending west from the Sellen, up along the northern coastline of Lake Encarthan, and finally reaching the orc hordes of Belkzen.

The Third Army of Exploration met with the greatest success. Again starting in Oppara, this army forged west

along the southern coast of Avistan and met with one victory after the other, until it extended all the way to the westernmost edge of the Inner Sea, where the army's General Coren founded the city of Corentyn and secured Taldor's control of passage into and out of the Inner Sea. No other Army of Exploration would ever match the Third Army's success.

The Fourth and Fifth Armies of Exploration focused their attention on Eastern Avistan—the Fourth making a relatively short and unremarkable foray up through Andoran and into the Five Kings Mountains, and the Fifth further expanding Taldor's influence in what would eventually come to be known as the River Kingdoms.

The disastrous Sixth Army of Exploration set up the end—many sages today believe that it was this army's journey into the Mwangi Expanse that signified the beginning of the end for Taldor. Armed with a powerful magical siege engine called the *Worldbreaker*, a gift to the army from dwarven engineers and arcanists, this headstrong force marched south into Garund. Historians believe that the army's actual goal was to conquer the western coast of the continent and, eventually, use the new lands to work back toward home in an attempt to claim all the region around the Inner Sea. Yet the Sixth Army never made it out of the jungles of the Mwangi Expanse—it was annihilated by the overwhelming forces of that era's Gorilla King. Legend holds that the *Worldbreaker*, while damaged and perhaps destroyed, yet remains in the vaults below Usaro under the current Gorilla King's control. Taldor never fully recovered from the Sixth Army's failure, and while a Seventh Army of Exploration did journey up through Isger and into Druma to defeat the Kellid tribes that ruled the region in 2133, the victory was sorely won and the history books do not record a complimentary picture of that army's cruel command.

GRAND PRINCE STAVIAN III

Despite the tradition's eventual failures, the Armies of Exploration did secure a vast territory for Taldor. At the nation's height, Taldor incorporated the regions known today as Galt, Andoran, Isger, Molthune, Cheliax, Nirmathas, Lastwall, and Cheliax, stretching from the World's Edge Mountains all the way to the Arch of Aroden.

As time passed, Taldor's colonial endeavors in Avistan brought unparalleled wealth and influence to its people. They also brought Taldor into conflict with the Keleshite kingdom of Qadira to the south. If exploration was one side of the coin of imperial Taldor, rivalry with Qadira was the other, as both nations engaged in a series of escalating raids and counterattacks across their shared and heavily fortified border over the course of centuries.

Taldor's affluence and success led to self-indulgence, and the Taldans became increasingly obsessed with ceremony, elaborate costuming, and jaded pleasures. Taldor's culture grew more decadent and detached from the outside world. Old rivals sought to take advantage of Taldor's profligacy, culminating in a massive invasion of Taldor by Qadira in 4079, which in turn triggered the so-called Even-Tongued Conquest. Corrupt, weakened, and unable to fight a war on two fronts, Taldor focused its waning might on its ancient enemy in the south. It successfully repelled the Qadiran invasion, but over the next decade, it lost most of its colonial holdings—including Andoran, Galt, and Isger—to the nascent empire of Cheliax. Even the church of Aroden abandoned Taldor to its mercurial obsessions and debauched appetites at this time, moving the center of the religion to Cheliax. Taldor's imperial ambitions were shattered, never to recover.

Today, beneath a pretense of high society and avant-garde culture, Taldan society is shortsighted, degenerate, and moribund. Thousands of noble houses claiming heritage dating back to the earliest days of empire constantly jockey for position and control of the various departments of the nation's complex bureaucracy. Greed and distrust characterize Taldan politics, and betrayal and assassination are the preferred methods for the aristocracy to increase their stations.

Even Taldor's monarch is not immune to such machinations. Unable to trust any of the feuding factions of Oppara, the emperor protects himself from the treachery of his subjects by employing fierce mercenaries from the Lands of the Linnorm Kings as his personal bodyguards, although it is the office of the grand prince they protect, not the grand prince himself. The huscarls of the Ulfen Guard have served in this capacity since ancient times, and are paid in whatever treasure they can carry from Taldor's gleaming treasure vaults at the culmination of their terms of service.

After centuries of habitation, Taldor's heartland is mostly free of dangerous beasts. The Verduran Forest, though, is still home to druids, gnomes, ettercaps, and assorted fey. In the north, the frost giants and thunderbirds of the Fog Peaks are an occasional threat, while orcs and worse inhabit the World's Edge Mountains. In addition, nomadic Keleshite horsemen frequently raid for livestock across Taldor's eastern and southern borders.

Taldor and Qadira have shared an uneasy peace for just over a century, but loyal Taldan cataphracts still patrol the line of crumbling frontier forts along the border. Taldor still resents Cheliax for the Even-Tongued Conquest, but there is little it can do about that now. Cheliax, for its part,

pays little attention to Taldor anymore. Closer to home, Absalom merely humors Taldor, and considers it something like a doddering and decrepit grandfather. While the city-state still follows all the niceties of politics and diplomacy, it basically ignores its northern elder. Meanwhile, the fledgling democracy of Andoran keeps alert minutemen watching its border with Taldor, afraid of a resurgence in imperial ambition.

Taldor's influence continues to wane, as it has for some time. And yet, many of the nations that now rule Avistan were once a part of its great empire—without Taldor, they themselves would not exist. And so one of the oldest and most powerful human empires in Avistan continues its gradual slide into oblivion—most likely for centuries to come.

Government

Grand Prince Stavian III is emperor of Taldor, but the awkward and bitter sovereign is as dissolute as his empire. Surrounding himself with grandiose titles and sycophantic courtiers, he dallies in whatever takes his fancy. Meanwhile, the bloated ranks of the aristocracy send representatives to the ineffectual senate to argue endlessly and pointlessly over trivial matters. In the end, the actual daily management of Taldor is left in the hands of its overtaxed bureaucracy—a sprawling, labyrinthine mess, with different bureaus and ministries constantly squabbling over jurisdiction. Even so, the civil service remains the clearest means of advancement to aristocratic status for the hordes of citizens without the benefit of titles to their names. Taldor has always followed the right of primogeniture, but Grand Prince Stavian has no male heir. His only child, Princess Eutropia, is disgusted with the stagnation of Taldan society and decided in her recent youth to force Taldor to join the modern world. She intends to inherit the throne upon her father's death, by force if necessary, and has grand plans to restore Taldor to its former glory.

Although Taldor's great Armies of Exploration are no more, its underfunded military is still impressive, consisting as it does of mighty war elephants, scale-armored cavalry, elite foot archers, and disciplined phalanxes, all under the command of High Strategos Maxillar Pythareus. The most infamous of Taldor's soldiers and warriors are the Lion Blades—specialists who come from the empire's most secretive school of fighting arts. Lion Blades prefer

crowded urban areas and are masters of motion, controlling both their own movement and that of those around them. With the flick of a blade, they can slow their enemy to a crawl, then step into a crowd and disappear from sight. Lion Blades are typically recruited out of the famous bardic colleges of Oppara, as the Shadow Schools want intelligent, flexible trainees to whom they can pass their arts. A Lion Blade usually spends at least a year in training before taking on missions for Taldor and other nongovernmental organizations. Occasionally, however, a few Lion Blades shirk their responsibilities and work independently or even serve the enemies of Taldor, with Cheliax especially eager for these turncoats.

Gazetteer

Cassomir: This large trade city on the Sellen River handles the river trade from the River Kingdoms and the Verduran Forest, as well as much of Taldor's Inner Sea trade. While the Taldan navy is stationed in Oppara, its best shipyards are found in Cassomir.

Fog Peaks: Taldor's northernmost border, the Fog Peaks are so named for the perpetual clouds that shade their mountaintops. These mountains are constantly soaked in rain or snow, and when the temperatures plummet in late fall, vicious, razor-sharp ice storms plague the higher elevations. Populous frost giant clans prevail here, along with large roosts of rocs that live in the northern reaches near Boarwood. Other dangers in the Fog Peaks include frost worms, remorhazes, winter wolves, ettins, and even a few white dragons.

Maheto: The city of Maheto, in the foothills of the World's Edge Mountains, is home to a sizeable population of dwarves, and is well known for the high quality of its metalwork and bladesmithing.

Oppara: The towers and villas of Taldor's capital, Oppara, were once plated with gold, granting it the title the Gilded City, a name that remains to this day. The precious metal was long ago stripped by vandals and salvagers. The Imperial Palace and Senate are located here, as are two renowned bardic schools—Kitharodian Academy and Rhapsodic College. Oppara is also home to the Brotherhood of Silence, one of the largest and most influential thieves' guilds in the Inner Sea region. The oldest known temple to Aroden, the Basilica of the Last Man, is located in Oppara, its clergy and influence but a shadow of their former selves.

Sellen River: One of the longest rivers on Golarion, the Sellen River ends its journey by spilling into the Inner Sea at Star Bay. Fed by dozens of tributary rivers and thousands of high mountain lakes and streams, the Sellen doesn't experience typical flooding and dry seasons like most temperate rivers. It simply flows, as faithful as the sun rises.

Verduran Forest: The portion of the Verduran Forest that resides within Taldor's borders is a semi-autonomous prefecture of the empire—the monarchy still honors the Treaty of the Wildwood, an ancient pact with the druids of the region that allows Taldor to use the forest's resources but limits logging and hunting to specific regions of the forest. Ettercaps, bands of obnoxious fey, river pirates and bandits, and even dragons are among the forest's more obvious dangers, but sentient and flesh-eating plants also present a danger, as do massive colonies of giant vermin.

Wispil: In the Verduran Forest, the gnome town of Wispil provides most of the kingdom's woodcraft and timber. Cassomir's bustling yards would not exist without the steady supply of lumber and gnomish shipwrights Wispil provides.

Zimar: Zimar is a heavily fortified garrison town near the Qadiran border. Long the home of Taldor's armies, even after a century of peace with Taldor's ancient enemy, Zimar remains a disciplined, militaristic city.

LION BLADE OF TALDOR

Thuvia

DESERT LAND OF ETERNAL YOUTH

Alignment: LN
Capital: Merab (56,870)
Notable Settlements: Aspenthar (25,680), Duwwor (8,300), Lamasara (11,450), Pashow (4,320)
Rulers: Ilepodus, Patron of Merab; Prince Zinlo of Aspenthar; Zamere, Queen of Lamasara; Kharane, Defender of Duwwor; Guldis, Emir of Pashow
Government: Loose association of independent city-states bound by treaties of trade and mutual defense
Languages: Osiriani, Polyglot
Religion: Gozreh, Nethys, Pharasma, Sarenrae, Usij (cult of Ahriman)

Although consisting primarily of desert wastes haunted by powerful outsiders and deadly monsters, the land of Thuvia is a prosperous and vital nation thanks to a single rare plant—the sun orchid, from which Thuvian alchemists have developed an incredible elixir capable of turning back the ravages of time. Such is the demand for this elixir that rulers from nations throughout the Inner Sea and beyond strive to support this nation and its leaders with tithes and gifts. Those who rule Thuvia know that if the secrets of the elixir were to fall into other hands, their nation could collapse—making the methods of creating the *sun orchid elixir* one of the Inner Sea region's most fervently guarded secrets.

HISTORY

At the dawn of the Age of Destiny, Thuvia was a harsh realm ruled by a nomadic group of desert tribesmen who banded together to form a league of city-states along the region's coastline and rivers. Known as the Tekritanin League, this region along with Jistka to the west played key roles in reestablishing civilization in the Inner Sea region after Earthfall. When ancient Osirion began its expansion westward into the lands of the Tekritanin League, its leaders forged an alliance with the nomads to aid Osirion in its war against Jistka. At the height of this war, the notorious Pharaoh of Forgotten Plagues traveled to the deep deserts of the region, far from the Tekritanin League's reach, where he built the House of Oblivion—a vast structure engineered to lure a powerful extraplanar entity called Ahriman from his dwelling in Abaddon. Ahriman answered, bringing with him a small army of corrupted genies collectively known as divs. In return for the gift of the House of Oblivion, Ahriman promised the

Pharaoh of Forgotten Plagues his support not only in the destruction of Jistka but also in tightening the Pharaoh's control over the rest of his realms. When the Pharaoh of Forgotten Plagues was destroyed in –3047 AR by his successor, the Song Pharaoh, Ahriman was defeated as well, although the central deserts of Thuvia have remained the haunt of Ahriman's violent div minions and his cult, the Usij, ever since.

After Jistka's defeat, Osirion allowed the Tekritanin League to continue to exist as a sort of vassal state, yet when Osirion entered its Second Age, this alliance ended when Osirion wiped out the league, renaming the realm Thuvia and establishing it fully as part of the empire. This rule continued for another 6 centuries before Osirion's power waned. The last Osirian governor of Thuvia was assassinated in –841 AR, and with that act, the name of Thuvia was lost on the desert winds as the region descended into barbarism. And so Thuvia remained for nearly 2,000 years, until in the struggling city of Merab an alchemist named Artokus Kirran made a discovery that changed the region forever.

SUN ORCHID ELIXIR

In 1140 AR, Artokus developed a formula that combined various alchemical substances with the nectar of the sun orchid—a rare flower that bloomed only in the burning heart of the Thuvian desert, where the divs of Ahriman still ruled. Through his experiments, Artokus produced a potion that temporarily halted the process of aging. The process was expensive and the gathering of the orchids incredibly dangerous, but Artokus quickly found that many people willingly paid any price for the promise of eternal youth. It soon became clear that the trouble was not the gold involved, but rather the alchemist's ability to meet the demand. Within a year, foreign powers threatened to lay siege to Merab, seeking to claim the alchemist and the secret of eternal life. Merab turned to the other cities of the desert for aid, offering a share of the wealth to be gained from the *sun orchid elixir*. Within 2 years the alliance was formalized, and the city-states united under the ancient Osirian title of Thuvia.

The lords of the newborn Thuvia met in council with Artokus. There, the priestess Taladere urged the leaders to resist the lure of immortality. "We are all children of Pharasma," she said. "Our journey begins with birth and ends with death. It is something we should embrace, not fear. Let these foreigners shatter the path of fate, but let us accept what Pharasma has woven." The council acknowledged the wisdom of her words, yet all agreed that the elixir could bring prosperity to their harsh and arid land. And so they decreed that only one citizen of Thuvia should ever partake of the *sun orchid elixir*: the alchemist Artokus himself. Artokus accepted this as his destiny and his burden. The cities joined forces to build the mighty Citadel of the Alchemist among the foothills of the Barrier Wall. It is said that Artokus remains within to this day, continuing to produce the elixir that brings foreign gold to the wastes of Thuvia.

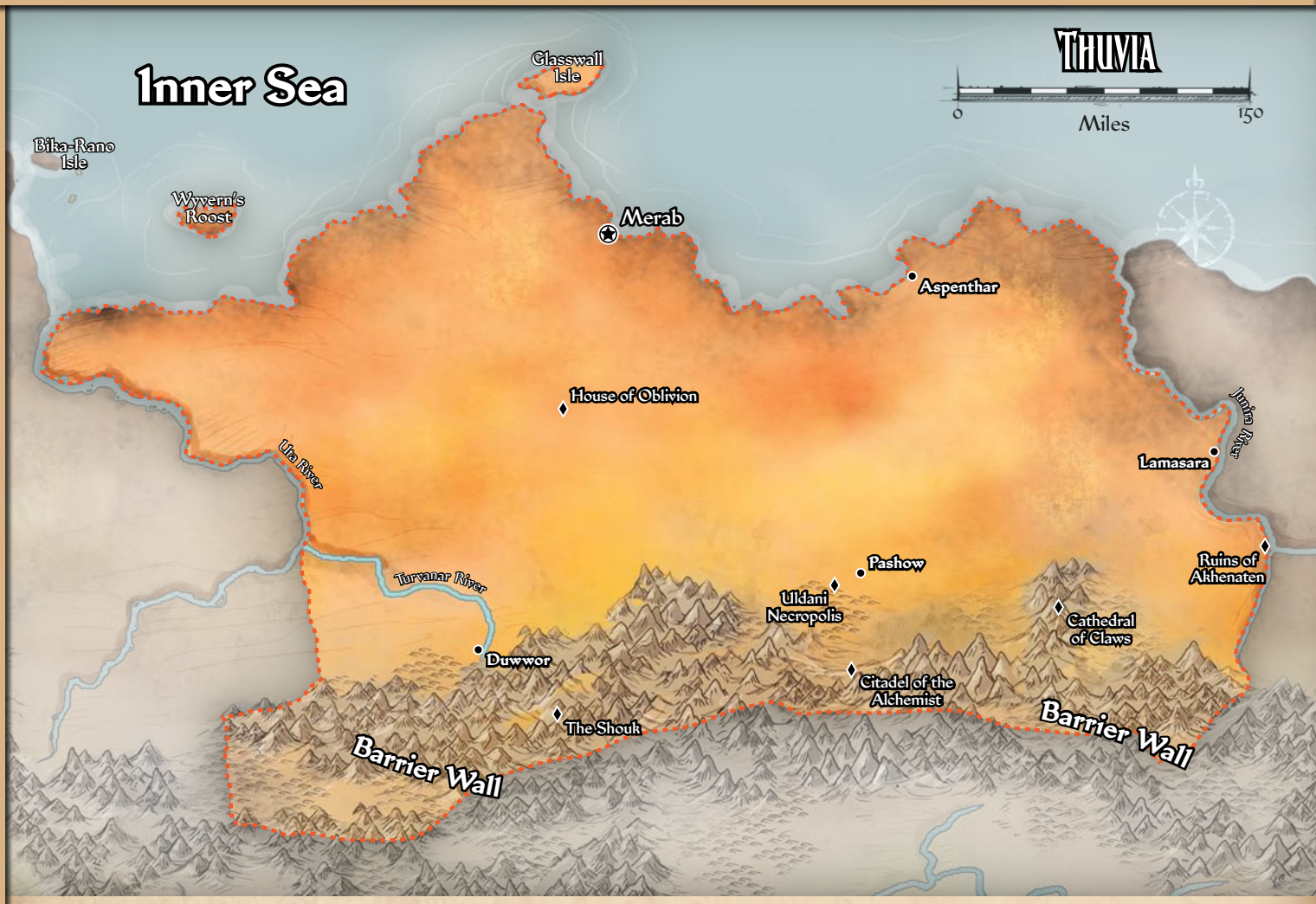
GOVERNMENT

The city-states of Thuvia present a unified front when dealing with foreign powers, but theirs is a very loose alliance. In theory, all of the five cities are equal, but in practice, Merab has the loudest voice, both as the largest city and as the birthplace of Artokus.

Every year, a blind, mute servant emerges from the Citadel of the Alchemist with an iron case containing six vials of the precious *sun orchid elixir*. By ancient pact, the right to sell the elixir rotates between each city-state on an annual basis, and it is the duty of the host city to provide an escort for the elixir. Merab typically relies on heavily armed caravans. Lamasara uses multiple caravans following different paths, relying on decoys to deceive would-be thieves. Pashow relies on teleportation magic. Once the elixir reaches the host city, it is auctioned off with great ceremony to foreign buyers and emissaries, each of whom has carefully maneuvered in order to secure an invitation to the auction from Thuvia's government. A single bid is allowed in these sessions. The six highest bidders each receive a vial of the elixir, and the lords of the city keep the treasures bid by all participants, even the losers. It is a costly endeavor, but anyone who challenges the process loses any chance of acquiring the elixir in the future.

The industry of Thuvia is largely based around the elixir. Entertainers and merchants dealing in exotic services and luxuries migrate from city to city, catering to the foreigners in the year that the city hosts the elixir. As a result, each of the cities has a massive open market that stands largely vacant in the years that pass between the cycles—the fifth year is always a time of festivals and celebration.

Many places and events draw adventurers to the land of the sun orchid, and while most are in some way connected to the *sun orchid elixir*, not all are. If a ruler has reason to believe that a particular shipment of elixir is in danger, he likely employs additional adventurers to protect it. On the other hand, unscrupulous adventurers might be drawn into a plot to steal a shipment of elixir. Beyond this, there is a secondary economy centered on the acquisition of the sun orchids themselves. Bands of hunters roam the interior,



ranging across the dunes and coming into frequent conflict with the divs in search of the rare flowers. The oases and lakes of the interior are governed by the so-called Water Lords, and orchid hunters must deal with these warlords to acquire water and other vital supplies. If they are lucky enough to find orchids, the hunters must be cautious, as many of the Water Lords are no better than bandits, happily killing foreigners to gain the treasures of visiting adventurers, and rumors suggest that they have sinister links to the divs.

GAZETTEER

Aspenthar: Prince Zinlo, leader of Thuvia's second-largest city, is an ambitious man. He requires all of his citizens to undergo mandatory martial training, and travelers report seeing representatives of Aspenthar negotiating with the Water Lords of the interior. Zinlo might support groups seeking to steal shipments of *sun orchid elixir* from other cities, and at some point he might even try to kidnap Artokus himself.

Citadel of the Alchemist: Above ground, this structure is a heavily fortified but otherwise unassuming stone structure carved from the root of a particularly ragged mountain known to the locals as Bent Razor. Despite the citadel's modest facade, its underground levels are vast and heavily fortified, both with guardians and with traps. Many of these are of an alchemical nature—strange creations of one of the citadel's few human inhabitants. While most believe this inhabitant to be the same Artokus Kirran who invented the *sun orchid elixir*, none outside of the Citadel claim to have met the alchemist in living memory. The hidden alchemical laboratories somewhere in the depths of this citadel's dungeons are believed to be among the greatest in the Inner Sea region.

Duwwor: The people of Duwwor, which houses a great temple to Gozreh, seek to live in harmony with the desert. Most of the best guides to the interior are found in Duwwor, and a circle of desert druids make their home a short distance from the city—these mystics of sand and wind can be valuable allies or dangerous foes.

House of Oblivion: Built over 7,000 years ago by the Pharaoh of Forgotten Plagues, the legendary House of Oblivion served as a powerful lure to draw Ahriman, the ancient lord of the divs and a powerful fiendish demigod,

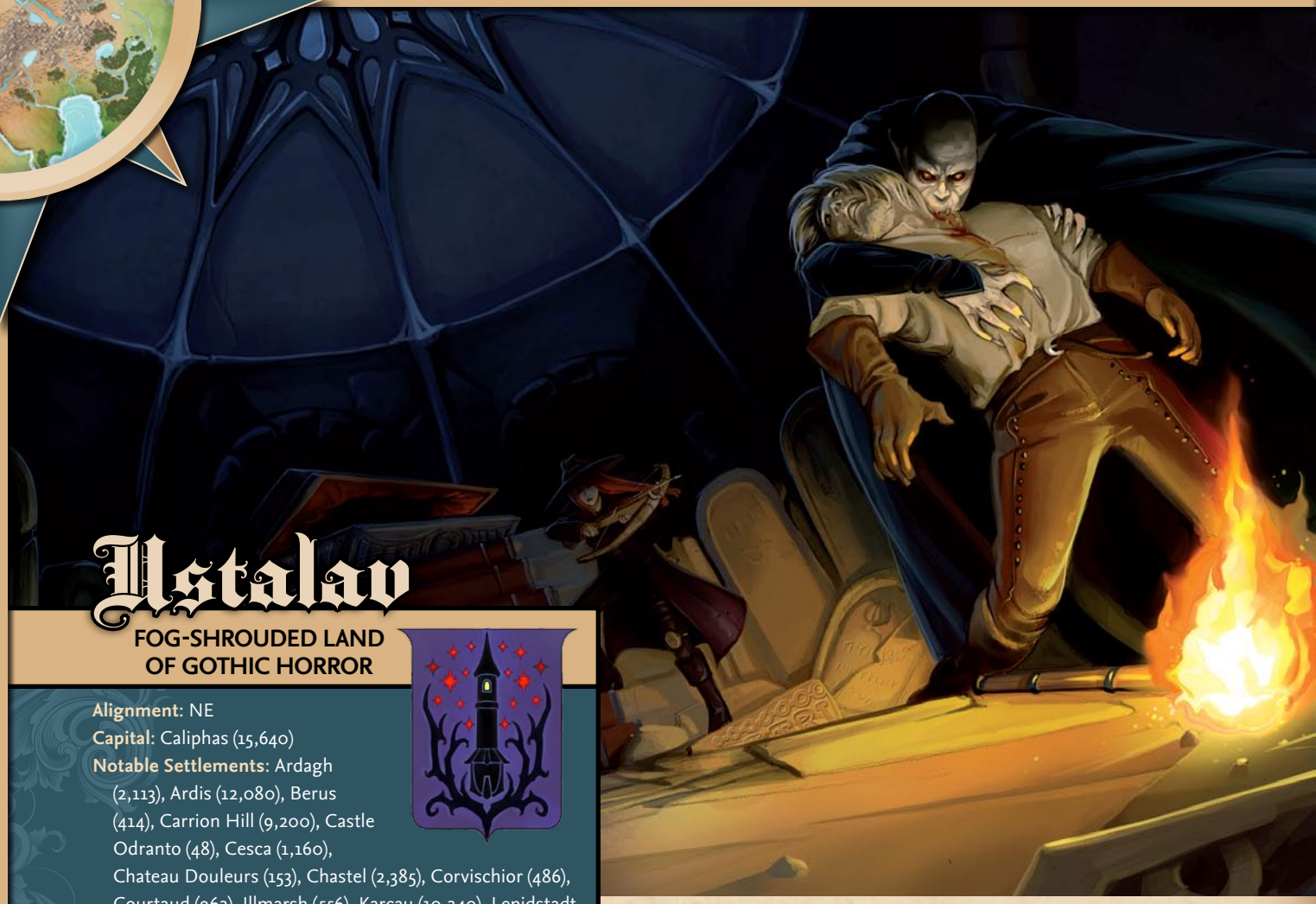
onto the Material Plane. When the Song Pharaoh defeated the Pharaoh of Forgotten Plagues, Ahriman fled back to Abaddon, but this vast monument to his evil remains, looming malignantly over the sands of central Thuvia. The house's black stone walls reflect no light, and tower hundreds of feet above the surrounding terrain—even the desert's sands seem wary of approaching, and a low, ominous buzzing seems to thrum in the air for miles around the place. This structure is believed to exist at least partially on both the Material Plane and Abaddon, and may still serve as a sort of "back door" by which the lord of the divs can visit this world. Certainly, the place is heavily guarded by all manner of fiendish horrors, and it seems without a doubt to be the heart of the div presence in central Thuvia.

AHRIMAN

Lamasara: Lamasara is known for its artisans and performers. While many of its greatest acts migrate with the *sun orchid elixir*, there is always music in the air of Lamasara, and light and laughter in the nights. Queen Zamere is considered to be the cleverest diplomat in Thuvia, and when a single voice speaks for the city-states, it is usually hers.

Merab: Merab is the largest of the Thuvian city-states and is generally considered the country's capital. Many of its greatest minds follow in the footsteps of Artokus. While none match his skill, the city is home to some of the finest alchemists in Garund, and there is always a wide selection of potions available at the Flowing Market. Sarenrae is the patron goddess of the city, and her Temple of the Redeeming Sun is the largest house of worship in civilized Thuvia.

Pashow: Pashow is the smallest of the Thuvian cities, largely due to the extremely limited resources of the region—its proximity to the Citadel of the Alchemist being its chief advantage over the other cities. The people of Pashow are devoted to the god Nethys, and in the past, their talents with arcane magic have helped them survive in the harsh land. Pashow is also one of the most troubled of the city-states. The young Emir Guldis lost the two most recent shipments of elixir, costing his city hundreds of thousands of gold pieces. In both cases, the couriers were to use scrolls to teleport themselves and the precious potions to Pashow. This practice has always been forbidden in the past, precisely because teleportation sometimes goes astray. Pashow's sages continue to seek out where the couriers went. Current theories blame either the intentional misdirection and slaughter of the couriers by div spellcasters, or else a natural phenomenon. Guldis continues to search for adventurers willing to replicate the accident and bring an end to the threat. His recent failures have shaken the confidence of his people, and a group of agitators now seek to put Ziralia—the eldest daughter of Prince Zinlo of Aspenthar—on Pashow's throne.



Ustalav

FOG-SHROUDED LAND OF GOTHIC HORROR

Alignment: NE
Capital: Caliphas (15,640)
Notable Settlements: Ardagh (2,113), Ardis (12,080), Berus (414), Carrion Hill (9,200), Castle Odranto (48), Cesca (1,160), Chateau Douleurs (153), Chastel (2,385), Corvischior (486), Courtaud (962), Illmarsh (556), Karcau (10,240), Lepidstadt (9,780), Tamrivena (3,620), Thrushmoor (3,480), Ravengro (311), Redleaf (62), Vauntil (733), Vische (2,556)
Ruler: Prince Aduard Ordranti III
Government: Loose confederacy of counties
Languages: Common, Skald, Varisian
Religion: Desna, Pharasma, Urgathoa

Cursed with a history of tragedy and faded glory, the Immortal Principality of Ustalav clings to its legendary past even as it struggles to forget centuries of horrors. From the fog-shrouded cliffs of Lake Encarthan to the tangled maze of the Shudderwood, the fractious nation bears an infamous reputation as a place of birth and rebirth for tyrants.

HISTORY

In the Age of Enthronement, the blade of the legendary hero Soividia Ustav drove the brutal Kellid tribes and their heritage of obscene magic from the lands surrounding the Hungry Mountains, and claimed the region as a new homeland for his wandering people. In victory, the warlord divided his nation between his lieutenants and allies, creating holdings befitting the deeds and merit of their ancient families. For more than 500 years, the newly risen Kingdom of Ustalav followed the horned crown of the Ustav line, yet as generations passed, the clannish Varisians quarreled endlessly over territory, familial rights, and the honor of long-dead ancestors. In the face of civil war, King Kaldemov divided the nation into 16 counties, formally establishing the domains of the land's most influential families and granting them broad administrative powers, so long as they remained loyal to and met the demands of the crown.

The country enjoyed several brief centuries of peace after its division—a never-reclaimed golden age in its tormented past. Unknown to the rulers of the nation, though, Ustalav was a poisoned land, tainted by the immortal remains of the wicked warlord Tar-Baphon, who, in 3203 AR, resurrected as the vile lich-king known as the Whispering Tyrant.

Raising orc hordes from the brutal lands of Belkzen and calling upon legions of the ancient dead, the lich-king unleashed his vicious military and arcane genius upon the unprepared lands of Ustalav, besieging the nation from without and from within. While the people

waged a desperate defense, every fallen soldier bolstered the strength of the undead ranks, and by 3206, Ustalav was a realm dominated by the dead. For more than 600 years, the Whispering Tyrant ruled an empire of abominations rooted in the country's corpse. When the Shining Crusade at last succeeded in imprisoning the dreaded immortal within his fortress of Gallowspire, the victorious knights freed the lich's living slaves and returned the principality's shattered counties to the few beleaguered survivors.

Reestablished and rechristened as the Immortal Principality of Ustalav, the country readopted the majority of the laws and systems of its near-legendary past. But, with the line of Soividia Ustav long broken, the crown came to rest with families claiming at best tenuous ties to the ancient hero—resulting in an era of slow recovery, infighting, and weak rulers. The land too had changed, as had the creatures afoot in those reaches. Although the Whispering Tyrant had been defeated, his minions proved subtle and unnaturally patient, hiding themselves amid the darkest shadows and haunting ruins left in the wake of an age of anguish. Forgotten enemies of Ustalav also prowled from the shadows once more—beasts thought to be mere legends and the unquiet spirits of slaughtered Kellid ritualists. And in the earth, waters, and skies, old things roused by the Tyrant's might stirred and cast unfathomable attentions upon an unsuspecting people.

Although the past generations have seen the repopulation of Ustalav and its rise as a hub of civilization on the often-savage northern shores of Lake Encarthan, the scars of death's grip still linger. Deadly orc raiders, savage barbarians, and merciless zealots array themselves beyond the borders, while within deadly creatures, shadowy conspiracies, and unnatural beings stalk the nights and nightmares of the country's populace. These circumstances have bred a suspicious people ruled by ageless superstitions, strict cultural traditions, and grim faith. Even as fearful rumors and blind prejudice pass for fact throughout much of the realm, many seek out reason in the darkness, leading to the rise of numerous centers of art, faith, and learning. Yet Ustalav endlessly proves itself a land covetous of its secrets and inhospitable to change, and many who gaze into its shadows are themselves consumed.

Within the past 40 years, Ustalav has suffered continued upheaval, from regime changes forcing capitals to shift to scandals of lineage to coups both bloodless and otherwise.

Government

Although Prince Aduard Ordranti III rules as Ustalav's sovereign, his will is far from the only one that directs the fate of his nation. In the west, the three Palatinates assemble local councils of the region's wisest and most influential, even though their frequently-changing representatives hold depressingly little sway in meetings of the royal court. The counts of the realm's heartland hold the most immediate and forceful influence over the nation and its people. Able to act without oversight or reprisal, Ustalav's ruling families have each transformed their corner of the nation as befits their ambitions or their petty vices. Although each count is sworn to serve the throne, generations of courtly manipulations, incomprehensible laws, concessions, and exceptions bind even the Prince's hands against interference in all but the most outrageous county edicts.

Gazetteer

Ustalav's counties are divided into three distinct regions—Soivoda, the Palatinates, and Virlych.

Soivoda

Dominating the entire eastern half of the country, the lands of Soivoda have not weathered time and tragedy with uniform grace.

Amaans: A land of mist-shrouded valleys and jagged mountains, Amaans lies in the shadow of menace. The county's relatively few residents largely occupy the lands around Lake Kavapesta, huddled near the border with civilized Ardeal. From their lowland homes, they spread ancient tales of the Hundred Haunted Vales of the Hungry Mountains, and of the strange whispers and hunting dead that stalk the Ghorcha Passage.

Ardeal: Historic home of Soividia Ustav, site of the former capital, and the supposed heart of Ustalav, Ardeal's glory has faded. For centuries, Ardis was the home of authors, poets, craftsmen, princes, and the Ustalavic elite. Now, however, the county is a place of baseless arrogance and fading memories, its splendors living only in memories and the grim half-fictions of aging authors like Ailson Kindler, whose gothic romances are among the most widely read and best-loved tales throughout the Inner Sea region.

Barstoi: Among the jagged hills, rocky fields, and salt mines of Barstoi live suspicious but hardworking people. Although widely held to be an unfriendly place, the county is perhaps the best managed in all Ustalav. Its people are well fed, its militias are finely trained, life brings with it rewards equal to one's toil, and all crimes are lethally punished by stern Pharasmin inquisitors and black-armored soldiers.

Caliphas: The soul of Ustalav has long been its largest city, the foggy, newly crowned capital of Caliphas. Trade across Lake Encarthan brings substantial wealth to the city's noblesse, but also vast crowds amid which frequent disappearances go largely unnoticed. Away from the shore, rural Caliphas retains much of its provincial charm, with numerous small communities of artisans growing up around the Droa and Raiteso Rivers, where vineyards, perfumeries, and alabaster quarries all feed the growing decadence of the cosmopolitan south.

The Furrows: In 4689, Barstoi dragged Ardeal and Varno into the civil war known as the War without Rivals. The struggle for possession of the Dragosvet Plains turned into 4 years of grim, futile trench warfare, with hundreds dying over mere yards of land. In the end, Count Neska conceded and recalled his armies to Barstoi, although not without issuing orders to burn and salt every inch of abandoned land. The countryside once known as Furcina is now the Furrows—a dead plain riddled with mazes of trenches and haunted by the disillusioned ghosts of wasted lives.

Odranto: The guardianship of northern Ustalav has traditionally fallen to the counts of Odranto. Centuries of skirmishes that forced the savage Kellids north of the River Moutray have left their mark on the county, dotting the region with the remains of architecturally varied castles. While soldiers still guard some, the people largely avoid the land's forsaken fortresses, with tales of House Beumhal, the Ground of Lost Tears, and the dreaded Castle Kronquist serving as warnings of cursed ancestries and foul deeds.

Sinaria: In a land of cold swamps and moss-draped woodlands, the people of Sinaria live off what little fertile planting ground surrounds Lake Prophyria. The bounties of these plantations funnel into Karcau, a vibrant light in the heart of a dark wilderness. Known for the widely respected Karcau Opera, the island-flecked Village of Voices has a tradition of musical genius. Built on the site of a vast underground lake, the city stands upon a labyrinth of submerged tunnels and underground channels.

Ulcazar: The smallest of Ustalav's counties, Ulcazar claims the highest peaks of the Hungry Mountains. Aside from a few scattered hermits and hunters, few people make their home amid the inhospitable mountains. High amid the peaks stands the little-known Monastery of the Veil, the home of a mysterious brotherhood of silent monks.

Varno: The close-knit people of Varno flourish in a land of scattered lakes and dense forests. The county's land and weather often prove fickle, and years of famine might follow several seasons of bounty, souring the people against even their closet friends.

Versex: With much of its land poorly suited to farming, the people of Versex largely survive by mining and plying the rough waves of Avalon Bay. Away from the bustling town of Thrushmoor, numerous secluded communities of clannish, suspicious folk dot the Versex coast and

highlands. Of particular strangeness are Carrion Hill, a city built upon an ancient mound and its own sprawling slums, and Illmarsh, where quarrelsome clans of fisher folk treat with strange shadows in the deep.

The Palatinates

In 4670, the county of Lozeri shrugged off control of its regional count, embracing rule by a council of politically savvy citizens after a series of relatively bloodless coups. Quickly acknowledged by the disinterested Prince Valislav, Lozeri, Vieland, and the refounded county of Canterwall became known as the Palatinates.

Canterwall: The breadbasket of Ustalav, Canterwall grows nearly half of the crops that feed the country, a fact that figured strongly in its royal release from hereditary rule. Since the country's founding, this land has defended the border with Belkzen and, more recently, the haunted mountains of Virlych. In past years, however, several hamlets in Canterwall have been deserted without explanation, the people seemingly swallowed up by the mists.

Lozeri: Ruled by a collective of well-to-do but just-less-than-noble citizens, this county caters to the affluent with elaborate hunts. The everyday citizen of Lozeri sees little difference between the rule of the deposed Count Beauturne and the new council, and many complain that at least the count kept the woods' outskirts safe. In recent years, rumors of the Devil in Gray, a creature of varying size and description according to conflicting reports, have haunted the woods, terrifying the populace while being disregarded by Courtaud's ruling council.

Vieland: When Lozeri denounced Count Beauturne, the astute Count Caromarc of Vieland recognized the changes in the wind and stepped down as ruler, retiring to his secluded manor in the Dippelmere swamp, north of Lepidstadt. Life in Vieland has largely gone unchanged since Caromarc's resignation.

Virlych

Ustalav fell over 1,500 years ago—the first casualty of the legendary Whispering Tyrant's return. Although the tyrant's defeat in 3827 freed the country back to its historic rule, generations of genocide and tragedy left Virlych a crippled, accursed land.

Virlych surrounds Gallowspire, the prison of the Whispering Tyrant. A pinnacle of jagged black stone and rent iron, the sealed fortress holds the remains of the immortal lich lord, locked away where they can supposedly do no harm.

The lands surrounding the accursed tower—formerly the counties known as Virholt and Grodlych—are lifeless and haunted, seemingly poisoned by Gallowspire's very presence. No sane folk live in Virlych, rightly avoiding a land wracked by unnatural storms, choked with blighted plants, and stalked by tales of unquiet dead. Only seasonal patrols from neighboring Lastwall traverse the region with any regularity, keeping a centuries-old watch over the immortal tyrant's throne. Yet, for all the dread the region inspires, Virlych endlessly fascinates explorers and arcanists eager to uncover secrets of the Whispering Tyrant's dark age, perpetuating the tales of horror that flow from such remnants as the bladed cathedral at Renchurch; Ghasterhall, the Palace of Travesties; and the Garden of Lead.

AILSON KINDLER

Varisia

WILD FRONTIER REGION

Alignment: N
Capital: None
Notable Settlements: Abken (298), Arsmeril (288), Baslwief (405), Biston (286), Crying Leaf (780), Galduria (1,420), Harse (828), Ilsurian (790), Janderhoff (10,230) Kaer Maga (8,000), Korvosa (18,486), Magnimar (16,428), Melfesh (955), Nybor (528), Palin's Cove (1,896), Ravenmoor (135), Riddleport (13,300), Roderic's Cove (1,100), Sandpoint (1,240), Sipplerose (635), Sirathu (440), Turtleback Ferry (430), Urglin (5,800), Veldraine (2,360), Wartle (302), Whistledown (551), Wolf's Ear (240)
Ruler: None
Government: Unaffiliated city-states
Languages: Common, Shoanti, Varisian
Religion: Abadar, Calistria, Cayden Cailean, Desna, Erastil, Gozreh, Lamashtu, Norgorber, Pharasma, Urgathoa, Zon-Kuthon

A sprawling region caught between the southern nations of Taldor's old empire and the northern lands ruled by the Linnorm Kings, Varisia has long been considered a backwater. As Varisia lacked any significant coastal settlements to raid, the Linnorm Kings traditionally bypassed the region in favor of attacking the southern kingdoms, while in the south, the distances involved made exploration of the area uneconomical. Only in the past few hundred years have the nations of the Inner Sea turned their attention to Varisia, and they've found a land ripe for exploration—something the Varisian people have known for thousands of years, yet have long maintained their silence about.

Although a relatively large stretch of Varisia has been settled by Chelish colonists and Varisian natives, the fact remains that this region is still primarily a dangerous wilderness. Legendary monsters, ranging from sinister local stories (such as the elusive Sandpoint Devil) on up to regional tales of terror (like deadly Black Magga, or the mythical Oliphaunt of Jandelay) have given the wilderness a singular menace, yet they are not as stark a reminder of the region's dangers as the numerous Thassilonian monuments that still dot the land. Built by armies of stone giant artisans under runelord command, these monuments were preserved and protected by magic.

Only today is this preservative magic beginning to fail, allowing the ancient monuments to slowly suffer the indignities of erosion and trophy seekers. In many of these monoliths lurk hidden dangers—immortal monsters trapped for centuries; enticing vaults of treasure protected by traps; and (some whisper) the slumbering runelords themselves, who wait patiently to awaken from their centuries-long sleep to reclaim a land rightfully theirs.

History

Although Varisia has only recently returned to the forefront of the Inner Sea's interest, it has not always existed as a remote frontier. Before Earthfall, this was the site of one of humanity's most powerful civilizations: the empire of Thassilon. Founded by exiles from Azlant and ruled by wizards known as runelords who reveled in the seven deadly sins, the nation of Thassilon enslaved giants to build vast monuments to its own ego. When Earthfall ushered in the Age of Darkness, Thassilon—already teetering from its own decadence and corruption—fell as well.

The region remained wild for thousands of years, inhabited only by barbarian tribes of Shoanti and Varisian wanderers until the frontier finally came to the attention of expansionist Cheliax, whose armies marched on the region in 4405 AR. Chelish soldiers drove the warlike Shoanti into the rugged regions to the northeast, while colonists adopted a tenuous peace with the native Varisians under the pretense of bringing "culture and civilization" into their lives. It was at this time that the ancient frontier came to be known as Varisia. Since then, the area has become the Inner Sea region's fastest-growing realm—a place of new opportunity, while still heavy with ancient mystery and the promise of undiscovered riches.

MAYOR
KENDRA DEVERIN

Government

Modern Varisia is a region of conflict, a strip of frontier laid against the Storval Rise (a land of barbarians and giants to the northeast). Although no central government controls Varisia, three major city-states have emerged, any of which could some day soon claim control over the region.

The eldest and largest of these city-states is Korvosa, a city of Chelish loyalists ruled by a monarchy but cleaving close to Cheliax in a bid to be reabsorbed into that empire. Yet as much as her people might like to put on airs, Korvosa is far from the only center of civilization in Varisia. The second-largest regional city, cosmopolitan Magnimar, is in an era of growth, while Korvosa stagnates in its hard-set traditional values. Farther north, in the region's third-largest city of Riddleport, crime is actively encouraged, resulting in a rapidly growing den of pirates, thieves, and scoundrels.

Any one of these three city-states could someday claim the right to rule Varisia. While all three vie for that honor in their own way, only time can tell which of the cities is destined for such glory.

Gazetteer

Celwynvian: Deep in the Mierani forest, the ancient elven city of Celwynvian stands haunted, its verdant palaces and delicate towers locked in a mysterious conflict. The elves have tried numerous times to reclaim the abandoned city, but they are silent as to what exactly lurks in the ruins that keeps them from success. Some whisper of a strange contagion, others of dragons or demons. A few rumors even speak of drow, legendary elves from deep underground, and suggest Celwynvian is now the site of unknown dark elf atrocities that the elves themselves are loath to acknowledge, as if they were too ashamed of what their violent kin are up to.

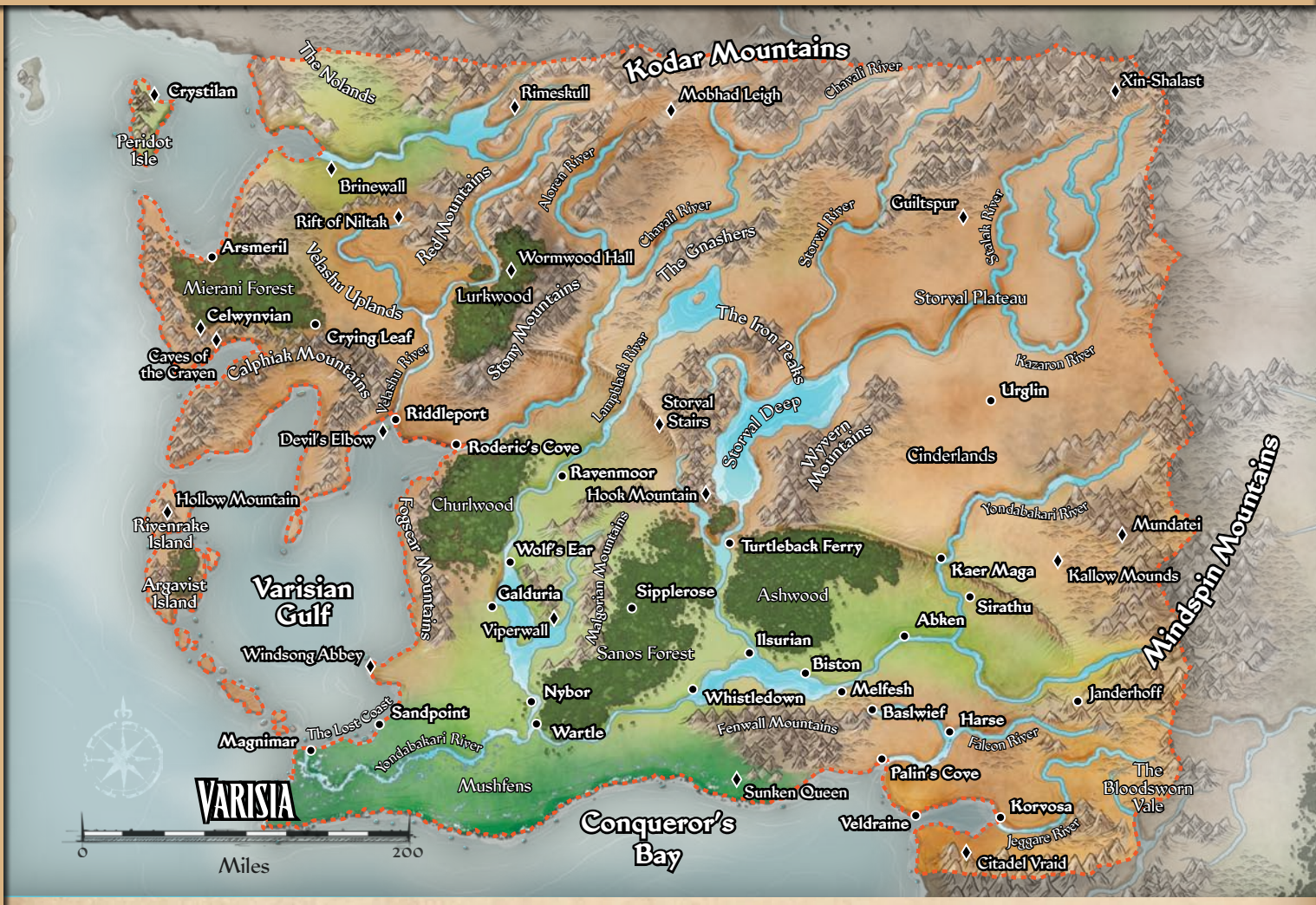
Cinderlands: Home to three Shoanti tribes, the hostile Cinderlands are a unique region. Not quite desert, these rugged badlands are quite volcanic. Black blizzards of emberstorms, immense grassland fires, and deadly eruptions of poisonous gas make it a difficult place to dwell, yet the Shoanti continue to do so, having adapted to the harsh environs as necessary.

Hollow Mountain: The largest of Rivenrake Island's peaks is still witness to a particularly striking Thassilonian ruin—the carving of a stern woman's face. An immense rent down the center of the face opens into an equally immense network of ruin-littered caverns that, rumor holds, lead to the dust-choked and destroyed city on Hollow Mountain's lower slopes. Scholars believe this is the site of Xin-Bakrakhan, the City of Wrath and capital of Runelord Alaznist's nation.

Kaer Maga: Varisia's most notorious city, Kaer Maga perches atop one of the highest parts of the Storval Rise, overlooking the verdant lands to the south. The city is built into the ruins of an immense, mysterious fortress that predates Thassilon, and its denizens enjoy anarchy in its purest form. All manner of strange factions hold court in Kaer Maga's halls, from the bloodthirsty bloatmages to the militant monks of the Brothers of the Seal and the grisly augurs—troll soothsayers who use their own entrails to prophesize with questionable accuracy.

Kodar Mountains: Tall and forbidding, the jagged snow-capped peaks of the Kodar Mountains are perhaps the highest in the Inner Sea region. Only the hardiest creatures, such as giants, rocs, yetis, wendigos, and dragons are able to withstand the extreme climate and altitude of the highest reaches here. Numerous mysteries and legends have origins hidden deep within the Kodar Mountains, but few rival the mythic quality of the lost city of Xin-Shalast.

Korvosa: A haven for merchants and tradesmen, Korvosa functions as a gateway for trade throughout all of Varisia.



The city itself is governed (some say over-governed) by a complex charter that divides responsibilities between several magistrates, law-enforcing arbiters, and a monarchy of kings and queens—the current ruler is King Eodred, although he has grown increasingly infirm over the past few years, leaving the rule increasingly in the hands of his beautiful (if petty) young wife, Queen Ileosa Arabasti. Most of Korvosa's citizens are native-born, but they retain much of their Chelish blood, both in appearance and tradition. Varisian people are tolerated in the city but are often discriminated against, while Shoanti are openly shunned and thought of as crude and violent barbarians who have no real place in a civilized city.

Lost Coast: Believed by many to be the favorite hunting grounds of the legendary Sandpoint devil, this stretch of coastline along the western shore of Varisia has seen swift growth over the past 4 decades, something that has forced the hundreds of local goblin tribes into greater conflict than ever before—both with their new neighbors and with each other. The waters of the Lost Coast feature abundantly fine fishing, as well as dangerous wild creatures such as bunyips, reefclaws, and great white sharks.

Magnimar: Unlike in Korvosa, guilds are quite actively encouraged in Magnimar, and with enough luck and skill, anyone can rise to a position of power. The local Varisians are much more tolerated here, although they still tend to dwell in specific ghettos inside the city walls. Magnimar's rule is split between Lord-Mayor Haldmeer Grobaras and a Council of Ushers. As the city grows, so does the Council, and in time Magnimar may well outshine Korvosa, especially as word that Magnimar places fewer restrictions on trade reaches farther into the world. Certainly Magnimar's holdings are healthier than those that surround Korvosa.

Mobhad Leigh: With a Shoanti name that translates as "Steps into Hell," the Mobhad Leigh has captured imaginations for ages. In a perfectly round pit in an otherwise nondescript field at the foot of the Kodar Mountains, a path of stairs leads partway down into the shaft's throat. These stairs end after extending downward a few hundred feet—the pit's actual bottom lies thousands of feet below in the Darklands realm of Sekamina. The Shoanti tribes avoid this region, especially after several of their spellcasters dropped dead while attempting to scout the pit's depths with scrying magic.

Mushfens: One of Avistan's largest wetlands, the swath of swamp known as the Mushfens stretches along the entire southern border of Varisia. This trackless region has resisted every attempt at colonization so far, and to this day remains a wildland in every sense of the term. Boggards, marsh giants, and stranger creatures rule here.

Riddleport: This city is a solution for those who find law of any sort oppressive, and serves as a safe harbor for mercenaries, thieves, bandits, and pirates of all cuts. Tales of bandits ruling the streets, of muggings and murder taking place in full light of day, and of riots and anarchy are popular among the nobles of Korvosa, yet there is little truth to these tales, for the Overlords of Riddleport are undeniably harsh in punishing those who would attempt to disrupt civic function. While Riddleport is not a place for the timid, it draws a surprising number of scholars and intellectuals, for the city of Riddleport is host to one of the most intriguing and well-preserved Thassilonian monuments—the cryptic Cyphergate, a ring of stone that arches gracefully over the entrance to the city's harbor. The Cyphergate has long intrigued wizards, sages, and their like, enough so that these stereotypically meek folk have become a strong and tempering force in Riddleport's society.

Sandpoint: The coastal town of Sandpoint has enjoyed great prosperity in its 4 or so decades of existence, and has recently grown large enough to become Varisia's sixth-largest city. Despite recent growing pains (such as an increase in crime, including the depredation of the notorious murderer Jervas Stoot, known also as "Chopper"), Sandpoint's mayor, Kendra Deverin, hopes to see her town's prosperity grow even further in the years to come. Sandpoint is built around an ancient Thassilonian tower known today as the Old Light. This ruined edifice, combined with the town's traditional problems with local goblin tribes, make it a hotbed of adventuring opportunity.

Storval Plateau: Farther inland, the land rises in a dramatic, jagged cleft. Beyond this natural boundary, the land changes from the verdant woods of the lower elevation to rugged badlands. Here, ogres and trolls hold court on rugged mountaintops and in deep ravines, yet the true lords of the Storval Plateau are the giants. Descended from the slave castes of ancient Thassilon, giants of all types call the true wilderness reaches of Varisia home, and their periodic forays and raids against humanity make for constant and brutal reminders that this realm is far from tame.

Sunken Queen: This towering pyramid has partially sunk into the sloppy depths of the surrounding Mushfens, leaving the immense Thassilonian ruin leaning at a severe angle. One face of the pyramid is decorated in an immense bas-relief carving of a beautiful nude woman, while curving towers extend from its peak like growths or chimneys. Several boggard tribes hold the Sunken Queen in special reverence.

Viperwall: Embossed with great stone serpents, the conical roofs of Viperwall's many towers shine in the moonlight. Avoided by locals, the structure is often surrounded by a greenish haze of poisonous gas that leaks steadily from fanged sculptures in the castle walls.

Windsong Abbey: Although at one time clergy from all of Varisia's major religions—good and evil—met at Windsong Abbey to resolve conflicts, many churches have withdrawn from the assembly since the time of Aroden's death, leaving empty halls and a growing sense of paranoia within.

Xin-Shalast: Said to have been the capital of one of Thassilon's runelords, Karzoug the Claimer, Xin-Shalast is thought to lie hidden somewhere deep in the Kodar Mountains. The legendary city of Xin-Shalast has long haunted the dreams of romantics and historians.

QUEEN ILEOSA ARABASTI

The Worldwound

EXPANDING DEMONIC INVASION

Alignment: CE
Capital: None
Notable Settlements: None (all ruined)
Ruler: None
Government: Loose coalition of demonic warlords
Languages: Abyssal, Hallit
Religion: Lamashtu, demon worship (particularly Deskari)

A century ago, the death of Aroden transformed the culture and politics of the Inner Sea nations. In the distant north in a land once known as Sarkoris, it changed the world itself, knocking Golarion out of metaphysical alignment in the direction of the Abyss, a nightmare realm in the Great Beyond, screaming with wicked souls and vicious demons.

HISTORY

Until the world split open and demons emerged to raze and ruin the entire nation, Sarkoris was a sprawling scrubland north of Numeria known for its fierce, painted warriors and bizarre witchery. Yet even before the end, Sarkorian mystics spoke of ascendant chaos, a thinness between this world and the next. Strange, ravenous creatures traditionally stalked the mysterious tombs and barrows of the stark region in central Sarkoris known as the Northmounds, where the cult of the demon lord Deskari, Lord of the Locust Host and usher of the Apocalypse, had long tormented the people of Sarkoris. One of Aroden's many miracles during his early years as a mortal wandering Golarion was his defeat of Deskari and his cult—by driving the cultists and their demonic patrons into the Lake of Mists and Veils, Aroden made the Northmounds safe again.

Just over a century ago, strange signs that the cult had returned to the region manifested. The people of Sarkoris worried, but were confident that the prophesized return of Aroden to the world would put a final end to the cult's machinations. But as all soon came to realize, no such return would occur. When Aroden died and the world suffered under the wrath of weeks of storms, Sarkoris entered its final dark hours. Ill tidings came to horrific life as vile abominations quickly overran the Sarkorian clan-holds, scattering their inhabitants and spreading the legend of an insidious taint in the north, centered on the Worldwound, a mile-wide cosmic blight limned in black flame southwest of the barbarian city of Iz. The closer one approaches to the Worldwound, the more the physical world itself becomes

unpredictable. Terrain changes before the eyes, shifting form with a torturous deliberation that seems to cause pain to the earth itself. Foul creatures spew from the madness at the center of the blight, monstrosities from the depths of the Abyss; almost overnight they became the undisputed masters of Sarkoris.

As word of Sarkoris's swift and dramatic fall spread, the church of Iomedae was equally swift to react. Still reeling from the loss of their deity's patron, an obvious threat like a demonic incursion was precisely the thing that the Iomedaean faithful needed to stave off true despair—her champions and priests threw themselves into the crusade against the Worldwound with an almost reckless abandon, not only to blunt their own horror at Aroden's death, but also because they believed it was their responsibility to pacify Sarkoris and seal the Worldwound—to finish the job that Aroden had started so many centuries ago with the first defeat of Deskari's cult.

To this end, the leaders of Iomedae's church and those of several other religions decreed the First Mendevian Crusade, as well as the three that followed. Zealous followers of the Inheritor from throughout Avistan still travel up the Sellen River to Mendev in an attempt to support the crusaders. The first efforts to pacify the Worldwound met with considerable success: the demonic hosts were driven back and the crusaders stood sentinel over the land. The malign, almost sentient chaos of the Worldwound, however, was not content to stay within its carefully proscribed borders. The northern crusader city of Drezen formerly stood within the borders of Mendev, but in 4638 AR, the counterstroke of the demon-hordes overwhelmed its guardians and protective enchantments, and the entire city fell under the influence of the Abyss. Tens of thousands of pilgrims and warriors drowned in the demonic wave that followed, depleting the armies of Mendev and necessitating the Second Mendevian Crusade.

The new influx of crusaders helped to stabilize a new front line along the Sellen River in the wake of this disastrous reversal, and the creation of the first bulwark of magical defenses, known as *wardstones*, helped to contain the demon horde's growth. Aside from constructing this tenuous hedge to keep the demons from spreading farther south, however, little progress has been made in purging the land of demons, who seem to grow in number with each passing month. The subtler fiends managed to create such unrest and suspicion in Mendev that the Third Crusade was effectively dissipated in witch hunts, paranoia, and internecine bickering rather than fostering meaningful advances at the front. Fortunately, the demons themselves were far too independent and disorganized to take advantage of their enemy's indisposition—their own mutually destructive tendencies make coordinated action very difficult. Minor victories and defeats characterize the past several decades of struggle.

Government

The Worldwound has no government as such, merely a loose coalition of demonic masters with sufficient power and malice to compel the allegiance of demons weaker than themselves, whether through onslaughts of raw savagery led by mariliths and balors, or whispering campaigns of terror and anarchy directed by succubi, incubi, and the occasional honey-tongued glabrezu. The strongest warlords in the Worldwound presently are the balor lord Khorramzadeh of Iz, dubbed the Storm King after the mantle of lightning that wreaths him in battle rather than the fiery shroud typical of his kind, and the marilith Aponavicius, conqueror of the crusader city of Drezen.

In perhaps the greatest betrayal, a growing number of humans and other humanoids have pledged loyalty to the demon host, often in return for their own eventual transformation into half-fiends or full demons. The witch Areelu Vorlesh has long held a position of prominence in this shattered land, due to both her eldritch might as well as her encyclopedic knowledge of the Worldwound and its effects. She has studied this eruption of raw chaos since before the fall of Sarkoris, and had just finished her unholy transformation into a half-fiend when the Worldwound opened. Many believe she was largely responsible for the Worldwound, when in fact her role as one of Deskari's favored minions, while not insignificant, was hardly the primary cause of the catastrophe. Her power, knowledge, and fell reputation for experimenting on any who displease her (and for sending her pack of retrievers to fetch any who interest her) earn her a wide berth in her adopted home of Undarin.

And above all else looms the vile architect of the Worldwound itself—the demon lord Deskari, a powerful entity said to be the child of an even more powerful demon, Pazuzu. Deskari's interest and eventual plans for the Worldwound, aside from bringing the Abyss to the Material Plane, remain unknown, yet increasing reports of sightings of the demon lord himself being active within the deepest rifts of the Worldwound are disturbing indeed. Whatever his plans might be, as far as the nation of Sarkoris is concerned, Deskari's mantle of Usher of the Apocalypse is all too apt.

Gazetteer

Drezen: The ruined towns and cities of the Worldwound were once Sarkorian settlements, with the notable exception of the lost crusader citadel of Drezen, a sad reminder of the overconfidence of the First Crusade. Thousands were lost in its fall, many overwhelmed in a wave of sheer chaos and perverted into fiendish monsters who turned on their fellows in a cannibalistic frenzy. Those who did not survive were taken from the city to the Crown of the World, where their anguished spirits were distilled into "white wraiths" capable of freezing a man to his marrow at a touch. The

crusader shrines within the city were horribly perverted into cultic demon-altars, but much of the city remains intact or is even rebuilt. The marilith mistress of the city, Aponavicius, is one of the most aggressive of the demon commanders, ready to sacrifice minions by the thousands as long as she can bloody the enemy.

Dyinglight: The wintry city of Dyinglight stands at the headwaters of the Sarkora River, surrounded by marshes and sulfurous hot springs. Dyinglight was once a mystical center of Sarkorian religion, its great ring of idols honoring Pulura, the mistress of the stars and the mysterious light of the aurora. Today, it is the haunt of fiendish marsh giants who dwell in the Frostmire Fen surrounding the city and frequently clash with the warclans of the Realm of the Mammoth Lords. Faced with the great emptiness of the western tundra between the two lands, the demons have shown little interest in pressing for westward expansion.

Gundrun: The small town of Gundrun is unique to the Worldwound in that a semblance of normal life can be found there. Far from the heart of the Worldwound itself, refugees of lost Sarkoris cling here to a sad shadow of their former homeland. Within the crumbling ruins of a city sacked long ago, hardy (and perhaps foolhardy) settlers return from surrounding lands to eke out a meager existence and live in a sort of barter-town that serves as a hub for isolated villages scattered to the south and west, toward Shudderwood and the Moutray River flowing along Ustalav's border. In truth, the demon hordes of the Worldwound turn their eyes primarily toward Mendev and pay little mind to the far southwestern frontier, but Gundrun and the surrounding lands are not without danger, as the demonic invasion left something behind. Local legend names this menace as "Kakuen-Taka, the Hunger That Moves." Fireside tales describe it as a swarm of tiny demonic horrors riding in "fleshy mansions" gnawed out of the animate remains of giants, mammoths, and similar creatures. Despite this ever-present danger, the lure of reclaiming even the tiniest portion of their ancestral home is enough to drive many with even a drop of Sarkorian blood to cling to this savage frontier.

Iz: At the center of this blighted land, and perched on the precipice of the Worldwound itself, looms the soot-choked city of Iz. Nearest to the mines of Sarkoris's central plateau, Iz was always a center of metalworking and stonecrafting,

but the whips of its demonic masters now elevate the importance and output of those trades far beyond what they were in the days of the barbarian kingdom. Life in the mines and foundries is exceptionally dangerous, as the convulsions of the expanding Worldwound periodically wrack the area with earthquakes and violent wildstorms. Ruled by the balor lord Khorramzadeh the Storm King, Iz may someday crumble into the Worldwound, although such oblivion has so far cruelly ignored this city of torment and shame.

Shudderwood: The southwest corner of the Worldwound is dominated by the Shudderwood, a place where the local fey have struggled in vain against the growing perversion of demonic influence. Many of the forest's northern denizens have succumbed, transforming into half-fiends or worse, while to the south, the region of Shudderwood that still lies within Ustalav's borders hides its own terrors.

Storasta: Storasta stands fewer than 70 miles downriver from Nerosyan in Mendev, but the gleaming walls of the Diamond of the North stand in sharp contrast to the decaying heap of Storasta's crumbling ruins, its stones walls burst and blackened by abyssal fires and overgrown with putrescent moss and thorny tangles. This ruin, once known among Mendevian visitors for its gardens and druid groves, is now so infested with assassin vines, shambling mounds, and blight-wracked treants that even demons find the place inhospitable. Still, the city's moldering wharves are home to many hezrous, and the river bottom and weed-infested banks are rife with murderous grindylows in their service, menacing any who dare the river.

Worldwound: The dominant feature of lost Sarkoris is the Worldwound itself. Once a narrow cleft little more than a mile long amid a region once known as the Northmounds, the Worldwound has grown so vast that it has become its own hideous terrain. This enormous canyon has swallowed up the Northmounds entirely, and now measures more than a mile across at its widest point and winds for dozens of miles like a scar upon the landscape. The wound itself is filled with nightmare vistas of quivering mesas and undulant lunatic spires, its base filled with a gelid precipitate of congealed primal chaos-stuff, a burbling cauldron of faintly glowing, sickly rainbow hues. The air above the Worldwound is choked with pestilential fumes shot through with multicolored lightning. It is within the path of the Worldwound that the demonic horde is strongest, with all manner of Abyssal monstrosities to be found lurking within.

Undarin: The river city of Undarin, its many bridges bestriding the now-befouled Sarkora River, was once a center for herdsmen of western Sarkoris to bring their flocks and herds for trade and slaughter, and miners came from the central plateau of Sarkoris to trade goods there as well. The stockyards west of the city were put to a fouler but tragically similar purpose in the early days of the invasion, as hapless captives were humiliated in animal pens before being taken for processing by their demonic captors. This unlovely city is most notable for the holdfast on the eastern bluffs inhabited by the demon-witch Areelu Vorlesh, a counselor to the more militant demon-warlords.

DESKARI, LORD OF THE LOCUST HOST

Beyond the Inner Sea

Opportunities for adventure abound in the Inner Sea region, yet the countries detailed in this gazetteer are but a fraction of the nations that span Golarion. Sooner or later, an adventurer might yearn to travel beyond the horizon, to face the new challenges of a distant land. In addition to Avistan and Garund, six additional continents offer legends and mysteries of their own to challenge and reward the bravest and most enterprising explorers: Arcadia, Azlant, Casmaron, the Crown of the World, Tian Xia, and Sarusan. The following brief summary provides only the barest rundown of these strange and distant lands, listed according to their relative impact on the Inner Sea region.

A rough map of the world of Golarion appears on page 204—note that this map presents the world as best guessed by the scholars of the Inner Sea. Exact shapes of regions grow more distorted farther from the centralized Inner Sea region—in particular, the oceans between the continents are much wider than presented on this map. A fully accurate map of the realms beyond the Inner Sea region is a luxury that most scholars can only dream of, but the map provided helps place the approximate shapes and locations of the planet's continents.

Arcadia

Few vessels survive the insidious whirlpools and ravenous sea monsters that haunt shattered Azlant to reach the open waters of the western Arcadian Ocean and, finally, the lush continent for which it is named: Arcadia, a wooded paradise thousands of miles west of Avistan. The handful of explorers who have successfully ventured there and returned to the courts of the Inner Sea speak of vast natural resources; gorgeous, panoramic displays of unbridled nature; and fierce native inhabitants.

Ulfen longboats sworn to the Linnorm Kings first discovered Arcadia 5,000 years ago, when they established a community called Valenhall on the rocky northeastern shores. At first, the new land seemed unclaimed by civilized races—a place of limitless natural bounty with few protectors save the occasional monster or ferocious animal. In time, however, the solemn natives of Arcadia made themselves known, savaging the Ulfen settlement with hails of arrows and hurled tomahawks. A strong shieldwall and rampant disease accidentally imported from Avistan thinned the ranks of the hostile natives, whom the Ulfen called skraelings, creating an uneasy balance of power between Avistani settlers and native Arcadians that exists to this day.

Since ancient times, Valenhall has served as the resting place of Linnorm King monarchs, the final destination on their last great voyage upon the seas of Golarion. Survivors of an arduous, almost impossible journey from island to island along the northernmost seaways of the Arcadian Ocean, the settlers of Valenhall and their descendants believe themselves to have traversed spiritual pathways into another world, a true afterlife fit only for the most valorous warriors. Guarded by einheriar and valkyries and ministered to by a trio of reclusive norns, Valenhall certainly seems to have one boot firmly planted in the supernatural world, leaving it relatively free from interference from the skraelings or other Avistani settlements, such as Andoran's lumber and agricultural colony at Elesomare and Cheliax's voracious gold mining and slaving operations at Canorus and Anchor's End.

Yet there is much more to Arcadia than Valenhall and the northern fjords colonized by the Linnorm Kings. This continent may be the largest of all Golarion's land masses, and the number of mysteries and wonders that await discovery beyond its shores can only be guessed at.

Azlant

The bravest pirate captains of the Inner Sea abandon the coastlines of the civilized world and set off across the ocean in search of completely uncharted waters. A thousand miles west of the Arch of Aroden is a nightmare maze of jutting cliffs, swirling tors, and jagged channels that once formed the proud island-continent of Azlant, home to the first of the great human realms of prehistory. When the arrogant elite of Old Azlant revolted against the aboleth lords that had raised them from barbarism, the aquatic masterminds brought down death from the sky, triggering a cataclysm that sank most of Azlant below the waves and scarred the neighboring continents of Arcadia, Avistan, and Garund. The mysterious Mordant Spire sea elves still ply the channels between continental ruins in their skimmers, guarding the few remaining secrets of their ancient enemies—the most technically and magically advanced human culture in history.

Despite its turbulent seas and ferocious sea monsters, Azlant still draws numerous explorers. Expeditions to Azlant, as well as those to the Mwangi Expanse, make up a significant portion of the entries in the Pathfinder Chronicles. Rightfully or not, many humans trace their lineages to Azlant, believing it to be the first and mightiest of their great empires, and the periodic appearance of some priceless relic rescued from what remains of Azlanti culture serves to stoke the interest of anthropologists and tomb-robbers alike. And there are plenty of tombs.

Although most of Azlant now lies deep below the sea, the towering cliffs that remain are shot through with ancient passages and complexes still visible from the frothing sea. Crumbling towers and statues recalling the splendor of Old Azlant perch at odd angles atop the ocean ravines, beckoning the reckless to explore their time-lost chambers. Very few spots are accessible at sea level, so adventurers must usually access the ruins by magic or foolhardy ascents with ropes and pulleys. The moldering wreckage of countless ships dashed against sheer cliffs churns in the whirlpools and eddies of Azlant's channels, a grim reminder of the dangers at play in these ruins.

The Sun Temple Colony: At the height of Taldor's imperial power, colonists from the vassal-state of Andoran sailed west through the Arch of Aroden to expand the grasp of the empire. After battling relentless storms that sank more than a dozen ships, the surviving vessels put in at one of Azlant's few harbors approachable at sea level, but the crew beached their vessel on razor-sharp rocks, scuttling their chance of safe return to Avistan.

Instead, the explorers salvaged what they could from the wreckage and trekked 3 miles up a natural rise to the peak of a large tor. There they discovered an ancient temple presumably dedicated to a forgotten Azlanti sun god, along with several mostly intact stone structures. Thanking Abadar for their deliverance, some 200 men and women inhabited the temple and made their best effort to establish a colony here on the edge of the world. Throughout the passing centuries, travelers often reported strange lights in the temple, and for the first few hundred years scattered communications from the temple community reached the Taldan viceroy in Augustana. As time passed, however, the communications grew more sporadic and erratic, until the last message 300 years ago consisted only of gibberish about a "weeping gate" and an "inner eye in the minds of us all." Further investigation of the community was thwarted by revolution in Andoran and the savage storms of the Arcadian Ocean, but still the strange lights flicker from the Sun Temple Colony, and the mystery of what happened to its people remains unsolved.

Casmaron

East of the World's Edge Mountains lies the sprawling continent of Casmaron. Traders seeking to profit from the

exotic markets of the east venture along the Golden Path, an informal trade route leading from Qadira's capital in Katheer through the hostile central steppes and deserts of Casmaron to the heartland of Imperial Kelesh. From there, the route ventures through the storied Impossible Kingdoms of Vudra, land of 10,000 gods and a 100,000 miracles, a realm so fantastic and sublime that the stories told by those who claim to have traveled there must surely be lies. Both Kelesh and Vudra claim immense regions as their own, rivaling the height of Avistan's moribund empires of Taldor and Cheliax, but they are hardly the only powers in vaunted Casmaron.

In the distant north, among foreboding pine forests, the stalwart remnants of the stricken kingdom of Iobaria fight desperately against the barbarism that is engulfing the nation's collapsed colony states. The vast, landlocked Castrovin Sea stares from the center of Casmaron like an unwinking eye, lapping against the forlorn shores of Iobaria in the north, the forgotten cities of ancient kingdoms like Ninshabur and Kaskkari in the west, and mighty Kelesh in the south. Strange island nations like Iblydos grace the continent's coast, while the distant northeastern reaches touch the legendary land of Kaladay, a xenophobic realm of fabulous cities and arid plains inhabited by colonists from Tian Xia in ancient times but little visited by the folk of the Inner Sea. So remote is the land of Kaladay that only the most learned scholars of the Inner Sea are even aware that it exists.

Padishah Empire of Kelesh: The Padishah Empire of Kelesh sprawls across south-central Casmaron, along the Obari Ocean's vast Kardaji Bay. Kelesh flourished in the Age of Destiny, finally swelling into an empire in the early days of Taldor. Its unbroken line of emperors has remained dominant for millennia, drawing upon the potent *wish* magic of bound genies and the arcane might of the empire's elementalists and esoteric mathematicians. The influence of Kelesh spreads even into Avistan, where its puppet-state of Qadira keeps watch over the Inner Sea. A half-dozen loosely held satrapies extend between the heartland and Qadira, each with its own brusque character, obscure customs, and ancient legends. The satrapies further north feel the yoke of civilization more lightly, with horse nomads dominating the vast central steppes of the Windswept Wastes on the empire's frontier.

Keleshite exports, such as silks, philosophy, drugs, and bronzework, flow steadily into the markets of Garund and Avistan. Clerics and dervishes in service of the empire's patron deity, the sun goddess Sarenrae, spread into the Inner Sea in the early years of the Age of Enthronement, zealously carrying the message of the Dawnflower and touching off a series of struggles that cast much of Garund into political chaos. Nonetheless, the righteous message of truth and redemption took hold, and many pilgrims of Chelish, Taldan, Kellid, and Ulfen descent join their Keleshite brethren on journeys to holy shrines and temples in the Keleshite heartland.

Perhaps the most notable of these sites is the Everlight Oasis, a sanctuary the natives call Ourzid-Mah. Situated near the heart of the satrapy of Zelshabbar on the border of the imperial lands, the oasis attracts tens of thousands of adherents to the Dawnflower. The faithful come to praise the deeds and words of their patron deity, to commune with fellow members of the faith from distant lands, and to bathe in the rejuvenating waters that form the centerpiece of the swelling, largely nomadic community. Such traffic brings with it a great deal of trade and skullduggery, of course, and despite its healing properties and importance to one of the most stridently good faiths on the planet, Ourzid-Mah possesses a well-earned reputation as the very last place western pilgrims reach on their voyage before being robbed of their possessions, savagely beaten, or worse.

Windswept Wastes: The ethnic Keleshites inhabiting the central deserts and western steppes of the domain claimed by the Padishah Empire of Kelesh give only grudging respect to their distant overlords, clinging to ancient religious and cultural traditions born of the prehistoric cultures of north-central Casmaron. Horse nomads and settled tribes alike honor Sarenrae and the imperial gods of their southern cousins, but the tribal priests keep alive a legend from the days of Ninshabur, an ancient nation whose culture was destroyed by the Tarrasque early in the Age of Destiny. The legend speaks of a primeval human hero, Namzaruum ("the sword"), destined to return to Golarion in an era of uncertain prophecy to lead the heirs of his kingdom to triumph against their enemies. For centuries, agents of the padishah emperor have scoured the tribes for sign of this cultural hero, with strict orders to put him to the sword in the interest of greater Kelesh.

Iobaria: In ancient days, Ulfen explorers from Avistan journeyed north along the edge of the world, finally turning south long after leaving the northern shores of the Lake of Mists and Veils behind, until they reached the Castrovin Sea, where they spread out to try to tame a hostile land. In time, their settlements emerged as Iobaria, a powerful kingdom that spread its influence throughout Casmaron via the Castrovin's numerous waterways. In the second millennia of the Age of Enthronement, Iobaria blossomed into an empire whose colonies stretched into Avistan in the form of Issia (now Brevoy) and Mendev. A series of tenacious plagues toppled Iobaria from greatness, the most potent being the Choking Death of 2742 AR, nearly 2 millennia ago. Three-quarters of its people fell to the calamity, leaving the empire's great wooden palaces and forest cities almost completely abandoned. Vassal states rebelled without fear of Iobaria's devastated armies, only to collapse themselves without the meager institutional support of the heartland. The Choking Death never truly vanished from the pine forests of Iobaria. It and a host of other mysterious illnesses have, along with internecine strife, kept the local population near its nadir for centuries.

Today, barbarism is the rule in much of Iobaria. Especially in the outer territories, the northern woodsfolk avoid the moldering cities in favor of a rustic life. Most worship a staggering array of minor nature spirits, with druids serving semi-nomadic human communities as spiritual shepherds and protectors from the harsh elements. Some measure of past grandeur still wafts from the old coastal capital of Orlov, where a powerful prince dreams of empire with a military force insufficient to defend his city's meager fortifications.

The *Record of Truan Iolavai*, an ancient text detailing a fantastic cross-Casmaron journey from Oppara to the distant Kaladay province of Yen-Shuan, describes a particularly chilling monument in the heart of Iobaria's remote pine forests. The travelers came upon an edifice, called Hask-Ultharan by locals, that took the form of an enormous cairn composed of monumental stone blocks quarried from a distant and unknown land. Marked with the distinctive script of the ancient cyclopes who ruled much of northern Casmaron before the rise of Azlant, the blocks reached above the treeline, serving as a sort of directional marker for Iolavai's Iobarian guides, who refused to approach it. Ever the scholar, Iolavai advanced upon Hask-Ultharan in the company of his guards, eager to explore the yawning portal along its longest side, only to be dissuaded by the appearance of a howling mob of malformed giants storming from the towering pile. The greatest of these beings, the demon lord known as Kostchtchie, crushed more than a dozen of the expedition's strongest fighters before the humans fled to safer lands. Historians bitterly argue about the accuracy of many accounts in the *Record*, but numerous tales in the centuries since corroborate the essential facts of Iolavai's account.

Ninshabur: The eastern reaches of the Windswept Wastes give way to a desolate landscape of cracked mud and sickly plant life that signifies the outskirts of the Pit of Gormuz, one of the most unusual geographical features on the planet. The yawning chasm spans 20 miles from edge to edge, and seems to cut straight down into the very heart of Golarion. Those who brave the strange gales and savage inhabitants of the region to peer over the portal's side speak of a vague dull glow at the apparent bottom of

the pit, a dolorous vision that forever gnaws upon the souls of those who see it even at a glance.

Legend holds that the Pit of Gormuz was once the great city of Ninshabur, cast into the depths of the earth by Sarenrae herself in retribution for its alliance with the monstrous god Rovagug. The Rough Beast himself is said to dwell at the terminus of the seemingly bottomless pit, wounded still from his ancient battle and bound by terrible magics from blighting the world with his disastrous presence. His enormous spawn, legendary monsters in their own right, occasionally emerge from the Pit of Gormuz to terrify the people of Casmaron and beyond. The Tarrasque that destroyed Ninshabur and thundered into Avistan at the close of the Age of Destiny was but one of the dozen titanic monsters disgorged by the Pit of Gormuz in the last 5,000 years. Other Spawn include the great beetle Ulunat, whose mighty carapace still shrouds a portion of Osirion's capital; the enormous winged beast known as Volnagur; and Chemnosit, the so-called Monarch Worm feared throughout the Darklands.

Ninshabur was the first and greatest of the so-called originlands lining the southwest coasts of the Castrovin Sea and its river systems. This ancient land figures in many epic poems and fragmentary historical records dating to the middle centuries of the Age of Destiny. A warlike power of unrelenting aggression and prideful, blustering gods, Ninshabur's influence extended even as far as the Inner Sea, where its military phalanxes tangled with Ancient Osirion and the Azlanti survivor-states that ultimately became Taldor. Today, Ninshabur stands only as ruins, its massive fortress cities abandoned for millennia after a campaign of devastation by the Tarrasque. Dust and erosion clogs the complex canals that once irrigated the land and provided for Ninshabur's people, and the haunted spirits of terrified souls stalk the plains between a half-dozen monolithic cities. With its proximity to the Pit of Gormuz and millennia of fell legends to scare away explorers and would-be settlers alike, Ninshabur has all but disappeared into history.

The adventurers of the Pathfinder Society have not forgotten Ninshabur, of course, and no fewer than four volumes of the *Pathfinder Chronicles* contain accounts of exploits engaged on that nation's distant soil. The most famous of these involves a trap-laden temple complex called Tabsagal, the impregnable treasure-vault of Ninshabur's kings, situated at the center of a wide plaza of cracked stone accessed by four 6-mile boulevards lined with carved statues of crouching beasts (the shedu, the lammasu, the sphinx, and the gorgon). Those who manage to dispatch the plaza's indomitable guardians face a bewildering maze of darkened passages, ingenious traps, and immortal guardians like caryatid columns, stone golems, ceustodaemons, and mihstus. The renowned Pathfinder Durvin Gest claimed to have recovered several potent artifacts from a "Chamber of Heaven" within the temple structure, including the *Scepter of Ages*, the *Apollyon Ring*, and the treacherous *Lens of Galundari*.

Within the last 300 years, fanatical priests of Namzaruum reclaimed the city of Ezida, a crumbling stone ruin on the southern coast of the Castrovin Sea. Ezida's towering central ziggurat now serves as a temple for the religion's caliph, the supreme ecclesiastical authority of the priests who minister to the tribes of the Windswept Wastes. Prophets of Namzaruum ply the trade routes of central Casmaron, spreading word of their hero's imminent return.

Vudra: Most of what is known about Vudra by the inhabitants of the Inner Sea comes from that distant land's emissaries dwelling on Jalmeray. For nearly 2,000 years, these explorers from a distant land have brought their unusual customs, culture, and mental and physical regimens to the folk of the Inner Sea, spreading tales of their homeland so outlandish as to be deemed impossible by even the most credulous audience. According to Jalmeri accounts, Vudra is composed of more than a hundred mahajanapadas, or semi-independent kingdoms ruled by rajahs in service of the maharajah. The emperor-like maharajah descends from the legendary Khiben-Sald, a godlike hero who united the kingdoms in antiquity and who even spent a decade as an honored guest of the Garundi wizard-king Nex.

The god Irori, Master of Masters, is but one of thousands of Vudrani deities who form an immeasurably large pantheon of conflicting philosophies that have guided the people of Vudra through the centuries. How many centuries remains a question, as the clerics of the Vudrani homeland claim a heroic dynasty of champions dating back more than 50,000 years, long before humans arose on Azlant and (conveniently) long before any intelligent race save perhaps the aboleths began recording history. Claims such as these earn the Vudrani of the Inner Sea a reputation for exaggeration and embellishment that, thanks to the charisma and good cheer of the Vudrani folk, often comes off as a curious affectation or endearing personality quirk than a true character flaw.

Vudra is a massive peninsula extending from southeastern Casmaron, with a total area nearly as large as that of Avistan. Legendary adventuring sites in Vudra include the terraced tower of Hemachandra, Seat of the Golden Moon, said to boast a shrine to every Vudrani god (each with its own dedicated repository for priceless offerings); the jewel-laden, haunted shadow-palace of Chhaya, a jungle princess beheaded by Khiben-Sald in ancient days as she unified the mahajanapadas; and the forsaken desert Narhari, the territory of Trilochan, the three-eyed dragon thought to be the wisest and wiliest of Rovagug's children.

Crown of the World

A sprawling arctic desert called the Crown of the World squats upon Golarion's brow, grasping with icy mountain

claws the northern reaches of Avistan and Tian Xia. An unforgiving realm home to ice dragons, frost giants, remorhazes, wendigos, and worse, the Crown of the World nonetheless sees a great deal of traffic, as its frozen trails offer a reliable crossing between continents despite the considerable natural dangers. Most travelers stick to the well-worn Path of Aganhei, named for the Tian explorer who first charted it several thousand years ago. The treacherous route leads from Hongal in the northern reaches of Tian Xia through a winding series of ice ravines and open arctic wasteland before finally reaching Avistan. The Crown of the World, despite its inhospitability, hosts several indigenous peoples, from the hearty whalers and mountaineers known as the Erutaki Nations to the delicate but fierce elven Snowcaster tribes.

Encased deep in the ice at the very top of the planet, not far from the north pole, lie the ruins of an ancient civilization, its name and legends long lost to history. The ruins predate Thassilon, Azlant, and even the coming of the aboleths to Golarion, and their existence and origin remain among the world's most intriguing mysteries.

Garund

Although the top third of the continent of Garund is considered part of the Inner Sea region, the majority of the continent lies far south of what commonly appears on maps of Avistan and the Inner Sea. With very few established trade routes to the west or south, and with the majority of trade routes to the eastern continents passing through the Obari Ocean, exploration of southern Garund has been left primarily to groups like the Pathfinders and the Aspis Consortium.

The early volumes of the *Pathfinder Chronicles* contain numerous intriguing mentions of strange lands south of the Inner Sea. In particular, the fourth volume records Durvin Gest's journey around Garund aboard the commandeered pirate ship *The Silken Purse*. During this journey, Gest writes of jagged cliffs along the coastlines and a powerful matriarchal society with traditions dating back, perhaps, to the time of Old Azlant.

Explorers who followed in Gest's footsteps but focused more on the coastlines they traveled than the end goal of circumnavigating the continent speak of strange, hostile ports and of cities built into and among the trees, of towering ragged mounds akin to structures built by termites but on a scale that implies much larger hosts, of vast swamps from which terrifying roars and strange flashing lights emerged, and of the endless jungle of the Mwangi Expanse, which blankets the heart of Garund.

Yet not all of Garund is hostile wilderness. Numerous nations can be found along its coastline, all sharing a deep fear and respect for the Mwangi Expanse and all having their own particular idiosyncrasies and beliefs. Some of these nations, like Chauxen or Tirakawhan, are rather small, recent colonies established by Vudra or Kelesh, while others are much larger and older, primarily peopled by humans of Garundi descent. Dehrukani is an idyllic realm of azata-worshiping people who build incredible crystal towers with the aid of allied celestial artisans, while Nurvatchta is a strange society of beautiful people who, it is said, transform into hideous arachnid horrors at night. Yet perhaps the two greatest empires of southern Garund are the swampy deltas of Droon, a realm ruled by dinosaur-riding lizardfolk, and the powerful matriarchy of Holomog, the society of artisans and warriors encountered so long ago by Durvin Gest. Holomog sprawls along much of Garund's southeastern coast, and the notorious assault of one of its armies upon Geb ages ago, when the army was stolen by a renegade pirate, resulting in the loss of the army and the creation of the Field of Maidens, may have been but the first, for rumors hold that Holomog readies for war.

Sarusan

Golarion's smallest continent, Sarusan, lies in the trackless seas south of Tian Xia's Valashmai peninsula, surrounded by vexing currents and powerful storms. The strange land thus remains unknown to most modern cultures, half-recalled in oral traditions or hidden away in the lost literature of dead civilizations. What few records remain speak of a land out of phase with time, where immense mammals long extinct or completely unknown in the civilized world are said to thrive in vast deserts, fabulous jungles, and verdant plains. Many believe the black-skinned reed boat cultures of the Wandering Isles—a sprawling archipelago that appears different with each attempt to map it and forms an untrustworthy link between Sarusan and Tian Xia to the north—descend from the human inhabitants of Sarusan, but no modern expedition to this lost continent has ever successfully returned to tell the land's tenacious secrets.

Tian Xia

Known the world over as the Dragon Empires, the continent of Tian Xia is often regarded as the most exotic land beyond the Inner Sea by that region's natives, for it is indeed a magical realm of dragons, spirits, honor, and traditions that go back as far as any in the Inner Sea region. The ruler of the nation state of Quain, for example, possesses a 93-foot-long scroll showing his descent from the first Tian emperor, Mu Lung, some 11,000 years ago. Elsewhere on the continent, exiled Emperor Shigure of Minkai can supposedly trace his family line back 296 generations directly to the Minkan goddess Shizuru.

Tian Xia is a vast land, rivaling (some say exceeding) all other continents in size, yet large portions, particularly in the south, remain dangerous wilderness. Nevertheless, the people of Tian Xia have created an incredible society over the millennia, one with as many stories as Vudra has

gods. Over the past 7 millennia, the Tian-Shu have built hundreds of different nations and city-states, as well as three empires—each of which made it their own prerogative to rename the continent they ruled. The last empire to rule much of the continent did so for thousands of years—it was this nation of Lung Wa that gave the land its current name. Yet just as the Inner Sea was thrown into turmoil a century ago by the death of Aroden, the formation of the Eye of Abendego, and the opening of the Worldwound, so too did Tian Xia suffer a major change with the sudden and violent collapse of Imperial Lung Wa, which left the heartland of Tian Xia in a tangle of nation-states all squabbling for power, yet surrounded by several more powerful nations whose traditions have long remained apart from the overwhelming influence of Lung Wa.

Mainland Tian Xia is dominated by the imposing mountains known as the Wall of Heaven—a continental range that runs along much of the region's western coast from the lands of Hongal in the north all the way to Nagajor to the south. These mountains rarely lower to navigable passes, forcing trade with Tian Xia to focus at those points where the terrain allows or funneling trade through Hongal and over the Crown of the World. Perhaps the greatest of Tian Xia's western ports is the sprawling city of Goka, an urban center that rivals Katapesh in diversity and Absalom in size. Goka is a city for everyone, a "landing place" for countless traders and visitors and adventurers from the west. Control of Goka has passed from hand to hand among countless nations over the ages, but with the fall of Lung Wa, the settlement is entering a golden age as a Free City.

As one moves east, leaving the Wall of Heaven behind, the land slowly descends into a series of vast plateaus and badlands and into what was once Lung Wa, but which is now known as the Successor States. To the northeast, the mighty peninsula of Minkai arcs gracefully down from the north along the coast, while to the southeast lies the magical and mysterious realm of Xa Hoi. And beyond Xa Hoi lies the hideous naga empire of Nagajor and the trackless jungles of Valashmai.

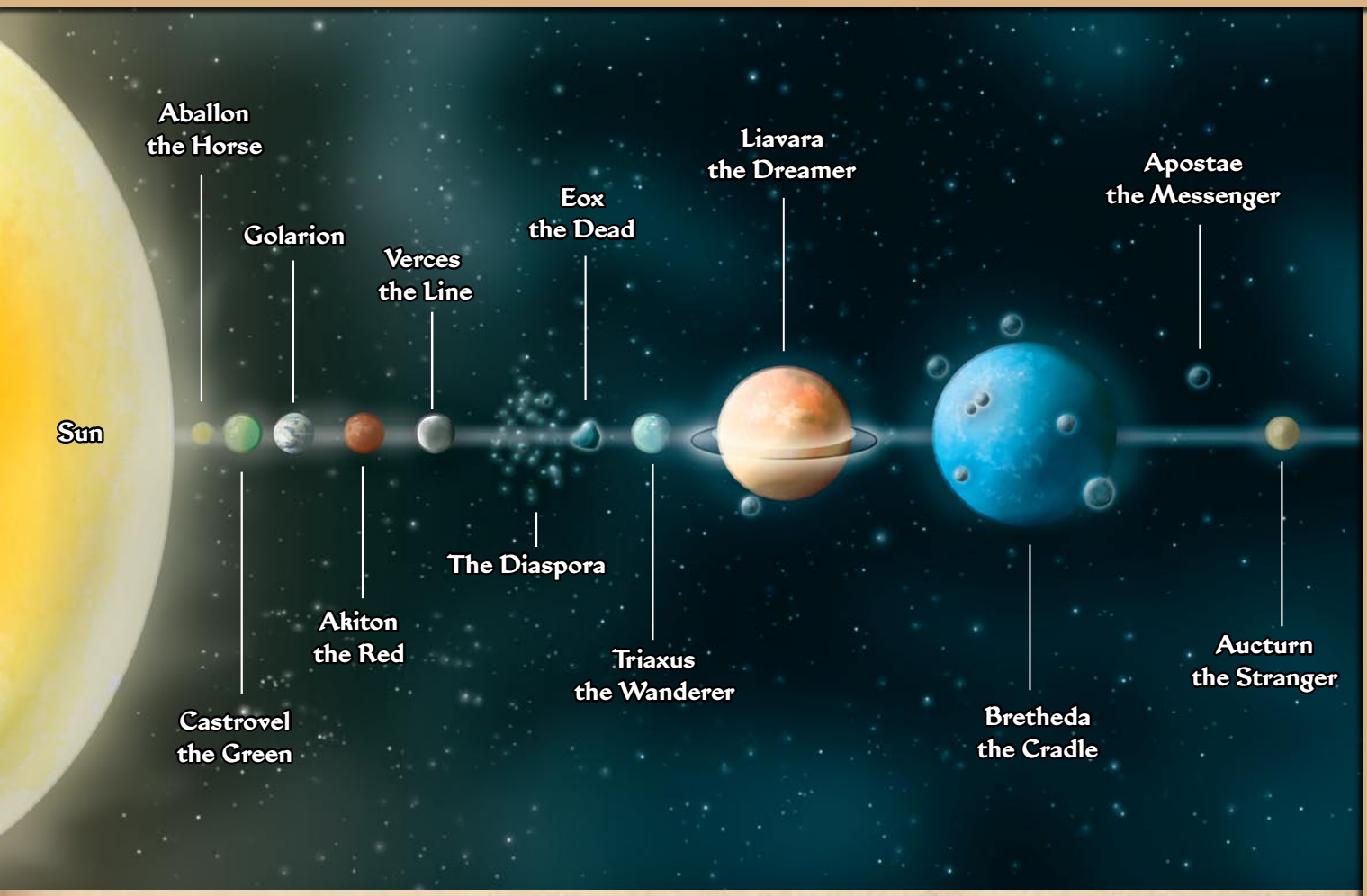
Minkai Empire: With the end of Lung Wa's domination of the empire, Minkai could be the most powerful nation on the continent, for its resources far exceed those of any single Successor State. Yet Minkai rule over the continent seems unlikely, for despite more than a millennium of relative peace, the mighty but faltering Minkai Empire stands on the brink of ruin. Emperor Shigure Higashiyama, third son of the previous emperor of Minkai, planned on spending life as a poet and mid-ranking governmental official. Yet upon his coronation 3 years ago, he found himself whisked away by the Higashiyama clan "for his own protection." In truth, none know what fate befell Emperor Shigure nor why the Higashiyama clan took him into hiding in the first place. Countless rumors and conspiracy theories are muttered behind closed doors, but none can deny that since the Emperor vacated the Jade Throne, things in Minkai have grown increasingly unstable. Already, dozens of smaller islands belonging to the empire have declared their independence from the Jade Throne. For now, the Higashiyama clan has installed a temporary ruler of Minkai to try to keep things from falling apart—the increasingly notorious Jade Regent. With each month that passes and with each further indignity the honorable land suffers, the closer Minkai comes to civil war.

Nagajor: A tropical realm of rivers and swamps with very little dry land, Nagajor is ruled by a dynasty of naga matriarchs who have reigned here the last several thousand years. A massive dormant volcano sits near the eastern core of Nagajor. The nation is populated primarily by strange, humanoid creatures with scaly skin and serpentine features who venerate the naga matriarchs almost as gods. The monks known as the Order of the Poisoned Fang base their fighting style, Ular Tangan, on the nagas and serve Nagajor as emissaries, spies, and assassins throughout Tian Xia.

Successor States: With the collapse of mighty Imperial Lung Wa just over a century ago, the face of Tian Xia changed forever. Provincial governors, military warlords, noble families, and wealthy merchants all moved quickly to slice up the empire for their own gain. As a result, hundreds of sovereignties rose from Lung Wa's ashes and swiftly erupted into war. In the century since the empire's collapse, consolidation, reconciliation, and conquest have thinned the number to 16 states. At any given time, open war of some manner exists between at least two of the states, although in general these conflicts continue to shrink in scope and ferocity.

Valashmai Jungle: A vast rainforest that dominates the southernmost quarter of Tian Xia, the Valashmai is by all accounts one of the most dangerous wildernesses on Golarion. Often pierced by jagged volcanic mountain ranges or slumping into trackless swamps and mysterious lakes, the Valashmai hides the monsters and secrets that are the stuff of legend in Tian Xia and beyond—yet for every brave and foolish adventurer who strikes it rich within the vast wilderness, a hundred are never heard from again.

Xa Hoi: Xa Hoi exerts considerable influence over southeast Tian Xia, despite its relatively small size. Like Minkai, Xa Hoi is one of the only mainland kingdoms to never fall to Imperial Lung Wa or its predecessors. Xa Hoi's Dragon King Pham Duc Quan can trace his unbroken royal pedigree back to the kingdom's founding nearly 3,000 years ago. Despite its independence and influence, Xa Hoi does little to provoke its neighbors, and instead maintains mostly positive relationships with nearly every other nation of Tian Xia. That said, the Dragon King is no fool, and like his fathers before him, he maintains an active and well-trained army made up of compulsory conscripts.



OTHER WORLDS

Golarion is but one world of the 11 that orbit the sun. To the vast majority of the planet's denizens, the other 10 worlds are little more than points of light in the sky, with the exception of the two closest planets—Castrovel (the Green Planet) and Akiton (the Red Planet), which are visible to the naked eye as distinctly colored stars. Travel to these planets from Golarion requires magic. Most are linked by a network of portals that allow instantaneous travel between them, but as these portals tend to be heavily guarded or lost in remote corners of the world, such interplanetary travel is rare and limited to a tiny handful of adventurers and explorers.

Aballon the Horse: Aballon's searing surface is dotted with strange ruins that seem almost mechanical in nature.

Castrovel the Green: This planet is covered with expansive jungles and trackless swamps and ruled by a violent race of matriarchal humanoids who have mastered strange forms of psychic magic.

Golarion: Possessing a single moon, Golarion is the core world of the system—the most heavily inhabited of the 11.

Akiton the Red: Akiton is a planet of immense red deserts, tortuous mountains, and rugged badlands. The denizens of Akiton are known primarily for their violence.

Verces the Line: Only the terminator line of tidally locked Verces can support "normal" life—the frozen and boiling extremes to either side are the lands of monsters.

The Diaspora: This is a belt of asteroids, many of which are large enough to be small planetoids of their own.

Eox the Dead: An ancient apocalypse saw the destruction of this once-thriving planet's atmosphere. Today, only the undead dwell upon this airless world.

Triaxus the Wanderer: Triaxus's orbit sends it through extremes of frozen winters and boiling summers.

Liavara the Dreamer: Several colorful rings surround this immense gas giant, as do a large handful of moons, some of which are inhabited.

Bretheda the Cradle: The upper atmosphere of this gas giant is inhabited by a mysterious race of aliens who have seeded the planet's dozens of moons, many of which have their own diverse environments and inhabitants.

Apostae the Messenger: Many believe that a strange portal on Apostae, which is barely large enough to be a planet, leads to worlds beyond this solar system.

Aucturn the Stranger: Little is known about this ominous planet apart from rumors connecting it to the Dark Tapestry, the empty places between the stars wherein true madness lies.

Before the Inner Sea

While dozens of empires and kingdoms thrive throughout the modern Inner Sea region, these nations were far from the first to rise to power. Numerous older empires blazed the trail for modern successes like Cheliax, Andoran, and Absalom. In some cases, little remains of these lost empires other than strange ruins or unbelievable legends, but in other cases, the modern world owes its very shape to what has come before.

Although in many cases these lost empires have been gone for tens of thousands of years or longer, magic was a larger part of these ancient societies than it is today, to the extent that the ancients, be they aboleth or serpentfolk or humanity, or some altogether different and mostly forgotten race, wove magic into the very structures of their stone cities. This preservative magic has kept these ancient ruins from crumbling over the years, protecting them from threats as subtle and minor as erosion to those as violent and destructive as earthquakes, volcanoes, and in some cases, even the devastation of Earthfall itself. As a result, the ruins of ancient empires like Ghol-Gan, Azlant, and Thassilon survive relatively intact today.

Primeval Empires

Although humanity is the dominant race on Golarion, such was not always the case. If their own history is to be believed, the aboleths were among the first creatures to ascend to intelligence there. Certainly, their influence was felt among the earliest Azlanti settlements, and their own submerged cities carry with them a staggering weight of ancient menace.

Prehuman nations and empires existed above the ocean's surface as well. Cyclopes ruled vast swaths of northern Casmaron, and ancient ruins that stand today in the Shackles, the southern Sodden Lands, and Mediogalti

indicate that the mysterious builders of the ruins of ancient Ghol-Gan were also of this race. Not much remains of the elven presence on Golarion in those pre-Azlant ages, but evidence suggests that the elves may have first settled certain areas of the world in those early days as well.

Perhaps the largest of these primeval empires, however, was the serpentfolk empire. Spread throughout the Darklands, these sadistic reptilian monsters ruled much of northern Garund as well as large areas of Azlant and Avistan, where they subjugated the "lesser" races they encountered. Imagery of serpentfolk using primitive, cave-dwelling humans as cattle and beasts of burden is not uncommon on the oldest of their subterranean ruins, and were it not for Azlant's rise to power and their many successful wars against the serpentfolk, the world today would have developed into a significantly different place.

Azlant

In the ancient days long before the Age of Darkness, alien aboleths enhanced primitive humans, drawing them from their caves and nomadic lifestyle and setting them on the path to civilization and high culture as part of a curious experiment. For thousands of years these humans flourished, eventually forming humanity's first great empire, Azlant, which stretched from coast to coast upon a vast island continent at the heart of the Arcadian Ocean. Azlant developed unparalleled art, philosophy, and science until its prideful leaders came to believe themselves superior to the aboleths who had raised them out of barbarism. In preemptive retaliation for their disloyalty, the aboleths looked to the stars, uniting in an unspeakable ritual that brought a shower of great stones tumbling from space. The resulting catastrophe shattered the island of Azlant, wiping out its people and creating a ruin-laden maze of crumbling sea canyons where once a mighty empire had stood. Elves from the Mordant Spire, still ply these waters in an attempt to protect the secrets of the distant past from the opportunistic explorers of the present.

Ruined Azlanti colonies, sometimes no more than a few buildings but occasionally significant sites with signs of hundreds of structures, exist along the borders of the Inner Sea. Among these remnants, those that have not gone on to become cities of either Andoran or Taldor tend to either hold little historical value or else remain undiscovered (and thus are laden with almost unimaginable treasures).

Expeditions to Azlant reveal tantalizing hints of that nation's ancient power and unique customs. That so many of their buildings survived not only Earthfall but also the ensuing 10,000 years of erosion and decay points to their skills in architecture and engineering as much as to their magical methods of preservation. Most Azlanti ruins bear a lingering aura of magic—sometimes the final remnants of this preservative magic serve to stave off the effects of time, yet in many cases this magic has at last begun to fail. Some conspiracy-minded theorists point to a possible link between this failing and the death of Aroden, the so-called "Last Azlanti." Whatever the cause, as erosion slowly regains a grip on these relics, scholars increasingly realize that now is the time to explore and discover Azlant's legacy, before these ancient ruins vanish forever.

Thassilon

At the height of Old Azlant, the wizened mystics of that continent-kingdom exiled a powerful wizard named Xin for his scandalous beliefs that cooperation with the lesser races could build a greater nation. The outcast arrived on the shores of Avistan with an army and a plan. He established the empire of Thassilon in the region that would one day become known as Varisia, and in so doing brought commerce and civilization to the simple folk he found living on Avistan as nomads—Varisians and Shoanti. As Thassilon's reach and influence continued to grow, Xin appointed seven of his most powerful wizardly allies as governors, splitting his empire into seven nations. Xin's governors, each focused on one of the seven schools of rune magic he helped define in accord with the seven Azlanti virtues of rule, became known as the runelords.

Yet Xin's optimism was sadly misplaced. The runelords wrested control of his empire from him, and for centuries their cruelty led Thassilon along the path of decadence. Each runelord championed one of Xin's virtues of rule, and in so doing transformed those virtues into the seven deadly sins of envy, gluttony, greed, lust, pride, sloth, and wrath. The runelords (wrathful Alaznist in Bakrakhan, envious Belimarius in Edasseril, greedy Karzoug in Shalast, slothful Krune in Haruka, lustful Sorshen in Eurythnia, prideful Xanderghul in Cyrusian, and gluttonous Zutha in Gastash) enslaved giants and created monuments to themselves that stand throughout northwestern Avistan to this day. In the end, Thassilon grew too decadent to sustain itself—by the time Earthfall devastated Golarion, Thassilon already had one foot in the proverbial grave. Yet though Thassilon died, legends state that its runelords did not—that these powerful wizards foresaw the coming devastation and fled to hidden fortresses guarded by powerful artifacts known as *runewells*, and that they linger today in stasis waiting for the *runewells* to activate and awaken them, unleashing the runelords upon an unsuspecting new age.

Out of the Darkness

Earthfall destroyed both Azlant and Thassilon and plunged the Inner Sea region into an Age of Darkness. It wasn't for a thousand years, until the start of the Age of Anguish, that civilization would begin to flourish once more. While some of these earliest civilizations, such as the Hold of Belkzen or Osirion, survive in one form or another today, many of these earlier nations have been lost as well. The greatest of these lost empires are summarized on the next page.

Ancient Osirion: Osirionologists refer to the millennia-long era in Osiriani history prior to Qadiri rule as Ancient Osirion. At its height, circa –3000 AR, Ancient Osirion was one of the largest human nations ever to grace the Inner Sea region; its reach extended into or encompassed all of what are today known as Geb, Katapesh, Nex, Thuvia, and Rahadoum. A succession of godkings ruled mighty Osirion, and under their pharaonic rule, the empire prospered. Ancient Osirion was built upon the backs of conquered nations and slaves who toiled to raise towering monuments dedicated to the glory of their living gods. Eventually, however, the rule of divine kings faltered—it took Osirion many centuries to recover from the age of barbarism that followed.

Jistka Imperium: The Jistka Imperium was the first nation to rise in the Inner Sea region during the Age of Anguish, circa –4120 AR. It controlled or influenced all of northwestern Garund and even some of southwestern Avistan. The rise of Osirion, however, coincided with the decline of Jistka, as many of Jistka's trading partners in the east opted for shorter trade routes with Osirion. Many of this empire's contributions to history were lost to conquest, assimilation by the Osirians, and the relentless desert sands.

Shory: Little is known as to what the Shory themselves called the magnificent machines that gave their legendary cities aerial buoyancy, but current research has settled upon the term "Aeromantic Infandibulum." These glass, adamantine, and mithral metropolises represent a godlike zenith of mechanical and arcane engineering scarcely understood today. Whether the legends that the first and greatest of their cities, Kho, was destroyed by the Tarrasque are true, little remains today of the Shory's flying cities but scattered ruins throughout central Garund. The Ruins of Kho in particular shudder quietly with the release of ancient and mysterious energies, confounding and cursing all who plunder there. Although the means to replicate Shory technology were lost long ago, none can ignore the horrible, tempting suggestion that research into the field of Aeromantic Infandibulum might yet bear fruit. An unassailable, sky-borne throne-palace that can outrun even the seasons of the world would make a living god of anyone who possessed it.

Many spend their whole lives seeking some intact example of Shory mage-craft, chasing after stories of hovering buildings glimpsed gliding through the Eye of Abendego, hanging silently above the thickest of jungles in the Mwangi Expanse, or sweeping across the blistering voids between the Zho Mountains. Among the paranoid of the Inner Sea, in fact, there are persistent rumors of flying towers, stone ziggurats, strange golden domes, glass spires, and less recognizable strongholds that appear and vanish from the sky more swiftly than clouds—it is possible, if not likely, that undying remnants of the Shory yet soar high above the world, cloaked from sight for some unknown purpose.

Tar Taargadth: Petty bickering and infighting ground to a halt the dwarven Quest for Sky, forcing the dwarven leaders to take drastic measures to unite their fractious citizens. In so doing, they created the Kingdom of Tar Taargadth. The kingdom became an empire when it broke the surface and the dwarven Sky Citadels were built, some of which yet exist. Tar Taargadth existed in some form for 6,500 years before collapsing—today, the region is known as the Five Kings Mountains. Dwarves still dominate this region, but they have never restored their homelands to the original glory of old Tar Taargadth.

Tekritanin League: Caught between Jistka and Ancient Osirion, this decentralized federation of semi-independent city-states served as a mixing point of the two cultures, even while it frequently engaged in wars and boundary disputes against them. They aided Ancient Osirion in the destruction of their western neighbors, the Jitska Imperium, only to be rewarded by Osirion by being conquered and transformed into the realm known today as Thuvia, circa –1400 AR.

Recent Ruins

Not all of the Inner Sea's lost empires faded into ruin in distant ages. With Aroden's death just over a century ago, two additional events contributed to the destruction of three recent nations. To the north, the opening of the Worldwound consumed the barbarian kingdom of Sarkoris, while to the south, the Eye of Abendego drowned both Lirgen and Yamasa.

Lirgen: Once hailed as nation of fortune, the Lirgen of today rots in the hurricane-lashed swamps of the Sodden Lands. Lirgen was ruled by a powerful caste of astrological philosophers, known as the Saoc Brethren. These scholars consulted the heavens in all things, from business deals to national laws. After the hurricane brought ruin to their nation, these philosophers took their lives in ritual suicide. Very few of the Saoc Brethren remain today, although rumor holds that some have attempted to reclaim their homelands with varying degrees of success.

Sarkoris: The brooding barbarian kingdom of Sarkoris is merely the latest failed state to tumble into the mass grave of Avistan's tumultuous cultural history. A savage, windswept land of painted warriors and weird witchery, Sarkoris was the first to fall under the influence of the pernicious Worldwound following Aroden's death.

Yamasa: Although primitive, Yamasa was once a proud and powerful nation, controlling much of the trade along western Garund. In the years following the formation of the Eye of Abendego, the kingdom was totally destroyed, with many of its people retreating to the interior or falling into foul practices of necromancy and cannibalism in the rain-drenched ruins of their former glory.

Lost Empires of Golarion

3

Religion

So it was that in the time before time, the Dawnflower met the Rough Beast in a battle that shook all existence. In the great monster's roars was the essence of nightmare, half-formed blasphemies that tore at flesh and soul, blacker than the spaces between stars. Yet the Dawnflower had seen those same stars formed, had herself shaped the light that held night and chaos to its time and place. She drew her burning blade, and with the ululation of the righteous, drove the Beast ever back, down below the foundations of the earth. And there she caged him...

Deities

Nothing in all of the human condition inspires greater passion or leads to greater conflict than religion. The practices of faith are particularly important when the gods play active roles in not just the grandest world-changing events but also the simplest day-to-day tasks of living. Those who dedicate their lives to serving the gods are the most obvious manifestations of divine power, but the power of the deities touches the lives of everyone living on Golarion.

The first section of this chapter looks at the 20 gods and goddesses whose faith has most widely spread throughout the Inner Sea—the region's core deities. Other gods generally have a relatively small number of worshipers, are only worshiped by a single race, or have very localized areas of control. These other gods are demigods (many of whom are also demon lords, archdevils, or the like)—immensely powerful creatures whose strength does not approach that of the true gods—though to a mortal, these distinctions are mostly academic.

The Core Deities

Golarion's prehistoric eras are the subject of myth and legend—no written documents exist from such ancient times. Some scholar-priests and past-scrying mages have managed to piece together some bits of information, but these visions and glimpses of the past tend to raise far more questions than they answer. And so one must turn to parable and the myths of the faithful to piece together what happened so long ago. Yet by cross-referencing these various legends with those divinatory glimpses of the past and strange whispers of ancient races, something of a clear picture can be constructed for the modern mind to grasp.

At the dawn of mortal life, the Rough Beast Rovagug was already ancient—a force of entropy and destruction responsible for the ruin and wrack of countless worlds. The other gods opposed Rovagug—among these ancient divinities were Abadar, Apsu, Asmodeus, Calistria, Dahak, Desna, Dou-Bral, Erastil, Gozreh, Pharasma, Sarenrae, and Torag, as well as numerous other gods from remote parts of the world. Even more gods died in these battles, though no known records exist of their names—certainly those deities who may have actively supported Rovagug are forever forgotten.

When Rovagug was finally defeated, Sarenrae chose Golarion as his tomb. She cut open the world and cast the defeated but not dead god into a prison realm hidden inside or behind the Material Plane that would come to be known as the Dead Vault, but had to rely upon one of her greatest enemies, Asmodeus, to seal the planar oubliette. The other deities played a role in the Rough Beast's defeat as well, although their contributions are less well known.

Once the Rough Beast was imprisoned, the surviving gods nursed their wounds and returned to their homes in the Great Beyond. During this time new gods emerged, such as Shelyn, sister of Dou-Bral. For unknown reasons they quarreled, and Dou-Bral went beyond to the spaces between the planes and was transformed by something outside of reality called Zon-Kuthon. The slain mortal Urgathoa fled Pharasma's Boneyard and returned to the world as a goddess and the first undead. And demonic Lamashtu ascended from the Abyss, a transformation made possible in part by her murder of a minor god.

Earthfall brought an age of strange godly births. Zon-Kuthon fulfilled the conditions of his banishment and reclaimed a twisted aspect of his old powers. Orcs emerged upon the surface world and battled humans, and the god Gorum made his first appearance during these wars (although which side he favored in those wars remains hotly contested).

Then came the Age of Enthronement. The Last Azlant Aroden became a living god when he raised the *Starstone* from the Inner Sea. The existing gods took no action to prevent this usurpation of their divine prerogative with mortal magic, and as a result, the following millennia recorded the ascension of Norgorber, Cayden Cailean, and Iomedae to godhood, also with the help of the *Starstone*. Irori became a god seemingly without any external help at all.

And finally, as the Age of Lost Omens began, the death of Aroden rocked the world in a physical and metaphysical sense. Even more so than the mortals, the gods themselves were stunned that one of their own might die for unknown reasons and completely unexpectedly. For ages they were guarded, and then reticent, and then the gods knew fear. Were they doomed to sudden and unpredictable destruction? With the loss of prophecy, none of them knew... except Pharasma, for death is her domain, but she has little to say on the subject.

Additional Domains

Some deities of Golarion grant domains beyond those detailed in the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*. For rules on how domains work, see page 40 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*.

Scalykind Domain

Deities: Apsu, Dahak, Ragadahn, Ydersius

Granted Powers: You are a true lord of reptiles, and your gaze can drive weak creatures into unconsciousness.

Core Deities

Deity	AL	Areas of Concern	Domains	Favored Weapon
Abadar	LN	cities, law, merchants, wealth	Earth, Law, Nobility, Protection, Travel	light crossbow
Asmodeus	LE	contracts, pride, slavery, tyranny	Evil, Fire, Law, Magic, Trickery	mace
Calistria	CN	lust, revenge, trickery	Chaos, Charm, Knowledge, Luck, Trickery	whip
Cayden Cailean	CG	ale, bravery, freedom, wine	Chaos, Charm, Good, Strength, Travel	rapier
Desna	CG	dreams, luck, stars, travelers	Chaos, Good, Liberation, Luck, Travel	starknife
Erastil	LG	family, farming, hunting, trade	Animal, Community, Good, Law, Plant	longbow
Gorum	CN	battle, strength, weapons	Chaos, Destruction, Glory, Strength, War	greatsword
Gozreh	N	nature, the sea, weather	Air, Animal, Plant, Water, Weather	trident
Iomedae	LG	honor, justice, rulership, valor	Glory, Good, Law, Sun, War	longsword
Irori	LN	history, knowledge, self-perfection	Healing, Knowledge, Law, Rune, Strength	unarmed strike
Lamashtu	CE	madness, monsters, nightmares	Chaos, Evil, Madness, Strength, Trickery	falchion
Nethys	N	magic	Destruction, Knowledge, Magic, Protection, Rune	quarterstaff
Norgorber	NE	greed, murder, poison, secrets	Charm, Death, Evil, Knowledge, Trickery	short sword
Pharasma	N	birth, death, fate, prophecy	Death, Healing, Knowledge, Repose, Water	dagger
Rovagug	CE	destruction, disaster, wrath	Chaos, Destruction, Evil, War, Weather	greataxe
Sarenrae	NG	healing, honesty, redemption, the sun	Fire, Glory, Good, Healing, Sun	scimitar
Shelyn	NG	art, beauty, love, music	Air, Charm, Good, Luck, Protection	glaive
Torag	LG	the forge, protection, strategy	Artifice, Earth, Good, Law, Protection	warhammer
Urgathoa	NE	disease, gluttony, undeath	Death, Evil, Magic, Strength, War	scythe
Zon-Kuthon	LE	darkness, envy, loss, pain	Darkness, Death, Destruction, Evil, Law	spiked chain

Venomous Stare (Sp): As a standard action, you can activate a gaze attack with a 30-foot range (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 300). This is an active gaze attack that can target a single creature within range. The target must make a Will save (DC = 10 + 1/2 your cleric level + your Wisdom modifier). Those that fail take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage + 1 point for every two cleric levels you possess and are fascinated until the beginning of your next turn. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Wisdom modifier. This is a mind-affecting effect.

Serpent Companion (Ex): At 4th level, you gain the service of an animal companion. Your effective druid level for this animal companion is equal to your cleric level –2. You may choose either a viper or a constrictor snake (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 54) as your companion.

Domain Spells: 1st—*magic fang*, 2nd—*animal trance*, 3rd—*greater magic fang*, 4th—*poison*, 5th—*animal growth**, 6th—*eyebite*, 7th—*creeping doom* (takes the form of Diminutive-sized reptiles), 8th—*animal shapes**, 9th—*shapechange*.

*Only reptiles.

Void Domain

Deities: Great Old Ones, Groetus

Granted Powers: You can call upon the cold darkness between the stars to gain flight, travel to other worlds, or summon monsters from beyond to do your bidding.

Guarded Mind (Ex): You gain a +2 insight bonus on saving throws against all mind-affecting effects.

Part the Veil (Su): At 8th level, you can lace spells you cast with the raw madness that waits in the outer darkness. Activating this ability is a swift action that you must use as you cast a spell that targets a single creature and that allows a Will saving throw to negate or reduce the spell's primary effect. If the target fails to resist the spell, the target is also confused for a number of rounds equal to the spell's level as visions of the void cause temporary insanity. The victim can attempt a new saving throw each round to end the effect—these additional saving throws apply only to the additional confusion effect and not to the original spell effect. Part the veil is a mind-affecting effect. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 1/2 your class level.

Domain Spells: 1st—*feather fall*, 2nd—*levitate*, 3rd—*fly*, 4th—*lesser planar binding*, 5th—*overland flight*, 6th—*planar binding*, 7th—*reverse gravity*, 8th—*greater planar binding*, 9th—*interplanetary teleport*.

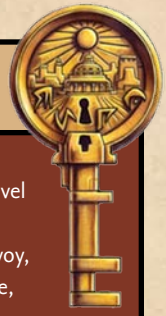
Reading the Entries

The following pages present the twenty core deities. Each entry begins with a short stat block, after the deity's name and most common title. The deity's areas of concern are listed next—these are creatures, acts, objects, and philosophies that the deity holds dear and its worshipers call holy. Next is listed the deity's alignment, the domains it grants, and its favored weapon. The centers of worship line lists Inner Sea regions where the deity is most commonly worshiped. A deity can be worshiped in other regions, but the faith is less common there. Finally, nationality lists the deity's most commonly associated ethnicity or race—this refers to how they're often depicted, and does not indicate any nature of exclusivity.

Abadar

MASTER OF THE FIRST VAULT

God of cities, law, merchants, and wealth



Alignment: LN
Domains: Earth, Law, Nobility, Protection, Travel
Favored Weapon: Light crossbow
Centers of Worship: Absalom, Andoran, Brevoy, Cheliax, Katapesh, Mana Wastes, Molthune, Nex, Osirion, Sargava, Taldor, Varisia
Nationality: Taldan

Abadar dwells in the perfect city of Axis, where he watches over the First Vault. Its vast halls hold a perfect copy of every object ever made, from the flawless longsword to the faultless law. Abadar is a patient, calculating, and far-seeing deity who wishes to bring civilization to the frontiers, order to the wilds, and wealth to all who support the progression of law. His primary worshipers are judges, merchants, lawyers, and aristocrats, all of whom benefit from established laws and commerce. Those who are poor or who have been wronged also worship him, hoping he helps to reverse their ill fortune, for most mortals seek wealth and the happiness it brings. He expects his followers to abide by the laws (although not foolish, contradictory, toothless, or purposeless laws) and work to promote order and peace. Abadar is shown as a clean, well-dressed man bearing the markings of riches and civilization. From his gold breastplate to his richly embroidered cloak, everything about him is refined and cultured, and he always carries an ornate gold key.

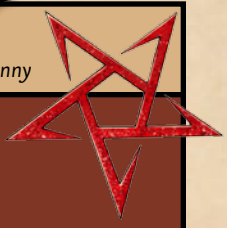
Clerics of Abadar are an organized lot, spending much of their time helping the community thrive and grow. They care less about morals and more about helping the culture itself to continue expanding. Despite this, their efforts generally trend toward the advancement of all, such as taming the wilderness, passing laws, and eliminating disease, as all of these promote the growth of civilization. Formal garb for religious ceremonies includes white silk cloth trimmed with gold thread, a belt or necklace of gold links bearing a golden key, and a half-cloak of a deep yellow or golden color. Temples are elaborate buildings with rich decorations and high, thick, stained-glass windows. These windows have small frames (to prevent access by thieves) and usually feature vivid yellow glass that casts a golden hue on everything within the church. Worshipers' holy book is Abadar's *Order of Numbers*.

Abadar makes his will known to the faithful via sudden windfalls of cash, while those who have angered him meet with the opposite fate—sudden mounting expenses leading to destitution.

Asmodeus

PRINCE OF DARKNESS

God of contracts, pride, slavery, and tyranny



Alignment: LE
Domains: Evil, Fire, Law, Magic, Trickery
Favored Weapon: Mace
Centers of Worship: Cheliax, Isger, Nidal
Nationality: Devil

Some say that when the world was forged, Asmodeus wrote the contract of creation, agreed to by the gods. His faithful believe that this contract holds the key to their lord's final victory, ushering in a new age under his infernal reign. Asmodeus believes in strict discipline, unwavering obedience, and the strong ruling the weak. He loves the art of negotiation and delights in deals that appear fair but actually give one party a distinct advantage. The Prince of Darkness expects and appreciates flattery, although he recognizes it for what it is. Frequently shown as a red-skinned human with black horns, hooves, and a pale aura of flames, Asmodeus often appears as a foil in art depicting good deities. In his temples, such roles are reversed, with the Prince of Darkness standing tall over the other deities as they bow before him.

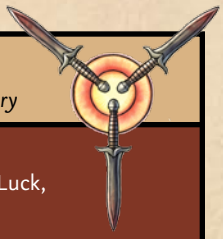
Public temples dedicated to Asmodeus thrive in Cheliax, although secret shrines are scattered across Golarion. Asmodeus's impeccably clean and orderly clerics dress mostly in dark tones, usually black with red accents; many ceremonies use horned masks or helms. His faithful abound among slavers, bureaucrats, tyrants, and even some silver-tongued nobles. Temples built to him look and feel distinctly diabolical, but many are actually temples of other gods that were abandoned or purchased, and then redecorated to suit their new master and rededicated with rituals designed to blaspheme what was once practiced there. His doctrine is recorded in the *Asmodean Disciplines*, although that work is greatly simplified and relies on numerous appendices and supplementary volumes.

Asmodeus is also the most powerful of Hell's archdevils, and the only one of that realm's rulers to rightfully claim the title of deity. The eight other archdevils have long sought Asmodeus's throne, but to date, none of them have been able to displace the Prince of Darkness from his position of power. Of all the evil gods, the other deities find Asmodeus the easiest to bargain and deal with. The most legendary tales tell of Rovagug's imprisonment—after Sarenrae cast the Rough Beast into the Pit of Gormuz, it was Asmodeus who locked Rovagug away.

Calistria

THE SAVORED STING

Goddess of revenge, lust, and trickery



Alignment: CN
Domains: Chaos, Charm, Knowledge, Luck, Trickery
Favored Weapon: Whip
Centers of Worship: Absalom, Galt, Kyonin, Nex, River Kingdoms, The Shackles, Taldor, Varisia
Nationality: Elf

Although the elves worship a great many deities, they hold none so highly as Calistria. The Savored Sting speaks to the mercurial, detached nature that makes elves elves. Some favor her as a trickster goddess, while others appreciate her lustful, audacious spirit. Ever scheming and planning her next conquest, Calistria is always maneuvering to attain a more advantageous position. Spies, prostitutes, and thrill-seekers are often followers of Calistria. Iconography of the faith depicts her as the ideal of elven beauty, dressed in revealing gowns and having long, graceful ears, slender limbs, and a suggestive smile playing across her lips. Giant wasps, her favored creatures, commonly appear beside her; unlike bees, wasps can sting again and again without dying—which represents Calistria's vindictiveness.

Temples to Calistria often host a lively community of sacred prostitutes, each with his or her own contacts in the community. The resulting hotbed of gossip, double-dealing, and opportunities for revenge assure the cult's growing popularity. In elven lands, her temples are more like thieves' guilds, catering to suspicious lovers seeking evidence and wealthy folk wishing to escalate feuds, and only secondarily serving as a place for carnal release. Formal clothing is very scant, typically yellow silk that covers little and conceals even less, often augmented with henna dyes on the palms of the hands and in narrow bands on the arms. Her holy text is *The Book of Joy*, a guide to many passions.

Calistria's promiscuity is well documented in many religious texts (including her own), but often these accounts seem to be at odds, indicating that some of her supposed trysts may be little more than wishful thinking on the parts of other gods and goddesses. Some tales preach that Cayden Cailean got drunk and took the Test of the *Starstone* after Calistria rebuffed his advances, claiming that no mortal could enjoy her charms and survive.

Calistria shows her favor by granting sudden runs of luck in worshipers' attempts to find companionship, while those who displease her often find themselves plagued by wasps with an unerring ability to sting in sensitive places.

Cayden Cailean

THE DRUNKEN HERO

God of bravery, ale, freedom, and wine

Alignment: CG
Domains: Chaos, Charm, Good, Strength, Travel
Favored Weapon: Rapier
Centers of Worship: Absalom, Andoran, Galt, River Kingdoms, The Shackles, Taldor, Varisia
Nationality: Taldan

The legends say that Cayden Cailean never meant to become a god. As a hired sword working out of Absalom, Cayden was renowned for taking on any job, so long as the cause was just and the coin was plentiful. One night, in an intoxicated stupor, a fellow drunk dared him to take on the Test of the *Starstone*. He accepted, and somehow, 3 days later, Cayden Cailean emerged from the *Starstone*'s sacred cathedral as a living god. Amazed that he passed the tests and unable to remember how he did it, he continued in his godly life much as he did when a mortal—fighting for just causes, enjoying various alcohols, and doing only what he wanted to do. This simple philosophy appeals to many mortals both high and low, and adventurers, philanthropists, revelers, and freedom fighters all claim him as their patron god. In art, Cayden Cailean appears as he did in life, as a bronze-skinned man carrying a tankard of ale in one hand. Some depictions of the Drunken Hero display broken shackles about his wrists, representing Cayden's escape from the concerns of mortal life.

Members of Cayden's faith make excellent guides and explorers, quick to smile at danger and always willing to have fun even in the direst of circumstances. His festive temples resemble common ale halls and attract members of all social classes. Formal raiment is a simple brown tunic or robe with a wine-red stole bearing his ale-mug symbol (adventurer-priests of the faith sometimes carry a magical stole that doubles as a rope). He has few buildings that function only as temples; most are actual alehouses bearing a shrine to him above the bar. His simple holy text is the *Placard of Wisdom*, condensing his divine philosophy into a few short phrases suitable for hanging on the wall.

The faithful of Cayden Cailean often carry tankards with them for luck, or pause before a particularly dangerous or stressful task to pour a splash of ale out upon the ground. He often shows his approval through the discovery of a fresh bottle of wine, but in cases where a mortal has instead drawn his ire, such found bottles invariably taste of vinegar or raw sewage.

Desna

SONG OF THE SPHERES

Goddess of dreams, luck, stars, and travelers

Alignment: CG
Domains: Chaos, Good, Liberation, Luck, Travel
Favored Weapon: Starknife
Centers of Worship: Kyonin, Lands of the Linnorm Kings, Nidal, Numeria, River Kingdoms, Ustalav, Varisia
Nationality: Varisian

While the other gods created the world, legend holds that Desna was busy placing stars in the heavens above, content to allow the other deities to create a world full of wonders for her and her faithful to explore. Since that day, all those who look up to the stars find themselves wandering in the endless mysteries of the sky. Trailblazers, scouts, adventurers, and sailors praise her name, as do caravaneers and those who travel for business, and her luck makes her a favorite of gamblers and thieves. Desna often appears as a comely elven woman, clad in billowing gowns with brightly colored butterfly wings on her back. Delicate clouds of butterflies frequently accompany her image.

Wanderers at heart, the faithful of Desna travel the world in search of new experiences, while always trying to live life to its fullest. Their temples are light, open affairs, with a significant number of astrological charts to help track the stars and mark important celestial events. Formal attire for most of the priesthood is a flowing white robe with black trim and a matching silken cap, although ranking members of the church add more decorative elements. Her temples also double as celestial observatories or at least have one room partially open to the sky, and in rural areas they often have services for travelers. Her holy text is called *The Eight Scrolls*.

Desna is one of Golarion's oldest deities, and she has changed little since the dawn of civilization. Her worship has always been strongest in the regions known today as Varisia and Ustalav, and despite the fact that she herself does not generally appear as a Varisian, she seems to identify most strongly with these folk. Desna often shows her favor through the manifestation of butterflies, particularly bright blue swallowtails. Her priests often make it a point to master the use of her favored weapon, a throwing blade known as a starknife—the weapon has become quite popular among others as well. She keeps several palaces throughout the Great Beyond, including one called Cynosure, visible in the northern night sky as the star around which all other stars dance.

Erastil

OLD DEADEYE

God of family, farming, hunting, and trade

Alignment: LG
Domains: Animal, Community, Good, Law, Plant
Favored Weapon: Longbow
Centers of Worship: Andoran, Cheliax, Galt, Isger, Lands of the Linnorm Kings, Mana Wastes, Molthune, Nirmathas, River Kingdoms, Varisia
Nationality: Ulfen

Worship of Erastil dates back to before the Age of Darkness, when early man began to domesticate and dominate his natural surroundings. Pastoral legends claim that Old Deadeye crafted the first bow as a gift to mortals so they might learn to hunt and survive in the dangerous world. Many—if not most—of his worshipers never set foot in a city, choosing instead to live simple lives in rustic villages, lonely shacks, or quiet towns on the border of untamed land. Erastil's followers often mount above their fireplace a carven wooden placard depicting their god's image. He appears alternately as an old human trapper with bow in hand or as a tall humanoid with the head of an elk. These images often depict Erastil fighting off wild animals and other beasts.

Erastil's faithful are found in most small villages and towns, administering to the people less through sermons and more by deed. His clerics are often called upon to help build homes, birth children, oversee trade, and bless crops. Shrines to Erastil are almost always simple wooden buildings that serve rural communities as gathering places. Even in large cities where his faith is overshadowed by more progressive religions, his temples are usually just large houses converted for church use, offering visitors a place to pray and sleep. Given his focus on the simpler things in life, formal raiment is practical—usually a leather or fur shoulder-cape, sometimes branded with his symbol or affixed with a wooden badge bearing his mark. His book, *Parables of Erastil*, gives homilies on strengthening family bonds, almanac-like advice on planting, and hunting lore.

Erastil manifests his approval through bountiful hunts or harvests. He also works through the actions of all manner of hoofed mammals, particularly caribou, deer, elk, and moose. He indicates his disfavor through omens such as broken arrows and failed crops.

While Erastil's faith is traditionally common in rural areas in the northern reaches of Avistan, it has become increasingly entangled with civilization. Conflicts over jurisdiction and representation with the church of Abadar seem, unfortunately, to be on the rise as a result.

Gorum

OUR LORD IN IRON

God of battle, strength, and weapons

Alignment: CN
Domains: Chaos, Destruction, Glory, Strength, War
Favored Weapon: Greatsword
Centers of Worship: Brevoy, Lastwall, Lands of the Linnorm Kings, Nirmathas, Numeria, Realm of the Mammoth Lords, River Kingdoms
Nationality: Kellid

Gorum's clerics say that the Lord in Iron was forged in the first great battle between orcs and humans. When the dust from the conflict finally settled, all that was left was one suit of iron armor. From that day forward, dying warriors and victorious knights sometimes swear they see Gorum delivering their deathblow or charging alongside them. Warriors from across Avistan and beyond call out to Gorum to strengthen their blades and aid them in upcoming battles. This sometimes leads to both sides of a conflict carrying the standard of Gorum, but the Lord in Iron favors the battle itself more than either side. The Lord in Iron commonly appears as a suit of terrible, spiked plate mail possessing a pair of fiery red eyes, with no flesh visible. His followers believe that when there are no more battles to fight, Gorum will collapse and rust away, having lost all will to continue. His faith is strongest among warrior cultures and "barbaric" folk.

His priests wear functional heavy armor. Followers claim that the spirit of Gorum lives in all iron, be it armor or a weapon, and they take great care to polish and maintain the artifacts of war. His temples are more akin to fortresses than places of worship, made to withstand any assault and stockpiled with armor, weapons, and preserved rations. He has no sacred text, but a collection of seven heroic poems called the *Gorumskagat* explains the church's creed.

Traditionally, Gorum (and by extension, his priests and followers) has little interest in the affairs of other gods. If they oppose him directly, he'll fight them—otherwise, he considers their affairs and politics wastes of time. Gorum is a headstrong and impatient deity, prone to impulsive and emotional outbursts. His first reaction to an unexpected situation is violence, and when he sees something he likes, he takes it. His priests often emulate these traits, and as a result, there are more evil followers of Gorum than good.

Gorum shows his favor through iron armor or weapons that shed blood when touched. His anger most often manifests in sudden patches of rust, often enough to completely ruin an item.

Gozreh

THE WIND AND THE WAVES

God of nature, the sea, and weather

Alignment: N
Domains: Air, Animal, Plant, Water, Weather
Favored Weapon: Trident
Centers of Worship: Mwangi Expanse, Sargava, The Shackles, Sodden Lands, Thuvia, Varisia
Nationality: Mwangi

Sailors claim that Gozreh dwells at the horizon, where the sea meets the sky. Born of the ocean's fury and the wind's wrath, Gozreh is a fickle deity. Those who ply the waters or rely upon the rains know this better than most, and are sure to placate Gozreh and honor him when the winds and waves are favorable. Gozreh has two aspects, equally depicted in art and sculpture. When at sea, or over water, Gozreh is a woman, with wild, flowing green hair whose body transforms into endless waves. In the sky and over land, Gozreh appears as an aged man with a long white beard, emerging from a mighty storm cloud. Temples in port cities often venerate both images.

Male priests are expected to grow long beards, and female priests must keep long hair; both weave dried seaweed, strands of white cloth, and other decorative items into their hair. Formal garb is long, flowing robes of sea-green, storm-gray, or sky blue, offset with coral and pearl jewelry. Gozreh's temples always open to the sky above and often contain some sort of pool or open water at their heart. Travelers preparing for a long ocean journey frequently seek the counsel of her clerics, who also bestow an annual blessing upon farmers before the spring planting. Gozreh's *Hymns to the Wind and the Waves* is a collection of prayers and rules for personal behavior and respect for the natural world.

The majority of druids follow various philosophies, the most predominant of which is the Green Faith (see page 236), yet some druids do turn to deities for guidance and inspiration. Of these druids, Gozreh is easily the most common choice.

Signs of Gozreh's favor include a sudden but gentle, warm breeze that carries a strong scent of flowers, the unexplained sound of waves crashing on a distant beach, and dreams of a specific, recognizable animal (such as a white wolf, a frilled lizard with glowing blue eyes, or a ghostly raven). Signs of her displeasure include being watched and shrieked at by wild birds or beasts, sudden rainstorms localized over a specific building or individual, or an unending taste of blood in the mouth.

Iomedae

THE INHERITOR

Goddess of honor, justice, rulership, and valor

Alignment: LG
Domains: Glory, Good, Law, Sun, War
Favored Weapon: Longsword
Centers of Worship: Absalom, Andoran, Cheliax, Galt, Lastwall, Mendev, Molthune, Nirmathas, Sargava
Nationality: Chelaxian

As a mortal, Iomedae rose to prominence in the era of the Shining Crusade, when she led the Knights of Ozem in a series of victories over the Whispering Tyrant. Success in the Test of the *Starstone* a short time later granted the valiant swordswoman a spark of divinity and the attention of Aroden, who took her on as his herald. Today, Iomedae's church has absorbed most of Aroden's remaining followers and devotes a great deal of focus to the Mendevian Crusades against the horror of the Worldwound. Followers of Iomedae have a strong sense of justice and fairness and an even stronger dedication to swordcraft, statesmanship, and bringing civilization to "savage" people. Her clerics have a reputation for trustworthiness that serves them well in political affairs. Iomedae appears as a fierce Chelaxian mistress of the sword, complete with full battle armor, heraldic markings, and resplendent shield.

Formal raiment is a white cassock with gold or yellow trim and a matching mitre; most followers prefer these colors and wear them in their day-to-day garments. Pious adventurers usually wear a narrow chasuble in the goddess' colors. Her temples are bright, whitewashed buildings that double as courts and living space for holy knights. Her holy text is *The Acts of Iomedae* (usually just called *The Acts*), a recounting of 11 personal miracles performed in ancient times by Iomedae throughout Avistan and Garund as demonstrations of the power of Aroden. Having absorbed most of her dead patron's followers, she informally enforces his teachings as well, although she is more forward-looking in her goals and doesn't let herself be constrained by the events of history. Likewise, her followers use converted churches of Aroden as well as her own unique temples.

Iomedae most commonly shows favor in the form of mundane objects reshaping into sword-like forms, mysterious white or golden lights on a person or object, or a compass-like pull on a longsword or other long metal weapon. She shows her displeasure by flickering lights, damaging weapons against inferior materials, and causing gold or silver items to become dull and heavy.

Irori

MASTER OF MASTERS

God of history, knowledge, and self-perfection

Alignment: LN
Domains: Healing, Knowledge, Law, Rune, Strength
Favored Weapon: Unarmed strike
Centers of Worship: Absalom, Jalmeray, Katapesh, Mana Wastes, Nex, Osirion, Qadira
Nationality: Vudrani

The followers of Irori claim that he was once a mortal who achieved absolute physical and mental perfection, and thus attained divinity. While many Avistani of the Inner Sea are wary of his strict adherents, the disciplined regimen of the Master of Masters is gaining popularity among those who seek order in these troubled times. There is a minor rivalry between his faith and those of Cayden Cailean, Iomedae, and Norgorber, for unlike them he became a god without the help of a magical artifact. Irori is very rarely depicted in art because his faithful believe that any icon of him cannot hope to live up to his perfect image. Instead, they describe him as a flawless Vudrani man, with no hair save a long braid, simple robes, and wooden sandals.

Irori's priests have no formal garb other than a long rope of braided hair tied in a loop and worn about the neck like a necklace. Temples are usually sprawling complexes featuring rooms for prayer, sleep, and exercise, where his faithful study and train night and day in an endless quest to achieve perfection and purify their *ki*, or life force. Those who rise to the rank of master are said to go to Irori's side when they die to serve him forever, while those who fail are reincarnated to begin the journey anew. The temples are not generally open to the public. His holy text is *Unbinding the Fetters*, a lengthy tome describing physical exercises, meditation, diet, and other methods to transcend the limitations of the mortal form.

Many of Irori's followers are monks, men and women who have dedicated their lifestyles to simplicity and purity in order to perfect themselves. He is also worshiped by scholars, sages, and those who seek to impose order on the fundamental chaos of magic—his religion sometimes clashes against the teachings of Nethys as a result. Irori respects all other deities, and teaches similar tolerance to his followers; he dislikes those who tear down or corrupt the accomplishments of others, and has an ongoing feud with Asmodeus as a result. He shows his displeasure in the form of mysterious and sudden cramps, fatigue, or sudden setbacks in the form of unexpected illness or madness.

Lamashtu

MOTHER OF MONSTERS

Goddess of madness, monsters, and nightmares

Alignment: CE
Domains: Chaos, Evil, Madness, Strength, Trickery
Favored Weapon: Falchion
Centers of Worship: Belkzen, Irrisen, Katapesh, Nex, Osirion, River Kingdoms, Varisia, Worldwound
Nationality: Demon

Gnolls claim that when Lamashtu first saw a hyena, she took it as her consort and thus the first gnoll was born. A thousand such stories abound about all manner of creatures, each citing the Mother of Monsters as the beast's progenitor. Lamashtu's worshipers seek out deformity both in themselves and others. Scarring rituals and mutilation are common among the faithful. Although typically venerated by monstrous races, such as gnolls, goblins, and medusas, some human cults practice her dark litanies in secret, promoting tainted births and destroying works of beauty. Some use magic to become more hideous or beastlike in appearance, while her monstrous followers do the opposite to spy on city dwellers. Lamashtu's crude depictions usually paint her as a jackal-headed woman, with long feathered wings, taloned feet, and a great swollen belly. Such images frequently include a multitude of monsters gathering to her call, with the favored rising above the rest.

Ritual garb includes a jackal mask made of leather or precious metal, a cloak of black feathers, and a pair of swords or knives decorated to resemble the Demon Queen's own weapons. Places of worship are often as simple as a flat rock but might include a ring of stones, pillars, trees, or wooden blocks; some might have a deep hole in the ground or access to some sort of chasm representing an entrance to the goddess's underworld realm. Her holy "text" is the *Skull of Mashag*, a magical skull that recites the goddess' doctrine.

Lamashtu is one of countless demon lords—quite possibly the most powerful among them. One of her monikers reflects this level of power—the Demon Queen. Yet Lamashtu does not seek to rule the Abyss or bend the other demon lords to her will. She maintains wars with some (such as her archnemesis Pazuzu) and is rumored to be the lover of others (decadent Socothbenoth often brags of the children he has sired with her), yet her true interests lie beyond the petty squabbles of the demon host.

Lamashtu's favor appears as violent dreams, sudden deformities, or unexplained pregnancies resulting in the painful (often fatal) birth of a deformed child. She shows her disfavor in the form of painful welts or nightmares.

Nethys

THE ALL-SEEING EYE

God of magic

Alignment: N
Domains: Destruction, Knowledge, Magic, Protection, Rune
Favored Weapon: Quarterstaff
Centers of Worship: Absalom, Geb, Katapesh, Kyonin, Nex, Numeria, Osirion, Thuvia
Nationality: Garundi

Ancient Osirian texts mention a powerful God-King named Nethys, whose mighty sorceries allowed him to see all that transpired, even across the planes of the Great Beyond. The knowledge he gained through these visions fueled his divinity, but shattered his psyche as well. Ever since, Nethys has been of two minds—one set upon destroying the world and another pledged to protect it. The church of Nethys tries to balance the god's two aspects, but individual temples might lean one way or the other. His followers are those who desire magical knowledge or power, arcane or divine, regardless of how they want to use it—whether to destroy, invent, or protect. Nethys is often shown with both his aspects in action. One side of him is burned and broken, unleashing terrible magic upon the world, while the other half is calm and serene, using magic to heal the sick and protect the innocent.

Formal ceremonies in the church require an elaborate robe, skullcap, mozzetta, and hood, all in similar colors (such as red, maroon, and burgundy), the color range chosen depending on the temple. Depending on its focus, a particular temple might look like a fortress, sanctuary, wizard's tower, or even a small palace, but all are staffed by knowledgeable people unfazed by loud noises and strange appearances. His bible is *The Book of Magic*, a comprehensive tome that discusses guidelines for channeling magic and the moral ramifications of its use and misuse (often taking alternative positions in the space of a few paragraphs); its words are always written on the temple's interior walls, but most priests also carry it as a book or scroll bundle.

It is said that the manifestation of zones of unpredictable magic are the results of Nethys passing close to the Material Plane, while the manifestation of zones of "empty magic" (areas where magic simply doesn't function) are indications of his anger at a region. Nethys is not known for showing favor or wrath to his followers or enemies, a fact in which many of his worshipers take pride. They are quick to point out to other faiths that their god does not patronize or coddle them with frustrating dreams or bizarre omens—traits that generally do not endear the faithful to members of other churches.

Norgorber

THE REAPER OF REPUTATION

God of greed, murder, secrets, and poison

Alignment: NE
Domains: Charm, Death, Evil, Knowledge, Trickery
Favored Weapon: Short sword
Centers of Worship: Absalom, Galt, Nex, Osirion, River Kingdoms, The Shackles, Taldor, Varisia
Nationality: Taldan

Little is known of Norgorber's life in Absalom before he ascended to godhood through the Test of the *Starstone*. Members of his debased faith go to great lengths to keep his life a secret, using murder if necessary to obscure Norgorber's origins. Some believe that if the Reaper of Reputation's true nature were discovered, he would be undone. Of the known Ascended gods, he is the only evil one. Norgorber's cult splits itself into four groups, with each focusing on one of his aspects and ignoring the others. They often wear masks both as a symbol of this devotion and to keep their identities a secret (even in Absalom, where their faith is marginally allowed). Some worshipers even carry additional masks to portray different emotions or signals, holding them in front of a simplified mask they only remove in private. Despite the division in the faith, Norgorber's followers still work together in some regards, taking careful actions meant to shape the future, all according to some secret plan. Those who call him the Reaper of Reputation venerate him primarily as the god of secrets and are typically spies or politicians. Thieves' guilds often venerate him as the Gray Master, and look to his skills as a thief more than anything else. Many alchemists, herbalists, and assassins know him as Blackfingers and see his work in every poisoned meal and venomous beast. Yet his most notorious, and most dangerous, cultists are the madmen, murderers, and maniacs. These cultists know him as Father Skinsaw, and believe that with every murder, the future is sculpted according to their dark god's unknowable plan.

Ceremonial colors are black and brown, and ceremonial clothes themselves usually follow current fashion so the wearer can blend in with those outside the faith. Elaborate masks, often with colored lenses and hinged jaws, are used to invoke the mysteries of the divine in Norgorber's various aspects. Temples dedicated to Norgorber are often hidden in other businesses, transformed at night so the faithful can plot and pray. His clerics are master imitators, stealing others' identities and using them to cover up dark deeds or to destroy other organizations from within.

Pharasma

LADY OF GRAVES

Goddess of birth, death, fate, and prophecy

Alignment: N
Domains: Death, Healing, Knowledge, Repose, Water
Favored Weapon: Dagger
Centers of Worship: Brevoy, Nex, Osirion, The Shackles, Thuvia, Ustalav, Varisia
Nationality: Garundi

Sitting atop an impossibly tall spire, Pharasma's Boneyard awaits all mortals. Once there, they stand in a great line, waiting to be judged and sent to their final reward. Only the unworthy end up in her graveyard, their souls left to rot for all eternity. Legends claim that Pharasma knew the death of Aroden was fast approaching and even judged him, but did nothing to warn her own followers, many of whom were driven mad by the event. Pharasma is depicted as a midwife, a mad prophet, or the reaper of the dead, depending upon her role. Pregnant women often carry small tokens of her likeness on long necklaces to protect the unborn and to grant it a good life. Her followers are midwives, expectant mothers, morticians, and (though less so since Aroden's death) diviners.

Pharasma's temples are gothic cathedrals, usually located near a town's graveyard, although a single bleak stone in an empty field or graveyard can serve as a shrine. Her faithful dress in funereal clothes for religious ceremonies, always black (regardless of the local custom) and accented with silver and tiny vials of holy water. They despise the undead as abominations to the natural order. Her holy book is *The Bones Land in a Spiral*; much of it was written long ago by a prophet, and many of its predictions are so vague that there is much debate about what events they foretell and whether they have already passed. Other sections were added later and deal with safe childbirth, proper disposal of the dead, methods of performing auguries, and so on.

Pharasma manifests her favor through the appearance of scarab beetles and whippoorwills, both of which function as psychopomps that serve to guide recently departed spirits to the Boneyard. Black roses are thought to bring good luck, especially if the rose's stem sports no thorns. Pharasma sometimes allows the spirit of someone who died to send short messages to living kin to comfort them, to expose a murderer, or to haunt an enemy. Her displeasure is signified by cold chills down the spine, bleeding from under the fingernails, an unexplained taste of rich soil, the discovery of a dead whippoorwill, or the feeling that something important has been forgotten.

Rovagug

THE ROUGH BEAST

God of destruction, disaster, and wrath

Alignment: CE
Domains: Chaos, Destruction, Evil, War, Weather
Favored Weapon: Greataxe
Centers of Worship: Belkzen, Darklands, Katapesh, Realm of the Mammoth Lords, Osirion, Qadira
Nationality: Monster

Sarenrae

THE DAWNFLOWER

Goddess of healing, honesty, redemption, and the sun

Alignment: NG
Domains: Fire, Glory, Good, Healing, Sun
Favored Weapon: Scimitar
Centers of Worship: Absalom, Katapesh, Osirion, Qadira, Taldor, Thuvia
Nationality: Keleshite

In the dawn of prehistory, Rovagug was born to destroy the world, but all the other gods stood against him, side by side. Many died in the struggle, but in the end, Sarenrae sliced open the world to imprison him within, and Asmodeus bound him there, keeping the only key. The only images of Rovagug show him as a terrible monster of unimaginable size and power. Of all the religions, few are more despised by civilized people than Rovagug's. In the wild lands, various monsters pay homage to him, including orcs, ropers, and troglodytes. Many of his faithful believe that Earthfall awoke their god, and that the time of his freedom is fast approaching. Foremost among the signs of his stirrings are the so-called Spawn of Rovagug, immense beasts who periodically surge from the Pit of Gormuz in central Casmaron, site of the Rough Beast's imprisonment long millennia ago. The legendary Tarrasque is the most powerful and terrifying of the Spawn, although several others have left their mark upon history over the years.

Rovagug's priests wear shaggy coats dyed in strange colors and hideous masks depicting horrid beasts, melted faces, or maddening shapes. His temples are banned in nearly every major city, driving his followers to erect secret shrines. The very rare temples are built in caves or dungeons and usually have some monster as the focus of worship, hand-fed by the priesthood to keep it reasonably tame except to outsiders. Rovagug has no holy text, but his monstrous, primitive thoughts press themselves upon his worshipers, flooding them with a desire to break, destroy, and rend, as well as to find a means to end his imprisonment and bring about the end of the world.

Rovagug has long railed against the other gods, but his hatred for Sarenrae eclipses all others. Even before the Dawnflower cast him down, their wars were legendary, and it is said that Sarenrae placed the fire of the sun in the core of the world to constantly burn him in his prison. Volcanic eruptions and earthquakes are held to be indications of him twisting in his sleep, and storms the evidence of his breath coursing up from the dark places of the world.

When the primal forces created Golarion, Asmodeus planted a malignant evil upon the world under cover of perpetual darkness. The doctrine of Sarenrae's faith tells that the Dawnflower brought light to the world, and with it came truth and honesty. Those who had turned to evil saw their wickedness and were forgiven by the light of Sarenrae. The clergy of Sarenrae are peaceful most of the time, administering to their flock with a gentle hand and wise words. Such kindness vanishes, however, when the church is stirred to action against an evil that cannot be redeemed—particularly against the cult of Rovagug. At such times, Sarenrae's clerics become dervishes, dancing among foes while allowing their scimitars to give their opponents final redemption. Thus, her faith attracts those with kind hearts, but willing to harden them when kindness is a dangerous weakness. Religious art depicts the sun goddess as a strong woman with bronze skin and a mane of dancing flame. While one hand holds the light of the sun, the other grasps a scimitar, so that she might smite those who do not change their ways.

Formal raiment includes a long white chasuble and tunic decorated with red and gold thread depicting images of the sun, and officiating priests usually wear a golden crown with a red-gold sunburst device on top. Scimitars inlaid with gold sunbursts or golden gems are common ceremonial implements. Temples are open-air buildings open to the sky, sometimes with large brass or gold mirrors on high points to reflect more light toward the altar (satellite buildings, however, have ceilings). Sarenrae's holy book is *The Birth of Light and Truth*. Most copies contain extra pages for the owner to record uplifting stories he experiences or hears in order to repeat them to others. Swordplay, particularly with the scimitar, is held to be a form of art by her followers.

Sarenrae indicates her favor with sightings of doves, or through the shapes of ankhs appearing in unexpected places. Her displeasure is most often made apparent through unexplained sunburns or periods of blindness that can last anywhere from only a few moments for minor transgressions to a lifetime for mortal sins.

Shelyn

THE ETERNAL ROSE

Goddess of art, beauty, love, and music

Alignment: NG
Domains: Air, Charm, Good, Luck, Protection
Favored Weapon: Glaive
Centers of Worship: Absalom, Galt, Sargava, Taldor
Nationality: Taldan

An ancient story tells of how Shelyn stole the glaive of Zon-Kuthon (her half-brother) in an attempt to redeem him from the alien influence possessing his mind. This attempt failed, but she has not given up hope, and out of love for him she retains the so-called *Whisperer of Souls* as her favored weapon despite its malign influence. Her story of love and devotion despite sorrow inspires mortal friends and lovers to persevere in adverse circumstances, bards to craft epic songs and tragedies, and artists to create works that touch the soul. All depictions of Shelyn, regardless of race or ethnicity, show her as a young woman barely out of her youth, with eyes of blue or silver (or sometimes heterochromatic, with both colors). Shelyn's ankle-length chestnut hair bears several strands colored bright red, green, and gold. She always wears tasteful clothing and jewelry that accentuates her beauty without revealing too much of it. Shelyn preaches (and practices) that true beauty comes from within, and she favors relationships not based solely on carnal desires.

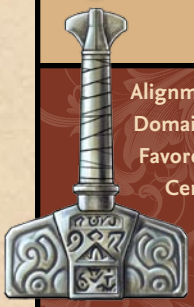
Formal garb for the church are leggings and a long tunic for men and a calf-length dress for women, cut and tailored to make the wearer attractive but not overtly sexual. Red is her primary color, accented with silver, although blue is acceptable. Clerics of Shelyn must endeavor each day to create something of beauty—typically a work of art or piece of music but applying other skills might be appropriate (such as the tending of flowers by a gardener). Her temples are roomy places surrounded by gardens and statues, decorated inside with paintings and sculpture and always filled with song and music. Her prayer book is *Melodies of Inner Beauty*, most of which consists of songs.

Shelyn sometimes sends messages to her faithful directly by means of a short but precise whispered message in the ear. Songbirds are sacred to the sect; their presence is considered good luck. Her displeasure can be manifested in a number of ways. A brief glimpse of a repellent reflection in a mirror, a lover's quarrel, a drab-colored bird, and wilted rose beds are all common signs of her disappointment.

Torag

FATHER OF CREATION

God of the forge, protection, and strategy



Alignment: LG
Domains: Artifice, Earth, Good, Law, Protection
Favored Weapon: Warhammer
Centers of Worship: Druma, Five Kings Mountains, Lands of the Linnorm Kings, Mana Wastes
Nationality: Dwarf

The dwarves believe that Torag created the world at his great forge, striking it again and again with his hammer to get the shape he desired. As the rocks tumbled and the sparks flew, the dwarves were born, made of stone with bellies full of fire. Torag appears as a powerful and cunning dwarf, busy at his forge hammering at a weapon or shield. He is the consummate planner, with a contingency for nearly every situation. Nearly half his clerics are dwarves, although a great many humans have taken up his call. His faithful are skilled architects, artisans, and military planners. Guardians and city watch sometimes offer up prayers to the father of creation, hoping he protects them as they watch over their charges.

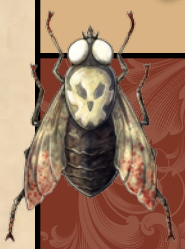
Formal dress for the clergy is a work-worn, heavy, leather, knee-length smithing apron, often with a large blacksmith's hammer. Some priests affix rivets, plates, or badges to their aprons to commemorate significant events, such as marriage, birth of a child, completion of their first set of plate mail, and so on. Temples tend to be circular, built around a large, central, and fully functional forge, and satellite anvils used for even mundane tasks, for every act of smelting and smithing is considered a prayer to Torag. His holy book is *Hammer and Tongs: The Forging of Metal and Other Good Works*, and is usually bound in metal.

Burrowing animals are sacred to the faithful of Torag, as are all animals that dwell in caves and mountainous areas. Flying creatures that live in such regions are viewed as abominations and freaks—bats in particular are hated by the church of Torag. He sometimes sends messages in the form of cryptic riddles that appear on stone surfaces for a short period of time. Earthquakes are the ultimate indication of his displeasure, but those who survive are thought to be blessed. The followers of Torag particularly hate the cult of Rovagug, for his spawn have long seethed and squirmed in the deeper corners of the earth. Yet despite this loathing, Torag's followers do not get on well with those of Sarenrae, since their willingness to forgive and their devotion to the sun seem to many dwarves to be an indication of weakness.

Urgathoa

THE PALLID PRINCESS

Goddess of disease, gluttony, and undeath



Alignment: NE
Domains: Death, Evil, Magic, Strength, War
Favored Weapon: Scythe
Centers of Worship: Darklands, Geb, Osirion, Ustalav, Varisia
Nationality: Varisian

Some claim that Urgathoa was a mortal once, but when she died, her thirst for life turned her into the Great Beyond's first undead creature. She fled from Pharasma's endless line of souls and back to Golarion, bringing disease with her to the world. She appears as a beautiful, raven-haired woman from the waist up, but below that her form begins to rot and wither, until only blood-covered bones remain at her feet. Urgathoa is worshiped by undead as well as by dark necromancers and those hoping to become undead. As such, her clerics must often keep their activities a secret. Some who are sick with the plague make offerings to the Pallid Princess in hopes of alleviating their illness, though most turn to Sarenrae. The occasional gluttonous prince might make offerings to Urgathoa as well, be it for more food, women, or other carnal pleasures. She and Calistria vie for control of their overlapping interest, with the elven goddess representing lust and the undead one representing physical excess.

Ceremonial clothes in her church consist of a loose, gray, floor-length tunic with a bone-white or dark gray shoulder-cape clasped at the front. Traditionally, the lower half of the tunic is either shredded or adorned with strips of cloth or tassels to give the overall appearance of increased damage as it approaches the floor, mirroring the goddess's own decay. Because most ceremonies involve indulging in large amounts of food and wine, these garments are usually stained from spills. Her temples are built like feast halls, with a large central table serving as an altar and numerous chairs surrounding it. Most temples are adjacent to a private graveyard or built over a crypt, often inhabited by ghouls (which embody all three of the goddess's interests). Her sacred text is *Serving Your Hunger*, penned by Dason, her first undead knight-commander.

Urgathoa sometimes rewards female clerics who serve her particularly well by transforming them after death into hideous undead creatures called the daughters of Urgathoa. She has also been known to lend support to the daemon Horsemen from time to time, for many of their goals closely match her own.

Zon-Kuthon

THE MIDNIGHT LORD

God of darkness, envy, loss, and pain

Alignment: LE
Domains: Darkness, Death, Destruction, Evil, Law
Favored Weapon: Spiked chain
Centers of Worship: Belkzen, Cheliax, Geb, Irrisen, Nidal, Varisia
Nationality: Alien

The beauty goddess Shelyn once had a half-brother, but his envy over her talents led him to abandon her for a journey into unknown regions beyond the edge of the Great Beyond. There, he encountered something that changed him for the worse—when he returned, he had become a new god entirely, a god of pain and suffering and loss. He committed terrible acts against those who tried to redeem him, particularly his father and his half-sister, and for his crimes, he was banished to the Plane of Shadow for as long as the sun hung in the sky. That time came to an end on Golarion during the Age of Darkness, and Zon-Kuthon returned, weeping tears of hateful joy. In time, his influence declined, but he and his worshipers remain ready to surge across the world with lash and chain and cruel laughter. His horrid affection attracts evil sadists, demented masochists, and those whose spirits are so wounded that only overwhelming pain distracts them from their sorrows. Those wallowing in a spiritual darkness find themselves pulled to his dark embrace, while others left to starve in oubliettes might cut their own flesh just to remind themselves that they exist.

His appearance often changes, with wounds on different parts of his body and clothing cut to reveal them, and often with a metal crown that distorts his flesh into an obscene sunburst; mortal representations of Zon-Kuthon are usually simplified to show a pale man in black with one significant wound. Zon-Kuthon's temples look like torture chambers, and many are actual torture chambers converted for church use. In smaller locales, the church might be a secret cave or basement where the cultists meet, littered with surgical and torture instruments that can pass as farm or craftsman's tools in case the lair is discovered. The church has no official formal garb, although their self-mutilation and use of black leather makes them identifiable. His book of laws is *Umbral Leaves*, penned by a mad prophet of his church.

Zon-Kuthon's faithful have carved out a nation of their own—founded at the height of the Age of Darkness, the people of Nidal venerate the Midnight Lord as their savior and king.

Other Gods

Listed here are 10 additional deities who have relatively widespread worship yet have not become so ubiquitous that their names and faiths can be found throughout Avistan or Garund. In some cases, this is simply because their worshipers do not actively seek out new members of their faith, while in others it is the deity who discourages growth. Beyond these 10, still more deities exist, but those are generally focused on specific races or regions of the world and have not yet expanded beyond their relatively narrow confines to touch other realms and believers.

Worshipers of these additional deities generally consist of relatively specialized groups (such as the Red Mantis), are more or less localized in certain regions (such as Gyronna and Hanspur of the River Kingdoms), or simply have cults that are either not particularly interested in increasing their numbers or are actively hunted by other organizations (such as Ghlaunder, Groetus, and Zyphus).

Achaekek (He Who Walks in Blood): Also known as the Mantis God, Achaekek serves many of the gods as an assassin, sent to murder those who have risen in power and in some way challenge the gods. Not all of Golarion's deities approve of these heavy-handed methods, yet neither have any of the gods stepped in to directly oppose Achaekek. The Mantis God himself does not actively seek worshipers, but he has them nonetheless—He Who Walks in Blood is the divine patron of the assassins known as the Red Mantis, a group of infamous murderers who use the methods and themes of the Mantis God to strengthen their own notoriety. Achaekek's symbol is a pair of red mantis claws clasped together as if in prayer.

Apsu (The Waybringer): All good dragons revere Apsu, though few are the sort who practice divine magic—most leave that to their smaller mortal allies and servants, some of whom forsake humanoid gods to worship the Waybringer. As Apsu's primary goal is the destruction of Dahak, mortals with no ties to the world of dragons have little need for his church. Apsu's symbol is a silver dragon whose descending tail encircles a mirror.

Besmara (The Pirate Queen): Pirates rarely have the time or patience to dedicate their lives to worship, but all buccaneers know of Besmara the Pirate Queen. Said to sail the turbulent seas of the Maelstrom in her grand ship *Seawraith*, Besmara's raids on places as diverse as Elysium, Axis, Heaven, and Hell are legend among certain circles of pirates. Yet few honestly worship her until their deaths loom large, be they in the form of a sinking ship, a ravenous sea monster, a violent storm, or a war at sea, at which point even the most callous pirate suddenly finds faith and prays to Besmara for just one more day of life. Besmara's actual priests are most commonly found in the waters off the Shackles or on the waterfront boardwalks of Ilizmagorti—those found at sea generally serve double duty as priest and captain, and their reputations on the seas are among the most notorious. Her symbol is the jolly roger, a black flag decorated with a skull and crossbones.

Dahak (The Endless Destruction): Dahak holds no love for his creations, having killed and maimed many of them in his joyous rampages, and most dragons hate him in return. However, he can offer them power and immortality, and this tempting offer has swayed many evil dragons (and other creatures) to his service. Ugly, spiked, and scarred, Dahak hates his father Apsu and wishes to destroy him. Dahak's symbol is a fiery-red falling star.

Droskar (The Dark Smith): Droskar once held promise as the greatest of Torag's students. Day after day he labored at the forge, and the designs he produced brought wonder and delight to all who beheld them. Droskar's greed for power and respect outstripped his good sense, though, and Torag soon uncovered the truth: Droskar's works were copies. He had kidnapped, imprisoned, and tortured a talented smith for the designs that garnered so much admiration. Torag's wrath was great, but rather than slay Droskar outright, he cast the cheat out of his kingdom and cursed him to struggle forever in a fruitless quest to produce an original work. Droskar recruited worshipers by promising salvation in return for ceaseless toil, or enslaved them and forced them to labor, but his followers could not inspire Droskar to originality. His presence gradually faded from Golarion, and while most scholars believe him dead, certain ruined temple forges still carry whispered prayers inside their halls. Droskar's symbol is a fire burning under a stone arch.

Ghlaunder (The Gossamer King): The cult of a demigod of parasites and infection, Ghlaunder's faith is a foul and festering blight that often takes root in small, defenseless, rural areas. As with the parasites they venerate, cultists of Ghlaunder often prey on others. Such a cultist might serve a village as priest, posing as a faithful follower of an obscure cult or pagan religion while slowly encouraging worship practices that bring the locals unknowingly closer to the Gossamer King. Cultists of Ghlaunder do not bleed their flocks dry, but rather protect and aid them so that they will always be there for sustenance. When exposed, cultists of Ghlaunder often preach of the necessity of parasites and infection, lest the weak and old overrun the world.

Said to have been accidentally freed from a cocoon on the Ethereal Plane by Desna, Ghlaunder manifests as an

Other Deities

Deity	AL	Areas of Concern	Domains	Favored Weapon
Achaekek	LE	assassination, the Red Mantis	Death, Evil, Law, Trickery, War	sawtooth sabre
Apsu	LG	glory, good dragons, leadership, peace	Creation, Good, Law, Scalykind, Travel	bite or quarterstaff
Besmara	CN	piracy, sea monsters, strife	Chaos, Trickery, War, Water, Weather	rapier
Dahak	CE	destruction, evil dragons, greed, treachery	Chaos, Destruction, Evil, Scalykind, Trickery	bite or whip
Ghlaunder	CE	infection, parasites, stagnation	Air, Animal, Chaos, Destruction, Evil	spear
Groetus	CN	empty places, oblivion, ruins	Chaos, Darkness, Destruction, Madness, Void	heavy flail
Gyronna	CE	extortion, hatred, spite	Chaos, Destruction, Evil, Madness	dagger
Hanspur	CN	river travel, rivers	Chaos, Death, Travel, Water	trident
Kurgess	NG	bravery, competition, sport	Community, Good, Luck, Strength, Travel	javelin
Milani	CG	devotion, hope, uprisings	Chaos, Good, Healing, Liberation, Protection	morningstar
Sivanah	N	illusions, mystery, reflections	Knowledge, Madness, Magic, Rune, Trickery	bladed scarf
Zyphus	NE	accidental death, graveyards, tragedy	Death, Destruction, Evil, Plant, War	heavy pick

immense, mosquito-like monstrosity when he appears in the world, often paying secret visits to feed from the blood of his favorite followers. He favors drinkers of blood and fungoid creatures, and his symbol is a blood-fat mosquito.

Groetus (God of the End Times): The god of the end of the world, Groetus has no organized faith. Most of his worshipers are loners—either madmen who live on the street and prophesize the end of the world, or more dangerous megalomaniacs who actively seek methods to bring about the end of existence and please their insane god. Groetus himself doesn't really care about his flock, since when he has his way, they will all be gone. He knows his time will eventually come, because all things must end, whether or not he has worshipers. Some speculate that he might not even know he has worshipers.

The God of the End Times plays a small role in Pharasma's worship, for in her Boneyard, it is said that Groetus looms as a gibbous and huge moon in the sky above. No one knows if this "moon" is actually Groetus, his shell, or simply the object upon which he dwells. The few explorers who have braved this moon and walked upon its surface without vanishing invariably return to the world as Groetus's newest insane cultists. The other gods likely know Groetus's secrets, but refuse to speak of them. Groetus's symbol is a full moon with the faint image of a skull seen in the pattern of craters that decorate its surface.

Gyronna (The Angry Hag): This goddess only allows females into her priesthood. People fear her clergy for their ability to poison the minds of others with hate, turning friends against each other and making enemies out of allies (though they are not above simply knifing someone in an alley if it suits their purposes). Her symbol is a bloodshot eye.

Hanspur (The Water Rat): Some legends say that Hanspur was once a mortal priest of Gozreh; after he was murdered in his sleep by a traveling companion, his god raised him as an unstable guardian of the waterways. His symbol is a rat walking on water or standing on a log.

Kurgess (The Strong Man): Legends hold that Kurgess was born in a small village somewhere in Taldor, a simple farmer's son who grew into a tall, strapping young lad. One day, a traveling merchant's carriage ran off the road near Kurgess's home, and the towering man single-handedly lifted the carriage out of the ditch. So impressed was the merchant that he offered Kurgess a chance to become famous. He brought the simple man to the city of Cassomir and began entering him in numerous competitions and events. Kurgess won each of them, splitting the money with his sponsor. They went on the road, traveling from town to town and entering in one competition after the other. Whether they were contests of strength, speed, or endurance, Kurgess won them all. Yet eventually his fame grew too great—with each win, he left in his wake bitter and jealous rivals. Finally, during the third annual Raptor Run in sprawling Oppara, his enemies caught up with him and rigged the event so that there was no way for anyone to win. Yet when the truth of the sabotage became clear, Kurgess managed to save most of the other competitors from death on a raptor's talons, but only at the cost of his own life. In attempting to avenge themselves, Kurgess's enemies made him into a martyr.

In the decades that followed, Taldor's fortunes declined, yet word of Kurgess's luck, skill, and bravery spread. People took to calling upon his memory for luck and favor during competitions, and it's said that Cayden Cailean and Desna themselves raised him to godhood for his deeds. In the last 300 years, rumors that Kurgess has returned to Golarion to attend festivals anonymously, either to participate and win or to protect those who compete, have seen his faith rising and spreading throughout southern Avistan. Kurgess's priests are generally travelers who carry small portable shrines, but tournaments, fairs, and competitions are their temples. Kurgess's symbol is a flexing muscular arm with a golden chain gripped in the fist.

Milani (The Everbloom): For many centuries, the Inner Sea region was dominated by the sprawling Empire of Cheliax.

This changed drastically only 100 years ago with the death of the nation's patron deity, Aroden. In the years that followed, the Thrice-Damned House of Thrune regained control of the nation's core, but several outlying regions seceded, with varying degrees of success. These times of upheaval were dark and grim, and in many cases only hope carried the unfortunate citizens through. Many of them turned to new faiths, seeking guidance from any who offered it. In the years immediately following Aroden's death, charlatans and con artists were thick among these faiths as well, but one faith in particular rose not only to give the downtrodden hope, but to aid in organizing their rebellions in ways that could rebuild society rather than damn it to eternal barbarism. This was the faith of Milani.

Until Aroden's death, Milani herself was nothing more than a minor saint, one of dozens associated with the Last Azlanti. The patron of partisans and rebels alike, Milani became one of Aroden's widest-reaching inheritors, yet never quite reached the popularity of Iomedae, perhaps because Iomedae still retained a valuable connection to humanity through her relatively recent ascension into divinity, but more likely because Iomedae's faith had already spread wide before Aroden's demise. Today, Milani's worshipers are generally small congregations in oppressive nations where hope and uprisings are the only chance at a better tomorrow. Her faithful have come to terms with the fact that once an uprising is successful, the need for hope fades—they understand this, and wait patiently in their small village chapels for the time when they will be called upon again to defend the common man from oppression. Milani's faithful are currently most active in struggling Galt and some of the more unstable River Kingdoms. Her symbol is a rose growing to bloom between the cobbles of a bloody street.

Sivanah (The Seventh Veil): While mysterious Nethys is widely accepted as the greatest god of magic, other deities claim control over certain specific foci in magic. Some of these, like Urgathoa's mastery over necromancy, are well known. Other such deities are more obscure, but none are quite as mysterious as Sivanah, the patron of illusionists, tricksters, and those who work to preserve secrets and mystery. None can say what Sivanah's true form is, although most agree that she is female. Legend holds that she dresses in seven veils, and that each of six veils is tied to a different race: cyclops, elf, gnome, halfling, human, and naga. It is said she can appear as any of those races while wearing the appropriate veil, but that she herself is of an unknown seventh race, the identity of which is masked by the seventh veil. Sivanah works her deeds through reflections in mirrors and the surface of water, and is said to speak to some of her followers through their own shadows. Her ultimate goals are secrets even to her most faithful, such concealment ironically preventing her faith from growing much more beyond the level of a cult. Worship of Sivanah is relatively strong in parts of Nex and Irrisen, and among illusionists throughout the world. Her worship is expressly forbidden in Nidal, for she is said to be one of Zon-Kuthon's greatest enemies, and views his use of shadows as a corruption and enslavement. Sivanah's symbol is seven drab-colored veils knotted together.

Zyphus (The Grim Harvestman): Not every death makes sense. Those who have strong faith often seek to explain unexpected death as the "will of the gods," yet for many, this justification holds little sway. To them, such tragic deaths can only be explained by the influence of a malevolent, hateful force—something that seeks to bring ruin and sadness into the world. Unfortunately, there is some truth to this belief, thanks to the godling known as Zyphus.

Cultists of Zyphus hold that their god, known as the Grim Harvestman and the harbinger of unexpected tragedy, was formed from the enraged soul of the first mortal to die a hollow, meaningless death. Each additional accidental death is said to add to Zyphus's strength, so that some day he will be powerful enough to engineer the death of his most hated rival—Pharasma. The true believers of Zyphus preach that those who are slain by accidents they engineer do not travel on to Pharasma's Boneyard, but are instead captured by the Grim Harvestman, their souls consumed and absorbed by this malignancy. His cultists are widespread but relatively small in number—they hold court in graveyards that have fallen from favor or otherwise no longer sit upon hallowed ground. Even in well-used and relatively safe graveyards, it is not uncommon to see carvings depicting Zyphus or his symbol on gate arches or vault roofs, warding against the Grim Harvestman. Zyphus's symbol is a heavy pick made of a femur, skull, and rib.

Outsider Demigods

A number of powerful, unique outsiders exist who, while not true gods, still have the capacity to grant spells and are served on Golarion by cults of devoted worshipers. There are certainly more outsider demigods than those listed here, both in established groups like archdevils, the Eldest of the First World, and especially the demon lords, but also in entirely different categories that generally do not have large cults on Golarion.

Archdevils

There are nine circles to Hell, each of which is ruled by a different archdevil and serves a different role in the punishment of sinful mortals. The lord of Hell and ruler of its deepest circle is Asmodeus, a god in his own right—the other eight Lords of Hell bow before him and exist to serve him even as they scheme among themselves for methods of gaining power. Cultists of these other eight archdevils are uncommon outside of Cheliax, and even there they tend to exist in the shadow of the church of Asmodeus. Often, a worshiper of an archdevil is a lone cultist who keeps a small, usually hidden shrine, yet lives another life as an

Archdevils

Archdevil	AL	Areas of Concern	Domains	Favored Weapon
Baalzebul	LE	arrogance, flies, lies	Air, Death, Evil, Law	spear
Barbatos	LE	animals, corruption, gateways	Evil, Law, Magic, Travel	quarterstaff
Belial	LE	adultery, deception, desire	Charm, Destruction, Evil, Law	ranseur
Dispater	LE	cities, prisons, rulership	Evil, Law, Nobility, Trickery	heavy mace
Geryon	LE	forbidden lore, heresy, snakes	Evil, Law, Strength, Water	heavy flail
Mammon	LE	avarice, watchfulness, wealth	Artifice, Earth, Evil, Law	shortspear
Mephistopheles	LE	contracts, devils, secrets	Evil, Knowledge, Law, Rune	trident
Moloch	LE	fire, obedience, war	Evil, Fire, Law, War	whip

Demon Lords

Demon Lord	AL	Areas of Concern	Domains	Favored Weapon
Abraxas	CE	forbidden lore, magic, snakes	Chaos, Evil, Knowledge, Magic	whip
Angazhan	CE	apes, jungles, tyrants	Animal, Chaos, Evil, Plant	spear
Baphomet	CE	beasts, labyrinths, minotaurs	Animal, Chaos, Evil, Strength	glaive
Cyth-V'sug	CE	disease, fungus, parasites	Chaos, Earth, Evil, Plant	scimitar
Dagon	CE	deformity, sea monsters, the sea	Chaos, Destruction, Evil, Water	trident
Deskari	CE	chasms, infestation, locusts	Chaos, Destruction, Evil, War	scythe
Gogunta	CE	amphibians, boggards, swamps	Chaos, Death, Evil, Water	whip
Kostchtchie	CE	cold, giants, revenge	Chaos, Evil, Strength, War	warhammer
Nocticula	CE	assassins, darkness, lust	Chaos, Charm, Evil, Darkness	hand crossbow
Orcus	CE	necromancy, undeath, wrath	Chaos, Death, Evil, Magic	heavy mace
Pazuzu	CE	sky, temptation, winged creatures	Air, Chaos, Evil, Trickery	longsword
Shax	CE	envy, lies, murder	Chaos, Destruction, Evil, Nobility	dagger
Socothbenoth	CE	perversion, pride, taboos	Charm, Chaos, Evil, Travel	quarterstaff
Zura	CE	blood, cannibalism, vampires	Chaos, Death, Evil, Madness	rapier

upstanding citizen. It is said that these cultists bear hidden marks upon their bodies, proof of their pledge to Hell.

Baalzebul: The Lord of Flies rules Cocytus, the seventh Hell, a frozen realm of icy seas and jagged glaciers. His whispers are brought to cultists through the buzzing of flies.

Barbatos: The current ruler of Avernus, the uppermost Hell, Barbatos holds the keys to the gateways into Hell, and has dominion over birds that feast on the recent dead.

Belial: Desire and adultery are the areas of concern for Belial, ruler of the molten layer of Hell's fourth circle, Phlegethon.

Dispater: The immense, iron-walled city of Dis is ruled by Dispater, Hell's greatest politician and jailer.

Geryon: The stinking swamps of Stygia are the dominion of the Serpent, Geryon, source of all great heresies and the venomous treachery of the snake's fatal kiss.

Mammon: Hell's treasurer and accountant, Mammon lurks in the dark and dreary sewers below Dis, a lightless realm called Erebus.

Mephistopheles: Silver-tongued Mephistopheles rules the Hanging Garden of Caina, and is the keeper of many of Hell's greatest secrets and contracts.

Moloch: Mighty Moloch, Lord of Malebolge, trains Hell's infernal army and wages his eternal war on Heaven and goodness throughout the Great Beyond.

Demon Lords

Whereas there are only nine archdevils, the number of similarly powerful demons is beyond knowing. The Outer Rifts of the Abyss fall away into infinity, and the legions of demons and their realms are endless. Nonetheless, certain demon lords have risen above their kin to become known and feared beyond the endless realms of the Abyss. The 13 most widely worshiped demon lords are listed below.

Abraxas: Master of the Final Incantation, Demon Lord of Forbidden Lore and Magic. Abraxas is a hideous creature, with the head of a deformed and fanged bird and two writhing vipers in place of legs. Abraxas is believed to know countless magical formulae, spells, and secrets, particularly those that cause great devastation and pain—including the "Final Incantation," a potent word that, when uttered, strips away and destroys magic.

Angazhan: The Ravener King, Demon Lord of Apes and Jungles. Angazhan appears as a towering blood-red ape with six long, thin fingers; tusk-like teeth; and relatively small, bloodshot eyes. His presence is strongest within the Mwangi Expanse, where his chattering brood, the simian charau-ka (known to outlanders as ape-men), hold court amid the ruins and feast on the flesh of human cattle.

Baphomet: Lord of the Minotaurs, Demon Lord of Beasts and Labyrinths. Baphomet is one of Lamashtu's

favored consorts, and while the original minotaurs were the children of the Demon Queen, an increasing number have come to view Baphomet as their true lord. Baphomet looks like a hulking, muscular minotaur with sharp teeth and immense horns—he wields a magical glaive made of rare red adamantine in battle.

Cyth-V'sug: Prince of the Blasted Heath, Demon Lord of Fungus and Parasites. The hideous Cyth-V'sug dwells upon a layer of the Abyss that consists of a single, massive colony of parasitic fungus that transforms all it touches into an extension of its own vile consciousness. Cyth-V'sug's most powerful spawn, a unique demon called Treerazer, recently established a domain on the Material Plane, a move that raises concern that the Prince of the Blasted Heath may be closer to his goal of total assimilation than many think.

Dagon: The Shadow in the Sea, Demon Lord of the Sea and Sea Monsters. One of the largest demon lords, Dagon dwells in the depths of the Abyssal sea of Ishiar. Not quite fish or octopus or eel, the Shadow in the Sea often sends his spawn into the depths of Material Plane oceans to serve as high priests for vicious oceanic monstrosities. His cult is also strong along remote coastlines, where societies of humans or marsh giants mix with ichthyic visitors, taking them into their homes in exchange for good fishing or gifts of strange gold jewelry.

Deskari: Lord of the Locust Host, Demon Lord of Infestation and Locusts. Thought to be the son of Pazuzu, Deskari is believed by many scholars to be the Usher of the Apocalypse. The insectoid demon long plagued the northern nation of Sarkoris, where his cultists were eventually driven into the Lake of Mists and Veils by Aroden. Yet with Aroden's death, the manifestation of the Worldwound and the demonic armies that emerged speak to Deskari's growing influence over this reach of the Material Plane once again.

Gogunta: Song of the Swamp, Demon Lord of Boggards and Swamps. Gogunta is an immense batrachian monstrosity, believed by the boggards to be the source of their race. Scholars of the demonic believe she was a hezrou in Dagon's service who ascended to the role of demon lord—certainly she favors the hezrous as guardians and lovers, and often sends them to guard or even lead boggard tribes on the Material Plane (particularly tribes in Varisia's Mushfens, swamps in the River Kingdoms, or in the Sodden Lands).

Kostchtchie: The Deathless Frost, Demon Lord of Cold and Giants. Born an Ulfen man possessed of a legendary temper and hatred of women and giantkind, Kostchtchie bargained with Baba Yaga for immortality. The result of his ill-advised bid for eternal life saw his body twisted and deformed into that of a hideous giant—Kostchtchie found eternal life only by becoming what he hated most. His hatred has since shifted to humanity, and he leads terrific wars against the northern tribes of Iobaria as often as possible, doing so through proxies and priests when he is unable to do so in person. His current goal is the destruction of the nation of Irrisen, the next step in his vengeance against the Witch Queen Baba Yaga.

Nocticula: Our Lady in Shadow, Demon Lord of Darkness and Lust. As seductive and beautiful as she is cruel and sadistic, Lady Nocticula is the patron of succubi and assassins alike. She appears in whatever form the observer most desires, shifting gender and race and appearance with unsettling speed—her true form is that of a shapely succubus with three tails and hoofed feet that drip with molten metal. Her worship is strong among those who live by treachery and murder, and many cities unknowingly host assassin guilds devoted to her glory.

Orcus: Prince of Undeath, Demon Lord of Necromancy and the Undead. Although mighty Orcus is perhaps one of the most widely worshiped demon lords throughout the countless worlds of the Material Plane, his cults have remained relatively small on Golarion because of competition from those dedicated to his rivals, Zura and the Pallid Princess Urgathoa. He appears as an immensely fat humanoid with a ram's head, bat-like wings, cloven feet, and a long stingered tail. His legendary weapon, the *Wand of Orcus*, is never far from his taloned hand.

Pazuzu: King of the Wind Demons, Demon Lord of the Sky and Winged Creatures. Pazuzu appears as a wiry human with eagle's legs and talons, a demonic avian head, two pairs of bird wings, a scorpion tail, and a writhing snake in place of his genitals. Pazuzu is an aggressive demon lord fond of possessing mortals and using them as tools to work his evils upon the world. It is said that Pazuzu can hear his name when an innocent speaks it unknowingly, and that this may be all that is needed to invite possession by the cunning demon.

Shax: The Blood Marquis, Demon Lord of Lies and Murder. Cruel and sadistic, Shax revels in the act of torture and murder. He is particularly fond of eating the eyes of his living victims. His cultists are killers and warmongers who invoke his name for glory and luck in their bloody acts. Shax appears as a human man with a dove's head and bird-like legs and an immense collection of knives and other bloodstained weaponry.

Socothbenoth: The Silken Sin, Demon Lord of Perversion and Taboos. Brother and lover to Lady Nocticula, deviant Socothbenoth views all the world as having been created for him to take pleasure in. His tastes (and those of his faithful) run to the violent and destructive. Although fond of changing his appearance on a whim to aid in whatever pleasures he currently seeks, in his true form he appears as a lithe, handsome human man with black eyes; long, brown hair; large, pointed ears; and numerous body piercings of metal and bone.

Zura: The Vampire Queen, Demon Lord of Cannibalism and Vampires. Gothic and beautiful, Lady Zura is said

to be the first vampire, an Azlanti Queen who succumbed early to that people's growing decadence. Tales of her cannibal feasts and baths of blood persist today as vague legends. Zura often assumes the form of a voluptuous maiden, but in her true form appears as an almost skeletal woman with bat-like wings instead of arms, blood-red eyes and hair, immense fangs, and taloned feet.

Other Demon Lords: No less powerful than the demon lords presented in greater detail above, these additional demon lords generally have smaller or more remote cults.

Aldinach: She of the Six Venoms, Lord of Scorpions.
Andirifkhu: The Razor Princess, Lord of Traps.
Areshkagal: The Faceless Sphinx, Lord of Greed.
Flauros: The Burning Maw, Lord of Volcanoes.
Haagenti: The Whispers Within, Lord of Transformation.
Jezelda: Mistress of the Hungry Moon, Lord of Werewolves.
Jubilex: The Faceless Lord, Lord of Sloth.
Kabriri: Him Who Gnaws, Lord of Ghouls.
Mazmezz: The Creeping Queen, Lord of Vermin.
Mestama: The Mother of Witches, Lord of Deception.
Nurgal: The Shining Scourge, Lord of Senseless War.
Shivaska: The Chained Maiden, Lord of Prisons.
Sifkesh: The Sacred Whore, Lord of Heresy.
Urxehl: Trollfather, Lord of Storms.
Xoveron: The Horned Prince, Lord of Gluttony.
Yhidothrus: The Ravager Worm, Lord of Time.
Zevgavizeb: The God of the Troglodytes, Lord of Reptiles.

Eldest

While no one truly rules the First World, there are those entities so powerful as to command respect and obedience from other residents, and even from the land itself. These all-powerful personalities go by many names—the fey-lords, the shapers—yet to most they are simply the Eldest.

Count Ranalc: Count Ranalc is a primal being of darkness and the chaos of creation, exiled from the First World to the Plane of Shadow millennia ago by the other Eldest for unknown reasons, and since vanished completely. Scholars have long been intrigued by the fact that all mention of Ranalc ceases at almost exactly the same time as the archwizard Nex laid siege to Absalom.

The Green Mother: This tall, beautiful woman with shocking green hair resembles a cross between a nymph, an elf, and a dryad. Within her forest bower, she is the most seductive and manipulative creature in the First World.

Imbrex, the Twins: Whether the entity known as the Twins is truly a pair of siblings or simply one creature split into two bodies is a question that may never be answered. Hundreds of feet tall, the vaguely reptilian, statue-like humanoids refer to themselves collectively as Imbrex.

The Lantern King: If the First World can be said to have a trickster god—no easy feat in a world where capricious, reality-bending mischief is standard practice for many—then the title belongs to the will-o'-wisp-like Lantern King.

The Lost Prince: Also called the Melancholy Lord, this gaunt, dark-haired Eldest is a morose and dour individual. While his servants expound on his good works, the truth is that the Lost Prince attempts to remain neutral in most matters, keeping to himself in his ever-crumbling tower.

Magdh: Capable of seeing farthest into other realms and down the long lines of probability and fate, the three-faced entity called Magdh is the prophetess and seer of the Eldest. Those seeking her wisdom and second sight are welcomed according to strange and mysterious guidelines.

Ng the Hooded: If Ng the Hooded has a face, no one has ever viewed it. Some whisper that the delicate gloves that are his only visible body part hide whirring clockwork, others that he's the mouthpiece of a distant god or the First World itself.

Ragadahn the Water Lord: Also known as the Serpent King, the World Serpent, and (somewhat heretically) the Father of Dragons, Ragadahn claims to be the progenitor from whom all linnorms are descended.

Shyka the Many: Time is fickle in the First World, and Shyka knows this better than any. Over the eons, many have borne this title—and continue to. For in all of his incarnations, Shyka the Many is a master of time.

Elemental Lords

The elemental lords are near-divine embodiments of the raw power of air, earth, fire, and water. Capricious, destructive, cruel, and dangerous, they seem to have no good analogs—according to those who worship these beings, this is because the Elemental Lords have long since slaughtered their weaker counterparts.

Ayrzul (The Fossilized King): Ayrzul, king of the earth elementals, dwells in a vast labyrinth of radioactive and poisonous metal.

Hshurha (Duchess of All Winds): Hshurha is the ruler of the air elementals. She looks disdainfully upon any creature with solid flesh or visible form.

Kelizandri (The Brackish Emperor): Kelizandri, king of the water elementals, often takes the form of an immense aquatic dragon.

Ymeri (Queen of the Inferno): Ymeri is constantly at war with the other denizens of the plane of fire. Her wrath is as terrible as the greatest of volcanoes.

Empyreal Lords

Just as there are powerful and unique fiends who rule portions of the Outer Rifts and other dark corners of the Great Beyond, so too are there paragons of good in the brighter reaches of the Outer Sphere. These powerful angels are known collectively as the empyreal lords.

Andoletta: Always sharp-tongued and stern, wrinkled Grandmother Crow watches over the innocent, chides the wavering, and raps upon the wicked with a walking stick made of willow.

Eldest

Eldest	AL	Areas of Concern	Domains	Favored Weapon
Count Ranalc	CN	betrayal, exiles, shadows	Chaos, Darkness, Nobility, Travel	rapier
Green Mother	NE	carnivorous plants, intrigue, seduction	Charm, Evil, Earth, Plant	sickle
Imbrex	LN	endings, statues, twins	Community, Earth, Law, Strength	dire flail
Lantern King	CN	laughter, mischief, transformation	Charm, Chaos, Madness, Trickery	dagger
Lost Prince	N	forgotten things, sadness, solitude	Knowledge, Madness, Nobility, Repose	quarterstaff
Magdh	LN	complexity, fate, triplets	Knowledge, Law, Luck, Rune	scythe
Ng	N	the seasons, secrets, wanderers	Knowledge, Magic, Travel, Weather	gauntlet
Ragadahn	CE	linnorms, oceans, spirals	Chaos, Evil, Scalykind, Water	whip
Shyka	N	entropy, reincarnation, time	Death, Destruction, Madness, Magic	light mace

Elemental Lords

Elemental Lord	AL	Areas of Concern	Domains	Favored Weapon
Ayrzul	NE	earth	Destruction, Earth, Strength	morningstar
Hshurha	NE	air	Air, Destruction, Weather	longbow
Kelizandri	NE	water	Destruction, Travel, Water	trident
Ymeri	NE	fire	Destruction, Fire, War	longsword

Empyreal Lords

Empyreal Lord	AL	Areas of Concern	Domains	Favored Weapon
Andoletta	LG	consolation, respect, security	Good, Knowledge, Law, Protection	quarterstaff
Arshea	NG	freedom, physical beauty, sexuality	Charm, Good, Liberation, Strength	flail
Korada	NG	foresight, forgiveness, peace	Good, Magic, Healing, Protection	unarmed strike
Ragathiel	LG	chivalry, duty, vengeance	Destruction, Good, Law, Nobility	bastard sword
Sinashakti	CG	journeys, joy, messengers	Chaos, Good, Luck, Travel	shortbow
Valani	CG	change, growth, primality	Chaos, Earth, Good, Weather	club

Horsemen

Horseman	AL	Areas of Concern	Domains	Favored Weapon
Apollyon	NE	pestilence	Air, Darkness, Destruction, Evil	scythe
Charon	NE	death	Death, Evil, Knowledge, Water	quarterstaff
Szuriel	NE	war	Evil, Fire, Strength, War	greatsword
Trelmarixian	NE	famine	Earth, Evil, Madness, Weather	spiked gauntlet

Arshea: Alternately depicted as male or female, silken-skinned and androgynous Arshea dances amid colored veils, comforting the weary and freeing the repressed.

Korada: Korada sits within the Dream Lotus of Nirvana, balancing the spheres of existence in his mind and communing with enlightened spirits.

Ragathiel: Five-winged Ragathiel leads a legion of spirits, among whom number some of the greatest heroes in history.

Sinashakti: The dawn-skinned Walker of Worlds, Sinashakti sprints through the planes, eager to see all there is and learn the ways of all people.

Valani: Where Valani, the Father of Islands, passes, new lands are born. His whispers lead people to shelter, while his screams bring storms and prove that nothing lasts forever.

Horsemen

The fiendish lords of the foul plane Abaddon are known to mortals collectively as the Horsemen. They are not represented by organized faiths or churches on the Material Plane, for the most part—rather, their worshipers venerate them out of fear or ignorance, their actual clerics usually found among the more monstrous races of the world.

Apollyon: The Horseman of Pestilence is known also as the Prince of Locusts. He is a hulking, ram-headed monstrosity that dwells upon the carcass of a dead god.

Charon: Perhaps the most powerful of the Four Horsemen, Charon's realm is the River Styx—he is the Horseman of Death, and the ferryman for lost souls that travel to the Outer Rifts.

Szuriel: Szuriel, the Horseman of War, is a black-winged woman with bleeding eyes and ragged teeth, and is the harbinger of countless battles and conflicts.

Trelmarixian: The youngest of the four, Trelmarixian is the Horseman of Famine, a jackal-headed man with crystal teeth and an unending hunger.

The Fallen, False, and Forgotten

This section includes gods from ancient times whose followers have died off, "gods" who are not truly gods at all but are still worshiped by cults, and gods who have perished. Although only a few dead gods and false gods are detailed here, many more exist on Golarion—the ones presented here are merely the best known.

False gods and dead gods cannot grant spells to clerics, but other divine spellcasting classes (such as druids or oracles) who gain their power from other sources, rather than directly from the gods, can serve these forces as champions or cultists. Forgotten gods, while unknown to the world at large, can still grant spells to their clerics—while they may be impossibly distant or depleted in power, they linger still in unknown corners of the Great Beyond.

Aroden (The Last Azlanti; Dead God): Some 5,000 years after the destruction of Azlant, its last true son—the immortal hero Aroden—raised the *Starstone* from the depths of the Inner Sea, installed it in Absalom's Ascendant Court, and became a living god. In time, Aroden became the patron deity of Taldor, a nation rife with Azlanti blood and hungry for conquest. As Taldor's influence spread, so too did the reach of Aroden's proud religion. Yet at the height of his faith's power, Aroden died, leaving his followers adrift and bereft of miraculous ability. Much of Aroden's cult turned to follow his saint, the missionary heroine Iomedae, but the full repercussions of the death of the Last Azlanti have yet to be felt. Formal raiment in the church still echoes the elaborate costuming popular when the church's center was in Taldor, with multilayered costumes and tall hats and helms supposedly designed in the fashion of the ancient Azlanti, and colors appropriate to the priest's national colors. Aroden's symbol is a winged eye in a circle.

Great Old Ones (Forgotten Gods): There are potent entities who dwell in the deepest reaches of the Material Plane or beyond its sane dimensions, in a haunted realm known to scholars and the fearful as the Dark Tapestry—the empty places between the stars. The entities that hail from these inimical realms are often referred to as the Great Old Ones, and bear hideous names like Azathoth, Nyarlathotep, Shub-Niggurath, and Yog-Sothoth. Mortals who worship these alien beings believe they shall one day come to Golarion and unmake the world. Whether these beings are related to or rivals of Rovagug is unknown, but their power is real and on par with divine magic from "normal" deities. They do not care how mortals use the powers they grant, but most members of these cults, known collectively as the "Old Cults," are insane and very dangerous. Clerics of the Old Cults typically have access to the domains of Chaos, Knowledge, Madness, Rune, and Void, but these choices can vary depending upon the specific Great Old One worshiped. Their favored weapon varies, but daggers are common weapons among the cults.

Lissala (Forgotten God): Lissala was a goddess of runes, fate, and the reward of service, a being of harsh duty and obedience who rewarded her followers well. Her faith was strongest in the ancient empire of Thassilon, and shrines and temples to her can still be found hidden in remote Thassilonian ruins in Varisia and Belkzen. As Thassilon grew more decadent, so did Lissala's faithful—her cult was known for its flagellations, mortifications of the flesh, and extravagant "Feasts of Sigils" on high holidays. Although Lissala seemed to have vanished from the multiverse along with the fall of Thassilon, evidence suggests that some of the runes of old Thassilon retain some link to her, and rumors of new clerics devoted to this ancient goddess are spreading. She was depicted in art as a serpentine creature with a woman's torso and arms, a quill and a whip in her hands, six wings on her back, and a head shaped like the mysterious Sihedron Rune. Lissala is lawful evil. Her favored weapon is the whip, and she grants access to the domains of Evil, Knowledge, Law, Nobility, and Rune.

Peacock Spirit (Dead God): The Peacock Spirit was worshiped by mages, scholars, and ascetics in both ancient Azlant and Thassilon. Difficult to comprehend, neither male nor female, and never depicted as more than an eye or feather in illustrations or statuary, this mysterious god bears a true nature deliberately hidden under many veils. The Peacock Spirit's hidden name was revealed only to its most faithful priests, all of whom are now, like the strange spirit itself, long dead.

Razmir (The Living God; False God): Built on arcane magic and a phenomenal lie, the cult of Razmir the Living God controls an entire country through the false deity at its head. Lacking the staples of healing magic that all clerics command, the cult relies on obscure arcane spells, secret "holy" magic items, and simple folk medicine to deal with illness and injury. Those living within and near the theocracy have seen Razmir's priests perform magic, and there is little reason to doubt his declaration of godhood. He claims to be the god of law, luxury, obedience, and the land of Razmiran itself. "Priests" wearing masks in his image can be found in neighboring lands, using the threat of violence to "prove" the divinity of the Living God.

Ydersius (The Headless King; Forgotten God): Ydersius was the patron god of the all-but-forgotten race of snake-men that battled mighty Azlant and lost. Forced to hide in the Darklands after he was decapitated (but not truly slain) by an Azlanti hero, Ydersius's mindless body thrashes recklessly through strange caverns in Orv while his head, presumably rotted away into a bare skull, remains lost. Some, however, say that the skull still thinks and can control a tiny measure of power, and if it and the body were ever reunited, Ydersius would heal and lead his people in an attack on the surface world. Ydersius is chaotic evil. His favored weapon is the dagger, and he grants access to the domains of Chaos, Evil, Nobility, Scalykind, and War.

Philosophies

A philosophy takes as its central tenet not the teachings of a deity, but the insights of a train of thought. In most cases, a philosophy is created by a mortal, and while philosophies often persist long after the founder's death, the founder is not, in fact, a deity. Followers of philosophical ways of thought can be (and usually are) of varied classes. Clerics who follow a philosophy must select a patron deity among the philosophy's associated religions (they gain no additional benefits from adherence to a philosophy).

There are countless philosophies to choose from on Golarion. Some of them are simple concepts, such as atheism (the "gods" may be real but not divine, and therefore not worthy of blind devotion and worship), pantheism (veneration of all the deities as warranted by the situation at hand), and agnosticism (no mortal can say what is divine and what isn't—the workings of the divine are fundamentally unknowable by mortals). Others are so fantastically complex that very few creatures count themselves as followers, and fewer still claim to fully understand them.

Listed here are four of the most widespread, well-known, or notorious philosophies currently active on Golarion. For the most part, adherence to a philosophy does not preclude membership in another organization, prestige class, or religion, although there are certain implications in most philosophies that make some choices untenable—you wouldn't expect to ever see a diabolist priest of Desna, for example.

Diabolism

Veneration of the Nine Circles of Hell

Alignment: LE

Centers of Belief: Cheliax

Associated Religions: Asmodeus, archdevils

The philosophy of diabolism is often misunderstood by those who do not adhere to its tenets. It is easy to misunderstand, as the religion of Asmodeus and the various cults of the other eight archdevils inexorably intertwine with and support the philosophy. Yet at its core, the primary difference between these religions and diabolism is the simple truth that a diabolist isn't particularly interested in serving one of the Lords of Hell. His interests lie in the underlying structure of Hell itself.

A diabolist sees each of the archdevils as an architect of the purest form of society, and Hell itself as the model for which such a society must be based. There cannot be rulers without the ruled, pleasure without the existence of pain and suffering, light without darkness. The argument that good is defined by evil and that kindness could not exist without cruelty is a favorite point of debate among diabolists. Many don't view their interest and admiration of Hell as evil, but rather as an honest and open appreciation of the simple fact that Hell is a necessity, and its rulers are to be respected, not reviled.

The Green Faith

Veneration of the Natural World

Alignment: Any neutral

Centers of Belief: Andoran, Nirmathas

Associated Religions: Erastil, Gozreh, the Eldest

Many divine scholars believe that druidism may be older even than the concept of faith. In the earliest days of the world, before even mortal man could envision such abstract ideas as gods or philosophies, the world in which he lived was a constant. The heat of the sun, the coolness of rain, the violence of a storm, the strength of a beast, and the beauty of a wildflower were all physical proof of the complexity and power of nature. Certainly, the fact that ancient druidic marks appear in cave paintings or carved in stone so ancient that the markings are little more than shadows testifies to the faith's ancient genesis.

The philosophy of the Green Faith may be one of Golarion's oldest. Legends hold that the Green Faith originated in war, as four sects of druids battled for control of a great natural wilderness. One sect held their faith in the storms of the sky, a second in the earth that provides a home to all living things, a third in the strength and purity of the wild beast, and a fourth in the cleansing quality of fire. One morning, the leaders of the four sects gathered in a war-torn vale, intent on finishing their conflict once and for all. Before any could strike, a geyser that seemed made of equal parts bubbling water, soil, and snapping flames spiraled up from the ground. A host of multicolored birds sprang from the geyser and flew away before the geyser sank back into the ground. The druids realized that, although their methods differed, their philosophies all held root in the same concept, and while they had come to do battle, they instead forged a lasting peace.

Dedicated worshipers of the Green Faith spend some time each day in deep meditation, communing with the natural forces. Peasants and farmers show their adherence to "the old ways" by hanging bundles of fresh herbs over their doorways, tending to their holdings without disturbing the natural order, and showing respect for nature whenever possible. Not all druids are members of the Green Faith, but only the most bitter and disenfranchised druids scoff at or deride the philosophy's values.

The Prophecies of Kalistrade

Achieve Wealth through Denial of the Physical World

Alignment: LN

Centers of Belief: Kalistocracy of Druma

Associated Religions: Abadar

Based on the dream-records of an eccentric mystic from the early days of the Age of Enthronement, the Prophecies of Kalistrade teach a regimen of sexual and dietary prohibitions, exclusive adornment in the color white, and the wearing of full-length gloves to prohibit physical contact with those who do not follow this path to enlightenment. Those who adhere to the Prophecies can expect to achieve vast personal wealth and success later in life—followers of the Prophecies who remain poor or destitute have, invariably, neglected one of the philosophy's core teachings, and thus do not deserve to reap the benefits of a life walking the straight and narrow path of Kalistrade.

Followers of the Prophecies of Kalistrade have weathered the recent change in ages quite well—they feel sheltered from the panic and turmoil surrounding Aroden's death, and point to this as proof of the inherent superiority of following this philosophy over blind allegiance to a god. Gods can die. Thought and tradition can not. Many followers of this philosophy have come to believe that a time of transformation is at hand, a transition into an age where the gods become relics of the past, and the true followers of the prophecies shall inherit the world. Certainly, ongoing and relentless expansion and ever-growing financial holdings suggest Druma will continue to grow in the years to come.

This philosophy's great strength is in its open acceptance of new members, regardless of gender, race, or background. Although humans are generally the most common members, anyone capable of demonstrating the ability to adhere to the philosophy's strictures and thus amass personal wealth is welcome, making this philosophy (and the nation of Druma) a popular destination for refugees fleeing from Cheliax or Isger.

The Whispering Way

True Life Begins with Undeath

Alignment: NE

Centers of Belief: Geb, Ustalav

Associated Religions: Kabriri, Orcus, Urgathoa, Zura

Adherents of the Whispering Way believe that undeath is the truest form of life, an eternal reward for those clever enough to snatch it by any means necessary. The philosophy certainly predates its most famous convert, the necromancer Tar-Baphon, who came to be known by history as the Whispering Tyrant. The Whispering Way is a secret so potent it cannot be spoken aloud, written, or recorded. It must be passed mouth to ear, sotto voce, from one adherent to another. The secret is dry in the mouth when whispered. It smells of foulness and decay. Once heard, it is never forgotten.

On a basic level, the Whispering Way is a formula for becoming a lich. But it is much more than that. Domination of the gate from life to eternal undeath—even the mere pursuit of it—breeds arrogance and entitlement. Adherents to the Whispering Way believe (or more accurately, come to understand) that the ideal state of life is undeath, and a planet teeming with life is inimical to this goal. A living world is an insufficient throne for an eternity of undeath. For conditions to be truly suitable, the world itself must die.

None spread the secret so widely as Tar-Baphon himself. Enshrined in his haunted capital of Gallowspire and bolstered by the terrified armies of enslaved Ustalav, the lich-king savaged neighboring nations, all in the hope of attracting the attention of his great enemy, Aroden. Tar-Baphon believed that the story of humanity's rise during the Age of Enthronement had become the story of Golarion itself, and that the fate of the world and of Aroden had become intertwined. By slaughtering Aroden on the field of battle, the Whispering Tyrant hoped to drive a lance into the heart of the planet.

It didn't work. Aroden's attention remained elsewhere. The gambit instead drew the unified attention of Ustalav's neighbors, and a triumvirate of nations drove their way to Gallowspire and imprisoned Tar-Baphon forever in the dungeons below his haunted tower.

But the Whispering Way remains a potent threat throughout the Inner Sea region, and indeed throughout the entire world. In the last century, the legend has taken on a new dimension. Adherents to the Way don't know if Aroden's recent demise was at the hands of Tar-Baphon or not, and few of them care. Their metaphor has been satisfied, and they now move from a program of anticipating and bringing about the literal death of Golarion to planning for the inevitable aftermath.

The Great Beyond

The Great Beyond exists as a tremendous, layered, nesting sphere. Every plane within the Great Beyond is part of an unimaginably immense hollow sphere of varying thickness and diameter. At the heart of the sphere lies the Material Plane.

The *GameMastery Guide* presents rules for planar traits, such as alignment, gravity, magic, shape, and time. These traits apply to the planes beyond Golarion—note that in most cases, the name of the planes in the Pathfinder Campaign Setting's Great Beyond are identical to those listed in the *GameMastery Guide*, but with a few exceptions. The Maelstrom has the same planar traits as Limbo, the Boneyard the same traits as Purgatory, and Axis the same traits as Utopia. In addition, the Great Beyond contains an additional plane—the First World. Its traits are encapsulated in the sidebar on page 239.

THE INNER SPHERE

At the center of the Multiverse, the planes collectively known as the Inner Sphere hang suspended within the Astral Plane like the core of a ripe fruit. The Elemental Planes—Air, Earth, Fire, and Water—act like the skin of this core, layered one inside the other, physically bordering one another in a churning dance. Within the borders formed by the Elemental Planes reside the Material Plane, the First World, and the Shadow Plane, with the misty Ethereal Plane bordering between all of them. Buried deepest within the Inner Sphere are the Positive and Negative Energy Planes—twin poles of creation and destruction.

Material Plane

Golarion orbits its yellow star with nearly a dozen other worlds in a small, isolated corner of the Material Plane. It is

here that mortal life lives and loves and wars and dies. While Golarion, with its great oceans and diverse continents, is certainly a cradle of mortal life, it is not alone in this respect among its neighboring spheres—the other worlds that share Golarion's star are described on page 209

Yet even these worlds are not the only ones within the universe of the Material Plane. Other stars with other worlds exist, drifting in the dark with wonders and horrors all their own, and despite the separation, these remote cousins occasionally prove to be the source of beings both benevolent and malignant, who have in the past—or even now—influenced events on Golarion.

Between these stars, in the dark and empty places, stranger life lurks—this region is known as the Dark Tapestry, and what dwells in this nightmare realm can rival the liveliest awfulness found in the deepest of the Outer Rifts. Fortunately, the vast physical distances between the Dark Tapestry and the well-lit worlds help to keep these opposing elements of existence apart.

Ethereal Plane

The fluid, shifting mists of the Ethereal Plane overlaps the planes of the Inner Sphere like a shallow river between very different shores, with distorted, hazy visions of neighboring planes visible as if through frosted glass. The Ethereal Plane's position allows for travel between the Inner Planes. In places, the boundaries grow thin, because of both natural variation and magical influence. Caution is urged, however, as the Ethereal Plane is by no means an empty no-man's land between antithetical realms.

Legends also tell of stranger things within the ethereal fog: paths to other worlds within the First World, the Material Plane, or the Shadow Plane; doorways to the Outer Sphere constructed eons ago by unknown beings; and even a hidden pocket-plane, sequestered by the gods as a repository for their unwanted but beloved mistakes.

The First World

Lurking within many of Golarion's darker and more fantastical myths and fairy tales are references to the so-called First World. A place untouched by mortal civilization and possessed of a life all its own, the First World is something more animate and dramatically distinct from the warped shadow presented by the Shadow Plane. While the Shadow Plane exists as a pale, mocking reflection of the Material Plane, the Material does the same for the First World, for the First World is a vibrant "rough draft" of reality fashioned in the dim dawn of the cosmos.

Regardless of its origin, the First World exists out of phase with the Material Plane, overlapping its boundaries yet existing entirely independently of the Ethereal and Shadow Planes—unlike the Shadow Plane, the First World does not mimic Material cities and landmarks. Magic can provide transportation between the two planes, but only in places where their boundaries already run thin, such as the wild places untouched by civilization, or those rare places the fey see fit to mark as theirs, placing mounds, stones, and rings of earth or mushrooms like boundary fences between the planes. Within the First World stand ancient forests as tall as mountains, living lakes and rivers, traveling faerie courts alternatively benevolent or sadistic, and landscapes of all manner separated by rolling, animate banks of memory-eating and time-shifting fog. And ruling over all in this realm are powerful entities known only as the Eldest. It is from this realm that fey creatures, the dread linnorms, the mysterious gnomes, and yet stranger beings hail.

First World Planar Traits

The First World exists behind the fabric of the Material Plane like the sketch behind a painting, and thus does not appear on the map on page 240. It has the following traits:

Erratic Time: Time progresses faster in some areas and slower in others, often according to the whim of the Eldest or other powerful individuals. For most visitors from other planes, their own timestream clings to them like a protective shell, but it's not uncommon for one who spends a day in the First World to find that a year or more has passed back home.

Highly Morphic

Minor Positive Dominant: The First World does not grant fast healing to creatures save for in certain areas where life is particularly potent and concentrated.

Mildly Neutral-Aligned

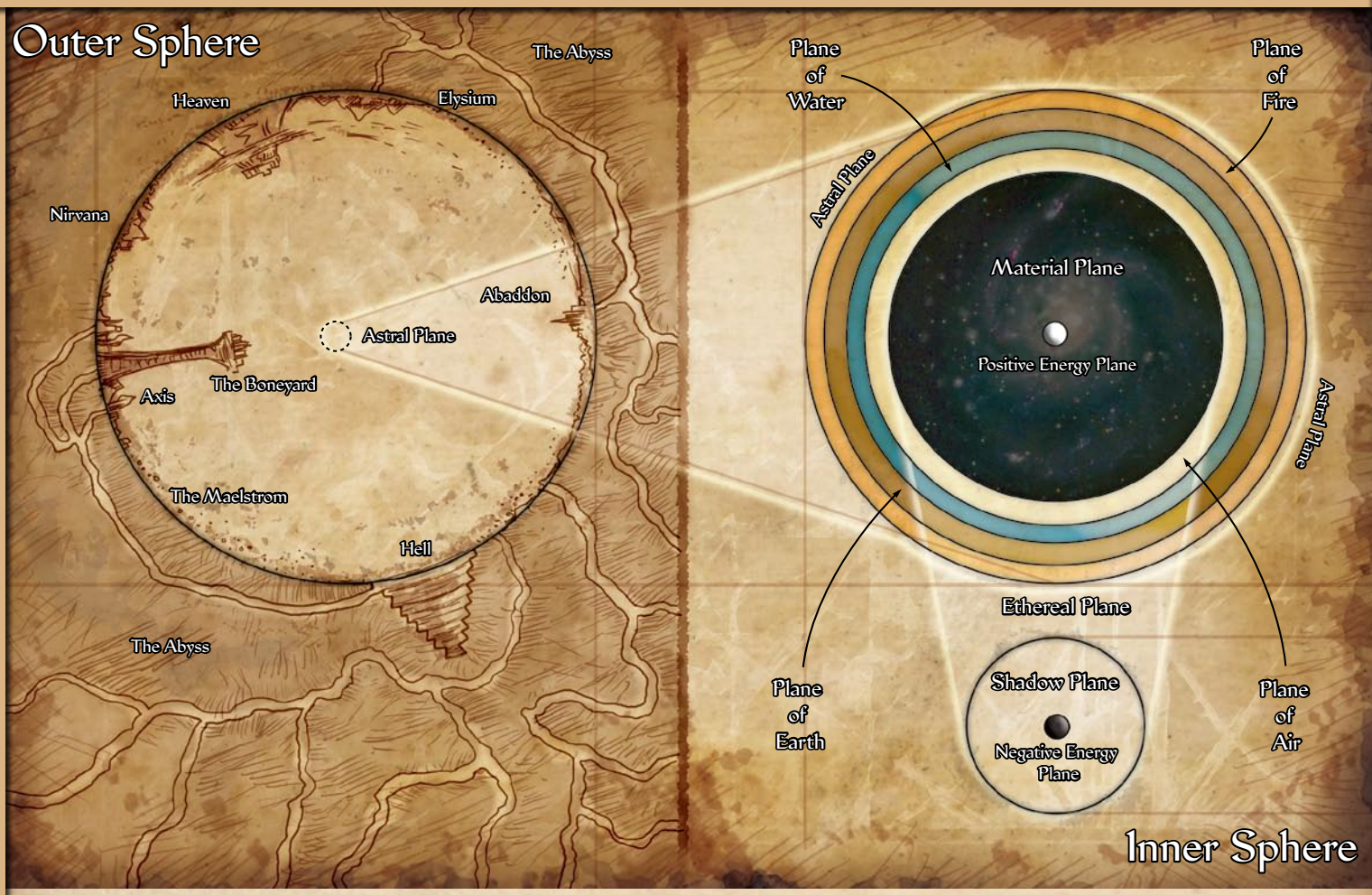
Shadow Plane

Isolated on the far side of the Ethereal mists, the Shadow Plane exists as a twisted reflection of the Material Plane. Like a funhouse mirror or a broken, warped pane of glass looking out into a caged menagerie, the Shadow Plane emulates the Material Plane's life but only manages to produce and populate itself with hollow perversions.

Where cities appear on the Material Plane, the corresponding region of the Shadow Plane might hold crumbling ruins or a metropolis swarming with its own creeping life. Deserts on the Material exist on the Shadow as syrupy seas of leaking, wind-blown darkness and oceans as open, bottomless pits in the world of their dark reflections. The correlation is imperfect, and distances are grossly skewed from one plane to the other, making venturing there and back a useful, if treacherous, method of travel.

Negative Energy Plane

A jealous, hollow twin to the Positive Energy Plane, the Negative Energy Plane cannot create. It can only consume and destroy. This devouring void forges twisted mockeries of the Material Plane's denizens, with the Shadow Plane itself the greatest expression of this warped emulation.



Largely sterile and desolate, the Negative Energy Plane is, however, populated by great numbers of undead, especially the more powerful and intelligent, as well as stranger insectoid creatures that traverse the realm like strange fish in a night sea.

Positive Energy Plane

Spoken of by some as the embers of creation's forge, blown and tended by the gods, or something that existed even prior to the deities, the Positive Energy Plane is the source of vitality and souls themselves. Pretty metaphysics aside, however, the raw vitality of the plane proves overwhelming to mortals and even most immortals, incinerating their bodies within seconds of unprotected exposure. Because of this effect, little is known of its interior, save for barely intelligible fragments learned with extreme caution from the rarely seen beings of luminous energy who call the plane home.

Plane of Air

The Plane of Air surrounds the Material Plane like an idealized expression of the skies from any number of Material worlds. Sparkling blue vistas mingle with regions of churning thunderheads, gently drifting snow, and massive banks of white clouds. Regions of storms grow increasingly frequent near the border with the Plane of Water, and it is not rare to find massive globules of water filled with all manner of marine life intruding into its neighboring plane like incongruous floating seas.

This plane is scantly populated compared to the other Elemental Planes, with only a fraction of the non-native populations present in the other three, largely due to the lack of solid ground except for drifting chunks of ice and the occasional magically created platform of stone. Still, the plane is home to the djinn (who reside in floating cities of their own creation), air mephits, elementals, and a surprisingly large population of constantly warring dragons.

Plane of Earth

A place of solid, eternal rock, the Plane of Earth is riddled by caverns the size of planets, mineral veins like rivers, and hollow geodes like pocket crystalline seas. Unlike mundane caves and mineshafts burrowing into the earth on Material Plane worlds, the Plane of Earth is not a lightless place, although it is possessed of vast blackened reaches. Many of its caverns and open places are lit by phosphorescent crystals, miniature stars crafted and suspended by the magic of the shaitan genies, and glowing fungus that feeds off the slow trickle of water from the bordering Plane of Water.

Precious stones, valuable ores, and pure veins of every metal imaginable riddle the plane's vast expanses. The plane's natives realize this, and approach their wealth with differing perspectives.

Plane of Fire

The Plane of Fire is a plane of deadly beauty. From its border with the Plane of Earth to the edges of the Astral Plane, it encompasses seas of flame, "snowfall" of burning embers, rivers of molten iron, scorching white skies dotted with ash-filled clouds, and sheets of flame oscillating with a panoply of colors like burning rainbows.

Outside of the animalistic fire elementals, the most recognizable natives are the tyrannical efreet. Ruled by their grand Sultan Hakim Khalid Suleiman XXIII, Lord of Flame and Khan of Magma, they dwell within grandiose palace cities that float atop the flames on hemispheres of iron and steel, and—for their imperial capital—upon a hemisphere of gleaming brass. The City of Brass is the plane's most notable location. Without the protection of personal might, great wealth, or official status as a trader or diplomat, outsiders are quickly enslaved by the notorious efreet. For those seeking shelter from the plane's worst conditions, or wishing to do business or gather information, the City of Brass offers a dangerous and often treacherous harbor.

Plane of Water

A vast liquid shell between the Planes of Air and Earth, the Plane of Water alternates between immense stretches of saline seas and freshwater oceans. A world illuminated by filtered light exists near the border with the Plane of Air, while the regions bordering the Plane of Earth fall into a perpetual twilight in the murky depths of silt and mud where the planes bleed and merge more fully.

Paramount among the natives of the Plane of Water, the marid genies rule a vast but fractured empire that extends from the border with the Plane of Air down to the twilit depths touching the Plane of Earth. The self-demarcated rule of their various clans ends only with the reach of the light and the territorial claims of the great brine drakes and krakens. Bordering the marids' domain, and largely coexisting peacefully with them (although not always among themselves), are entire nations of sahuagin who long ago fled their homes on the Material Plane to become adoptive natives, along with smaller kingdoms of tritons, merfolk, water mephits, and all manner of mundane sea and freshwater life.

Despite the inability of most mortal creatures to breathe there, the Plane of Water is the most hospitable of the Elemental Planes when it comes to populations of adapted non-natives and the ease with which mortal visitors can find survivable conditions. Situated as it is between the Plane of Earth and Air, bits of both neighboring planes occasionally break away and intrude into the eternal sea, providing stable ground and pockets of breathable atmosphere, sometimes in conjunction when they collide.

THE OUTER SPHERE

After stretching for such incredible distances that the Inner Sphere's light is no longer distinct, the silver void of the Astral Plane ends at the edges of the planes that comprise the Outer Sphere. Arranged like a gigantic shell that surrounds the Astral Plane and the entire Inner Sphere, the Outer Planes range from heavenly paradises to infernal hells, domains of chaos or regimented law, and everything in between. They are places of wonder and horror, the domains of Golarion's gods and beings stranger still, each plane existing like an island within the shifting wilderness of the chaotic Maelstrom.

Abaddon

The waste of Abaddon is as the source of the river Styx and the native plane of a race of neutral evil fiends known as the daemons (see the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2*). Dominated by the competing courts of the four godlike Horsemen of the Apocalypse, the remainder of the plane is filled by unclaimed wastelands and the fiefdoms of many minor lords and vassals to the Four. Like a land in the bleak aftermath of total depopulation by war or plague, the landscape is filled by an unnatural hush. A cold, cloying black mist shrouds the ground, and the sky overhead feels heavy and rotten, shrouded as it is by the weird perpetual twilight of a solar eclipse.

Daemons are one of the youngest of the fiendish races, born from the souls of evil mortals who perished in particularly gruesome or violent manners. They are dependent on the existence of mortality, but they view its existence as a curse. Corruption and domination mean nothing to them, nor does physical pain and destruction. The daemons of Abaddon instead feast upon mortal souls, existing as personifications of the worst ways to die. The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse rule this race of fiends. They were the first of daemonkind to appear, manifesting as four great scourges designed to bring about the deaths of mortals by the thousands. Ram-headed Apollyon, the Horseman of Pestilence, rules the Plaguemere—a vast, continent-sized region of swamps and flooded forests. The river Styx feeds the Plaguemere and filters out into the other Lower Planes and the Maelstrom before pooling below Pharasma's spire—this realm is ruled by Charon, the Horseman of Death, who represents death from old age. Black winged but coldly beautiful, Szuriel resides over the Cinder Furnace as the Horseman of War. And the Lord of Wasting, jackal-headed Trelmarixian the Black, rules as the Horseman of Famine. Rumor holds that a mysterious fifth horseman, an archdaemon of vast power, rules over these four, while others hold that the Four murdered their

one-time leader, upon whose perpetually regenerating flesh they now dine in a perverse sacrament.

The Abyss

Winding through the Outer Planes are the bottomless chasms known as the Outer Rifts—the entrances to the infinite horror of the Abyss. Unlike a mundane canyon or volcanic rift on the surface of a Material Plane world, the gargantuan chasms of the Abyss are not bound by the normal laws of reality as most mortals conceive of them. Once over the yawning lip of a particular crack in the Outer Sphere, gravity is local, twisted, or in some cases nonexistent. Each chasm opens into a different layer of the Abyss: some dump the unwary into burning netherworlds or acidic seas with no visible connection to the chasm just plunged into, while others might open into enormous forested regions with a land of exploding volcanoes hanging above like a sky on the opposite side of the original chasm. Everything is local, everything is meaningless, and pain is part and parcel of the land itself.

The rifts that open up in the surface of the Outer Sphere rarely lead to a layer claimed by one of the various demon lords and queens, but instead to unclaimed territory, and frequently into regions of the Abyss currently in flux or claimed by multiple fiendish lords. The opening rifts change and shift without rhyme or reason, belching forth marauding armies of demons from their depths or else eerie, desolate silence in the aftermath of demonic struggles on the other side.

There are two primary races of fiends dwelling within the Abyss—the ancient qlippoth (see the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2*) and the fecund demons. These two races act almost as metaphysical bookends to the races of the Outer Sphere, for the qlippoth are possibly the oldest of these races, while demons are without doubt the youngest. When the Abyss first opened into the Outer Sphere as a result of strange experiments into the nature of reality at the hands of protean explorers, the qlippoth were already ancient. With the introduction of sinful mortal souls, the daemons undertook a fateful experiment—by infusing the raw nature of the Abyss with these sinful souls, they triggered the creation of the first demons. As if the Abyss itself had learned a dreadful new trick, the assimilation of chaotic and evil mortal souls quickly outpaced the daemons' ability to control it, and now the myriad demons are the most populous of all the fiendish races. Greatest among their kind are the demon lords, powerful entities like Abraxas, Cyth-V'sug, Dagon, Nocticula, and Pazuzu, who possess unique forms and godlike powers. The demon queen Lamashtu exists as a paragon of her kind by having actually claimed the mantle of true divinity, temporarily transcending her jealous kindred in their eternal struggles.

CHARON

Astral Plane

Viewed from its exterior, the whole of the Inner Sphere resembles nothing so much as a great and burning star, clad as it is by the Plane of Fire. Beyond its surface, a great and vast void surrounds the Inner Sphere, stretching out to the limits of sight and to virtually unimaginable distances beyond, ultimately reaching the edge of the Outer Sphere as the far shores of this gulf.

By no means, however, is this void empty.

Like the rushing air of a forge bellows, or the solar wind of a true star, the flames of the Plane of Fire whip and churn the Astral Plane's metaphysical substance, casting it out into the void as thin clouds of drifting silver haze. As these winds near the Outer Sphere, some of them collide and aggregate, solidifying into nascent demiplanes formed and defined by the influence of the portion of the Outer

Sphere they drift toward, or by the diffuse mental whispers of the memories of the dead.

Of all the Astral Plane's visitors, only the souls of dead mortals are truly a constant. Carried along by currents within the silvery haze, these souls group together and swim within the many branches of the vast River of Souls. The plane's natives tend to give these spirits a wide berth, though many seem incapable of perceiving them, potentially because of some natural law of the Multiverse or deific fiat. Beyond this natural protection and the safety of numbers the souls possess within the river, it is not uncommon to see the river shadowed and watched over by protective natives of the Outer Planes. These Outer Planes natives might desire the safety of the souls out of benevolence or enlightened self-interest in ultimately receiving those souls due to them, their god, or their plane. Of course, these self-appointed guardians frequently come into conflict with one another, despite a collective desire to see the souls reach their appointed destinations.

Axis

Axis, the plane of rigid perfection and unyielding Law, rests at the base of the Great Spire of Pharasma. Composed of a single, massive city, Axis sprawls outward toward its neighboring planes, separated from them by the shifting borderlands of the Maelstrom. Such is the antipathy of Axis's denizens to disorder that more ferocity is given to guarding over those walled borders than to the waters of the Styx that lap against the base of Pharasma's spire. Axis holds idealized versions of houses, public institutions, barracks, factories, and temples, while massive spires of crystal and stone rise above the skyline, carved with theorems and equations: the laws of Axis and thus of reality itself. There are no shortages of labor or raw goods, no social disorder. The native population possesses a selfless, almost hivemind mentality. Everything moves according to the best interests of universal order: the discovery of laws and the promotion of the collective will of Axis for what its natives view as the obvious betterment of the Great Beyond.

Unlike the similarly ordered planes of Heaven and Hell, Axis is not ruled by any single race. The outer walls are watched over by legions of construct-like inevitables (see the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2*), while other groups of that race are regularly sent out to battle the forces of the Maelstrom across the planes. Their creators, a race known as the axiomites (see the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2*), dwell among them. Axiomites appear as humanoids of many different races—seeming to correspond to the original race of the soul that birthed them—but with distinct differences. When they move, axiomites disperse into moving, hive-like clouds of fine, golden crystalline dust, resolving into moving patterns of equations before they finally coalesce back into their bodily forms.

The Boneyard

Every soul passing through the Astral Plane migrates toward a great spire rising up from the surface of the Outer Sphere that physically reaches into the silvery void, attracting the swirling current of souls like a mundane lightning rod in the center of a storm.

Situated at the top of the spire, the deific domain of the goddess Pharasma sprawls as a vast necropolis filled with solemn courtyards, graves, monuments, and forums teeming with the souls of the newly deceased awaiting judgment—be it self-imposed or external. Each vast court bears the motifs and styling of the plane to which it corresponds, containing celestial or infernal heralds who await the arriving dead, and gates allowing for souls' egress once their fate is determined.

The souls in the Boneyard are each assigned to their ultimate destination within the Outer Sphere, be it Heaven, Hell, Elysium, the Abyss, or any other plane or god's domain. When the ownership of a soul is in dispute, deific representatives petition them to settle their claims, although in the case of souls bound by contract to an archfiend or similar planar entity, Pharasma herself plays the determining role.

Far beyond Pharasma's palace and the surrounding necropolis, the souls of the neutral dead are transformed into strange entities of a dualistic nature—these creatures are the aeons (see the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2*). They serve Pharasma and the Boneyard as advisors, arbiters, caretakers, explorers, guardians, guides, and even soldiers in times of need.

Elysium

Elysium is a plane of good unhindered by law, a land of unrestrained passions and emotions, and a land where the creative spark is coaxed and adored with all the force of a benevolent storm. A land of many terrains, Elysium encompasses a wide variety of climes ranging from thick evergreen forests to jagged mountain ranges and lush—if isolated—river valleys, all presenting a place of unplanned, wild beauty.

To the unprepared, Elysium might seem harsh and uninviting, with little of civilization's trappings, but a deeper understanding of the plane reveals its true character. Elysium and its native inhabitants desire two things: selfless cooperation and hardy self-sufficiency.

More often felt than seen, the native celestials operate with little regard for order and structure, constantly moving about and eschewing cities or large, formal settlements. Foremost among them are the beautiful azatas, of which the bralani, ghaele, and lillends are the most common and well known. Omnipresent across the plane, they usually appear as beautiful humanoids, though many also have shape-changing abilities and may appear as formless balls of colored light or localized weather phenomena.

The exception to this rule of wandering impermanency is the titans. These towering, regal humanoids dwell in hidden castles atop the highest, most isolated peaks, and higher still in floating palaces in the clouds. Their true history is an open question, and while they are not native to Elysium, and indeed behave almost as if exiled from another realm, they arrived there eons ago and have established some agreement with the celestials of Elysium.

Heaven

The celestial mountain of Heaven rises high above the landscape of the Outer Sphere, nearly to the heights of Pharasma's spire, situated as the bulwark of enlightened order and the redoubt of organized compassion. Surrounded by glittering walls of glass and gold, magically tempered to the strength of iron, its gates are guarded by the native archons who shepherd arriving souls to the region on the slope that best reflects their character and, when at all possible, reunite them with loved ones or comrades who wait for their arrival.

Heaven is divided into seven distinct regions, with each watched over by a single, unique archon granted power by a deep spiritual communion with the plane itself. The regions begin at the outer gates leading onto Heaven's slopes and end with the area surrounding—but not including—the peak. Although not rulers of the plane's souls in the strictest sense, these unique archons act as shepherds to the spirits of dead mortals and beloved commanders to the archons. The archons are those souls who, upon entry into Heaven, climbed the mountain on their own in response to what they collectively describe as a voice calling to them by name, asking them to serve for the common good. Having listened to that voice, they vanished into the heights and then later descended, transfigured and given a place within the archons' ranks.

Hell

The domain of the god-fiend Asmodeus, the Prince of Darkness, Hell is a constructed plane rather than one claimed fully formed or coaxed from the wilds of the Maelstrom. Best described as multiple planes stacked within and upon one another, Hell is a labyrinth of planned and calculated evil in which each gate swings wide to an even deeper truth revealed to those deemed worthy enough to breach it or corrupt enough to perceive the path. It is here that the nefarious fiends known as devils rule. Each layer of Hell is ruled over and administered by one of the archdevils, paragons of their kind and suzerains of the god-tyrant himself. Eight layers are known and feared, but the palace of Asmodeus himself resides beneath them all, in a ninth layer so dark and deep that few have seen it and fewer still wish to.

The Iron Wilderness of Avernus is the first layer of Hell as seen from the borderlands of the Maelstrom and the walls of Axis. Here, the archdevil Barbatos rules, the newest addition to the caretakers of Hell.

The court of Dis supplies a constant stream of soldiers to the layers above and below. Inside the burning walls of Dispater's garrison-cities, the wrathful dead are trained and transformed by combat alongside the most elite souls of the other seven courts.

The searing sewers of the city of Dis compose the third circle of hell—darkened Erebus. Here at the eternal counting house of Mammon, Hell's material fortunes of conquest are listed, its supplies catalogued, and its outbound soldiers equipped.

The Burning Legions of Phlegethon refer to both a place and a thing. Here, amid the clang of hammers and the stench of burning flesh, souls are melted down, purified of weakness and rebellion, and recast into the forms of devils according to the will of Hell's rapacious forgemaster, Belial.

Housing temples to the base sins and the libraries of diabolic scholars, Stygia is where the sages of Hell scribe new lies to inflict upon mortals to lead them astray. Serpents rule these swamps, and are in turned ruled by Geryon, one of Hell's most accomplished tempters, a creature whose whispers may have spawned more heresies than any other.

Deeper still lies the layer of Malebolge, a smoldering forest covered in a constant snow of white ashes, where the damned are falsely rewarded within Moloch's palaces of silver and stone.

In the seventh circle of Hell, Baalzebul, the Lord of Flies, rules over a realm of frozen oceans and razored glaciers known as Cocytus.

Below these frigid reaches lies Caina, a realm of iron and steel cages suspended above an almost living darkness. Mortal souls hang from the ramparts and bridges of Mephistopheles' domain, at the center of which rises his vast palace.

Of the deepest circle of hell, a searing volcanic desolation known as Nessus, very little is known beyond the fact that here, in Hell's fundament and genesis, rules the greatest devil of all: Asmodeus, the Prince of Darkness.

The Maelstrom

When viewed from the edge of another plane, the Maelstrom's features appear much like that of its adjacent neighbor. The differences grow more profound farther away from the stabilizing anchor of the borderlands, eventually falling back into the mutable freedom of perpetual change in a vast churning sea of possibility called the Cerulean Void. The Maelstrom defies the efforts of mapmakers, as its very character shifts and flows like the tide of an unseen ocean, to which the borderlands are but shores and calm shallows. Crystalline forests melt like candle wax into shallow brine seas with jewel-like icebergs, and then sublimate to vast parched deserts, all within the stretch of

days. Still, islands of stability do exist within the depths of the Maelstrom. Petty gods, exiled fiends, and fallen celestials rule such islands, and even the rare stronghold of a mortal wizard or priest-king can be found here, holding itself against the metaphysical lapping tide.

Creatures wandering in from the structured planes, long since grown native, populate the Maelstrom's borderlands, often possessing characteristics and behaviors at odds with their origins. Deeper still, the mysterious serpentine proteans (see the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2*) thrive within an environment of plastic potentiality. Claiming to be the first children of the Outer Planes, the proteans worship alien, godlike beings they refer to as the Speakers of the Depths, whom scholars speculate to be something akin to a pair of conjoined gods or a single dualistic entity.

Nirvana

Rolling pastoral hills, breathtaking mountains, and lush forests of every clime fill Nirvana's idyllic expanse, with the landscape encountered by travelers curiously matching their expectations of a restful, physical paradise. Beyond appearances, though, lies both mystery and majesty.

Nirvana's native celestials are the agathions. Each race of agathion follows the teachings of a single, elder member of its kind, collectively said to be the first mortal souls to reach Nirvana, each of whom transcended to some greater existence. These elders, having witnessed Nirvana's hidden secrets openly in those primal days, willingly returned to guide all those who came after them.

Greater incarnations of good can be found here as well—angels prepared to martyr themselves on the Material Plane, within the Maelstrom, and even in the Lower Planes themselves in the defense of universal benevolence. While most angels dwell upon Nirvana, it is not uncommon for those more closely aligned with law or chaos to be found among the entities of Heaven or Elysium.

Other Planes

The Great Beyond contains far more planes than those mentioned here. Listed below are several additional minor planes known to have strong connections to Golarion.

The Dead Vault: Reputed to be yet another layer of the metaphysical "onion" that is the Great Beyond, the Dead Vault is said to lie within Golarion's molten core. This is a prison realm discovered long ago by the gods and used to contain one of their great enemies—the Rough Beast Rovagug.

The Dimension of Dream: Hidden within the deepest mists of the Ethereal Plane lies a strange realm known as the Dimension of Dream, a plane forged by the slumbering minds of mortal life, yet existing on its own beyond the knowledge of its unwitting creators.

The Dimension of Time: A plane defined by speculation and purely hypothetical theory, the Dimension of Time's existence has yet to be solidly confirmed. Untold power and horror await those who could access and travel this mythical realm.

The Immortal Ambulatory: This mobile demiplane appears as a massive globe filled with drifting stars and floating islands as it moves from plane to plane. This singular plane is the home of Apsu, god and perhaps source of all the worlds' dragons.

Leng: If the Dimension of Dream was built by slumbering mortals' nocturnal musings, then Leng arose from their nightmares. Lodged somewhere between dream and reality, the inhabitants of this malevolent realm have a disturbing interest in those who dwell upon the Material Plane and often travel there in strange ships to gather slaves.

APSU

4

Life

"They think this is funny," Seltyiel snarled. The troll skeletons stalked toward them, claws spread wide. One great fist swung down, and the poor fool who still thought he was acting went sailing through the air.

"Well, it kind of is," Lem admitted. He sprinted forward and dove between the corpses, daggers slicing in precise cuts that would have hamstrung an elephant. Blades snicked impotently against mammoth bones.

"Don't you start, too!" Lowering his sword, Seltyiel reached for the core of his rage and let it burn and flow up through his arm until it surrounded him with silent, silver flames.

The audience roared in approval.

Life Along the Inner Sea

From the barbaric tribes of the Realm of the Mammoth Lords to the undead slave castes of Geb, the pioneers and natives of Varisia to the revolutionaries and reactionaries of Galt, the lands of the Inner Sea teem with variety and diversity. Yet for all of the region's scope, there remain constants that the many nations share. This chapter explores those constants and examines what it means to live in the Inner Sea region.

TIME

Although many calendars exist among the peoples of the Inner Sea, the one in widest use employs Absalom Reckoning (AR) for all of its dates. This reckoning system is based on the foundation of Absalom (which occurred on 1 Abadius, 1 AR), and because of Absalom's expansive influence, the city's calendar has achieved great popularity throughout the region. In Absalom Reckoning, the day of the month is always given first, followed by the name or number of the month, with the year coming last.

Golarion spins on its axis roughly once every 24 hours. A week consists of 7 days, with 52 weeks per year. A year has 12 months, each of which corresponds to a popular deity and (roughly) to a single cycle of Golarion's sole moon. In order to most accurately reflect reality, many calendars across Golarion add in leap days. In the Absalom Reckoning, the leap day is tacked on to the end of Calistril and occurs on every year divisible by 8. Thus, the current year (4711) is not a leap year, but 4704 was and 4712 will be.

Days of the Week

Day	Task
Moonday	Work, religion (night)
Toilday	Work
Wealday	Work
Oathday	Work, pacts signed, oaths sworn
Fireday	Work, market day
Starday	Work
Sunday	Rest, religion

Months of the Year

Month	Days in Month	Season	Associated Deity
Abadius (January)	31	Winter	Abadar
Calistril (February)	28	Winter	Calistria
Pharast (March)	31	Spring	Pharasma
Gozran (April)	30	Spring	Gozreh
Desnus (May)	31	Spring	Desna
Sarenith (June)	30	Summer	Sarenrae
Erastus (July)	31	Summer	Erastil
Arodus (August)	31	Summer	Aroden
Rova (September)	30	Fall	Rovagug
Lamashan (October)	31	Fall	Lamashtu
Neth (November)	30	Fall	Nethys
Kuthona (December)	31	Winter	Zon-Kuthon

HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

The following list records most of the major holidays in the Inner Sea region and a few of the minor ones.

Abadius

1st. New Year, Foundation Day (Absalom): Commemorates Absalom's founding by Aroden.
20th. Ruby Prince's Day (Osirion): Monarch's birthday.

Calistril

2nd. Merrymead: Commemorates coming Spring with the distribution of the last of the previous season's alcohol.
19th. Loyalty Day (Cheliax): Marks the signing of the Treaty of Egorian and House Thrune's rule.
Last Oathday. Batul al-Alim (Qadira): Commemorates the birth of the romantic poet of the same name.
29th. Leap Day: Added every 8 years for calendar accuracy.

Pharast

5th. Day of Bones (Pharasma): Pharasmins parade the recent dead in a procession, then inter corpses for free.
13th. Kaliashahrim (Qadira): Celebration of the Padishah Emperor's rule, and Qadira's allegiance to the empire.
26th. Conquest Day (Nex): Day of nationalism on which citizens renew their vows to one day destroy Geb.

Gozran

7th. Currentseve (Gozreh): Solemn occasion on which families of sailors and rivermen pray for safe passage during the year.
15th. Taxfest (Abadar): Clerics accompany tax collectors on their rounds, then host a public feast for all citizens.
16th–30th. Wrights of Augustana (Andoran): Annual celebration of Augustana's shipyards and the navy.

Desnus

2nd. Ascendance Day (Norgorber): Norgorber's ascension.
13th. Old-Mage Day (Mwangi Expanse): Celebration of Old-Mage Jatembe and his magical warriors.
Last Sunday. Goblin Flea Market (Andoran): Market day of crafts, strange items, and games for costumed children.

Sarenith

3rd. Liberty Day (Andoran): Marks Andoran's independence from foreign rule.
10th. Burning Blades (Sarenrae): End of a month-long festival in which the faithful dance with flaming blades.
21st. Talon Tag (Andoran): Annual aerial display by mounted Eagle Knights in Almas.
Last Sunday. Goblin Flea Market (Andoran)

Erastus

3rd. Archerfeast (Erastil): Archery competitions, livestock trading, and courtship of eligible women.
14th. Founding Festival (Korvosa, Varisia): Festival featuring magical light shows celebrating the founding of Korvosa.
17th. Burning Night (Razmiran): Annual festival at which heresies against the god-king are burned publicly—whether they be books or traitors.
15th–21st. Kianidi Festival (Garund): Garundi gathering to display mementos of their travels, fortifying tribal histories and regional ties.
Last Sunday. Goblin Flea Market (Andoran)

TALDAN SUNDIAL

Arodus

6th. First Crusader Day (Mendev): Honors the continuing crusade against the Worldwound.
9th. Day of Silenced Whispers (Ustalav): Celebrates Ustalav's freedom from the Whispering Tyrant.
16th. Armasse (Aroden, Iomedae): Day to train commoners in combat and learn from history.
Last Sunday. Silverglazer Sunday (Andoran): Two-part fishing festival involving swimming contests and huge puppets.

Rova

First Sunday. Silverglazer Sunday (Andoran): Second half of the festival.
Second Oathday. Signing Day (Andoran, Cheliax, Galt, Isger): Marks the day the nations broke from Taldor.
19th. Day of the Inheritor (Iomedae): Marks Iomedae's absorption of Aroden's faithful into her church.

Lamashan

Second Moonday. Harvest Feast: Celebrates the harvest and the end of field work for the year.
6th. Ascendance Day (Iomedae): Iomedae's divine ascension.
27th. Jestercap (Andoran, Druma, Taldor): Day of pranks and practical jokes. Particularly favored by gnomes.

Neth

5th. All Kings Day (Galt): Commemorates Galt's Red Revolution and freedom from a tyrannical nobility.
8th. Abjurant Day (Nethys): A day of working together to shore up mutual defenses and train children in magic.
14th. Even-Tongued Day (Andoran, Cheliax, Galt, Isger): Commemorates these nations' freedom from Taldor.
18th. Evoking Day (Nethys): A day of fireworks displays and magical duels (both mock and real).
23rd. Seven Veils: Celebration of brotherhood between all civilized races, marked by interracial masquerade balls.
28th. Transmutatum (Nethys): Self-improvement.

Kuthona

Second Week (Sunday to Starday). Winter Week: Traditional feast; time for courting and spending time with friends.
11th. Ascendance Day (Cayden Cailean): Cayden's divine ascension.
31st. Night of the Pale: Night of morbid revelry, as people wait indoors for the ghosts of last year's dead to pass by their homes.

Vernal Equinox

Firstbloom (Gozreh): Celebration of the coming spring with fertility dances.
Planting Week (Erastil): A holy week marked primarily by hard work in the fields.

Summer Solstice

Ritual of Stardust (Desna): Night of song and bonfires, in which Desna's faithful throw sand and powdered gems onto the embers to symbolize the stars while making proclamations of love and friendship.
Sunwrought Festival (Sarenrae): Celebration of the year's longest day with fireworks, kites, and gift giving, as well as reenactments of the Dawnflower's battle with Rovagug.

Autumnal Equinox

Harvest Feast (Erastil): A holy week marked primarily by hard work in the fields.
Swallowtail Festival (Desna): Day of feasting, storytelling, and public release of a wagonload of butterflies.

Winter Solstice

Crystalhue (Shelyn): Day of artistic creation; traditionally a time for courtship and romantic proposals.
Ritual of Stardust (Desna): See above.

Full Moons

Abadius—Longnight: Tradition in which revelers defy the long winter nights by staying up all night to greet the dawn.
Desnus—Remembrance Moon (Lastwall, Ustalav): Honors those fallen in the crusade against the Whispering Tyrant.
Lamashan—Admani Upastuti (Jalmeray, Vudra): Marks the founding of the colony of Jalmeray.

Weather and Climate

A wide range of climate bands exist in the Inner Sea region, from blisteringly hot in the deserts of Garund to freezing cold and snowy at the border with the Crown of the World. In general, weather patterns in Avistan and Garund flow from west to east, sweeping cold rains across Varisia, Nidal, northwestern Cheliax, and the Mwangi Expanse. The rain shadow created by the Mindspin Mountains is partially offset by the rain-birthing waters of Lake Encarthan. South of the Menador and Five Kings Mountains, the chill of the north gives way to the warm waters of the Inner Sea, allowing for extended growing seasons and larger populations.

The deserts of northern Garund speak to the relatively arid conditions north of the Barrier Wall. South of those imposing mountains, though, heavy rains create the rainforests and jungles of the Mwangi Expanse. Off the western shore of Garund churns the century-old hurricane, the Eye of Abendego, which contributes to the production of driving rains across western and central Garund. These endless rains, in fact, flooded a section of the coast, creating the storm-soaked devastation of the Sodden Lands. East of the Shattered Range, the dominant weather flow brings warm rains from the Obari Ocean, allowing for the lush grasslands over most of eastern Garund. Only the destructive influence of life-stripping magic prevents Nex from growing abundant crops like Geb.

While most of the Inner Sea region experiences weather typical for its climate, several aberrant weather conditions manifest in various areas around the Inner Sea. Some of these bizarre phenomena are relatively localized, and draw only curious locals or passing experts. Other unusual weather events affect wide swaths of territory and are known (and often feared) even thousands of miles away.

Emberstorms: Also known as "black blizzards," the terrible and destructive emberstorms are one of the most fearsome natural occurrences in the already quite fearsome Cinderlands. These dust storms, composed of ash and embers left behind by the region's immense and frequent brushfires, roar across the plains and scour all in their paths. The indigenous Shoanti tribes of the region believe that the emberstorms are the Cinderlands' way of claiming those whom the gods have called away.

Eye of Abendego: A vast and terrible hurricane rages day and night off the coast of the Sodden Lands. The permanent storm appeared at the time of Aroden's death, along with numerous other massive storms that lasted "merely" a few weeks or months. Although the hurricane's strength waxes and wanes with the seasons, it can rip the sails off of ships even at its weakest—at its strongest, it can tear galleons in half. The Eye constantly spawns storms that roil along the coastline. Over the years, these storms swept away the nations of Lirgen and Yamasa, leaving behind the desolate, rain-swept region known as the Sodden Lands.

Mistgales: These clouds of fog form mainly in the ancient forests of northern Avistan (particularly in Ustalav), but they sometimes appear in graveyards and ruins as well. Fog rises from the ground at nightfall and forms swirling storms anywhere from 10 feet to a mile in diameter. Damp and chilly, mistgales are the bane of travelers, who find the road obscured and their journey made more unpleasant (and somewhat frightening) by the unusual storms.

Morozko: Manifesting randomly throughout the year in remote reaches of the Crown of the World, morozkos are named for the first druid to encounter them and note their strange proclivity for acting almost as if driven by an intelligent malevolence. These singularly harrowing blizzards carry upon their winds a supernatural cold and strange sounds, as if of shrieking maniacs or hungry ghosts. Once these violent storms appeared only on the Crown of the World, but over the last 100 years, they have been occurring further and further south.

Spider Storms: This term for a torrential downpour lasting several hours originated in Korvosa, where arachnid menaces known as drain spiders (see page 254) infest the sewers. After a sudden and violent rainstorm, the water level in the sewers rises enough to drive the drain spiders to street level—resulting in an eruption of spiders pouring from the gutters, outhouses, and sewers of the city. Varisian traders bought stories of these fortunately rare plagues out of Varisia, and now the term "spider storm" finds use in most areas, especially around Lake Encarthan.

Tornadoes: These devastating windstorms are feared throughout the Inner Sea region, particularly in large flatland areas such as along the eastern coast of Garund or the southern reaches of Andoran, Taldor, and Cheliax. In the deserts of northern Garund, tornadoes often advance along the fronts of vast sandstorms, while in the demon-wracked wastes of the Worldwound, tornadoes are a dangerously common sight. Indeed, the tornadoes of the Worldwound seem to seek out living targets and structures with a disturbing accuracy, and stories of tornadoes infested by millions of venomous insects that seem unharmed by the high winds are particularly frightening.

Tumblefires: In the dry summer months of Andoran, Cheliax, Taldor, and surrounding areas, thunderstorms can generate unusual effects. Often a "dry" thunderstorm—an electrical storm that rages without rain—strikes an area and fills the sky with a crackling lightning show while thunder booms an accompaniment. During these storms, ball lightning sometimes hits the ground and rolls like a flaming tumbleweed across fields or even through city streets. Despite its frightening appearance, tumblefire generates no heat and leaves no fire in its wake. Touching tumblefire results in a mild shock, and sometimes causes the lightning to wink out without a trace. Some peasants report that tumblefires seem attracted to metal objects and can even be "led" with pitchforks or knitting needles.

LANGUAGES

The people of the Inner Sea speak many languages, from widespread Taldane to the tongues of ancient empires.

Modern Human Languages

The following are the most common languages.

Common (Taldane): One of the oldest languages still in use in the Inner Sea region, Taldane is also the most widely spoken in the area, and is used as a common tongue.

Hallit: Spoken by the Kellid people in the far north, Hallit is a coarse, rough-sounding language.

Kelish: Throaty, phlegmatic, and passionate, this ancient language derives from the tribal tongues of the Padishah Empire of Kelesh in the distant east.

Osiriani: The most widespread language of Garund, Osiriani is directly descended from Ancient Osiriani.

Polyglot: The dialects of the Mwangi share enough remnants of a mysterious root language that members of different tribes can generally understand one another.

Shadowtongue: A mix of Infernal, Azlanti, and Common, Shadowtongue is rarely spoken beyond Nidal's borders.

Shoanti: Spoken widely in northwest Avistan but rarely anywhere else, the Shoanti tongue is a unique combination of Varisian, Giant, and Thassilonian.

Skald: Famous for its long, complex words and lilting pronunciation, Skald sounds at the same time lyrical and hard to the ears of southern Avistani.

Tien: This language contains thousands of homophones. Its written form uses nearly 24,000 pictographs.

Varisian: Varisian is rife with subtle double meanings, innuendo, and gradations of meaning.

Vudrani: Vudrani borrows and adapts words from both Kelesh and Tien to form a pleasing, musical dialect.

Ancient Languages

The following languages are not commonly known in the Inner Sea region, save by scholars and historians.

Ancient Osiriani: This precursor to modern Osiriani shares many similarities and differs mainly in its hieroglyphics and lexicon. Speakers of this tongue can speak modern Osiriani, but with an archaic accent.

Azlanti: One of the most widely spoken languages of its time, Azlanti became the basis for dozens of languages all over Avistan and Garund.

Cyclops: Once the ancient language of the giants, this tongue was created before the rise of humanity by the cyclopes of Ghol-gan.

Jistka: Jistka remains in use throughout Avistan, though almost exclusively by scholars and royalty.

Tekritanin: This choppy language is a meld of various regional dialects once spoken in the Tekritanin League.

Thassilonian: One of the ancestor tongues of modern Varisian, Thassilonian is mostly remembered for its now-unused alphabet, consisting of three sets of runes.

Other Languages

Humans are far from the first race to communicate verbally or in a written form.

Abyssal: Many believe Abyssal was the first language to develop among natives of the Outer Sphere.

Aklo: This mysterious tongue is common among sinister elements of the First World and the Darklands, as well as among other ancient creatures like the aboleths.

Aquan: Aquan is a guttural tongue with thick, throaty sounds and long syllables.

Auran: Auran is a breathy, gentle-sounding language.

Celestial: Celestial is used by all of the good-aligned planes of the Outer Spheres.

Draconic: This ancient tongue, the language of dragons, is among the oldest in the Inner Sea region.

Druidic: Only druids speak this complex language, and they guard its secrets jealously.

Dwarven: Dwarven is a guttural, phlegmatic language consisting of hard consonants and clipped syllables.

Elven: The Elven language is complex but beautiful, sounding poetic in its cadence and tone.

Giant: Giant exists today as a simplistic mesh of original Cyclops and Thassilonian.

Gnome: Gnome shares some similarities with both Aklo and Sylvan, but has a larger vocabulary than either.

Goblin: The nigh-incomprehensible yapping of goblins, the militaristic barking of hobgoblins, and the sibilant taunts of bugbears all use the same vocabulary.

Gnoll: Punctuated by high-pitched yips, deep barks, and throaty growls, this cacophonous language is difficult for non-gnolls to pick up—much less master.

Halfling: The modern language of Halfling descends directly from various human tongues.

Ignan: Ignan consists mostly of short words—their staccato feel on the tongue emulates the popping of fire.

Infernal: Infernal requires precise enunciation, for many of its words with unrelated meanings nonetheless bear extremely similar pronunciations.

Necril: A whispering tongue said to have ties to ancient Osiriani, Necril is the language of the dead—it is spoken primarily by ghouls and agents of the Whispering Way.

Orc: Known for the brusque delivery of its disjointed, hard-consonant syllables, Orc sounds harsh and angry.

Orvian: Sort of a cross between Aklo and Terran, this ancient tongue is spoken by many of the deepest-dwelling races of the Darklands.

Sylvan: Spoken by fey and certain denizens of the First World, Sylvan is one of the oldest languages.

Terran: Terran is a slow and deliberate language, the sounds of which cannot be rushed.

Undercommon: Descended from Elven but incorporating certain Orvian words, the drow-created tongue called Undercommon expands upon certain specific areas of its mother tongue's vocabulary while ignoring others.

TRADE

Regardless of the goods—raw timber from northern Andoran, exquisite glass from Cheliax, or exotic spices from Qadira—trade powers the nations that rest upon the rocky shores of the Inner Sea. Golarion's most powerful trading nations launch thousands of merchant fleets every week into the salty, wind-tossed waters that link the massive Arcadian Ocean to the stormy Obari Ocean.

Trade Routes

A large number of trade routes exist in the Inner Sea region—the two most well-traveled are known as the North Tack and the South Tack, yet others can be even more profitable, if more dangerous.

North Tack: One of the oldest and most profitable routes, the North Tack runs from the Spice Harbor of Sedeq in southern Qadira to the militaristic naval trading stations of Corentyn in southwest Cheliax. This route hugs close to the coast for most of the journey, but sails hard for Absalom after putting in at Qadira's enlightened capital of Katheer.

Obari Crossing: A highly profitable but rather dangerous route, the Obari Crossing is the primary point of connection between the Inner Sea and the trade nations of Casmaron and Vudra. This infamous route is notorious for its violent weather, its proximity to regions rife with monsters, and the sheer length of its passage, but as it serves to provide a link between Katapesh and regions like Vudra, Kelesh, and Iblydos, many captains and trade companies view it as well worth the risks.

Path of Aganhei: Unique among the major trade routes for being a land route, the Path of Aganhei connects northern Avistan to Tian-Xia via a long and dangerous route over the Crown of the World. The Path actually consists of two paths that overlap—the eastern route connects the Successor States to the Realm of the Mammoth Lords and eventually the Sellen Passage, and the western route connects Minkai to the Lands of the Linnorm Kings and Varisia.

Sellen Passage: The lifeblood of central Avistan, the Sellen Passage is based out of Cassomir—this route extends north up the rivers of the Sellen river basin, and south across the Inner Sea to Absalom. This key route connects the Inner Sea proper to regions like Brevoy, Galt, Kyonin, Mendev, Numeria, the River Kingdoms, Ustalav, and Lake Encarthan and the nations that share its shore.

South Tack: Faster but less profitable than the North Tack, the South Tack launches from Katapesh, sails north to Sothis and then Absalom, and then runs along the northern coast of Garund due west and out into the Arcadian Ocean through the Arch of Aroden. Here, the South Tack turns hard to the south and ends at Azir, the godless coastal capital of Rahadoum.

Varisian Run: At one point known as the West Tack, this route has recently become known as the Varisian Run as trade with Magnimar and Korvosa has grown. This trade route runs along the western coast of Avistan and northern Garund, linking Magnimar to Eleder and making stops along the way in Cheliax, Mediogalti, the Shackles, Sargava, and then inland in the Mwangi Expanse.

Coinage

The spread of trade throughout the Inner Sea Region has seen the standardization of exchange rates for coinage as well, and as such, the buying power of a gold coin remains relatively standardized. Names for coins can vary from region to region, and while ultimately the name a tradesman uses for his coins matters little in light of their value or quantity, in some circles a fierce sort of national pride exists in the claiming of such names. Sample names for coins from five areas of the Inner Sea region are provided below, but by and large, all coins are normally just referred to as "pieces."

A PILE OF GOLD CROWNS

Coin Names

Coin	Cheliax	Andoran	Katapesh	Absalom	Brevoy
cp	pinch	cap	grain	penny	bit
sp	shield	wolf	penny	weight	link
gp	sail	sail	scarab	measure	crown
pp	crown	falcon	genie	sphinx	dragon

Society

Governments, laws, customs, traditions, and cultures vary wildly from nation to nation in the Inner Sea region. Yet there are many relatively constant constructs as regards society in the Inner Sea region, as outlined below.

Humanocentric: While numerous races and creatures exist in the Inner Sea region, humans largely dominate the realm. The use of the term "humanity" includes near-human, civilized races such as elves and gnomes under the overall category. Savage races, such as orcs, goblins, and gnolls, however, generally fall outside of what the Inner Sea region qualifies as "society."

City and Rural Life: The vast majority of humanity in the Inner Sea region dwells in urban centers—cities, towns, and villages. A certain element of stereotyping and profiling exists between city dwellers and country dwellers, and conflicts between the two are not unheard of. Yet in truth, both lifestyles are inexorably dependant on each other. Rural populations often dwell in dangerously close proximity to monster-haunted wildernesses and need protection from their urban neighbors, while urban populations rely on their rural kin for necessities like food and other resources. This dichotomy plays out often between the faiths of Erastil and Abadar—two religions about essentially the same thing but with drastically, obstinately different methods of presenting themselves.

Magic: The common citizens of the Inner Sea region, be they farmers or traders or city guards, know about magic. It's likely that they've seen magic spells in action, and have even been the beneficiary of healing magic or other minor effects at some point in their lives. Yet magic is not so universal a part of life for most of the Inner Sea's citizens that they've come to rely on it. It's seen most often as an extravagance or a reward used by the wealthy, or in a worst-case scenario as yet another tool a despot or monster might use to oppress honest folk. Magic is thus a source of wonder and awe and of fear, but since it's not a fundamental part of most folks' everyday lives, it's also often misunderstood.

Power Levels: Throughout this book, particularly in Chapter 2, key NPCs are mentioned by name. Experience levels and classes are not presented for these NPCs, in order to maintain a level of versatility and freedom allowing adventure writers, hobbyists and professionals alike, to adjust these NPCs as they wish. Nonetheless, there exist guidelines for how powerful most rulers and heroes and city guards are in the Inner Sea region. The vast majority of humanity are "standard," ranging in level from 1st to 5th—most with NPC classes like commoner, expert, or warrior (it's uncommon for a character with only NPC class levels to be above 5th level). A significant number of a nation's movers and shakers, along with other leaders, heroes, and notables, are "exceptional," ranging in level from 6th to 10th. "Powerful" characters, ranging in level from 11th to 15th, are quite rare—typically only a handful of such powerful characters should exist in most nations, and they should be leaders or specially trained troops most often designed to serve as allies or enemies for use in an adventure. Finally, "legendary" characters of 16th or higher level should be exceptionally rare, and when they appear should only do so as part of a specific campaign—all legendary characters should be supported with significant histories and flavor.

Fauna

Innumerable animal species thrive on Golarion, ranging from the relatively innocuous to the deadly. Some of the more unique animals of Golarion are detailed below.

Donkey Rat: Snowy-white or dirty-gray rodents the size of small dogs, the donkey rats native to Avistan's west coast are often popular pets throughout the region. Their meat is generally considered to be quite tasty (if gamey), but is stigmatized as being a "backwoods" food of choice, and its consumption is usually mocked by urbanites as a sign of poor breeding. A donkey rat has unusually long legs and a short, rather furry tail—traits that blur the lines between rodent and ungulate. ***Stats:*** *As dire rat (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary *232), but without the disease ability (CR 1/4).*

Drain Spider: These are sizable, venomous, mottled brown spiders about the size of a small rat. Originally native to the Mwangi Expanse, their propensity for stowing away in exported fruit has resulted in their spread throughout the Inner Sea region. They've taken particularly well to dwelling in the sewer systems of many cities in Absalom, Andoran, Cheliax, and Varisia, and are quite aggressive. After a strong downpour, these spiders are often forced onto street level by flooding, boiling up from the drains in great swarms and thus justifying their common name. ***Stats:*** *Individual drain spiders are equivalent to young scarlet spiders (CR 1/6); swarms are equivalent to a spider swarm (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary *258 for both).*

Firefoot Fennec: These small, large-eared foxes possess a distinctive pattern of flame-colored fur around their paws, rather than the typical black "socks" of more common vulpines. Ranging across northern Andoran, southern Isger, and northeastern Cheliax, firefoot fennecs are regarded as good luck symbols, and by extension their uniquely colored pelts are prized by furriers, especially in Absalom and Molthune. ***Stats:*** *As dog (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary *87) with the young creature template (CR 1/4).*

Giant Gecko: These lizards can lie at ease sunbathing motionlessly for hours before suddenly dashing up and across a sheer cliff face—without any apparent difficulty—in search of food. The giant gecko's widely-spaced, uniquely textured toe pads allow it to scale almost any solid surface. ***Stats:*** *As monitor lizard (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary *194) with the young template, replace swim speed with climb 30 ft., no poison ability (CR 1).*

Jigsaw Shark: Common throughout the Arcadian Ocean, jigsaw sharks are particularly notorious for their preference of habitat—shallow, coastal waters. This often puts them in close proximity to sailors, merchants, and swimmers. A jigsaw shark is aggressive, and reports of them lunging out of water to snap at passers by on low piers or attacking small rowboats are well-documented. A typical jigsaw shark can grow to a length of 7 to 8 feet. With a pale tan belly and a blue-gray back decorated with mottled brown, irregular spots, these sharks are easy to identify in the wild. Stats: *As shark (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary *247) with the young creature template (CR 1).*

Sargavan Boar: No larger than a small dog, this species of boar is adapted to living in the warm, wet environment of the jungle and the veldts along its fringes. Easily able to hide in the underbrush because of its small size, the creature gives a loud, ear-splitting squeal when threatened, and its pointed tusks can be quite dangerous. Mwangi natives who live near their habitat believe the boars to be watchers over the souls of those who have died within the Screaming Jungle. As such, Mwangi eat boar meat only after giving thanks to the deceased animal's spirit, and they prefer to consume it as infrequently as possible. The heavy consumption of boar meat on the part of the Chelish colonists is yet another source of friction between the two groups. ***Stats:*** *As boar (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary *36) with the young creature template (CR 1).*

Storval Aurochs: In the northwestern reaches of Avistan, a particularly large species of aurochs can be found amid the highlands of Belkzen and Varisia. These aurochs, known as Storval aurochs, are much more aggressive and hardy than typical aurochs, and are able to hold their own against many of the more dangerous denizens of these remote regions. ***Stats:*** Pathfinder RPG Bestiary *174; add giant and advanced simple templates for Storval aurochs (CR 4).*

Flora

Countless different plant species exist on Golarion. A few stand out for their usefulness—or deadliness.

Flayleaf: Narrow, reddish-brown leaves droop from these wiry shrubs. Harvesting the narcotic leaves of flayleaf plants is fraught with peril, as colonies of poisonous, red-bellied spiders often build their nests in the plants. Flayleaf can be found in nearly any temperate environment. When harvested before the leaves turn brittle and dark brown, flayleaf leaves can be smoked as pipe weed or rolled into thin paper and burned until they smolder. ***Stats:*** Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide *237.*

Jukamis: This tall, rubbery plant can reach 15 feet in height in the jungles of the Mwangi Expanse, where it is most often found growing near riverbanks. The jukamis, or "fan leaf," is famous for its thick, enormous leaves that are used for a variety of tasks in the vast central jungles of Garund. It produces a rubbery substance when boiled down that can be used to waterproof huts, strengthen weapons and armor, and help support buoyant rafts. Its leaves often serve as roof coverings for huts or makeshift raincoats and hats. In the wilds, a jukamis plant can be used as a makeshift shelter against the frequent rains. ***Stats:*** *As normal wood.*

Nettleweed: Commonly found in the forests of Avistan, this pale green, vine-like weed produces ochre-colored burrs that cause horrible itching when they come in contact with flesh. Alchemists and naturalists have yet to find any beneficial use for nettleweed and its itch-inducing burrs, except as an irritant. When it comes in contact with the skin of most creatures, nettleweed creates such an irritation that the afflicted creature can do little more other than to scratch itself furiously. ***Stats:*** *As poison oak, but never causes severe exposure (*GameMastery Guide *245).*

Paueliel: Towering above most other trees, the lofty paueliel are widely held as the "first trees." Lumberjacks superstitiously connect them to the fey races of the woodlands and, despite the strength of the wood, often avoid harvesting them. Nature enthusiasts revere them. These silver-barked hardwoods grow to immense heights, but never spread to more than a few feet in diameter. ***Stats:*** *As darkwood but with hardness 7 and 150% as expensive.*

Pesh: This cactus grows in hot areas with some water source (such as around desert oases or near mudpots and hot springs) where it often chokes out all other vegetation. Its leaves are a source for the eponymous narcotic, and its spring-blooming yellow flowers bear distinctive crimson stripes and can serve as a non-narcotic spice.

The easiest way to make pesh is to cut one of the pesh plant's leaves and collect the milky sap. The thin, pungent milk begins to curdle after being kept in a cool, dry place for 3 days. An additive called nagri—a bitter salt mined from dry lake beds such as those at Sabkha—is stirred into the curdled sap at this point and the mixture is then allowed to sit for another day. Large white lumps form in the mixture, like curds in curdled milk; a fine mesh is used to strain the lumps (the raw pesh) from the liquid whey. Pesh in this raw, solid form can be eaten plain for a narcotic dose, but is more commonly smoked in a water pipe or hookah.

To make refined pesh, farmers must wait for the 2 months each year when the pesh plants bloom. Fat seedpods swell on the plants, and the farmers score the pods with sharp blades. Thick sap oozes from the score marks and hardens into resin. Farmers typically spend weeks of delicate work scoring the pods, harvesting the dried resin after a day, and scoring fresh marks until every pod is dry, save a few left intact to produce seeds. The farmers then add the resin to the raw pesh to form sticky black blocks that can be eaten, rolled into leaves for smoking, or mixed into drinks. Refined pesh is much more potent than raw pesh and is considered a high-quality item for nobles and rich traders. The poor are more likely to consume pesh whey, stirred into tea, sopped up with bread, or held against their gums by gauze pads. ***Stats:*** GameMastery Guide *237.*

Technology

The complex question of technological advancement among the peoples of the Inner Sea region is not one to be approached lightly, for the world of Golarion has passed through countless eras of strange discovery, of technology both high and low, from primitive to futuristic. With the dawning and closing of each age, the tool-working peoples of this magic-infused place have again and again pushed back the mists of ignorance and savagery with shimmering wonders great and small. As each successive disaster, uprising, and cataclysm washes over the world, the secrets of earlier ages are lost—and new discoveries are made. As the peoples of the Inner Sea enter the second century of the Age of Lost Omens, the world stands once again upon a great precipice—new magics, mechanical practices, arcane theories, and alchemical procedures become more common and more accessible to clever minds with each passing day.

Yet in a world where wizards can conjure fire out of nothing, clerics can raise the dead, bards can shatter buildings with songs, and alchemists can transform themselves into monsters, what chance has technology to compete? The widespread use of magic in the world has stunted the advance of technology more than any other factor, relegating those who seek to find new ways of doing things to the role of crackpot and eccentric more often than not. Technological advances in the Inner Sea, as a result, tend to be limited to areas where magic isn't as common (such as the volatile Mana Wastes), stem from eras and nations that for various reasons learned to fear magic, or hail from areas where strange advanced intrusions from unknown technological realms have made their presence known.

The technological wonders detailed below present four of the more well-known or legendary forms of technology that exist in the Inner Sea region. Some of these technological wonders also utilize magic to a certain extent, while others function solely on technological principles. All of them are relatively rare, and to the typical citizen, the difference between magical and technological is meaningless.

Clockworks

Magical constructs are used throughout Golarion as guardians, soldiers, and laborers—be they the aluum of Katapesh, sentinels in ancient treasure vaults, or the strangely self-aware flesh golems said to dwell in certain counties of Ustalav. Generally created by infusing a specially prepared body with an elemental spirit or (in some darker practices) a captured soul, there exists another, more obscure category of construct—the clockwork construct.

The technology for creating clockwork constructs was developed long ago in Azlant, then perfected in Thassilon. Earthfall saw the destruction of many clockwork creations and the temporary loss of the science of creating them, but in the ages that followed, the technique has been rediscovered as surviving clockworks are recovered and reverse-engineered or ancient accounts of the process are uncovered by explorers in Azlanti or Thassilonian ruins. The process of creating a clockwork construct is much more involved and time-consuming than the more traditional methods of magic, and so clockworks have remained at best curiosities or experiments of the idle and rich. One of the greatest repositories of rediscovered clockwork technology lies within the city of Absalom in the vaulted Clockwork Cathedral. Here, clever artisans seek to further unlock the mysteries of the mechanical application of magic, striving to vastly reduce the amount of magical energy necessary to power their creations.

The key difference between a traditionally created construct and a clockwork construct lies in the fact that no bound spirit or captured soul provides the power of animation. A clockwork construct uses a series of springs, gears, and mechanical trickery to power itself. It typically needs to be "wound," usually with a specially crafted key, in order to provide it with the energy it needs to function. Unfortunately, while this delicate machinery allows the inventor to bypass the dangerous and often distasteful practice of binding animating magic into a body, it makes clockwork constructs more susceptible to damage. A clockwork construct that's allowed to run down simply ceases functioning and is treated as an object, but most can lie in wait for centuries or longer in this state, springing to life immediately upon being wound back to animation.

Clockwork Traits: While you can create a clockwork construct from scratch, you can also turn any existing construct into a clockwork construct by simply applying clockwork traits to the construct. Adding these traits to a construct does not affect its CR.

- The construct gains the "clockwork" subtype.
- *Winding*: The construct must be wound with a special key in order to function. As a general rule, a fully wound clockwork can remain active for 1 day per HD, but shorter or longer durations are possible.
- *Vulnerable to Electricity*: Clockwork constructs take 150% as much damage as is normal from electricity attacks.
- *Swift Reactions*: Clockwork constructs generally react much more swiftly than other constructs. They gain Improved Initiative and Lightning Reflexes as bonus feats, and gain a +2 dodge bonus to AC.
- *Difficult to Create*: Increase the time and gp cost required to create a clockwork by 50% over normal.

Firearms

Of all the forms of technology that have appeared or disappeared from the lands of the Inner Sea, none are as universally misunderstood or coveted as the firearm. From the high halls of the Lands of the Linnorm Kings to the tent-cities south of the Screaming Jungle, the appearance of a firearm suggests at once an outrageous expenditure of gold and an immediate threat of dishonorable violence.

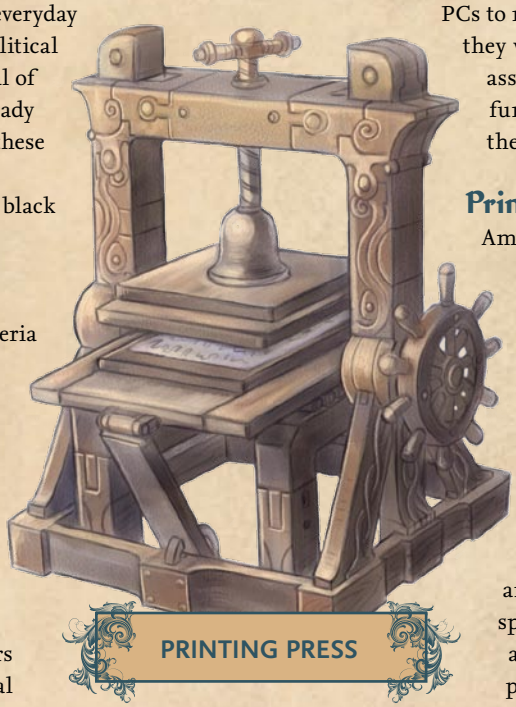
It was in the magic-dead reaches of the Mana Wastes that dwarven engineers from the sky citadel known as Dongun Hold invented the first firearms. The process by which firearms evolved took Alkenstar engineers many decades to develop and cost dozens of lives, but the curious weapons seem now to finally be gaining a foothold. Today firearms are the primary export from Alkenstar—only the complexity of crafting them, their reliance on refined black powder, and the outlandish prices demanded by Alkenstar's exporters have kept firearms from speeding into everyday use. Yet traditionalists and political scholars see the dangerous potential of this new form of weaponry, and already opposition to the proliferation of these strange new weapons is strong.

Game Impact: Firearms and black powder are detailed on pages 291.

Numerian Technology

The strange super-science of Numeria represents an unusual source of technology, one tightly controlled by the rulers of that realm. Here, weapons capable of launching killing beams of light, deadly automatons with metal skin and buzzing innards, and strange devices capable of saving lives or causing great explosions are discovered daily by brave adventurers who seek to explore the unusual metal ruins of that realm. Many of these recovered bits of high technology end up accidentally exploding or killing their would-be owners after mishaps during the process of figuring out their use, but the Technic League strives to catalogue the effects of these items while at the same time keeping those secrets to themselves and their overlord, the Black Sovereign. Still, strange Numerian technology has been known to leak out to other nations, where the devices fetch outlandish prices just as often as they accidentally maim or kill would-be sellers or their customers. The great danger posed by these exports has given Numerian technology something of a dark reputation, and in many nations the practice of importing or the act of owning such technology is illegal.

Game Impact: The futuristic weapons, robots, and devices that await discovery in Numeria could fill an entire book. Certainly the vast range of otherworldly weaponry, nanotechnological wonders, cybernetic miracles, robotic menaces, and the like could rival the lists of magic items presented in the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*. Yet the game effects of such strange technology can be duplicated by current effects in the game. A laser pistol might work similarly to a *wand of scorching ray*. Cybernetically implanted muscles might simply function like a *manual of gainful exercise +4*. A syringe filled with medical nanites might duplicate a *potion of cure light wounds* or even a one-shot *resurrection*. When pricing out technological wonders like these, simply assume that they are equivalent in price to a similar magic item. If you introduce such items to your game, you'll need to determine how the effects caused by them interact with magic or how their secrets can be discovered, of course—the simplest solution is to just allow PCs to research them using Spellcraft as if they were identifying magic items or to assume the effects created by them function identically to the spell effects they duplicate.



PRINTING PRESS

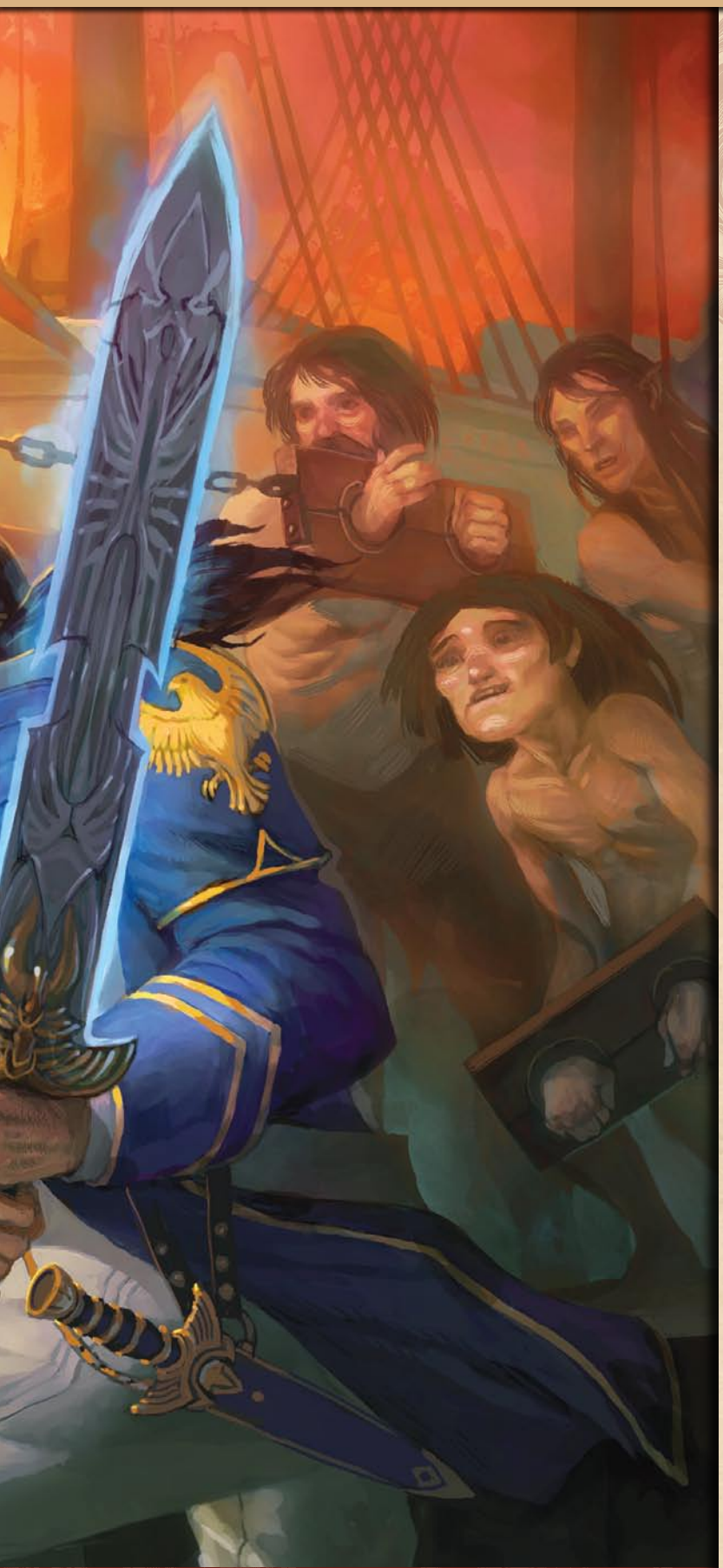
Printing Press

Among the finest of technological treasures is the printing press, a weapon of subtle power capable of turning a quiet populace against its ruler, making an entire nation unsafe for an outlaw, or setting a hundred militias ready for war against an enemy.

With only a few weeks of preparation, a print-master and her apprentices can engrave words and images onto plates held on a special press; these words and images are then perfectly replicated on paper, hundreds or even thousands of times. These ink-printed papers, often handsomely detailed with grandiose portraits of honored leaders or crude caricatures of hated foes, are then swiftly distributed to reach the eyes of a widely scattered people. Although terrifyingly expensive to build and maintain, leaders in nations as diverse as Absalom, Nex, and Qadira have benefited from the technology, reaping their investments tenfold from their use of printing presses.

The mighty aristocracies of Andoran, Cheliax, Galt, and Nex, however, possess greater technology still: movable-type printing-presses whose engraved letters and images can be arranged and rearranged independently on a frame held by the press to create hundreds of different prints, from the pages of bound books to posters decrying the wickedness of their enemies in multiple colors.

Game Impact: A printing press allows for the mass production of written material. While this does not allow for the swift production of magical items like scrolls, nor does it speed the process of creating spellbooks, it does allow for a different feel for player handouts or the rapid dissemination of information. A printing press has no actual game effect in play from a rules standpoint, but its existence can fuel countless adventure plots.



5

Factions

"By what right?" the Chelish slaver demanded. He was huge, with skin an unnatural gray. Probably devil-blooded, but it didn't matter.

"This one," Armande said simply, holding up his sword. The blade glowed blue, sensing the slaves' plight. Behind him, Leonila drew her weapon. The Chelaxian snickered and hefted a massive axe.

"So the Eagle Knights are thieves now?"

Armande refused to be baited. "There are greater and lesser sins."

"I'll live with mine," the slaver replied.

"That remains to be seen," Leonila said. As one, the knights sprang for the gangplank...

Factions of the Inner Sea

While nations and major religions can command vast resources and control large swaths of land or huge numbers of people, they are not alone in competing for loyalty. In addition to church and state, many people feel influence from various other groups. These groups can vary wildly in size and purpose, from local thieves' guilds interested only in filling the pockets and bellies of their members to vast international commercial conglomerates with their own private armies.

The largest of these organizations compete with lesser (or sometimes middling) sovereign nations in wealth, power, and influence. In some cases, such as with Cheliax's Hellknights, sovereign nations go so far as to rely upon these powerful groups from time to time. In other cases, such as with the Red Mantis, even nations bow to their power.

Smaller groups, while lacking in resources, can nonetheless occasionally inspire even greater zeal from their members. Those groups that strive to grow in size, influence, or wealth frequently attract more dedicated and motivated members.

This chapter looks at five of the most influential and important groups in the Inner Sea region: the mysterious and slightly sinister Aspis Consortium, the earnest and sometimes annoying Eagle Knights of Andoran, the tough and pitiless Hellknights, the widespread and curious Pathfinders, and the deadly and distinctive Red Mantis. In addition, the rest of this section takes a look at a handful of smaller organizations that nonetheless exert enough influence to be known beyond a single city, nation, or region.

Lesser Factions

The following smaller groups—organizations, cults, families, and businesses—exert some small amount of power in Avistan and Garund. Most of these groups have relatively narrow zones of influence and few are known to the common folk of the Inner Sea region.

Blackfire Adepts: When foul magic rends the veils between planes, Golarion itself burns with an insidious black flame. A mysterious cadre of outcast mystics, demonologists, and arcane explorers collectively known as the Blackfire Adepts tracks this ebon flame wherever it is found, venturing through these wounds in the multiverse to explore Outer Rift landscapes as they brush against the reality of the Material Plane. Those who return often do so changed in spirit and in body, possessing fell powers granted by or stolen from otherworldly entities. Rank-and-file adepts usually adorn themselves in red robes with fiery black trim, while the inscrutable leaders of the group hide themselves among academics and world travelers. The adepts once enjoyed great influence as a ruling faction of Nex, but their exile in the dying days of the Age of Enthronement scattered them to the secret corners of Golarion.

Bloatmages: It's often said that magical ability runs in the blood. To bloatmages, this is no less than the literal truth. By overloading their circulatory systems and forcing them to produce as much blood as possible, these arcanists are able to achieve great leaps in magical ability. Yet such power does not come without a price. In addition to becoming morbidly swollen and obese, the bodies of bloatmages are always pushed near to their breaking point. In order to survive, these practitioners must carefully regulate their blood pressure with constant leeching. Those deprived of such methods quickly fly into an insane rage due to pressure exerted on their brains, attacking those nearby indiscriminately before bleeding to death in a gruesome spectacle.

The Coils of Ydersius: Many of Golarion's civilizations have risen, flourished, and died. Some, like ancient Thassilon or mighty Azlant, are still very much a part of modern legend, but others have fallen into utter obscurity. One such civilization was the vast and powerful empire of the serpentfolk and one of Azlant's greatest enemies. Yet Azlant prevailed over them, and so great was Azlant's victory that knowledge of the underground empire has been all but lost. However, there are some who maintain that the serpentfolk are only sleeping, waiting for someone to rediscover and awaken them into a world ill prepared for their coming. Those who seek this end are the secret members of the Coils of Ydersius, a hidden cult composed of rare spirits of the serpent reincarnated into the flesh of modern man.

The Eldritch Order of the Palatine Eye: Little is known of this mysterious order, reputedly based somewhere in the nation of Ustalav. They have long stood against the Whispering Way, but are best known for their involvement with those who brought about the defeat of the blue dragon Kazavon, Lord of Scarwall.

Free Captains: To an outside observer or a merchant whose ship has been looted or sunk, the pirates of the Shackles may seem like a disorganized scourge. Yet in truth, these pirates are bound by a complex code of, if not honor, then a mutual recognition that it's always good to have allies on the high seas. The Shackles are ruled by a council of pirate lords who call themselves the Free Captains, and as they sail the southern Arcadian Ocean, they follow their

own code of rules when it comes to who can be raided and what can be sunk—even if, to their victims, those rules at times seem capricious and arbitrary.

The Harbingers: The Harbingers were founded 60 years ago by Lord Garron, an ousted noble of Cheliax living in Absalom who found the *Book of One Thousand Whispers*. The book contains prophecies that should have been resolved during the Age of Lost Omens and mentions places and nations that simply don't exist. Lord Garron's Harbingers believe that the Age of Lost Omens is a mistake on a cosmic level. To them, every major event of the past century is compounding that mistake. The Harbingers believe that all of the book's prophecies are about the world as it should be. Lord Garron became convinced after reading the book that he could trigger the missing Age of Glory if he could only cause the conditions of just one of the prophecies from the book to occur. He died pursuing his insane goal, but his daughter, Lady Arodeth, continues his work. Her Harbingers seek out people, places, and things that might meet the terms of any of the prophecies written in the book. Of course, the drastic steps and actions the Harbingers take in their increasingly desperate attempts to right this cosmic wrong only seem to make matters worse, and as failure mounts on failure, the group drifts farther and farther from Aroden's teachings and deeper into utter madness.

Lion Blades: The Lion Blades of Taldor are a secret organization committed to protecting the interests of Taldor and the emperor. They oppose Taldor's many enemies, foreign and domestic, through a program of infiltration, assassination, and espionage. One of the major goals of the Lion Blades is keeping a rein on corruption in the empire (aside from corruption that is useful to them); another is keeping any one faction of the imperial court from becoming powerful enough to upset the status quo and topple Grand Prince Stavian III. Through its shadow schools, the Lion Blades intensively train new recruits, preparing them for the high level of initiative and latitude with which they will be vested.

Norns: The Norns are hooded fey women who travel in groups of three (known as triumvirates) throughout the Lands of the Linnorm Kings and, at times, into neighboring realms. Many sages assume a triumvirate represents one soul split into three bodies, as a trio always speaks in perfect unison and killing one drastically weakens the other two. Norn triumvirates frequently appear to lost travelers and questing adventurers. Young heroes seeking linnorms often encounter Norns who test their resolve and wisdom, rewarding an abundance of those traits with cryptic prophecies. Their prognostication seems tied to the mysterious Eldest of the First World, and even in an era where the old prophecies have failed, the omens of the Norns seem at times almost dependable. The tests of the Norns are almost always inscrutable, and most who survive their trials do not realize until afterward—if ever—that they even faced a challenge.

Riftwardens: Legend holds that the Riftwardens, sworn enemies of the Blackfire Adepts, first came to Golarion from elsewhere in the Great Beyond, drawn to this world by their villainous enemies in a relentless effort to close planar rifts and gateways. Today, mortals and extraplanar allies alike bear the Sign of the Seeker's Spiral, and raise arms and magic against their hated foes. Riftwardens travel the Great Beyond and know some measure of its secrets, making them sought-after guides in arcane cities like Quantium, Egorian, and Absalom. Those who assume the secretive Riftwardens are pure simply because they align themselves against evil make a terrible mistake, however, for the obscure leaders of the Riftwardens surely serve otherworldly interests.

Sczarni: The Sczarni are a loosely organized association of Varisian bandits, smugglers, and thieves. Although only a small fraction of Varisians have Sczarni ties, these criminals are notorious enough that their activities are in large part the genesis behind the stereotype of Varisians as untrustworthy thieves. The Sczarni organize into tightly knit families, each of which has little to nothing in common with Sczarni bands in other locations beyond their shared skills, techniques, and pursuits. Their crimes tend to focus on thievery, scams, pickpocketing, and other forms of relatively nonviolent acts, but since these crimes often spiral out of control, violence often ensues nevertheless.

Reading the Faction Entries

The five major factions presented on the following pages each open with a short block of information following the faction's name.

Alignment: This entry lists the overall alignment of the faction and of its leaders. Variations in alignment can occur among the lower-ranking members.

Headquarters: This entry lists the name of the faction's headquarters, as well as the region where the headquarters is located.

Leader: This entry lists the name of the faction's current leader.

Prominent Members: This entry lists the names of several prominent members within the faction.

Structure: This entry provides a brief description of the way the faction is organized.

Scope: This lists whether the faction is national (active primarily in one or two nations), regional (active in the entire Inner Sea region), or global (active throughout all of Golarion). Note that a faction with a national scope might have a small number of agents active beyond its national borders but that they generally don't maintain extensive holdings beyond those borders.

Resources: This entry provides a brief list of significant resources the faction controls.

Aspis Consortium

Alignment: NE
Headquarters: Ostenso, with numerous regional headquarters
Leaders: A. X. Adrius, Jaydis Milon Malddis IV, and board of patrons
Prominent Members: Cirildimina Alasbhallas, Lord Pairo Gavhaul, Mr. Khayn, Professor Tantis Mais
Structure: Multinational corporation
Scope: Regional
Resources: Real property, other material, and liquid assets worth tens of millions of gold piece across Avistan and Garund

Nearly 200 years ago, a Chelish ship put into port at the Osirian capital of Sothis, its sails marked with the emblem of three intertwined asps. There it opened its hold to the cheap folk art and broken curios of the desert, dazzling poor craftsmen and smirking con artists with a rain of silver coins. Yet during the vessel's journey to Westcrown, a miraculous change took place. Offloaded in shining arks and pillowed cases amid a festival of anticipation, these trifles transformed into the treasures of antiquity, the heirlooms of pharaonic dynasties, mysteries with meanings lost to time, and relics ever more grand. The Osirion-obsessed nobility of the day never balked at the only fittingly grandiose prices called during the treasures' much-promoted auction. On that evening, the venture's three financiers each made modest fortunes, and the Aspis Consortium was born.

Structure and Leadership

The organization of the Aspis Consortium is structured so as to assure the organization's survival over that of any single operation or member. At its lowest tier are contractors, mercenaries, and other hired experts with no commitment or allegiance to the Consortium beyond the duties they are paid to provide. Such freelancers make up the majority of those in service to the organization; they are paid exorbitant sums upon a job's completion, but issued only loose terms dictating a task's specifics or methods—thus distancing Consortium members from any misdeeds.

Above such hired hands, true agents of the Consortium fall into three tiers, distinguished by small amulets, badges, or rings they carry. Bronze Aspis Consortium agents are skilled mercenaries, former professional soldiers, and educated members of the mercantile classes or lesser nobility picked for a particular skill set or knowledge of a given topic or region. All possess an ambition driving them to profit and power, as well as skills exploitable by those of higher ranks. These low-tier members have little influence beyond the specific operations meted out by their superiors.

Silver agents coordinate operations and sift through intelligence gathered by their lessers. They possess a degree of autonomy to direct their underlings as they please, so long as their endeavors profit their superiors. While they rarely devise new operations or expand the Consortium's interests beyond an assigned field or territory, they typically oversee multiple underlings and often serve as local bosses and physical faces for operations in a limited region, urban quarter, or small city.

Above them, gold agents either control operations within entire regions (not necessarily confined to distinct national borders), or bend their cunning to projects upon which the syndicate places particular value. Such masterminds possess or are provided with the resources, wealth, and manpower to manipulate numerous operations over a wide area, and see a far wider picture than their underlings—some of whom might be totally unaware of their participation in broader, more nefarious dealings. Ultimately, they report only to the Consortium's board of patrons.

Mystery, misinformation, and slander surrounds the leaders of the Aspis Consortium, some rumors attributing the organization's leadership to dark cultists, alien beings, masked villains, or stranger menaces. In truth, the Aspis Consortium answers to multiple leaders, a body of eight shareholders often simply referred to as the Patrons, and the scions of two of the group's three founders: the often-absent playboy Jaydis Milon Malddis IV, and the syndicate's icy public face, A. X. Adrius. While the board and two executives supposedly share control, none can claim to know all of the Consortium's myriad dealings. This approach to organization has also allowed the group to distance itself from past scandals by publicly dismissing and condemning patrons, absolving the organization of any wrongdoing with a complex but well-rehearsed dance of public manipulation. Beneath the Consortium's leadership, several other experts hold great influence within the syndicate, notably flamboyant but deft spy mistress Cirildimina Alasbhallas, smug fleet master Lord Pairo Gavhaul, the stoic chief of headquarters security Mr. Khayn, and the obsessively focused but ingenious head of the mysterious "Conference Z" operation, Professor Tantis Mais.

The Aspis Consortium has numerous regional headquarters, along with storehouses, banking operations, and associated workhouses and businesses along the coasts of Avistan, Garund, and the Inner Sea. While the syndicate's first and oldest auction house—still the seat of much business, recruiting, and oversight—is the Vira Majestica

in Westcrown, its headquarters and the meeting place of its leaders remains at the towering, pyramid-roofed Aspis Building in Ostenso. Sizable regional offices can be found in Azir, Eleder, Magnimar, Oppara, Sedeq, Sothis, and several other busy port cities. Among other operations—both legitimate and extra-legal—the Aspis Consortium currently holds an intense interest in exploring the Mwangi Expanse, developing trade with Jalmeray and distant Vudra, recovering relics from fallen Azlant and beyond the Arcadian Ocean, and researching new opportunities and discoveries in Numeria, the Crown of the World, the Darklands, and even more exotic locales.

Goals

What began as a private trading endeavor with a canny eye for profit, a flair for theatrics, and few scruples has since transformed into the largest and most varied business venture in both Avistan and Garund. Trade and uninterrupted ties to a host of former Chelish holdings have allowed the company to flourish through war, imperial decline, and what once appeared to be the very end of the world. Although Andoran, Nidal, Sargava, Varisia, and other lands have gained independence from Chelish rule, few sought freedom from the goods and fineries of the old empire, luxuries Consortium vessels reliably made available, and for which Consortium merchants are only too pleased to charge exorbitant prices.

Public Perception

Today, most of the world views the Aspis Consortium as a wide-ranging group of merchants and non-landed nobility with a private army of agents, mercenaries, and cheap labor, regarding their black-and-white-sailed trading ships with equal measures of respect, envy, and worry. While the majority of Consortium agents are consummate mercenaries—interested only in personal profit, paying their association dues, and little else—the organization has made an undeniable name for itself as expensive but unquestionably reliable brokers in international trade and many markets' only source for numerous rare and extremely valuable commodities. This penchant for the exotic ingratiates the company with the nobility of many nations, even as its agents wander largely unimpeded with sellswords, guards, and hired experts in tow. The Consortium's mostly positive public image ensures that no matter what nation it operates in, most of its labor force and much of its mercenary support is local, recruited from among the native populace.

Yet for all their profitable opportunities and once-in-a-lifetime ventures, rumors of unscrupulous dealings, merciless practices, and bloody betrayals form an undercurrent of suspicion regarding the Aspis Consortium. While the volatile times following the collapse of the Chelish empire enriched the group fantastically, the development of Cheliax's former holdings into nations unto themselves has decreased the need for Chelish goods while increasing the availability of such luxuries. This development has forced the Consortium to diversify its trading operations toward two objectives: discovering and being the first to exploit new wealth and new resources, and manufacturing a need for existing commodities. While such mandates might seem innocuous enough, the Aspis Consortium pursues these goals with a tenacity and ruthlessness that is notorious in many parts of the world. The moral ramifications of exploiting native populations, theft, warmongering and profiteering, and outright slaughter mean little to Consortium members—so long as these acts don't impact their greater prestige. Amid the cultured nations of the Inner Sea, all illicit dealings are conducted with a degree of surreptitiousness. Yet, as civilization gives way to barbarism, so too does the subtlety of Consortium agents wane, giving way to open violence and cruel entitlement.

Eagle Knights

Alignment: LG
Headquarters: Golden Aerie, Almas
Leader: General Reginald Cormoth
Prominent Members: General Andira Marusek, Marshal Helena Trellis, General Hedrik Traxxus
Structure: Military hierarchy
Scope: National
Resources: Numerous castles, citadels, and fortresses across Andoran

The Eagle Knights of Andoran are viewed by some as a shining example of the best of humanity in the face of a dark and cruel world populated by tyrants and filled with injustice. Others view them as benevolent but misguided ideological imperialists. Based within the nation of Andoran, the Eagle Knights find inspiration in its creed of common rule by the people, free mercantilism, and the respect of individual liberty. In many ways, they are best characterized as a military order devoted to the preservation and spread of Andoran's philosophical tenets.

The common impression of an Eagle Knight is of a soldier or paladin dressed in the blue-and-white regalia of the order and clad with the hallmark golden epaulets. Even the least foot soldier within the Eagle Knights' ranks stands among the best of the Andoren military, from which most of their number are initially recruited. Not all Eagle Knights are so open in their self-identification, however, nor are they all recruited from the upper tiers of the Andoren military, or even from the Andoren people.

Structure and Leadership

The order's current leader is General Reginald Cormoth, paladin of Iomedae and a sitting Executive Consul of the Andoren People's Council. Cormoth serves as the Eagle Knights' public face as well as its commander.

Officially known as the Guardian Tower of the Golden Aerie, the Eagle Knights' headquarters is a massive, seven-story column of white marble whose interior was quarried and converted into a gigantic watchtower overlooking the Andoren countryside. The column itself is ancient, and prior to its restoration 150 years ago, it was part of a sprawling, cyclopean ruin discovered and explored by Eagle Knights who carried the column back, piecemeal, as a spoil of conquest to the greater glory of Andoran. The exact location of that ruin and the circumstances behind its discovery are not entirely clear outside of the Eagle Knights' higher echelons, but following the column's restoration, the Knights erected a golden statue of Talmandor atop it in honor of their—and Andoran's—celestial patron. Rumors persist that the column and the ruins in which it was found might be connected to an ancient center of agathion influence on Golarion, or that they might have some deeper connection to the legendary avoral himself. (Avoral agathions are detailed in *Pathfinder Bestiary 2*.)

Cormoth has held his position within the Aerie for a decade. Before that he served as a high-ranking member of the Andoren military and, most importantly, the unacknowledged operational leader of the Eagle Knights' Twilight Talons. In his present role, Cormoth serves as the hand behind the Eagle Knights' operations within Andoran and as an elite adjunct to the standard Andoren military and its foreign and covert activities, with each of these areas' operational management delegated to his three under-marshals.

Below Cormoth, General Hedrik Traxxus of the Golden Legion, General Andira Marusek of the Steel Falcons, and the publicly unnamed Marshal Helena Trellis of the Twilight Talons control the three branches of the Eagle Knights' operations. Collectively, any ranking member of the order is known as an Eagle Knight, with the member's respective branch added to his title for formal address. For instance, General Traxxus is an Eagle Knight of the Golden Legion.

Goals

Frequently operating beyond the borders of Andoran, the Eagle Knights recruit nontraditional soldiers, many of them from the diverse ranks of adventurers and others equally at ease battling enemy troops, performing diplomatic missions, or delving into crypts beneath ruined cities. Bards, rangers, and rogues find equal opportunity alongside fighters and paladins so long as they hold to the same philosophical and nationalistic beliefs. Barbarian and druid Eagle Knights are exceedingly rare. Clerics and arcane spellcasters are actively recruited into the organization's fold, bypassing the typical military origins of their fellows. Clerics of allied churches often straddle a line of loyalty, though within Andoran this is generally not problematic, as both institutions are wont to cooperate to achieve their shared goals. Wizards and sorcerers are prized for their diverse and powerful abilities. Diviners are especially valued for their abilities to plumb the future and provide detailed information that oftentimes eludes agents on the ground, even deep-cover sleepers.

Within Andoran, the Eagle Knights of the Golden Legion operate alongside the nation's military as elite adjunct units, doubling as field commanders and trainers depending on the needs of a particular area. The Golden Legion guards Andoran's borders and its interior trade routes and keeps a watchful eye on the nation's wilder regions. In the infamous

Darkmoon Vale, for example, the Diamond Regiment operates under Commander Ingrid Odeber, the woman many say General Traxxus is training to take his place.

Not simply bound to serve as defenders of Andoran proper, the Eagle Knights of the Steel Falcons act beyond their patron state's borders, spreading Andoren philosophy like armed missionaries. Although the Steel Falcons do not openly acknowledge it, their foreign activities include guerilla, shadow, and proxy warfare directed against groups threatening Andoren security and those holding hostile ideologies, particularly the slave trade. In fact, the Gray Corsairs—a fleet of unmarked ships infamous for sinking a trio of Katapeshi slave-galleons and dozens of allied pirate vessels—are crewed, supplied, and directed by the Steel Falcons. In recent years, the Steel Falcons have launched operations against inland interests of Katapesh's faceless overlords, pirates of the Shackles, and suspected mercenary proxies of the Cheliax-based Aspis Consortium. Hoping to spread their ideology to other nations, the Steel Falcons even provided a small number of military advisors to the fragile government of Nirmathas, helping to mold that nascent land in Andoran's image while keeping it free of Molthune's control. Warfare aside, the Steel Falcons have made numerous exploratory forays to exotic locations. The results of one recent attempt to reach and map the ruins of legendary Kho are still unknown.

Operating without acknowledgment of their existence, the Twilight Talons are the Eagle Knights' spies, saboteurs, deep cover agents, and—at times—assassins. Eschewing the uniforms, symbols, epaulets, and other overt regalia of their kindred Knights, the Twilight Talons utilize a covert system of hand signals and passwords to recognize one another and prevent their discovery by the same groups they seek to infiltrate. As a final identifying mark, each Twilight Talon operative is marked with a magical tattoo, invisible under ordinary circumstances but revealed by speaking a command word unique to the individual tattoo.

Known only to General Cormoth and Marshal Helena Trellis but widely speculated upon with great paranoia by their affected targets, the Twilight Talons have agents among the governments and militaries of Andoran's rivals—Cheliax, Taldor, Katapesh, the Shackles, and Nidal. These spies only provide information, rather than risk breaking their cover to act in more immediately disruptive ways. More open action is provided by Twilight Talons who infiltrate groups without state support, such as independent slave traders and pirates, mercenary hirelings of the Aspis Consortium, and foreign, puppet extensions of the diabolist churches of Cheliax. The Twilight Talons report their findings to and pinpoint targets of opportunity for the larger forces of the Steel Falcons.

Public Perception

Despite their noble intentions and the prestigious light in which the citizens of Andoran hold them, the Eagle Knights are not always held in high regard outside their patron nation's borders. Realms such as Cheliax and Nidal are noted for being beholden to infernal powers and seeking to expand the mortal dominion of their distant masters—the collective lords of Hell and the god Zon-Kuthon, respectively. In these nations, reactions to an Eagle Knight range from cold tolerance at best to anger and eventual violence at worst. To the east, paranoid bureaucrats serving the crumbling empire of Taldor see Eagle Knights as rabble-rousers or even would-be anarchists.

The support of the Eagle Knights often comes to those who need it along with a push to adopt Andoran's social and governmental model. Even enlightened nobles who share the Eagle Knights' hatred of slavery feel a creeping worry that their own success and entrenched social power might be threatened by Andoran's waxing ideological tide. This perception is more likely than the open hostility of diabolists and slave traders to stunt and inhibit the Eagle Knights' goals in the world at large. Some suspect that the Eagle Knights are compromised by loyalties divided between Andoren nationalism and their founding philosophy as inspired by the legendary Talmandor. Perhaps such concerns are correct, and perhaps they are overinflated by the Eagle Knights' rivals, but they exist nonetheless. While the knights' crusade against slavery and the promotion of open trade between nations is supported by the merchant lords of Druma, some within the mercantile oligarchy worry about undue foreign influence from Andoran's more radical political elite arriving by way of their smiling, always well-armed missionaries.

EAGLE KNIGHT OF THE GOLDEN LEGION

Hellknights

Alignment: LG, LN, LE (strongly skewed toward LN)
Headquarters: Varies by order
Leader: Varies by order
Prominent Members: Lictor Uro Adom, Lictor Richemar Almansor, Lictor Severs "Boneclaw" DiViri, Lictor Resarc Ountor, Lictor Rouen Stought, Vicarius Giordano Torchia, Lictor Toulon Vidoc
Structure: Multiple orders of crusading law-bringers
Scope: National (Cheliax)
Resources: Varies (individual orders' resources vary from 12,000 gp to multiple million gp)

They are law without exceptions, justice without mercy, punishment without recourse. They are the weapons of desperate times and soldiers with the force of will to do whatever must be done. They are intimidation, relentlessness, and unwavering conviction. They are the black-gauntleted fist of absolute order. They are the Hellknights.

Goals

Grim-armored law enforcers uninterested in social goodliness and exceptions to the rules, Hellknights exist to enforce and stringently maintain order. In their iron-handed exaction of law—specifically, the codes of their varied orders and that of their home country of Cheliax—Hellknights emulate the most organized and effective armies in all the planes: the legions of Hell. They are not concerned with morality. They are not concerned with methods. They are concerned with results. If people cannot be trusted to obey the law out of their own senses of civility and social righteousness, then they will be treated like beasts and taught to obey out of fear of a master's stern hand.

Although severe, the Hellknights are not an evil group. There are certainly numerous evil members—particularly among the upper echelons of power—but the majority of members are lawful neutral, with members of all lawful alignments filling out the ranks of each order.

To strengthen their resolve, Hellknights study the methods, laws, tactics, and atrocities of Hell. They train with summoned devils until battles with mortal foes seem like welcome dalliances. Through soul-shaking horror, they seek to purge themselves of emotion, replacing it with steely discipline. Thus, Hellknights learn to make sacrifices for the greater good, obey draconian regimens of military conduct, commit to encyclopedic memorization the laws of their orders and local governing bodies, and undergo constant drills to temper both body and mind.

Structure and Leadership

All Hellknight orders have unique methods and interests.

The Order of the Chain: The backs of others are stepping-stones to power, or so believe the Hellknights of the Chain. Fugitive slaves, escaped convicts, and runaway indentured servants are their favored quarry, although freedom fighters, revolutionaries, and—on a more altruistic note—slave owners who keep their servants past a prearranged term also capture the chain-clad Hellknights' attentions. Unlike many of its brethren, the Order of the Chain rarely executes those who offend its code, either returning its quarry to their proper bondage, reselling them as slaves, or permanently detaining them in the order's prison-headquarters of Citadel Gheradesca on the cliffs outside Corentyn. Master of Blades Mardinus is the former slave of the order's Osirion-born Lictor Uro Adom, and holds himself as an example of the heights one can attain through obedience to the social order.

The Order of the Gate: From its redoubt Citadel Enferac in the western Menador Mountains, the secluded Order of the Gate deals and bargains with fiends in ways that give even the other Hellknight orders reason to dread. The crimson-cloaked signifers of the order outnumber the rank-and-file Hellknights three to one, and they claim to be granted otherworldy knowledge of egregious crimes before they are committed. While the signifers' infernal servants wreak their will in the world beyond, the order's actual members turn their efforts toward gleaning knowledge from the planes and the guardianship of some vague charge. The Hellknights of the Gate have no lictor, and are instead overseen by the ever-masked Vicarius Giordano Torchia.

The Order of the God Claw: The pentomic Order of the God Claw extols variations and virtues of five lawful deities, distilling select tenets into a dogma far from any one god's faith. Although the God Claw venerates aspects of Abadar, Asmodeus, Iomedae, Irori, and Torag, it is unclear from which of these gods it draws its power; indeed, it is possible that its own convictions grant it divine strength. Where other orders of Hellknights enforce their visions of law out of a sense of duty and grim necessity, the God Claw does so out of religious fervor and a belief that the world must forcibly be set upon a righteous path. The sharp-tongued Lictor Resarc Ountor preaches his order's iron-shod doctrine from its fortress Citadel Dinyar at the headwaters of the River Iseld.

The Order of the Nail: The only major order with headquarters outside of Cheliax, the Order of the Nail relocated to Citadel Vraid in the Mindspin Mountains near Korvosa 26 years ago. Tenacious hunters of brigands and

crusaders against savagery, the order members' interests often parallel those of local law enforcers. Lictor Severs "Boneclaw" DiViri—so nicknamed for the distinctive gauntlet he wears to cover his fire-withered left hand—commands the order and proves markedly open to requests for his Hellknights' aid.

The Order of the Pyre: The Hellknights of the Pyre view faith as the clearest window into the darkness of the heart. Seeking out cults of imaginary gods, crude shamans, and backwater witches, the order sees heathenish belief as an impediment to civilization and an excuse for lawlessness. Hunts for practitioners of godless faiths often lead the Hellknights far from their home in Citadel Krane outside the port of Ostenso—particularly into the depths of Garund. A strict atheist, Lictor Rouen Stought eyes the strange religions of Jalmeray with particular distaste, and while wise enough not to provoke the Vudrani on their island home, her followers frequently hound travelers from the Impossible Kingdom.

The Order of the Rack: The Hellknights of the Rack contend that knowledge can wound as deeply as any blade. With this in mind, they seek out and cleanse dangerous knowledge wherever they find it. What qualifies as unlawful information varies, from the unholy texts of demonic cults, to revolutionary prints from Galt, to many of the more egalitarian philosophies of the ancient Azlanti. The order takes the rack, an example of dangerous learning, as its symbol, and often puts the rack to use to prove the danger of misguided invention. On the second Oathday of every month, Lictor Richemar Almansor hosts public burnings of confiscated texts in the shadow of Citadel Rivad near Westcrown.

The Order of the Scourge: With anonymity and no threat of consequences, everyone is destined to become a criminal. The Order of the Scourge combats the lawless tendencies within mortal hearts through ever-present watchfulness and brutal reminders that no crime goes unpunished. It employs a vast network of informants, pays significant bounties for substantiated accusations, and publicly metes out grim punishments to perpetrators. Under the perfectionist Lictor Toulon Vidoc, the Hellknights frequently travel from Citadel Demain near Egorian to patrol crime-ridden slums and annihilate criminal organizations.

HELLKNIGHT OF THE NAIL

Hellknight Titles

Hellknight orders are first and foremost military organizations, and as such, they share a system of ranking individuals based on their skills, experience, and exemplary enforcement of their order's tenets.

Lictor: A general of a Hellknight order.

Vicarius: A scholarly leader of a Hellknight order.

Master/Mistress of Blades: A marshal commander of a Hellknight order, second to a lictor and equal in rank to a Paravicar.

Paravicar: A leader of a Hellknight order's signifers, equal in rank to a Master or Mistress of Blades.

Paralictor: A high-ranking Hellknight officer.

Maralictor: A mid-level Hellknight officer, similar to a lieutenant.

Signifer: A Hellknight arcane or religious spellcaster.

Hellknight: A typical soldier in a Hellknight order.

Armiger: A Hellknight in training; a squire.

Lesser Orders: Numerous lesser orders exist, although few are known outside the borders of Cheliax. For example, Egorian's Order of the Scar stalks murderers and assassins, while the Whisperwood's Order of the Pike hunts down monsters that flourish in civilized lands. These smaller orders are only slightly less feared than their better-known peers.

Public Perception

While widely feared and respected, most Hellknights join their order out of a sense of duty and a desire to be a part of something greater, seeing a world ruled by just law and free of rampaging beasts, cheating thieves, and lawless murderers as a future well worth striving toward—even at the sacrifice of some freedoms. Countries and rulers beset by criminal elements are sometimes known to invite Hellknights into their lands, leaving the business of law enforcement to an already loathed third party. Convincing them to leave once they've been welcomed sometimes proves problematic.

Pathfinder Society

Alignment: N
Headquarters: Absalom
Leaders: The Decemvirate, names unknown
Prominent Members: Koriah Azmeren, Marcos Farabellus, Sheila Heidmarch, Shevala Iorae, Osprey, Eliza Petulengro, Kreighton Shaine, Ambrus Valsin, Aram Zey
Structure: Loose affiliation of like-minded explorers
Scope: Global
Resources: Lodges and small holdings in most major cities in Avistan and Garund, a network of venture-captains and agents throughout the same regions, and moderate budgets at most lodges

Many of the greatest explorers of Golarion's modern age record their victories in an ongoing series of chapbooks known as the *Pathfinder Chronicles*. The amazing, often unbelievable tales bound in these oft-traded volumes tell of lost gods and sunken continents, of creatures older than the world itself who fell from the stars in the eldest days, and the fantastic ruins they left behind. These volumes also tell the stories of people—individuals who experienced some of the very best and worst Golarion has to offer.

The authors of these tales are members of the Pathfinder Society, a loose-knit group of explorers, archaeologists, and adventurers who search the globe for lost knowledge and ancient treasures. While an honest desire to unlock history's secrets motivates some Pathfinders, the promise of material fortune and fame propels others, who seek a sort of immortality in the publications of the Society. The rewards of academic study and glory-seeking, however, are not enough for yet another type of Pathfinder, who takes up the trade out of the simple thrill for perilous adventure.

Structure and Leadership

The Pathfinder Society was founded more than 400 years ago by a consortium of adventurers and scoundrels fond of working together and regaling each other with tales of their exploits. As the group grew and became more formalized, a governing council of 10 members was formed—the original Decemvirate. With the organization's continued expansion in both popularity and wealth, the members of the Decemvirate were eventually masked for their own safety, and today the Pathfinder Society is ruled by a shadowy group of masked individuals whose identities are unknown and unheralded. Presumably, the composition of the Decemvirate has changed over the passing of centuries, but when or how the Ten recruit new members is as secretive as their true identities.

Operatives known as venture-captains coordinate teams of Pathfinder agents in their assigned regions, tipping them off to ancient legends, passing along newly discovered maps, and supporting efforts in the field. Each venture-captain oversees the activities of several different Pathfinder field agents, who in turn conduct much of the exploration and adventure that fuels the Society as a whole. Venture-captains are fairly autonomous but still answer to the Decemvirate. The ultimate goals of the Decemvirate are inscrutable, and not even the venture-captains understand the full picture of what the Pathfinder Society does with the information it collects.

The Society's chief resource is its vast organization of operatives spread throughout the Inner Sea region and beyond. Venture-captains in cities or especially remote locations usually run lodges where they conduct Pathfinder business. Typically a house or building owned by the Society, a Pathfinder lodge is completely under the administration of the local venture-captain. Agents may stay in a lodge as long as they are on legitimate Pathfinder business, but to deter freeloaders, lodges rarely offer food or extensive free services. Most venture-captains keep small stores of potions, scrolls, and mundane adventuring equipment for sale to agents. Mercenary venture-captains charge exorbitant prices for these if they believe their agents have uncovered a treasure haul. As information conduits, venture-captains also pass along letters or messages through Pathfinder channels upon agent request.

The original and greatest Pathfinder lodge is located in Absalom—this structure is known as the Grand Lodge, a massive fortress complex located in the city's Foreign Quarter. The Grand Lodge is a place of wonder and education, a bastion of knowledge designed to inspire and organize all those who live for discovery. During the day its carefully manicured lawns and monument-strewn plazas are dotted with Pathfinders trading information, and at night the sounds of stories and songs resound along stone pathways lit gently by witchlights.

The most recognizable name among the Pathfinders is legendary Durvin Gest, author of many of the best-known tales from the first several *Pathfinder Chronicles*. Yet the very nature of the Pathfinder Society ensures that the organization attracts a host of oddball characters and impassioned adventurers determined to make their mark on the face of Golarion. Many of these have become legends in their own right. Currently, a man named Ambrus Valsin serves as the steward for the Grand Lodge. He supervises all important duties within the structure and keeps a long list of relatively safe but

time-consuming jobs on file to keep rookie Pathfinders busy. Three other venture-captains—broad-shouldered Marcos Farabellus, radical arcane theorist Aram Zey, and eccentric Kreighton Shaine—serve at the Grand Lodge as the masters of swords, spells, and scrolls, respectively. The Grand Lodge's newest venture-captain to rise to prominence is Shevala Iorae, a Varisian woman who got her start adventuring among the crumbling ruins of ancient Thassilon. Other venture-captains, like Galtan expatriate Eliza Petulengro, strangely deep-voiced Sheila Heidmarch of Magnimar, Darklands expert and scandal-prone Koriah Azmeren, and the enigmatic Chelaxian known only as Osprey, work constantly to ensure that the needs of the Pathfinder Society are well represented throughout the Inner Sea region.

Goals

The Pathfinder Society makes few demands on agents. Agents are expected to follow three primary duties: explore the mysteries of the world, report on findings uncovered in the pursuit of the first duty, and cooperate with other agents to ensure the success of the first and second duties. Unfortunately, because of the loose structure of the Society, conflicts are relatively common.

Agents are charged with writing up detailed reports of their exploits to pass on to their venture-captains, who then forward the most compelling accounts to the Grand Lodge in Absalom for consideration by the Decemvirate. Periodically, the masked leaders of the Society collect and publish the most worthy exploits in new volumes of the *Pathfinder Chronicles*, which are then distributed to Pathfinder lodges throughout the Inner Sea region.

Yet for as long as the Pathfinders have chronicled their adventures, the general public has clamored for access to these tales, as those that are published present exciting and hair-raising tales. Among scholars or competing explorers (particularly the Aspis Consortium), copies of the *Pathfinder Chronicles* are particularly valuable for their routes to treasure, secrets of magic, and other hints about how to navigate the far corners of the world. Reproductions and counterfeit copies are growing more and more common.

PATHFINDER

Public Perception

The Pathfinder Society is so loosely organized that it's difficult to identify it as having a particular flavor or character. In most cases, venture-captains are members of their communities and participate in local customs and habits. Since venture-captains often maintain lodges, they tend to be more responsible and, as a result, less unpredictable than the average Pathfinder in their actions—although exceptions always seem eager to show otherwise.

Field agents are much more of a hodgepodge. The freedom for agents to be, do, and say anything they want is likely the organization's most consistently distinct aspect. The liberty of agents occasionally clashes with the desires or goals of specific venture-captains, but rarely creates too deep of a rift for them to work together. The same cannot be said of most Pathfinder agents, and deep and even violent rivalries are far from unheard of among their ranks. Although the freedom to approach their duties as they see fit is a distinct advantage on most missions that Pathfinder agents might undertake, it unfortunately appeals to a large number of individuals eager to abuse their perceived status as Pathfinders, and these bad apples have done little to promote the perception of Pathfinders as legitimate scholars and explorers.

In certain areas where information is seen as a commodity or weapon, such as Nidal, Cheliax, or Galt, Pathfinders are often greeted with suspicion. So little is known of the mysterious leaders of the Society that governments who particularly fear their citizens and rely on propaganda, misinformation, or similar exploitative tactics often see Pathfinders as threats to their control of secrecy, and a Pathfinder in such an area must take extra care to avoid attracting the wrong sort of attention. Perhaps even more disturbing are the rumors of a secret "shadow lodge" within the Society itself that seeks to take over and control its massive magical resources, but both the Decemvirate and many vocal venture-captains dismiss these unsettling rumors as utter hogwash.

Red Mantis

Alignment: LE
Headquarters: Crimson Citadel, Mediogalti
Leader: Blood Mistress Jakalyn
Prominent Members: Individuals are not noted
Structure: Religious cult/assassins' guild
Scope: Regional
Resources: City of Ilizmagorti and all industry and defenses located there, vast collection of information and ancient magic kept at Crimson Citadel, dozens of safe houses and caches scattered throughout most major cities in the Inner Sea region

Some say the Red Mantis are death cultists, others believe they are members of an ancient and incredibly secretive thieves' guild, and still others think they are fiends from some dark plane beyond our ken. The truth is, the Red Mantis are the most tenacious and efficient assassins the world has ever known. The timeline of recorded history is stained with the blood of their victims.

One rarely has to wonder if an assassination is the work of the Red Mantis; they usually kill with a sacred sawtoothed sabre, so victims often drown in their own blood before their hearts cease beating. No palace, fortress, hidden safe house, or underground cavern is secure enough to keep out the Red Mantis. A hundred years ago, they killed Duke Kotaros of Cheliax, and history is replete with tales of generals and heroes slain in their own tents by the Red Mantis the night before a key battle. Victims of the Red Mantis stay dead—no matter what.

Structure and Leadership

The Red Mantis headquarters is the Crimson Citadel, a castle hidden in the jungles of the Garundi port city of Ilizmagorti on the island of Mediogalti. While the Red Mantis power base is centered on the city of Ilizmagorti, they maintain cells and individual agents ensconced in nearly every major city, and in many small towns as well. Members of the Red Mantis have contact with many of their fellows, and they may even interact with the Vernai (the "High Killers"), a cabal of assassin lords who lead the organization and interpret the will of the Mantis God.

Although there are no strict rules preventing men from becoming Red Mantis assassins, it is exceptionally unusual for a man to achieve the rank of Vernai. While the Vernai retain their names, to anyone outside of this high echelon of killers they are known only by their titles. The only member of the organization's leadership whose name is known beyond this strata is the Blood Mistress: the ultimate authority on the will of He Who Walks in Blood and the only person with access to the Sarzari Library (see Mediogalti in Chapter 2). The current Blood Mistress is Jakalyn. No one knows her exact age, but she is old enough that those who follow the actions of the Vernai are already speculating on who should succeed her when she joins the Mantis God in the Great Beyond.

Blood Mistress Jakalyn heads the organization, but she serves mostly as a resource for the Vernai. The council of High Killers does not have a specified number of members; any Red Mantis assassin who proves skilled, knowledgeable, and canny enough to draw the Mantis God's attention is invited to join the cabal. Traditionally there are 13 members of the Vernai, but this number is flexible—it has dipped as low as seven or risen as high as 23 in the past. Below the Vernai, the organization breaks into cells and hierarchies that change as the current assignments and needs of the order require.

Goals

As reliable as they are, even the most desperate plotters think twice before calling on the Red Mantis. One never knows what price they will ask—it varies widely based on the client and the target. They might request a handful of coins, a priceless artifact, or an unspecified favor to be redeemed at a future date. In every case, the price is nonnegotiable. Even those who get apparent bargains often end up feeling that the price cost more, either in gold or in conscience, than they originally thought.

Getting the attention of the Red Mantis is no simple task, either. There is no one sure method to contact them directly. One has to spread word in the seediest, most disreputable quarters and wait for the Red Mantis to take notice (if, indeed, they ever do). On the other hand, individuals who might be in need of the assassins' services sometimes find themselves approached by a business-like agent who presents an offer for the Red Mantis's assistance. How the Red Mantis come by this information is unknown, but they seem to have a supernatural way of knowing the name and details of anyone wronged or offended in a manner that calls for revenge.

The Red Mantis take on any assassination of any kind, save one. They do not commit regicide against a rightfully sitting monarch. It is said that this is because kings and queens, due to their divine right to rule, are the closest mortal approximations of the gods. Since the Red Mantis's own deity works for the gods as an assassin, it would be blasphemous to strike down a ruler whose rule has holy sanction. Princes, princesses, dukes, and all other royal

personages are considered viable targets, however, as are rulers of non-monarchies and any other sort of leader. The prohibition is as specific as it is sacrosanct.

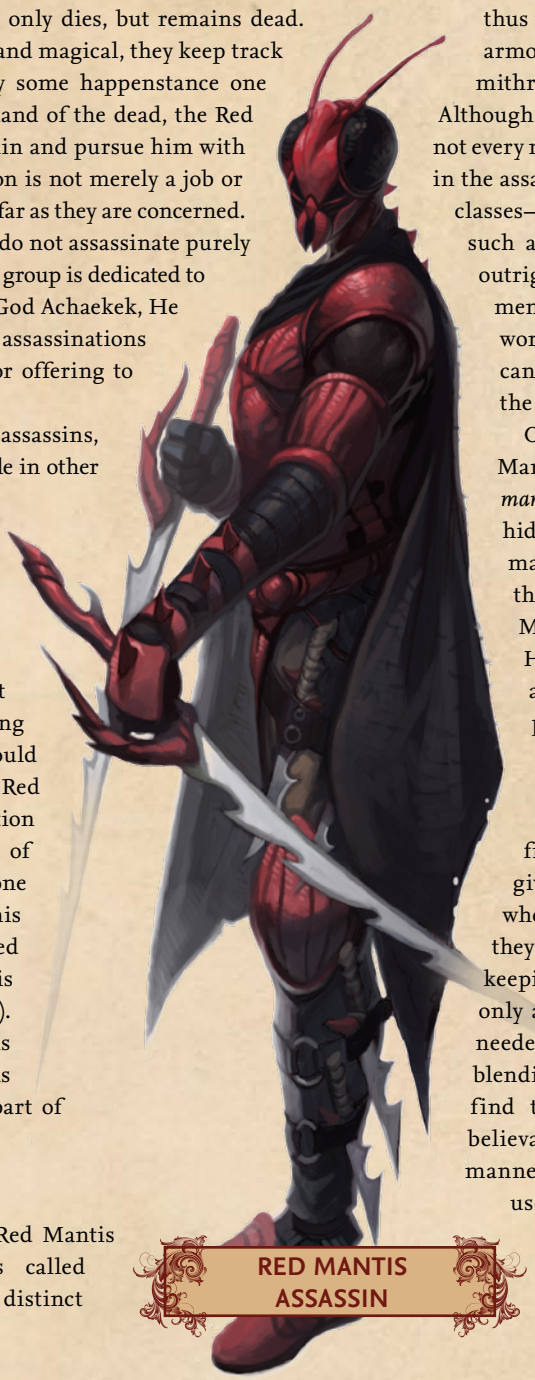
Once an assignment is accepted, the Red Mantis stop at nothing to locate, isolate, and strike down their target. They have, either openly or covertly, connections in nearly every government, guild, religious order, and merchant group throughout Avistan and Garund. There is practically no piece of information so obscure or well guarded that they cannot learn it. And once the target is found, they do anything necessary to ensure his death. No decoy, magical duplicate, or sacrificial lamb fools them for long.

What's more, the Red Mantis see to it that anyone they mark for assassination not only dies, but remains dead. Through means mundane and magical, they keep track of their victims, and if by some happenstance one of them returns from the land of the dead, the Red Mantis mark the target again and pursue him with renewed vigor. Assassination is not merely a job or even an artistic endeavor as far as they are concerned. It is a holy calling, for they do not assassinate purely for monetary gain. Since the group is dedicated to the worship of the Mantis God Achaekek, He Who Walks in Blood, their assassinations are more of a holy ritual or offering to their violent patron.

Unlike lesser orders of assassins, the Red Mantis do not dabble in other forms of skullduggery. In fact, they take it as a personal affront if a client even inquires about any other services. It occasionally strikes an enterprising villain that while they are performing an assassination, it would be child's play for the Red Mantis to gather information and perform other sorts of minor espionage. Anyone who actually suggests this finds his assignment turned down (if the Red Mantis haven't already accepted it). In addition, the Red Mantis never perform assassinations without being paid. It is part of their sacred bond.

Public Perception

When on a job, a typical Red Mantis wields two cruel blades called sawtooth sabres, using a distinct fighting style in which the blades are held point down so that the assassin's arms resemble the claws of a praying mantis. While the sawtooth sabre is as much a symbol of the Red Mantis as are their distinctive red and black uniforms or their insectoid helms and masks, the Red Mantis do not particularly mind the spread of sawtooth sabre use throughout the Inner Sea region. To the Red Mantis, the wider this deadly symbol spreads, the greater the society's fame and notoriety extends. Of course, those who disrespect the sawtooth sabre by wielding it poorly in combat are often visited with the same brutal punishments as any who would dare besmirch the Red Mantis legacy.



RED MANTIS ASSASSIN

Red Mantis agents favor mobility and finesse, and thus most Red Mantis assassins prefer leather armor over other forms of protection (although mithral armor is valued when it can be had). Although the society is a guild of killers for hire, not every member of the Red Mantis has class levels in the assassin or the Red Mantis assassin prestige classes—some are specialists in other venues, such as divine magic, arcane spellcasting, or outright warfare or unarmed combat. All members of the society are expected to worship Achaekek, although levels of faith can vary from the most devout cleric down to the most pragmatic of rogues.

One signature piece of gear most Red Mantis assassins utilize is the notorious *mantis mask*. As much as they are veils to hide the assassins' identities, these insectile masks are tools of murder and death. Only the most egotistical and notorious Red Mantis eschew the use of these masks. High-ranking members of the Red Mantis are also often granted draughts of the potent *elixirs of shadewalking* so they can more swiftly infiltrate an enemy's domain undetected.

Members of the Red Mantis come from all nations and walks of life. They give up their former names and stations when they join, taking on new names that they strive to keep secret from outsiders, and keeping their old names and old identities only as convenient disguises or aliases when needed. Red Mantis assassins are adept at blending into any situation in which they find themselves and taking on completely believable roles, perfect down to the accent, mannerisms, and taste in food. They never use the same cover identity twice, so it is possible to meet the same Red Mantis operative several times and never even know it.

6

Adventuring

The dragon's roar was a blast from a forge, but the beast was too big to land on the narrow bridge, and would need to make another pass.

"Small comfort," Valeros muttered. With his luck, he figured he'd be ash before the thing got in range of his swords.

"Remind me again why we're doing this?" Valeros called.

"Because you thought the proclamation didn't apply to us," Seoni answered. "Now shut up and get ready."

Wind swirled her hair as lines of blue light coiled around her body and launched themselves straight up, into the chest of the oncoming dragon.

Adventurers in the World

The Inner Sea region is a land ripe for adventure, but what role do the adventurers themselves play in this realm? What special talents, tricks, items, and magical spells can a hero or villain of the Inner Sea hope to master or discover? Where are heroes of different stripes most commonly found, and what functions do they serve?

Alchemist: Alchemists can most often be found in urban regions, where they have ready access to the strange components that their chosen field demands. The desert nation of Thuvia has a particularly welcoming atmosphere for alchemists, for that nation's entire economy owes its existence to alchemical discovery. Alchemists are welcome anywhere that learning and experimentation are common—from the depths of Alkenstar's gritty alleyways to the gnome settlement of Brastlewark in Cheliax to the fleshwarping pits of Oenopion in Nex and beyond.

Barbarian: Barbarians occupy those places where civilization surrenders to the savagery of marauders and the unyielding rigors of nature—places like the Realm of the Mammoth Lords and the Storval Plateau. Noble Ulfen clans battle dragons in the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, while the barbarians of Numeria fight for their very souls on the fringes of the Worldwound. Further south, the deserts of northern Garund are home to nomads astride hardy horses and plodding dromedaries, while in the jungles of the Mwangi Expanse, entire kingdoms of fierce barbarians are said to dwell in vast, ruined cities.

Bard: Bards hail from every region of every nation on Golarion, but one thing draws them together: an audience. Bardic schools in places like Absalom, Oppara, and Egorian teach various crafts of performance, tasks every bit as grueling as swinging a sword at practice dummies all day. In the harsh northern reaches of Avistan, bards fight side by side with barbarians, bolstering spirits and chronicling legends. In Kyonin, elven bards work to master their art and strengthen their elven traditions. In Katapesh and Qadira, bards can be seductive courtesans collecting powerful secrets or vibrant dervishes trained in graceful fighting styles.

Cavalier: Cavalier orders can be found throughout the Inner Sea region. The order of the cockatrice is particularly active in Mendev, for the opportunities to serve one's self in the crusades against the Worldwound are legion. Those who belong to the order of the lion can often be found in Taldor, Andoran, or even among the River Kingdoms, where they may serve as bodyguards or generals in royal armies. The order of the shield is most active in Andoran, but increasingly turns its eyes toward Galt as tales of the atrocities committed against that land's common folk spread. Several faiths, particularly those of Abadar, Asmodeus, Gorum, Iomedae, Sarenrae, and Torag, keep knightly orders akin to the order of the star.

Cleric: Although their titles and doctrines vary, clerics are found almost everywhere sentient creatures dwell. It might be more useful to delineate where clerics aren't: Rahadoum bans all religion and religious trappings, as does Hermea. Extremely few clerics reside in either land—the rare native who finds religion leaves quickly lest she face persecution. In the theocracy of Razmiran, only the worship of Razmir is allowed. The false god has no power to grant spells: his priests are sorcerers, oracles, and other spellcasters.

Druid: Druids are found wherever nature is. Woodland druids—possibly the most common type—serve the Green Faith and protect their plant-filled homes from despoilers and the lumberjack's axe whenever possible. Yet druids can also be found in other regions, be they the snow-swept plains of Irrisen, the ragged mountains of Belkzen, or the sinking swamps of the Sodden Lands. Where druids are rarest, though perhaps most needed, are places where nature has become twisted: the Worldwound, the Mana Wastes, and demon-haunted Tanglebriar.

Fighter: Every nation needs soldiers and constabulary, so fighters can hail from any part of Golarion. On the edges of civilization, this role is often shared with barbarians and rangers, yet even "savage" cultures produce elite fighters, wielding unconventional weapons and armor. In addition to the various national armies and local militias, a number of paramilitary groups exist. The Hellknights are an extremely lawful order that operate out of Cheliax and southern Varisia. In Rahadoum, the Pure Legion keeps the Kingdom of Man free of religious speech and paraphernalia. Arguably the most famous fighting schools are found in southern Brevoy, birthplace of the Aldori swordpact.

Inquisitor: With increasing numbers of soldiers of low character appearing amid the crusaders of Mendev, inquisitors of Iomedae are in great demand in that particular region. Likewise, in northern Garund and Taldor, where Sarenrae's faith has often been persecuted, her inquisitors are not uncommon. In nations that have strong religious overtones, such as Cheliax, Nidal, and Mediogalti, inquisitors often serve the dual roles of enforcer and investigator. While inquisitors are employed in Razmiran, they are generally inquisitors in name only, just as the False God's clerics aren't true clerics.

Magus: The magus's combination of arcane might and combat prowess makes him a common choice for a soldier

in regions where magic is commonplace, be it the forests of Kyonin or the deserts of Nex or Geb. Yet not all magi serve as agents of their government—indeed, the majority are lone wolves or mercenaries whose ability to excel in two wildly different specialties affords them an uncommon welcome in many organizations. Many Hellknight signifers are magi, as are many of the technology-embracing members of Numeria's Technic League.

Monk: The orders of monks in Avistan and Garund exist mostly in remote corners of the world and at the edges of civilization, but adventuring monks are typically expected to travel the world and not tie themselves to a single monastery. In the north, merchants and exiles from faraway Tian Xia bring their own styles and traditions to the region. An increasing number of temples devoted to Irori also train monks, and it is through these temples that the martial arts have spread across the region.

Oracle: The majority of the divine spellcasters in the Inner Sea's churches are clerics—oracles' traditional role has long remained outside of the organized aspects of religion. Oracles do not venerate specific deities, but many see themselves as pantheists who worship divine families, be they a category of deity (such as demon lords, empyreal lords, or the ascended gods of the Starstone Cathedral) or a collection of deities with shared interests. Others eschew the worship of deities completely, instead venerating philosophies or other less tangible objects of devotion.

Paladin: Paladins are a rare breed, as few people volunteer for a life of hardship and peril in the service of their religion. Not all of the Inner Sea's faiths maintain orders of paladins, with the faiths of Abadar, Erastil, Iomedae, Sarenrae, and Torag being the most prominent of those who do. Vigil, in Lastwall, hosts perhaps the largest concentration of paladins, thanks to the massive training facilities in the Holy Citadel of Light, where the young knights practice the arts of war battling hordes of orcs from Belkzen. Andoran also provides training grounds for holy warriors, many using their faith to underscore political ideology as members of that nation's famous (or infamous) Eagle Knights.

Ranger: Rangers are particularly common in Avistan since the fracturing of Imperial Cheliax, as many of its former holdings have been reclaimed by the wild. It is only the work of rangers that keeps many trade routes from disappearing. Most armies employ a handful of rangers to act as scouts, but the armies of Andoran, Kyonin, Molthune, Nirmathas, and the River Kingdoms rely more heavily on them.

Rogue: The rogue is perhaps the most common role; rogues operate across Avistan and Garund. Larger than average concentrations of rogues operate in the Shackles, Varisia, and Katapesh, where law is less stringent (or nonexistent). Rogues are also common in Nidal and Daggermark, where assassins are formally trained in silent death-dealing, especially with poisons and other debilitating toxins. Absalom, Manaket, Korvosa, Oppara, Port Peril, Sedeq, and Westcrown all host large, influential thieves' guilds.

Sorcerer: Areas that have seen a great deal of magic over the years tend to produce more sorcerers than their neighbors. Many sorcerers from Geb profess descent from undead bloodlines, a claim rejected by most traditional scholars. Neighboring Nex also has a large number of sorcerers. Varisia, once the center of a magical empire, produces many sorcerers despite its sparse population, especially among the native Varisians (who can commonly be found in nearby Ustalav as well).

Summoner: Summoners are relatively rare in the Inner Sea region. Often looked down upon by conjurers and mistrusted by druids, summoners generally reside upon the fringes of society. Yet some nations are openly welcoming of their strange powers and stranger eidolons—in the nation of Nex in particular, eidolons are often called upon to serve as research materials for fleshwarpers or as guardians for specific sites of interest. Summoners who specialize in shadowy creatures are common in Nidal, and areas like Qadira or Katapesh, where genie binding is more common, are likewise accepting of the summoner's trade.

Witch: The winter realm of Irrisen boasts the largest concentration of witches in the Inner Sea region, for here the government itself is ruled by these spellcasters. Witches can be found elsewhere as well, often as spellcasting hermits or feared advisors to remote tribal groups. With the exception of the cities of Irrisen, witches tend to avoid densely populated areas—when they cannot, they usually hide their true nature for fear of suspicious locals misunderstanding (or in the case of evil witches, clearly understanding) their true intent.

Wizard: Many magical institutes operate throughout Avistan and Garund. Necromancers can learn much at the schools of Geb, while the factories of rival Nex produce some of the finest transmuters on Golarion. Chelish schools, as well as the Acadamae in Korvosa, concentrate on conjuration. The wizards of Nidal specialize in shadow magic in honor of their dark patron, and the colleges of Rahadoum teach a pragmatic form of magic devoid of overt spirituality. The thaumaturgical colleges of Kyonin teach magic in the elven tradition, while Absalom is home to a variety of prestigious magical institutes.

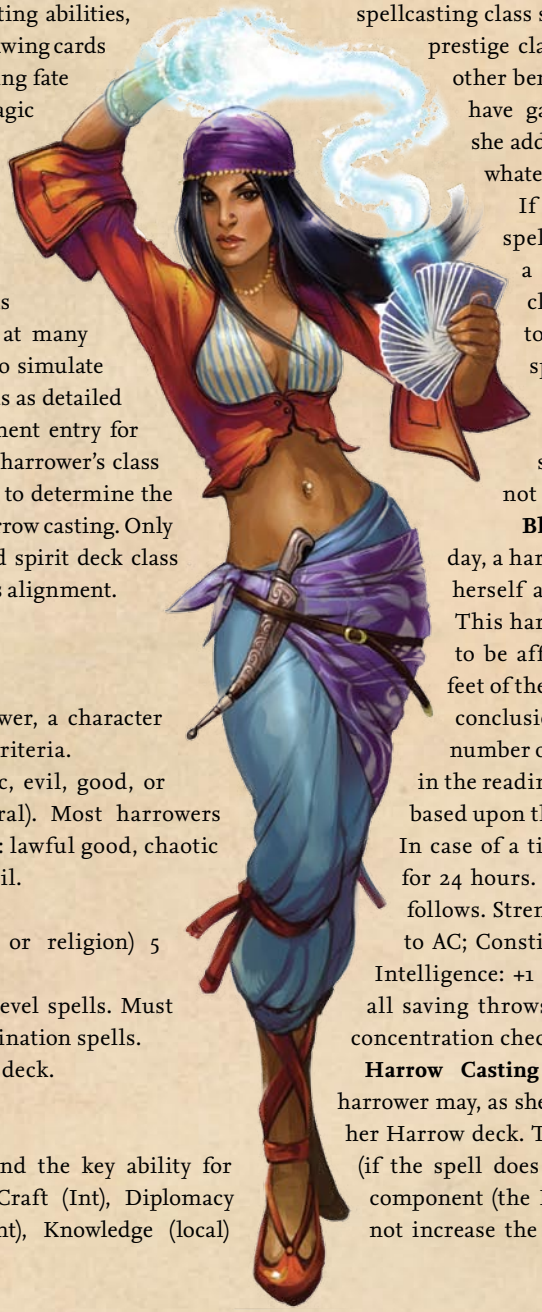
Prestige Classes

Numerous prestige classes exist on Golarion, including all of those detailed in the *Pathfinder Core Rulebook*, but four are particularlly unique to the Inner Sea region. These four are presented on the following pages, and include the harrower (a mystical reader of fortunes), the Hellknight (a remorseless champion of law, be it for good or evil), the low templar (a crusader whose heart may or may not be in the right place), and the Red Mantis assassin (a highly-trained murderer from Mediogalti Island).

Harrower

One of the most mysterious and mystical Varisian traditions, and certainly one that has captured the imaginations and curiosity of many of the Inner Sea's peoples, is the harrowing. Using a special deck of cards known as a Harrow deck, one can perform a harrowing by laying the cards out in a three-by-three grid that reveals secrets of the target's past, present, and future.

Whether or not the revelations and divinations of a typical harrowing are trustworthy, none can deny that the strange powers wielded by the harrower are real. The harrower uses the ancient art of fortune-telling to harness destiny and thus augment her spellcasting abilities, infusing them with power by drawing cards from her Harrow deck and letting fate decide what elements of her magic need augmentation.



Several of the harrower's powers require the drawing of cards from a Harrow deck. You can use an actual Harrow deck for this act (Harrow decks are available at **paizo.com** or at many gaming stores), but you can also simulate a draw from such a deck of cards as detailed on page 293, under the equipment entry for Harrow decks. For most of the harrower's class features, you need only roll 1d6 to determine the suit of each card drawn for a Harrow casting. Only the blessing of the Harrow and spirit deck class features pay attention to a card's alignment.

Hit Die: d6.

Requirements

To qualify to become a harrower, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Must be chaotic, evil, good, or lawful (cannot be true neutral). Most harrowers represent alignment extremes: lawful good, chaotic good, lawful evil, or chaotic evil.

Feats: Harrowed.

Skills: Knowledge (arcana or religion) 5 ranks, Perform (any) 5 ranks.

Special: Ability to cast 3rd-level spells. Must be able to cast at least three divination spells.

Special: Must own a Harrow deck.

Class Skills

The harrower's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (local) (Int), Knowledge (planes) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), and Use Magic Device (Cha).

Skill Ranks at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

The following are class features of the harrower.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A harrower gains no additional weapon or armor proficiencies.

Spells: When a harrower gains a level, she gains new spells per day as if she had also gained a level in a spellcasting class she belonged to before she added the prestige class. She does not, however, gain any other benefits a character of that class would have gained. This essentially means that she adds the level of harrower to the level of whatever other spellcasting class she has.

If the character had more than one spellcasting class before she became a harrower, she must choose which class she adds each harrower level to for the purposes of determining spells per day.

A harrower adds the *harrowing* spell (see page 295) to all of her spell lists as a 3rd-level spell if it is not already on a spell list.

Blessing of the Harrow (Su): Once per day, a harrower may perform a harrowing for herself and all allies within 20 feet of her. This harrowing takes 10 minutes, and allies to be affected by it must remain within 20 feet of the harrower for the entire time. At the conclusion of the harrowing, count up the number of cards from each suit that were used in the reading. This harrowing provides a bonus based upon the suit with the most cards showing. In case of a tie, choose one suit. The bonus lasts for 24 hours. The suits grant insight bonuses as follows. Strength: +1 on attack rolls; Dexterity: +1 to AC; Constitution: +1 on weapon damage rolls; Intelligence: +1 on all skill checks; Wisdom: +1 on all saving throws; Charisma: +1 on caster level and concentration checks.

Harrow Casting (Su): Beginning at 2nd level, a harrower may, as she casts a spell, draw three cards from her Harrow deck. This adds both a somatic component (if the spell does not already have one) and a focus component (the Harrow deck) to the spell, but does not increase the spell's casting time. Depending on

Harrower

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells
1st	+0	+0	+0	+1	Blessing of the Harrow	+1 level of spellcasting class
2nd	+1	+1	+1	+1	Harrow casting, Tower of Intelligence	+1 level of spellcasting class
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+2	Tower of Strength	+1 level of spellcasting class
4th	+2	+1	+1	+2	Tower of Charisma	+1 level of spellcasting class
5th	+2	+2	+2	+3	Spirit deck	+1 level of spellcasting class
6th	+3	+2	+2	+3	Divination	+1 level of spellcasting class
7th	+3	+2	+2	+4	Tower of Constitution	+1 level of spellcasting class
8th	+4	+3	+3	+4	Tower of Dexterity	+1 level of spellcasting class
9th	+4	+3	+3	+5	Tower of Wisdom	+1 level of spellcasting class
10th	+5	+3	+3	+5	Reading the signs	+1 level of spellcasting class

the harrower's level, the cards she draws might change the parameters of her spell or grant her some other benefit, as described in each tower ability. The harrower gains all of the different tower abilities available to her. If she draws cards that she has not yet gained the use of, those cards provide no benefit. Each card the harrower draws that exactly matches her alignment counts as two cards of that suit. A spell may not be affected by both Harrow casting and a metamagic feat. The harrower may use this ability a number of times per day equal to her class level.

Tower of Intelligence (Su): Beginning at 2nd level, whenever a harrower uses her Harrow casting ability, for each card she draws from the suit of Intelligence, she gains a +1 bonus on caster level checks made to penetrate Spell Resistance.

Tower of Strength (Su): Beginning at 3rd level, whenever a harrower uses her Harrow casting ability to augment a spell that deals damage to hit points, the spell deals +1 point of damage per die for each card from the suit of Strength she draws.

Tower of Charisma (Su): Beginning at 4th level, whenever a harrower uses her Harrow casting ability, for each card she draws from the suit of Charisma, the save DC of the spell increases by +1.

Spirit Deck (Su): A 5th-level harrower may, as a standard action, summon a shimmering, translucent Harrow deck made of force that flies through the air and engulfs a target within 30 feet in a whirling cloud of knife-edged cards. The harrower then draws a number of Harrow cards equal to her harrower level from her personal Harrow deck, and the spirit deck deals damage based on the number of drawn cards that match her alignment, as shown on the chart to the right. Each exact match deals 5 points of damage, each partial match deals 3 points, each non-matched card deals 1 point, and each opposite match deals 0 points. The harrower may use this ability a number of times per day equal to 1 + her Charisma modifier (minimum 1/day).

Harrow Deck Alignment Associations

Alignment	Opposite	Partial Matches
LG	CE	CG, LE, LN, NG
NG	NE	CG, LG, N
CG	LE	CE, CN, LG, NG
LN	CN	LE, LG, N
N	—	—
CN	LN	CE, CG, N
LE	CG	CE, LG, LN, NE
NE	NG	CE, LE, N
CE	LG	CG, CN, LE, NE

Divination (Sp): A 6th-level harrower gains the ability to cast *divination* once per day as a spell-like ability. Her caster level equals her character level.

Tower of Constitution (Ex): Beginning at 7th level, whenever a harrower uses her Harrow casting ability, for each card she draws from the suit of Constitution, she heals 1d6 points of damage.

Tower of Dexterity (Su): At 8th level, whenever a harrower uses her Harrow casting ability, for each card she draws from the suit of Dexterity, she gains a +1 bonus on Reflex saves and to AC until the beginning of her next turn.

Tower of Wisdom (Su): At 9th level, whenever a harrower uses her Harrow casting ability, for each card she draws from the suit of Wisdom, she increases the spell's effective caster level by +1.

Reading the Signs (Ex): When a 10th-level harrower draws cards from any deck of cards in order to either activate a class ability (such as Harrow casting) or to activate a magic item function, she may draw an extra card and choose one to ignore and shuffle back into the deck. The harrower may not use this ability when performing a harrowing, but may use it when performing her Harrow casting or spirit deck abilities. She can also use this ability when drawing cards from magical decks, such as a *deck of many things*. She may use this ability at will, but must wait 1d4 rounds between each use.

Hellknight

Not all who join have what it takes to become a full-fledged Hellknight, but those who do receive a wide array of abilities as they grow more and more powerful.

Hit Die: d10.

Requirements

To qualify to become a Hellknight, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +5.

Skills: Intimidate 5 ranks, Knowledge (planes) 2 ranks.

Armor Proficiency: Must be proficient with heavy armor.

Alignment: Any lawful.

Special: You must slay a devil with HD greater than your own. This victory must be witnessed by a Hellknight.

Class Skills

The Hellknight's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (local) (Int), Perception (Wis), Ride (Dex), and Sense Motive (Wis).

Skill Ranks at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

The following are all class features of the Hellknight.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Hellknights gain no proficiency with any weapon or armor.

Aura of Law (Ex): The power of a Hellknight's aura of law (see the *detect law* spell) is equal to his total character level.

Detect Chaos (Sp): This ability functions like a paladin's detect evil ability, save that it detects chaos.

Order: A character must choose one Hellknight order to join (see page 266 for a list of orders). The choice of order determines what disciplines the character gains access to.

Smite Chaos (Su): This ability functions as the paladin's smite evil ability, but against chaotic-aligned creatures. This ability is twice as effective against outsiders with the chaotic subtype, chaotic-aligned aberrations, and fey.

Discern Lies (Sp): At 2nd level, a Hellknight can use *discern lies* as a spell-like ability a number of times per day equal to 3 plus his Charisma modifier. His caster level equals his total character level.

Hellknight Armor (Ex): At 2nd level, a Hellknight earns the right to wear Hellknight armor (see page 290). While wearing this armor, the Hellknight reduces the armor check penalty by 1, increases the maximum Dexterity bonus allowed by 1, and moves at full speed. At 5th level, these adjustments increase to 2. At 8th level, these adjustments increase to 3.

Disciplines: A 3rd-level Hellknight gains access to his first discipline, choosing one that is associated with his specific order. At 6th level, the Hellknight gains a second discipline, chosen from any listed as being available to "any order." At 9th level, the Hellknight gains his third discipline, choosing this one from any of the disciplines listed below, even those not from his own order, with the exception of Pentamic Faith. When applicable, the save DC to resist a discipline's effect is equal to DC 10 + the Hellknight's level + the Hellknight's Charisma modifier. The Hellknight can use any one discipline a number of times per day equal to the total number of disciplines he has access to, so at 3rd level he may use his discipline once per day. At 6th level, he may use both disciplines twice per day each. At 9th level, he may use all three of his disciplines three times per day.

Brand (Sp; Order of the Pyre): The Hellknight can use *mark of justice* as a spell-like ability.

Censor (Su; Order of the Rack): When the Hellknight uses smite chaos on a creature, he can strike the creature mute for 1d4 rounds unless it makes a successful Will save. A mute

Hellknight

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+1	+0	+0	Aura of law, *detect chaos*, order, smite chaos 1/day
2nd	+2	+1	+1	+1	*Discern lies*, Hellknight armor 1
3rd	+3	+2	+1	+1	Discipline 1, Force of will 1
4th	+4	+2	+1	+1	Smite chaos 2/day
5th	+5	+3	+2	+2	Hellknight armor 2
6th	+6	+3	+2	+2	Discipline 2, force of will 2
7th	+7	+4	+2	+2	Lawbringer, smite chaos 3/day
8th	+8	+4	+3	+3	Hellknight armor 3 (full speed)
9th	+9	+5	+3	+3	Discipline 3, force of will 3, infernal armor
10th	+10	+5	+3	+3	Hell's knight, smite chaos 4/day

creature cannot speak, nor can it cast spells that have verbal components or use language-dependant effects.

Fearsomeness (Ex; any order): A Hellknight who uses the Intimidate skill to cause a creature within 10 feet to become shaken can instead cause that creature to become frightened.

Onslaught (Su; Order of the Nail): Once per day as a free action, a Hellknight increases his base speed by +10 feet and gains a +4 bonus to his Strength for 1 round. If the Hellknight is mounted, these bonuses also apply to his mount.

Pentamic Faith (Ex; Order of the Godclaw only): This ability allows the Hellknight to select one of the following domains: Artifice, Glory, Knowledge, Law, Magic, Nobility, Protection, Rune, Strength, Travel, and War. The Hellknight gains all of the granted powers (but not domain spells) of that domain, treating his Hellknight levels as cleric levels to determine what domain abilities he has access to.

Shackle (Su; Order of the Chain): When the Hellknight uses smite chaos on a creature, he can impede its mobility. The creature can negate this effect with a Will save; otherwise, it is affected as if by a *slow* spell for 1d4 rounds.

Summon Devil (Sp; Order of the Gate): The Hellknight may use *summon monster V* as a spell-like ability to summon 1 bearded devil. At 6th level, this spell-like ability is replaced by *summon monster VI*, allowing him to summon 1d3 bearded devils, or 1 erinyes. And at 9th level, this spell-like ability is replaced by *summon monster VII*, allowing him to summon 1d4+1 bearded devils, 1d3 erinyes, or 1 bone devil.

Tracker (Sp; any order): The Hellknight can summon a creature to aid him, either in battle or to track an enemy, as if using a summon monster spell, save that the summoned creature lingers for 1 hour before vanishing. A 6th-level Hellknight can summon either an eagle, a riding dog, a wolf, or a leopard. A 9th-level Hellknight can instead opt to summon a dire wolf or a hell hound.

Vigilance (Su; Order of the Scourge): The Hellknight gains low-light vision (this effect is constant). In addition, as a full-round action, the Hellknight can see through up to 5 feet of stone, wood, or similar barriers as if they didn't exist. Metal or denser barriers block this effect. Each use of this ability lasts as long as the Hellknight concentrates, up to a number of rounds equal to the Hellknight's level.

Wrack (Su; any order): The Hellknight may make a touch attack as a standard action to cause a creature to suffer incredible pain. The creature touched takes 1d6 points of damage + the Hellknight's Charisma modifier, and must make a Will save to avoid being staggered for 1d4 rounds.

Force of Will (Ex): At 3rd level, a Hellknight gains a +2 bonus on Will saves against spells with one of the following descriptors: charm, compulsion, glamer, fear, figment, pattern, or phantasm. At 6th level, the Hellknight chooses another subschool or descriptor to gain a +2 bonus on his Will save against, and the bonus provided by his first selection increases to +4. At 9th level, he chooses from the list again, and both previous selections increase by +2, so that he has a +6, a +4, and a +2 bonus, respectively, against the three different effects.

Lawbringer (Ex): At 7th level, a Hellknight's attacks are treated as lawful for overcoming damage reduction.

Infernal Armor (Su): As long as he wears Hellknight armor, a 9th-level Hellknight gains a +2 bonus on all Charisma-related checks made while interacting with nongood lawful creatures. In addition, he gains the ability to see perfectly in darkness of any kind, resistance to fire 30, and resistance to acid 10 and cold 10.

Hell's Knight (Su): At 10th level, a Hellknight can grant a weapon he wields or touches the *axiomatic*, *flaming burst*, or *unholy* weapon quality. This weapon maintains this new quality as long as the Hellknight remains within 100 feet of the weapon—a Hellknight may maintain only a single weapon's granted quality at a time. The Hellknight also becomes immune to fire while wearing Hellknight armor.

Low Templar

"I do so swear under the Light, by the Sword and Scales of Truth and all the fires of heaven, to undertake this holy Crusade. I pledge to guard heart, spirit, body, and mind from the corruption of this Wound upon the World. I furthermore promise and declare that I shall wage relentless war against the Spawn of the Pit and their manifold legions, as directed by those with charge of this Crusade and whenever opportunity presents, to extirpate and annihilate their execrable race and any who serve them."

So says the Crusader's Oath—the sacred vow all new recruits to the fight to oppose the powers of the Worldwound must take and repeat every year on the 6th of Arodus. Yet in too many cases, these words are hollow falsehoods, for many of those who take up the sword to crusade in Iomedae's name do so for their own glory.

After a time serving the crusades, some of these men and women attain such skill at serving the letter of the law while keeping to their own private agendas that they become low templars. Under a sanctified veneer, they walk a wavering line between heroism and thuggery. The church of Iomedae constantly struggles to maintain the morals of the crusaders, but when faced with the raw destruction of a demon host, sometimes the decision to support the lesser of two evils is the only real choice that can be made.

Hit Die: d10.

Requirements

To qualify to become a low templar, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Feats: Mounted Combat, Weapon Focus (any martial weapon).

Skills: Bluff 5 ranks, Knowledge (nobility or planes) 2 ranks, Ride 5 ranks.

Class Skills

The low templar's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (local) (Int), Knowledge (nobility) (Int), Knowledge (planes) (Int), Linguistics (Int), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Stealth (Dex), and Survival (Wis).

Skill Ranks at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

The following are all class features of the low templar prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A low templar is proficient with all simple weapons and all martial weapons. He is proficient with all forms of armor and shields.

Crusader (Ex): Whatever his faults, a low templar is a skilled warrior against the demon hordes of the Worldwound. At 1st level, a low templar gains a +1 bonus on all weapon attack rolls and weapon damage rolls against chaotic evil outsiders. He also gains an equal bonus on all Will saving throws against the abilities of chaotic evil outsiders. At 4th level, these bonuses increase to +2. The bonus increases to +3 at 7th level, and finally to +4 at 10th level.

Flag of Convenience (Ex): A low templar is adept at aligning himself with the winning side and has mastered the art of shifting or switching allegiance when convenient. He can disappear in one place and appear in another with new affiliations and associations, yet without besmirching

Low Templar

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+1	+0	+0	Crusader +1, flag of convenience
2nd	+2	+1	+1	+1	Dirty fighting
3rd	+3	+2	+1	+1	Sneak attack +1d6
4th	+4	+2	+1	+1	Crusader +2
5th	+5	+3	+2	+2	Live to fight another day, path of darkness/path of light
6th	+6	+3	+2	+2	Ruthless
7th	+7	+4	+2	+2	Crusader +3
8th	+8	+4	+3	+3	Sneak attack +2d6
9th	+9	+5	+3	+3	Parting shot
10th	+10	+5	+3	+3	Crusader +4, damnation/redemption

his reputation. Even when caught in illicit acts, he easily evades blame. The low templar gains a +2 bonus on all Bluff and Disguise checks, and on Linguistics checks made to create forgeries. A low templar never suffers a penalty to his Leadership score for moving around frequently, aloofness, cruelty, or the loss of prior cohorts or followers, and can replace lost followers in half the normal amount of time.

Dirty Fighting (Ex): A low templar melds the stately forms of jousting and chivalric standards with the down-and-dirty style of a barroom brawler. No trick is beneath him. A low templar never takes a non-proficiency penalty on attack rolls with improvised weapons and gains a +2 bonus on all combat maneuver checks. In addition, whenever he lands a critical hit, the low templar may opt to deal normal damage and roll on the following table rather than dealing extra damage.

d6	Result
1	Target is staggered for 1 round
2	Target is nauseated for 1 round
3	Target is deafened for 1 round
4	Target is blinded for 1 round
5	Target is sickened for 1 minute
6	Target becomes fatigued

If the critical multiplier is x3, the duration of the effect doubles. If the critical multiplier is x4, the duration triples.

Sneak Attack (Ex): This ability is exactly like the rogue ability of the same name. The extra damage dealt increases by +1d6 at 8th level. If a low templar gets a sneak attack bonus from another source, the bonuses on damage stack.

Path of Darkness/Path of Light (Su): As a low templar advances, he must eventually decide how closely he wishes to hew to his oaths to Iomedae and her ethos of law and goodness. If he chooses the path of light, he may choose to ignore the lawful or good aspect of his alignment (choose one) for determining alignment-based magical effects (e.g., reducing damage from unholy blight or an unholy weapon, masking his alignment from detect good, or ignoring some effects of a magic circle against good). He also gains a +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy checks with creatures with the lawful or good subtypes. If he chooses the path of darkness, he instead disregards either chaos or evil from his alignment and gains a Diplomacy bonus with creatures of the chaotic or evil subtypes.

Live to Fight Another Day (Ex): At 6th level, a low templar can use the withdraw action as a standard action, although if he does so, he can only move at his speed (not double his speed).

Ruthless (Ex): Whenever a low templar kills a foe or reduces it to a dying state with a melee attack, he can immediately make another attack with the same weapon at the same attack bonus as a swift action. This additional attack can be made on any legal target. The low templar gains a bonus on damage rolls with this swift action attack equal to his character level.

Parting Shot (Ex): At 9th level, a low templar can use the withdraw action as a move action, although if he does so, he can only move at his speed (not double his speed).

Damnation/Redemption (Su): At 10th level, a low templar must make a final choice of which ethical path to follow. He may mask a second alignment trait versus alignment-based effects, as per the path of darkness/path of light ability. A low templar can choose the path of darkness at 5th level and then choose the path of redemption at 10th level (or vice versa). When the low templar makes his damnation/redemption choice, he gains a planar cohort appropriate to his actual alignment, gained as if he had taken the Leadership feat. This planar cohort appears to him and pledges her loyalty to the low templar immediately. If the cohort perishes, the low templar must wait a week before calling upon a replacement. If the low templar has the Leadership feat, he gains a +1 bonus to his Leadership score. If he replaces his cohort gained from the leadership feat with the planar cohort, the maximum level equivalent for his planar cohort equals the templar's class level –1, rather than –2.

Red Mantis Assassin

Initiates of the Red Mantis usually begin their training as rogues, fighter/rogues, or ranger/rogues, as stealth and skill at arms are both prerequisites to joining the order.

Hit Die: d8.

Requirements

To qualify to become a Red Mantis assassin, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Lawful evil.

Skills: Intimidate 5 ranks, Perception 5 ranks, Stealth 5 ranks.

Feats: Alertness, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (sawtooth sabre), Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (sawtooth sabre).

Class Skills

The Red Mantis assassin's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Acrobatics (Dex), Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (local), Knowledge (nature), Knowledge (nobility), Knowledge (religion), Perception (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), and Stealth (Dex).

Skill Ranks at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier.

Class Features

The following are class features of the Red Mantis assassin.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A red mantis assassin is proficient with all simple weapons and all light martial weapons. She is proficient with light armor but not shields.

Spells: A red mantis assassin casts arcane spells drawn from the sorcerer/wizard spell list, but is limited to illusion and transmutation spells. She can cast any spell she knows without preparing it ahead of time. To cast a spell, a Red Mantis assassin must have a Charisma score of at least 10 + the spell's level. Her bonus spells are based on Charisma, and saving throws against these spells have a DC of 10 + the spell level + the caster's Charisma modifier (if any). Her selection of spells is extremely limited—at each Red Mantis level, she gains one or more new spells, as indicated on the table on the next page. At 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th level, she can choose to learn a new spell in place of one she already knows, provided the new spell is of the same level as the one she is replacing.

As mentioned above, a Red Mantis assassin can only learn sorcerer/wizard spells from the schools of illusion and transmutation, although as she gains levels, a small number of additional spells are added to her list. She does not automatically learn these spells when they become available—they must be selected as part of her total spells known. At 2nd level, she adds *obscuring mist* and *true strike* to her spell list. At 4th level, she adds *darkness* and *summon swarm* to her spell list. At 6th level, she adds *fog cloud* and *see invisibility* to her spell list. At 8th level, she adds *clairaudience/clairvoyance* and *hold person* to her spell list. At 10th level, she adds *dimension door* and *modify memory* to her spell list.

Sneak Attack (Ex): This is exactly like the rogue ability of the same name. If the Red Mantis assassin gets a sneak attack bonus from another source, the damage bonuses stack.

Sabre Fighting (Ex): At 1st level, the Red Mantis assassin gains Weapon Specialization (sawtooth sabre) as a bonus feat. At 5th level, she gains Greater Weapon Focus (sawtooth sabre) as a bonus feat. At 7th level, she gains Greater Weapon Specialization (sawtooth sabre) as a bonus feat.

Prayer Attack (Su): At 2nd level, a Red Mantis assassin learns her signature assassination style. To initiate a prayer attack, she holds her sawtooth sabre (or sabres) out, point down, and weaves the blade in the air. She must be within 30 feet of and visible to her victim. Beginning a

Red Mantis Assassin

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day 1st	2nd	3rd	4th
1st	+0	+0	+1	+1	Sneak attack +1d6, sabre fighting 1	1	—	—	—
2nd	+1	+1	+1	+1	Prayer attack	2	—	—	—
3rd	+2	+1	+2	+2	Red shroud	3	—	—	—
4th	+3	+1	+2	+2	Summon mantis, sneak attack +2d6	3	1	—	—
5th	+3	+2	+3	+3	Resurrection sense, sabre fighting 2	4	2	—	—
6th	+4	+2	+3	+3	Mantis form	4	3	—	—
7th	+5	+2	+4	+4	Sneak attack +3d6, sabre fighting 3	4	3	1	—
8th	+6	+3	+4	+4	Blood mantis form, fading	4	4	2	—
9th	+6	+3	+5	+5	Mantis doom	5	4	3	—
10th	+7	+3	+5	+5	Death mantis form, sneak attack +4d6	5	4	3	1

prayer attack is a standard action, and causes her victim to be fascinated by her unless he makes a Will save (DC 10 + the Red Mantis assassin's class level + her Charisma modifier—if she's wielding two sawtooth sabres, this DC gains a +2 bonus). She can maintain the fascination effect by concentrating. The victim may attempt a new save to escape fascination each time a threat (other than the fascinating assassin) appears. At any point after 3 rounds, she may make a coup de grace attack against the target, provided the target is still fascinated. Activating or concentrating on maintaining a prayer attack does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

Red Shroud (Su): At 3rd level, a Red Mantis assassin gains the ability to create a veil of red mist a number of times per day equal to her Constitution bonus (minimum once per day) as a move-equivalent action. The red shroud persists for 1 round per class level. It grants a +1 dodge bonus to AC and fast healing equal to her Constitution bonus (minimum of fast healing 1). This mist cannot be dissipated by wind. If she is slain while this ability is active, she can choose whether to remain corporeal or to disintegrate into a cloud of red mist that leaves behind only her gear in order to deprive her enemies of access to her remains.

Summon Mantis (Sp): Once per day at 4th level, a Red Mantis assassin may summon an advanced fiendish giant mantis, 1d3 fiendish giant mantises, or 1d4+1 giant mantises, as if using *summon monster V*. She can mentally direct the actions of these summoned vermin as a free action. All mantises summoned by this spell-like ability are blood red, and gain no racial bonus on Stealth checks in forests.

Resurrection Sense (Su): At 5th level, a Red Mantis assassin senses if a creature she has slain within the last year has been restored to life, as long as they are both on the same plane.

Mantis Form (Su): At 6th level, a Red Mantis assassin may transform into a blood-red giant praying mantis once per day as a standard action, as if using *vermin shape II* (caster level equals her class level). In addition to the normal adjustments to Strength, Dexterity, and natural armor provided by this spell effect, she gains the giant mantis's darkvision 60 feet, grab, lunge, mandibles, and sudden strike extraordinary abilities, but not its immunity to mind-affecting effects or its racial modifiers to Perception or Stealth. If she wields a magical sawtooth sabre in her hand when she transforms, the magical enhancements for that weapon apply to her corresponding claw attack—if she wields two of them, then the weapons each apply to a different claw attack.

Blood Mantis: At 8th level, her claw attacks inflict 1d6 bleed on a hit. She also gains damage reduction 5/good while in this form.

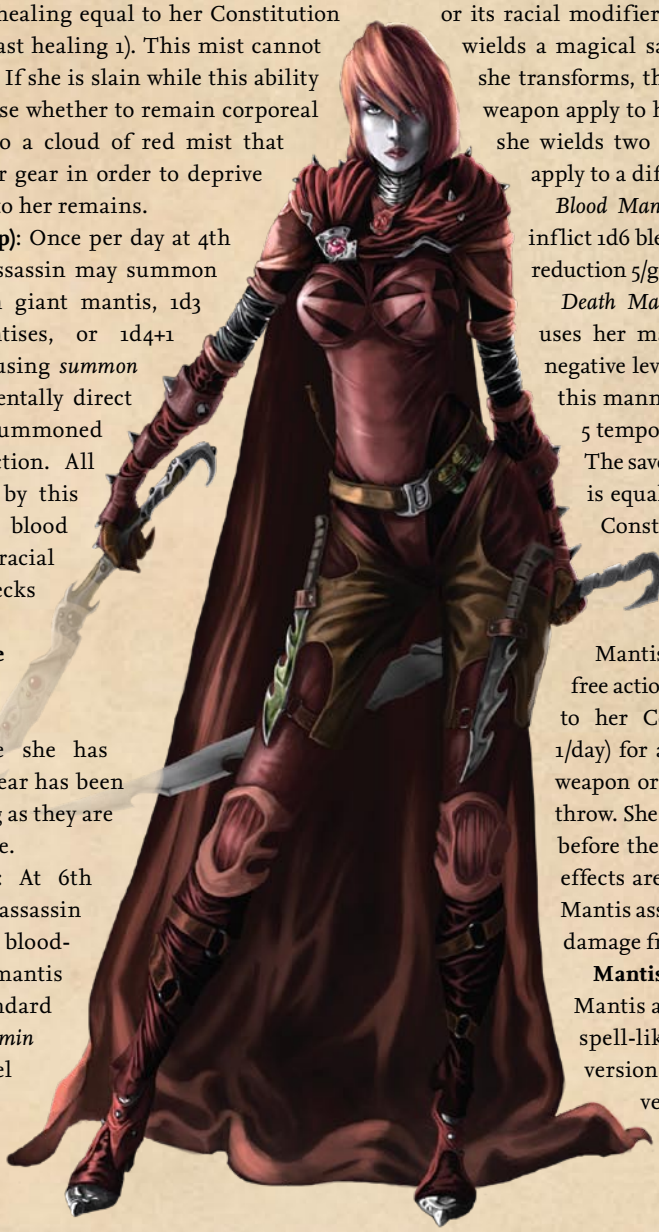
Death Mantis: At 10th level, whenever she uses her mandibles to attack, she inflicts 1 negative level. Each negative level inflicted in this manner grants the Red Mantis assassin 5 temporary hit points that last for 1 hour. The save DC to remove these negative levels is equal to 20 + the Red Mantis assassin's Constitution modifier. In addition, her damage reduction increases to 10/good while in this form.

Fading (Su): At 8th level, the Red Mantis assassin can become ethereal as a free action a number of times each day equal to her Constitution modifier (minimum 1/day) for an instant as she is attacked by a weapon or is forced to make a Reflex saving throw. She must choose to activate this ability before the weapon's attack roll or the spell's effects are adjudicated. This grants the Red Mantis assassin a 50% chance to avoid taking damage from the attack or effects.

Mantis Doom (Sp): At 9th level, a Red Mantis assassin may use *creeping doom* as a spell-like ability three times per day. This version of the spell summons swarms of venomous praying mantises, but the effects are otherwise the same as the spell.

Red Mantis Assassin Spells Known

Level	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
1st	2	—	—	—
2nd	3	—	—	—
3rd	4	—	—	—
4th	4	2	—	—
5th	4	3	—	—
6th	4	4	—	—
7th	5	4	2	—
8th	5	4	3	—
9th	5	4	4	—
10th	5	5	4	2



Feats

The following feats are available to all characters and creatures that qualify for them. Note that some of these feats have strong ties to specific regions, races, or religions, but in most cases that shouldn't preclude you from taking one of these feats for any character you wish—provided you include elements in your character's history that satisfy world verisimilitude and justify your choice to your GM's satisfaction.

Aldori Dueling Mastery (Combat)

You have mastered the grueling fighting style perfected by the Aldori Swordlords.

Prerequisites: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Aldori dueling sword), Quick Draw, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (Aldori dueling sword).

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on Initiative checks as long as you start combat with an Aldori dueling sword in your hand. As long as you wield only a single Aldori dueling sword in one hand, you gain a +2 shield bonus to your AC—if you wield the sword in two hands, this bonus drops to a +1 shield bonus to AC. Although the dueling sword inflicts slashing damage, you treat it as if it were also a piercing weapon when determining the effects of weapons used by a duelist.

Altitude Affinity

You have hardened your body against the grueling rigors of surviving at high altitudes.

Prerequisites: Endurance.

Benefit: You are automatically acclimated at high altitudes (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 430). In addition, you gain a +2 competence bonus on all Survival checks made at altitudes of 5,000 feet or higher.

Andoren Falconry

You know the secret Andoren arts of falconry developed by the Novotnian family of Darkmoon Vale.

Prerequisites: Cha 13, Animal Affinity, animal companion class feature.

Benefit: You improve your affinity with birds of prey, such as eagles, falcons, hawks, and owls. You gain a +2 bonus on Animal Handling checks made to train or control birds of prey. In addition, if you have a bird of prey as an animal companion, your animal companion gains one of the following bonuses chosen at the time this animal companion is gained: a +1 dodge bonus to AC, a +1 morale bonus on all attack rolls, or a +2 morale bonus on all Will saves.

Arcane Vendetta

The mistreatment of your people by an arcane society (such as Numeria's Technic League or the White Witches of Irrisen) has made you particularly eager to inflict harm on those who use arcane magic.

Prerequisites: Spellcraft 1 rank.

Benefit: You deal +2 damage with weapon attacks made against any target you have witnessed casting an arcane spell (not using a spell-like ability) in the last 5 rounds. You must have successfully identified the spell with a Spellcraft check to know without a doubt that the spell is arcane.

Careful Speaker

The paranoid terror that comes from living in a region with a dangerous government (such as Cheliax or Galt) has made you unusually aware of what you say.

Prerequisites: Wis 13.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on all Bluff checks made to fool someone or pass secret messages (but not to feint in combat), and a +2 bonus on all Will saves against attempts to scry upon you or read your mind.

Cypher Magic

Your intimacy with runes and the mysteries of ancient arcana has taught you secret ways to draw greater power from magical writings. These unusual methods were initially devised by the Cyphermages of Riddleport, but they have since spread far and wide through the Inner Sea region.

Prerequisite: Int 15, Scribe Scroll.

Benefit: You cast spells from scrolls at +1 caster level higher than the scroll's caster level. This benefit extends to scrolls that you have created. In addition, you gain a +2 bonus on caster level checks made to activate a scroll with a higher caster level than your own.

Cypher Script

Through researching lengthy, ancient, arcane scripts, you have discovered a more efficient method of recording spells. As with the Cypher Magic feat, Cypher Script was originally developed by the Cyphermages of Riddleport, but has been spreading through the Inner Sea region recently.

Prerequisite: Knowledge (arcana) 1 rank, Linguistics 1 rank, Spellcraft 1 rank, spellbook class feature.

Benefit: Any spell you scribe in your spellbook costs half as much as normal and takes up only half the room it normally would (round all fractions up). It only takes you 10 minutes per spell level to scribe a spell into your spellbook (5 minutes for cantrips).

Feats

Feat	Prerequisites	Benefits
Aldori Dueling Mastery*	Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Aldori dueling sword), Quick Draw, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (Aldori dueling sword)	Gain combat benefits when using Aldori dueling swords
Altitude Affinity	Endurance	Automatically acclimated to high altitude
Andoren Falconry	Cha 13, Animal Affinity, animal companion class feature	Bonuses when dealing with birds of prey
Arcane Vendetta	Spellcraft 1 rank	+2 bonus on damage vs. arcane spellcasters
Careful Speaker	Wis 13	+2 bonus on some Bluff checks and some Will saves
Cypher Magic	Int 15, Scribe Scroll	Gain bonuses to caster level when using scrolls
Cypher Script	Knowledge (arcana) 1 rank, Linguistics 1 rank, Spellcraft 1 rank, spellbook class feature	You are more efficient at using your spellbook
Demon Hunter*	Knowledge (planes) 6 ranks	Gain Knowledge and combat bonuses vs. demons
Dervish Dance*	Dex 13, Weapon Finesse, Perform (dance) 2 ranks, proficient with scimitar	Use Dex modifier instead of Str modifier with scimitar
Desert Dweller	Con 13, Survival 1 rank	Starvation, thirst, and extreme heat effects lessened
Desperate Battler*	—	Gain +1 morale bonus on melee attack and damage when alone
Eye of the Arclord	Knowledge (arcana) 4 ranks, ability to cast arcane spells	Gain a third eye with magic powers
Fey Foundling	Can only select at 1st level	Magical healing works better on you
Flagbearer*	Cha 15	Grant bonuses to allies who see your flag
Focused Discipline*	—	Gain temporary combat bonuses after resisting fear effects
Fortune Teller	Ability to cast divination spells	Cast some divination spells at +1 caster level
Free Spirit	Cha 13, chaotic alignment	+2 bonus on saves vs. mind-affecting and on escape attempts
Godless Healing	Cannot have a patron deity	Heal yourself 1d8 + level hp 1/day
Green Faith Acolyte	Follower of the Green Faith	Your spells work more efficiently on plants
Hamatulatsu*	Improved Unarmed Strike, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike)	Unarmed attacks can inflict piercing damage and sicken foes
Harmonic Spell	Bardic music ability	Casting spells extends duration of bardic performance
Harrowed	—	+1 on saves vs. enchantment; can draw Harrow cards for bonuses
Hermean Blood	Can only select at 1st level	2 skills of your choice are class skills
Necromantic Affinity	Con 15	You resist necromantic effects and heal as if undead
Noble Scion	Cha 13, can only select at 1st level	+2 on Knowledge (nobility) plus gain a nobility-related boon
Rapid Reload	Weapon Proficiency (crossbow) or Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms)	Reload your weapon quickly
Rugged Northerner	Con 13, Survival 1 rank	Frostbite, hypothermia, and extreme cold effects lessened
Scholar	—	+2 bonus on two Knowledge skills
Secret Signs	Int 13	You can hide somatic components of spellcasting
Shade of the Uskwood	Neutral evil, patron deity Zon-Kuthon	Add sinister spells to druid spell list
Shrewd Tactician*	Alertness, Combat Reflexes	Flanking is less efficient against you
Stoic	Iron Will	+1 save vs. fear, limited fear immunity
Storm-Lashed	—	Ignore many of the effects of bad weather
Survivor	Con 13, Diehard, Endurance	When you're dying, you stabilize more easily
Taldan Duelist*	Dex 13, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (falcata), Shield Proficiency (buckler), Weapon Focus (falcata)	Gain +1 shield bonus to AC, +2 on Acrobatics checks
Totem Spirit	Member of a Shoanti tribe	Gain a boon related to your tribe's theme
Varisian Tattoo	Spell Focus	Gain a cantrip as a spell-like ability
Wand Dancer	Dex 13, Dodge, Mobility, Perform (dance) 5 ranks	Move before and after using a spell trigger item

* This is a combat feat and can be selected as a fighter bonus feat.

Demon Hunter (Combat)

You are well-versed in demonic lore.

Prerequisites: Knowledge (planes) 6 ranks.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on Knowledge (planes) checks to know the powers and abilities of demons. You gain a +2 morale bonus on all attack rolls and a +2 morale bonus on caster level checks to penetrate spell resistance made against creatures with the demon subtype you recognize as demons.

Dervish Dance (Combat)

You have learned to turn your speed into power, even with a heavier blade.

Prerequisites: Dexterity 13, Weapon Finesse, Perform (dance) 2 ranks, proficient with scimitar.

Benefit: When wielding a scimitar with one hand, you can use your Dexterity modifier instead of your Strength modifier on melee attack and damage rolls. You treat the scimitar as a one-handed piercing weapon for all feats and class abilities that require such a weapon (such as a duelist's precise strike ability). The scimitar must be for a creature of your size. You cannot use this feat if you are carrying a weapon or shield in your off hand.

Desert Dweller

Your time spent living in merciless deserts has granted you resistance to extreme heat, starvation, and thirst.

Prerequisites: Con 13, Survival 1 rank.

Benefit: You treat extreme heat conditions (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 444) as severe heat, and severe heat as very hot conditions. You are not impacted at all by very hot conditions. In addition, you gain a +4 bonus on all Constitution checks made to resist the effects of starvation or thirst.

Desperate Battler (Combat)

Your experiences fighting against numerous foes that have already overwhelmed your allies, friends, and family have forced you to excel at fighting on your own.

Benefit: When no ally is within 10 feet of you and you are not receiving benefits from the aid another action, you gain a +1 morale bonus on melee attack and damage rolls.

Eye of the Arclord

Your understanding of the esoteric teachings of the Arclords of Nex allows you to open an eldritch eye that grants you superior perception of the magical world.

Prerequisites: Knowledge (arcana) 4 ranks, ability to cast arcane spells.

Benefit: Once per day as a standard action, you can open an incandescent third eye upon your forehead. The eye can remain open for 1 minute, during which time you cast all divination spells at +1 caster level (as long as you begin casting the spell before the eye closes), gain darkvision 60 feet, and can use *detect magic* (as the spell of the same name). You gain a +8 bonus on Perception checks to notice invisible creatures while the eye is open as well.

Fey Foundling

You were found in the wilds as a child, bearing a mark of the First World.

Prerequisites: You may only select this feat at 1st level.

Benefit: Your strange connection to the First World and the fey infuses you with life, and whenever you receive magical healing, you heal an additional 2 points per die rolled. You gain a +2 bonus on all saving throws against death effects. Unfortunately, you also suffer +1 point of damage from cold iron weapons (although you can wield cold iron weapons without significant discomfort).

Flagbearer (Combat)

When brandishing a flag adorned with the standard of an organization you owe allegiance to, you inspire nearby members of the same allegiance.

Prerequisites: Cha 15.

Benefit: As long as you hold your clan, house, or party's flag (see page 293), members of that allegiance within 30 feet who can see the flag (including yourself) gain a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, and saving throws against fear and charm effects. You must hold the flag in one hand in order to grant this bonus. If the standard is taken by the enemy or destroyed, this bonus becomes a penalty, affecting all creatures that the bonus previously affected for 1 hour (or until you reclaim the lost flag).

Focused Discipline (Combat)

Familiarity with the military traditions of your homeland inspires uncommon valor in you.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on all saving throws against fear effects. Whenever a fear effect targets you and fails to affect you (either because of a successful saving throw or because of immunity to fear), you gain a +2 morale bonus on attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, and CMB checks against the creature that attempted to use the fear affect on you for 1 round.

Fortune Teller

As a result of being raised in a land steeped in tradition and superstition (such as Varisia or Ustalav), you are skilled at communicating with the spirit world.

Prerequisite: Ability to cast divination spells.

Benefit: Upon taking this feat, choose a focus item for your divination magic—a crystal ball, runes, a Harrow deck, or some such item. Whenever you cast a spell from the divination school, you may use this focus item instead of the spell's material component, as long as the cost of the material component is no more than 1,000 gp. If you

choose to perform the spell using your focus item and the spell's normal material component (regardless of that component's cost), you cast the spell at +1 caster level.

Free Spirit

Your strong belief in the value of freedom protects you from mental and physical shackles.

Prerequisites: Cha 13, any chaotic alignment.

Benefit: You gain a +2 morale bonus on saving throws made against mind-affecting effects and on all Escape Artist or grapple checks made to escape a grapple or to escape from bonds.

Godless Healing

You have mastered a specialized and complex technique to ignore pain by focusing your belief on the self rather than relying on faith.

Prerequisite: Cannot have a patron deity.

Benefit: Once per day when you have half your total hit points or fewer, you may heal yourself of an amount of damage equal to 1d8 plus your total Hit Dice as a move action. This is a supernatural ability.

Special: You can take this feat more than once. Each time you do, you may heal yourself one additional time per day.

Green Faith Acolyte

You have trained to channel your magical energies in ways that do not harm the natural world around you.

Prerequisite: Follower of the Green Faith.

Benefit: Spells you cast that deal damage, channel negative energy, or otherwise harm life do not hurt normal or magical plants. In addition, whenever you cast a spell that utilizes, heals, or enhances normal or magical plants (such as *entangle* or *plant growth*), you cast the spell at +1 caster level.

Hamatulatsu (Combat)

You have mastered a deadly fighting form inspired by the hideous attacks of the barbed devil.

Prerequisites: Improved Unarmed Strike, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike).

Benefit: Your unarmed attacks can deal either bludgeoning or piercing damage. You decide which type of damage you deal whenever you attack a foe, but you may only choose one type at a time. If you critically hit a foe with your unarmed strike while doing piercing damage, the additional pain caused by the strike causes the foe to become sickened for 1 round (or staggered for 1 round if the target is already sickened). Multiple critical hits in a round against a single foe do not increase the duration of the sickened or staggered condition.

Special: Hamatulatsu may be selected as a substitute bonus feat at 6th level by a monk even if the monk does not otherwise meet the prerequisites. This fighting style is normally only taught to women of the Sisterhood of the Golden Erinyes.

Harmonic Spell

You can weave bardic music effects into your spellcasting in such a way that your spellcasting and bardic performance become indistinguishable.

Prerequisite: Bardic music ability.

Benefit: Whenever you cast a spell while you are maintaining a bardic performance, you can maintain the bardic performance for that round without expending one of your rounds of performance for the day. In addition, you can switch from one bardic performance to another as a swift action when you cast a spell while maintaining a bardic performance.

Harrowed

Numerous Harrow readings early in your life seem to have hit the mark precisely, increasing your belief that you are destined for a specific purpose in life.

Benefit: You get a +1 bonus on all Will saves made to resist enchantment effects. Once per day, you may draw a card from a Harrow deck you own. At any one time for the rest of that day, you may apply a +2 bonus on any d20 roll modified by the card's suit. For example, if you drew a card from the suit of Dexterity, you could apply this +2 bonus on an Initiative check, a Reflex save, a Dexterity-based skill check, or a ranged attack roll. You may assign this +2 bonus after you make the roll, but you must do so before you know whether the roll was a success or not.

Hermean Blood

You are the descendant of someone recruited to Hermea or the bastard result of a Hermean's illicit pairing with someone foreign to that land.

Prerequisites: You may only gain this feat at 1st level.

Benefit: Though you may not know it, the blood of greatness flows in your veins. Pick two skills that share the same associated ability score. Those skills are always considered class skills for you. It's possible that Hermean agents may come looking for you, either to evaluate you for an invitation or to cover up an embarrassing dalliance, as determined by the GM's whim.

Necromantic Affinity

Long exposure to necromantic energies has granted you a small measure of resistance against them.

Prerequisites: Con 15.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on saving throws made to resist spells and effects that utilize negative energy, cause negative levels, or cause ability damage, ability drain, or ability penalties. In addition, damage caused by inflict spells heals you as if you were an undead creature, but you also take damage from cure spells.

Noble Scion

You are a member of a proud noble family, whether or not you remain in good standing with your family.

Prerequisites: Cha 13, must be taken at 1st level.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on all Knowledge (nobility) checks, and that chosen Knowledge skill is always considered a class skill for you.

When you select this feat, choose one of the benefits listed below that matches the flavor of your noble family. Work with your GM to ensure that your choice is appropriate.

Scion of the Arts: You gain a +1 bonus on all Perform checks, and Perform is always a class skill for you. If you have the bardic performance ability, you can use that ability for an additional 3 rounds per day.

Scion of Lore: You gain a +1 bonus on all Knowledge skills in which you have at least 1 rank.

Scion of Magic: You gain one of the following languages as a bonus language: Abyssal, Aklo, Celestial, Draconic, Infernal, or Sylvan. Once per day, as a free action, you can gain a +2 bonus on any Spellcraft check you make. You must spend the free action to gain this bonus before you make the check.

Scion of Peace: Whenever you take 10 on a Wisdom-based skill, treat the result as if you had rolled a 13 instead of a 10.

Scion of War: You use your Charisma modifier to adjust Initiative checks instead of your Dexterity modifier.

Rapid Reload (Combat)

Choose a type of crossbow (hand, light, heavy) or a single type of one-handed or two-handed firearm that you are proficient with. You can reload such a weapon quickly.

Prerequisites: Weapon Proficiency (crossbow type chosen) or Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearm).

Benefit: The time required for you to reload your chosen type of weapon is reduced to a free action (for a hand or light crossbow), a move action (for heavy crossbow or one-handed firearm), or a standard action (two-handed firearm). Reloading a crossbow or firearm still provokes attacks of opportunity.

If you have selected this feat for a hand crossbow or light crossbow, you may fire that weapon as many times in a full-attack action as you could attack if you were using a bow.

Normal: A character without this feat needs a move action to reload a hand or light crossbow, a standard action to reload a one-handed firearm, or a full-round action to load a heavy crossbow or a two-handed firearm.

Special: You can gain Rapid Reload multiple times. Each time you take the feat, it applies to a new type of crossbow or a new type of firearm.

Rugged Northerner

You live a hard life in a cold climate and gain some benefit from it.

Prerequisites: Con 13, Survival 1 rank.

Benefit: You treat extreme cold conditions (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 442) as severe cold, and severe cold as cold weather conditions. You are not impacted at all by normal cold weather conditions. In addition, you do not become fatigued by frostbite or hypothermia.

Scholar

You have graduated from one of the many colleges, universities, and specialty schools of higher learning scattered throughout the Inner Sea region.

Benefit: Pick any two Knowledge skills. You gain a +2 bonus on these two skills. If you have 10 or more ranks in one of these Knowledge skills, the bonus increases to +4 for that skill.

Secret Signs

You are particularly adept at communicating with others via innuendo, gestures, and secret hand signs.

Prerequisite: Int 13.

Benefit: You gain a +4 bonus on Bluff checks made to pass secret messages. In addition, you are adept at hiding the somatic components of spellcasting. If you cast a spell that has only somatic components, an observer must make a Perception check opposed by your Sleight of Hand check to notice your spellcasting. Spellcraft checks made to identify any spell you cast that has somatic components take a –2 penalty.

Shade of the Uskwood

Ordained as one of the sinister albino druids who dwell within the heart of the Uskwood, you carry with you into the wider world a powerful effigy of hair, twigs, and blood that crawls with the deepening cold of the Midnight Lord's hallowed hunting grounds.

Prerequisite: Neutral evil, patron deity Zon-Kuthon.

Benefit: Add the following spells to your druid spell list. 0—*disrupt undead*, *ray of frost*; 1st—*ghost sound*, *touch of fatigue*; 2nd—*chill touch*, *spectral hand*; 3rd—*ghoul touch*, *invisibility*; 4th—*displacement*, *ray of exhaustion*; 5th—*animate dead*, *phantasmal killer*; 6th—*nightmare*, *waves of fatigue*; 7th—*circle of death*, *shadow walk*; 8th—*mass invisibility*, *waves of exhaustion*; 9th—*horrid wilting*, *weird*.

Remove all spells with the fire descriptor from all your spell lists (not just your druid spell list). You cannot cast any spells with the fire descriptor, nor activate them off scrolls, wands, or any other magic devices. In addition, you may not use wild shape to take the form of any creature with the fire subtype.

Special: As part of this feat, you create a personal Umbrae-Token that ties your soul and your doings to the fell power of the Uskwood. This potent object is treated as a wooden unholy symbol that radiates faint necromancy magic. If your Umbrae-Token is ever destroyed, your connection to the shadowy heart of the Uskwood is severed

and all benefits of this feat are lost until another is created. This process requires a journey to the Uskwood and an *atonement* spell cast by a fellow worshiper of Zon-Kuthon.

Shrewd Tactician (Combat)

Your dealings with pirates, thieves, and assassins have taught you to be exceedingly careful.

Prerequisite: Alertness, Combat Reflexes.

Benefit: Opponents do not gain a +2 bonus on attack rolls for flanking you, although they can still sneak attack you. You also gain a +3 bonus on Sense Motive checks made to resist a foe's Bluff checks to feint in combat.

Stoic

You know from firsthand experience that life is a series of unforgiving trials, and that fear itself is something that can be conquered.

Prerequisites: Iron Will.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus on all saving throws against fear effects. If you successfully save against any fear effect, you are immune to further fear effects from that source for 24 hours.

Storm-Lashed

A life spent enduring gales and storms has hardened your body to the elements.

Benefit: You can ignore many of the effects of severe weather. In rainy conditions, your visibility is only reduced by one-quarter (not by half) and you only take a –2 penalty on Perception checks. You are treated as if you were one size category larger for the purpose of wind effects, and halve any penalty to Perception caused by high winds. Finally, you gain a +2 bonus on all saving throws against electrical effects.

Survivor

Only the strong thrive in your homeland, and you are no weakling, even among your kin.

Prerequisites: Con 13, Diehard, Endurance.

Benefit: You gain a +5 bonus on all Constitution checks made to stabilize while dying. Once per day, if you are struck by a critical hit or sneak attack, you can spend an immediate action to negate the critical or the sneak attack damage, making the attack a normal hit.

Taldan Duelist (Combat)

You trained at one of Taldor's elite fighting schools and are skilled at rondelero, the art of fighting with the falcata (see the *Advanced Player's Guide*) and buckler.

Prerequisite: Dex 13, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (falcata), Shield Proficiency (buckler), Weapon Focus (falcata).

Benefit: When fighting with the falcata and buckler, your shield bonus to AC increases by +1 and you gain a +2 bonus on Acrobatics checks.

Totem Spirit

You are mystically tied to your tribe's sacred totem.

Prerequisite: Member of a Shoanti tribe.

Benefit: The benefit granted by this feat depends on which Shoanti tribe you belong to:

Lyrune-Quah (Moon Clan): You gain a +1 bonus on Will saves and a +2 bonus on Perception checks.

Shadde-Quah (Axe Clan): If you have the rage ability, you can rage for 3 additional rounds per day. You also gain a +2 bonus on Intimidate checks.

Shriikirri-Quah (Hawk Clan): You gain a +2 bonus on Initiative checks and a +2 bonus on Ride checks.

Shundar-Quah (Spire Clan): You gain a +1 bonus on Fortitude saves and a +2 bonus on Perception checks.

Sklar-Quah (Sun Clan): You gain a +1 bonus on Reflex saves and a +2 bonus on Acrobatics checks.

Skoan-Quah (Skull Clan): You gain a +2 bonus on weapon damage against undead and a +2 bonus on Heal checks.

Tamiir-Quah (Wind Clan): Your base land speed increases by 5 feet. You also gain a +2 bonus on Acrobatics checks.

Varisian Tattoo

You bear intricate tattoos that inspire and empower your natural magic ability. These tattoos mark you as a worker of the ancient traditions of Varisian magic. A Varisian tattoo typically consists of a long string of complex characters from the Thassilonian alphabet.

Prerequisite: Spell Focus.

Benefit: Select a school of magic (other than divination) in which you have Spell Focus—you cast spells from this school at +1 caster level. Additionally, you gain a single spell-like ability usable up to three times per day. The spell-like ability gained (and its Varisian name) are as follows:

Abjuration (*avidais*): *resistance*
Conjuration (*idolis*): *acid splash*
Enchantment (*carnasia*): *daze*
Evocation (*ragario*): *dancing lights*
Illusion (*vangloris*): *ghost sound*
Necromancy (*voratalo*): *touch of fatigue*
Transmutation (*avaria*): *mage hand*

Wand Dancer

You are trained in a tradition of Garundi courtesans and court mages that melds dance with the use of magic wands.

Prerequisite: Dex 13, Dodge, Mobility, Perform (dance) 5 ranks.

Benefit: When using a spell trigger item, you can move both before and after triggering the item, as long as the total distance moved is not greater than your speed. Choose one creature potentially affected by your spell trigger item. Your movement does not provoke attacks of opportunity from that creature only. You must move at least 5 feet before and after using your spell trigger item to utilize this feat.

Equipment

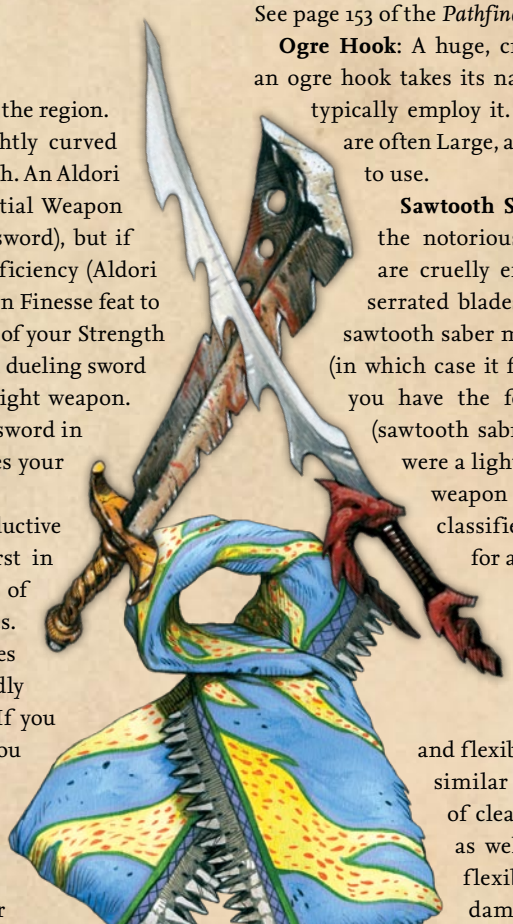
Adventurers throughout the Inner Sea region utilize a wide variety of weapons, armor, and gear beyond that presented in the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*.

WEAPONS

These weapons are known throughout the region.

Aldori Dueling Sword: These slightly curved swords measure just over 3 feet in length. An Aldori dueling sword may be used as a Martial Weapon (in which case it functions as a longsword), but if you have the feat Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Aldori dueling sword), you can use the Weapon Finesse feat to apply your Dexterity modifier instead of your Strength modifier on attack rolls with an Aldori dueling sword sized for you, even though it isn't a light weapon. You can also wield an Aldori dueling sword in two hands in order to apply 1-1/2 times your Strength bonus to damage.

Bladed Scarf: Knowing that seductive performances can bring out the worst in watchers, some Varisians craft rows of razor-sharp blades into their scarves. The skill required in using such scarves effectively and not revealing their deadly nature makes them exotic weapons. If you are proficient with a bladed scarf, you deal 1d4 points of slashing damage to any creature that makes a successful grapple check against you while you wield the scarf. You can use the Weapon Finesse feat to apply your Dexterity modifier instead of your Strength modifier on attack rolls with a bladed scarf sized for you, even though it isn't a light weapon.



DOGSLICER, SAWTOOTH SABRE, BLADED SCARF

Dogslicer: This short, curved blade is favored by goblins, who often drill numerous holes into it in an attempt to reduce its weight. If a wielder rolls a natural 1 when attacking with a dogslicer, the weapon gains the broken condition. Masterwork and magical dogslicers do not have this flaw. Most dogslicers are sized for Small creatures.

Earth Breaker: The crude metal of this massive hammer's head ends in multiple blunt spikes that channel the momentum of a powerful swing.

Horsechopper: Crafted by goblins to give themselves an advantage against horses, this weapon is essentially a halberd with an enlarged hook opposite the blade.

Klar: The klar is a traditional Shoanti weapon consisting of a short blade bound to the skull of a horned reptile. An attack with a klar is treated as an attack with shield spikes. See page 153 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*.

Ogre Hook: A huge, crude crook of sharpened metal, an ogre hook takes its name from the savages who most typically employ it. Usually created by ogres, these are often Large, and awkward for most humanoids to use.

Sawtooth Sabre: The signature weapons of the notorious Red Mantis, sawtooth sabres are cruelly efficient weapons. Their curved, serrated blades are can cause deep wounds. A sawtooth saber may be used as a Martial Weapon (in which case it functions as a longsword), but if you have the feat Exotic Weapon Proficiency (sawtooth sabre), you treat the weapon as if it were a light weapon for the purpose of two-weapon fighting—the sabre remains classified as a one-handed melee weapon for all other purposes.

Shoanti Bolas: These bolas function as standard bolas, but they deal lethal damage rather than nonlethal damage.

Urumi: This terribly thin and flexible blade appears as a coil of steel, similar to a metal whip, but is capable of cleaving flesh and holding an edge as well as any forged blade. Built for flexibility, an urumi takes only half damage from attempts to sunder it.

War Razor: To all appearances, a war razor is an oversized razor or flip knife. As the razor folds into the handle, no sheath is required, making the weapon easy to hide and thus granting you a +2 bonus on Sleight of Hand checks made to conceal the weapon on your body.

ARMOR

These types of armor follow the same rules as those presented in the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*.

Field Plate: This heavy armor is similar to full plate but lighter in construction, sacrificing a bit of protection for greater flexibility and mobility.

Hellknight Plate: These distinctive suits of armor are a special type of masterwork full plate that, when worn by

Weapons of the Inner Sea

Martial Weapons	Cost	Dmg (S)	Dmg (M)	Critical	Range	Weight	Type	Special
Light Melee Weapons								
Dogslicer	8 gp	1d4	1d6	19–20/x2	—	1 lb.	S	
War razor	8 gp	1d3	1d4	19–20/x2	—	1 lb.	S	
One-Handed Melee Weapons								
Klar	12 gp	1d4	1d6	x2	—	6 lbs.	S	
Two-Handed Melee Weapons								
Earth breaker	40 gp	1d10	2d6	x3	—	14 lbs.	B	
Horsechopper	10 gp	1d8	1d10	x3	—	12 lbs.	P or S	reach, trip
Ogre hook	24 gp	1d8	1d10	x3	—	10 lbs.	P	trip

Exotic Weapons	Cost	Dmg (S)	Dmg (M)	Critical	Range	Weight	Type	Special
One-Handed Melee Weapons								
Aldori dueling sword	20 gp	1d6	1d8	19–20/x2	—	3 lbs.	S	
Sawtooth sabre	35 gp	1d6	1d8	19–20/x2	—	2 lbs.	S	
Urumi	30 gp	1d6	1d8	18–20/x2	—	6 lbs.	S	
Two-Handed Melee Weapons								
Bladed scarf	12 gp	1d4	1d6	x2	—	2 lbs.	S	disarm, trip
Ranged Weapons								
Shoanti bolas	15 gp	1d3	1d4	x2	10 ft.	2 lbs.	B and P	trip

Armor of the Inner Sea

Armor	Cost	Armor/Shield Bonus	Maximum Dex Bonus	Armor Check Penalty	Arcane Spell Failure Chance	Speed (30 ft.)	Speed (20 ft.)	Weight[1]
Light Armor								
Leaf armor	500 gp	+3	+5	0	15%	30 ft.	20 ft.	20 lbs.
Heavy Armor								
Field plate	1,200 gp	+7	+1	–5	35%	20 ft.[2]	15 ft.[2]	50 lbs.
Hellknight plate	2,000 gp	+9	+1	–5	35%	20 ft.[2]	15 ft.[2]	50 lbs.
Stoneplate	1,800 gp	+9	+1	–6	35%	15 ft.[2]	10 ft.[2]	75 lbs.
Shields								
Klar	12 gp	+1	—	–1	5%	—	—	6 lbs.

[1] Weight figures are for armor sized to fit Medium characters. Armor sized to fit Small characters weighs half as much, and armor sized to fit Large characters weighs twice as much.

[2] When running in heavy armor, you move only triple your speed, not quadruple.

a character with levels in the Hellknight prestige class, grants additional effects.

Klar: The klar functions as a light wooden or light steel shield when used to defend in combat.

Leaf Armor: Druidic elves use alchemical compounds to treat special leaves used in crafting armor for their warriors. Leaf armor is always of masterwork quality.

Stoneplate: Crafted by dwarven stonesmiths from alchemically strengthened plates of basalt primarily for use by dwarven druids, stoneplate is heavy and unwieldy, but offers incredible protection to its wearer.

Firearms

Firearms are specialized weapons invented by the dwarves of Alkenstar and Dongun Hold. Until recently, knowledge and use of these violent weapons were limited to these dwarves. Within the last century or so, however, firearms have slowly begun to spread throughout the Inner Sea region. Their complex construction and need for rigorous care makes them rather expensive, thus limiting their availability to the very rich. Their unpredictable nature and the danger of misfires and explosions make them weapons for the truly adventurous or foolhardy.

Firearm Proficiency: The Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms) feat allows you to use all of the firearms presented here without penalty. A non-proficient character takes the standard –4 penalty on attack rolls with firearms and increases all misfire values by 4.

Even though Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms) grants you proficiency with all firearms, when you take feats that

Firearms of the Inner Sea

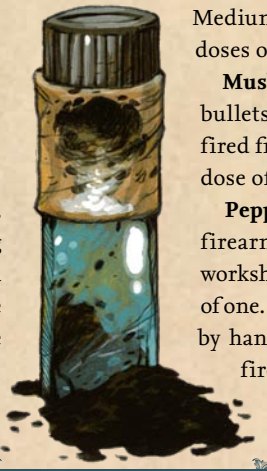
Firearm	Cost	Dmg (S)	Dmg (M)	Critical	Range	Misfire	Capacity	Weight	Type
One-Handed Firearms									
Pepperbox	3,000 gp	1d6	1d8	×4	20 ft.	1–2 (5 ft.)	6	5 lbs.	B and P
Pistol	1,000 gp	1d6	1d8	×4	20 ft.	1 (5 ft.)	1	4 lbs.	B and P
Two-Handed Firearms									
Musket	1,500 gp	1d10	1d12	×4	40 ft.	1–2 (5 ft.)	1	9 lbs.	B and P
Siege Firearms									
Cannon	6,000 gp	4d6	6d6	×4	100 ft.	1 (20 ft.)	1	3,000 lbs.	B and P

modify a single type of weapon (such as Weapon Focus or Rapid Reload), you must still pick one type of firearm (such as musket, pepperbox, or pistol) for those feats to affect.

Capacity: This lists the number of shots the weapon can hold. You may fire a firearm as many times in a round as you have attacks, up to this limit. The capacity often indicates the number of barrels a firearm has.

Range and Penetration: Armor, manufactured or natural, provides little protection against the force of a bullet at short range. When firing upon a target within a firearm's first range increment, the attack resolves against the target's touch AC. At higher range increments, the attack resolves normally (including taking the normal cumulative –2 penalty for each full range increment). Unlike other projectile weapons, most firearms have a maximum range of five range increments.

Loading a Firearm: It's a standard action to load a one-handed firearm and a full-round action to load a two-handed firearm. Loading a cannon requires three full-round actions. Loading a firearm provokes attacks of opportunity. The Rapid Reload feat reduces the time required to load one-handed and two-handed firearms, but not cannons. Loading a one-handed or two-handed firearm typically requires 1 bullet and 1 dose of black powder. Siege firearms typically require a ball and multiple doses of black powder. Firearm ammunition cannot be treated with poison.



BLACK POWDER

Misfires: If the natural result of your attack roll falls within a firearm's misfire range, your firearm misfires, even if you normally would have hit the target. When a firearm misfires, you miss the target and the firearm gains the broken condition. A broken firearm's misfire value increases by 4. If a firearm with the broken condition misfires again, it explodes. When a firearm explodes, the weapon is destroyed. Pick one corner of your square—the explosion creates a burst from that point of origin. Each firearm has a burst size noted in parentheses after its misfire value. Anyone within this burst (including the firearm's wielder) takes damage as if he had been shot by the weapon—a DC 12 Reflex save halves this damage.

Firearm Descriptions

The majority of firearms that can be found in the Inner Sea region are typically one of four varieties.

Cannon: Among the largest firearms, cannons fire solid balls of metal with a tremendous explosion. Most cannons are far too heavy to be used as a personal weapon by a Medium creature. A cannon uses a cannon ball and 10 doses of black powder as ammunition.

Musket: This large firearm fires large-caliber bullets that have a much greater range than those fired from a pistol. A musket uses a bullet and a single dose of black powder as ammunition.

Pepperbox: A pepperbox is the most advanced firearm available outside of Alkenstar's deepest workshops. This firearm possesses six barrels instead of one. The entire barrel housing can be quickly rotated by hand between shots, allowing all six bullets to be fired before the weapon must be reloaded. Fully reloading a pepperbox takes six times as long as reloading a pistol, since each barrel must be reloaded as a separate standard action. Each barrel of a pepperbox uses a bullet and a single dose of black powder for its ammunition.

Pistol: The single-shot pistol is the most common firearm found in the Inner Sea region, although it's still rare enough to be an object of envy or curiosity to most. A pistol uses a bullet and a singe dose of black powder as ammunition.

Adventuring Gear

People across Avistan and Garund have developed all sorts of unique gear useful for their particular needs.

Black Powder: Black powder is the key explosive component within a firearm, but in larger amounts it can be even more destructive. A single dose of black powder is enough to power a single shot from most one-handed and two-handed firearms, while 10 doses are required to fire a cannon. Black powder is often stored and transported in kegs of 100 doses, but in this quantity the powder itself becomes dangerous. Exposure to fire, electricity, or a misfire explosion causes black powder to explode—a single keg that explodes in this manner deals 5d6 points of fire damage to anyone within a 20-foot burst (DC 15 Reflex half).

Cannon Ball: A cannon ball is the ammunition of a cannon and many other siege firearms. Picking up or drawing a cannon ball requires a move action for Medium and Small creatures, but is a free action for Large and larger creatures.

Firearm Bullet: Firearm bullets typically take the form of a small ball of lead or some other metal. A bullet that misses is destroyed.

Flag: A flag is a colorful banner that bears the heraldry or symbol of a nation or organization. A character with the Flagbearer feat who bears a flag can grant additional combat bonuses to nearby allies. Carrying a flag in combat requires a free hand.

Harrow Deck: This is a traditional fortune-telling deck of cards used by Varisian soothsayers and seers. Each Harrow deck consists of 54 cards divided into six suits of nine cards. The six suits correspond to the six ability scores (hammer for Strength, key for Dexterity, shield for Constitution, book for Intelligence, star for Wisdom, and crown for Charisma). Each card in a suit further ties in with one of the nine alignments, corresponding to the location of the symbol on the face of the card. In addition, each card has its own unique name, independent of its suit and alignment.

HARROW DECK

It takes 2d4 minutes to perform a harrowing (an attempt to divine the future of a specific creature) with a Harrow deck. The exact results of any harrowing should be determined by the GM, who can use an actual Harrow deck (available at **paizo.com**) to perform the divination.

If you don't have an actual Harrow deck to draw cards from in game, but you need to determine the suit and/or alignment of a card, you can use dice to determine the result. Roll 1d6 to determine the suit (1=hammer, 2=key, 3=shield, 4=book, 5=star, 6=crown), and 1d10 to determine alignment (1=LG, 2=NG, 3=CG, 4=LN, 5=N, 6=CN, 7=LE, 8=NE, 9=CE, 10=roll again).

Heatstone: Alchemically treated to enhance their natural heat-generating properties, these round or ovoid stones of volcanic glass provide enough heat to keep chambers warm in the coldest winter. One heatstone keeps a 20-foot-square area comfortably warm even in extreme cold (below –20° F), or a 40-foot-square area in severe cold (between –20° F and 0° F). A single heatstone is activated by striking it against any hard surface, after which point it continues to provide heat for 24 hours. An active heatstone does not give off enough heat to cook food or cause damage.

Pathfinder Chronicle: Numerous volumes and editions of the Pathfinder Chronicles exist. When used as a reference (an action that typically takes 1d4 full rounds of searching the text), a Pathfinder Chronicle grants a +2 circumstance bonus on a specific Knowledge check. Each Pathfinder Chronicle grants this bonus to a different type of Knowledge, but regardless of which type that particular chronicle is focused on, the overall cost of the book remains the same.

Perfume/Cologne: Perfume and cologne are common accessories for those who hope to avoid offending through scent. Exotic scents are sold in vials containing 10 applications, with a single dose lasting for 24 hours during which its wearer gains a +2 circumstance bonus on all Diplomacy checks (save for those against creatures who, at the GM's discretion, would not be swayed by scent).

Powder Horn: A powder horn can contain up to 10 doses of black powder. Loading a firearm without a powder horn requires the Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearm). Black powder stored in a powder horn is protected from explosion though exposure to fire, electricity, and misfires.

Tears of Razmir: Razmir's faithful utilize a number of tools to help them control the populace, but few are more insidious than the tears of Razmir. This alchemical concoction contains mild narcotics and hallucinogens that bolster the user's energy and resistance to pain. It is also highly addictive. Although the clergy gives away tears of Razmir to non-users, it eventually demands payment—as much as 10 gp per dose from wealthy addicts. See pages 236–237 of the *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* for additional rules on drugs and addiction.

TEARS OF RAZMIR

Type ingested; **Addiction** major, Fortitude DC 18

Effects 1 hour; +1 alchemical bonus to Constitution, –2 penalty on Wisdom-based skill checks

Damage 1d2 Con damage

Adventuring Gear of the Inner Sea

Item	Cost	Weight
Black powder (dose)	10 gp	—
Black powder (keg)	1,000 gp	5 lbs.
Cannon ball	30 gp	25 lbs.
Firearm bullet	1 gp	—
Flag	10 gp	3 lbs.
Harrow deck	100 gp	—
Heatstone	20 gp	1 lb.
Pathfinder Chronicle	50 gp	1 lb.
Perfume, common	1 gp/dose	—
Perfume, exotic	100 gp/dose	—
Powder horn	3 gp	1 lb.
Tears of Razmir	25 gp	—

Spells

Spellcasters of the Inner Sea region are constantly on the hunt for new methods of magic. Some seek out forgotten or obscure spells in ancient dungeons, while others strive to invent and create their own magic. Listed on the following pages is a sampling of spells culled from across the Inner Sea region, from the arcane to the divine, and from the offensive to the defensive.

ANCESTRAL MEMORY

School divination; **Level** alchemist 5, cleric/oracle 5, druid 4
Casting Time 1 standard action
Components V, S
Range personal
Target you
Duration 1 round/level

When you cast this spell, you open your mind to the vast experiences of your ancestors in the hope of learning something pertinent about your current situation. The chance of successfully finding an ancestral memory that is pertinent is equal to 70% + your caster level. Failure indicates you merely gain a +5 insight bonus on all Intelligence-based skill checks for the duration of the spell.

Success indicates that you not only gain the +5 insight bonus on all Intelligence-based skill checks, but that one of your ancestors came across a situation or problem similar to one you are currently facing. In this case, the GM provides you with some specific information to assist you in overcoming your problem.

For example, a character might encounter a clay golem deep underground, and finds that her magic weapon and spells seem to be useless against the creature. She successfully casts *ancestral memory*, and "remembers" the proper type of weapons and spells that work against such creatures.

COVETOUS AURA

School abjuration; **Level** bard 5, sorcerer/wizard 5
Casting Time 1 standard action
Components V, S
Range personal
Area 25-ft.-radius emanation centered on you
Duration 1 round/level or until discharged
Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** no

Anytime a harmless (so noted by a spell's saving throw description) spell of 3rd level or lower is cast within a *covetous aura*'s area of effect, you may choose to immediately gain the benefit of that spell as if it had also targeted you. The intended target still gains the effect of the spell. You gain the benefits of this duplicated spell only if the caster is in range of the *covetous aura*. You are considered the caster of the additional spell effect. If the effect allows for multiple targets other than yourself, you cannot use the stolen spell effect to target other creatures—a *covetous aura* only aids you. Once you choose to gain the benefit of another spell, the *covetous aura* immediately ends. Rumors hold that this unusual spell was invented thousands of years ago by Runelord Belimarius, who was constantly jealous of other spellcasters' abilities.

DIRGE OF THE VICTORIOUS KNIGHTS

School illusion (shadow); **Level** bard 6
Casting Time 1 full round
Components V, S, F (a medal from a dead Hellknight or a copy of a Chelish opera script, either worth at least 100 gp)
Range 120 ft.
Effect 120-ft. line, 10 ft. wide
Duration instantaneous
Saving Throw Reflex half; **Spell Resistance** yes

By performing part of the Chelish opera *Victory of the Hellknights*, you call forth spectral illusions of mounted Hellknights to trample your foes under the hooves of their glorious steeds. The shadowy knights appear in your square and ride forward in the direction you indicate, dealing 1d6 points of damage per caster level (maximum 20d6) to all creatures in their path. Half of this damage is cold damage, while half results directly from arcane power and is not subject to cold resistance or immunity. The knights cannot pass through force effects or barriers that block incorporeal creatures or undead.

GORUM'S ARMOR

School transmutation; **Level** cleric/oracle 1, inquisitor 1, magus 1
Casting Time 1 standard action
Components V, S, M (1 iron spike)
Range touch
Target 1 suit of metal armor or 1 metal shield
Duration 10 minutes/level
Saving Throw Fortitude negates (harmless); **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

The targeted suit of armor or shield sprouts thousands of tiny iron spikes like porcupine quills. These do not harm the armor's wearer (though donning or removing armor under the effects of this spell takes twice as long), but they act as armor spikes or shield spikes (as appropriate). Any creature attacking the wearer with natural weapons takes 1 point of piercing damage for each attack that hits. At 5th level, the spikes gain a +1 enhancement bonus on attack and damage rolls; this bonus increases to +2 at 10th level. At 15th level, the spikes also gain the *anarchic* weapon quality.

Harrowing

School divination; **Level** bard 3, sorcerer/wizard 3, witch 3
Casting Time 10 minutes
Components V, S, F (a Harrow deck)
Range touch
Target one creature
Duration 1 day/level or until fulfilled

You use a Harrow deck to tell a fortune for yourself or someone else. If you cast *harrowing* on another creature, you must remain adjacent to the target for the duration of the casting time. A harrowing must describe one set of events or course of action (for example, "hunting down the pirate king," or "traveling to Viperwall to search for a magic sword") that the target of the spell intends to undertake at some point during the spell's duration.

If you have access to a Harrow deck, draw nine cards when this spell is cast. If you do not have a Harrow deck, you can simulate the draws by rolling a d6 and a d10 for each of the nine cards, as detailed on page 293 of this book. Record the ability score and alignment associated with each card. Each of these cards grants a luck bonus or a penalty on a specific type of d20 check; the magnitude of the penalty or bonus depends upon how closely that particular card's alignment matches the target creature's alignment. If the card and target's alignments are identical, that card provides a +2 luck bonus on the associated suit's check. If the card and target's alignments are of the opposite alignment (see below), the card inflicts a –1 penalty on that associated check. If the card has any other alignment, it provides a +1 luck bonus on the associated suit's check.

While penalties persist on all associated checks for as long as the harrowing persists, the bonuses are one-use bonuses that the harrowed character can "spend" at any time to modify that card's associated check. You can spend a bonus to modify an appropriate roll after the die is rolled, but cannot spend the bonus once you know the result of the roll. Since all of the bonuses granted by a *harrowing* are luck bonuses, they do not stack with each other. Penalties, on the other hand, do stack. Once you spend all of the bonuses granted by a *harrowing*, or once the spell's duration ends, the spell ends and the penalties are removed.

A single creature can only be under the effects of one *harrowing* at a time. If it is subjected to a second *harrowing* while a previous *harrowing* is still in effect, the new *harrowing* automatically fails.

Associated Suit Checks

Suit	Associated Check
Hammer (Str)	Attack rolls (ranged and melee)
Key (Dex)	Reflex saving throws
Shield (Con)	Fortitude saving throws
Book (Int)	Skill checks
Star (Wis)	Will saving throws
Crown (Cha)	Any d20 roll

Opposition Alignments

Alignment	Opposition
LG	CE
NG	NE
CG	LE
LN	CN
N	LG, LE, CG, or CE (pick one when spell is cast)
CN	LN
LE	CG
NE	NG
CE	LG

Infernal Healing

School conjuration (healing) [evil]; **Level** cleric 1, magus 1, sorcerer/wizard 1, summoner 1, witch 1
Casting Time 1 round
Components V, S, M (1 drop of devil blood or 1 dose of unholy water)
Range touch
Target creature touched
Duration 1 minute
Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

You anoint a wounded creature with devil's blood or unholy water, giving it fast healing 1. This ability cannot repair damage caused by silver weapons, good-aligned weapons, or spells or effects with the good descriptor. The target detects as an evil creature for the duration of the spell and can sense the evil of the magic, though this has no long-term effect on the target's alignment.

Infernal Healing, Greater

School conjuration (healing) [evil]; **Level** cleric 4, magus 4, sorcerer/wizard 4, summoner 4, witch 4

As *infernal healing*, except the target gains fast healing 4 and the target detects as an evil cleric.

Interplanetary Teleport

School conjuration (teleportation); **Level** cleric/oracle 9, sorcerer/wizard 9, witch 9
Casting Time 1 standard action
Components V
Range personal and touch
Target you and touched objects or other touched willing creatures
Duration instantaneous
Saving Throw none and Will negates (object); **Spell Resistance** no and yes (object)

This spell functions as *teleport*, save that there is truly no range limit and you do not need to have seen your destination, though you must have a solid grasp of which world you wish to travel to ("Verces" is an acceptable destination, but "a habitable world near that bright star" is not). If you have a specific location on a planet in mind, you arrive there without a chance of failure; otherwise you arrive at a random location on that world that

would not immediately be life-threatening. If no such safe landing zone exists on the world, the spell simply fails.

LOVER'S VENGEANCE

School enchantment (compulsion) [mind-affecting]; **Level** bard 3, cleric/oracle 3, sorcerer/wizard 3, witch 3
Casting Time 1 minute
Components V, M (a piece of jewelry worth at least 100 gp)
Range touch
Target creature touched
Duration up to 1 day/level (D) or until discharged
Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); **Spell Resistance** Yes (harmless)

You inspire yourself or a lover to a vengeful rage against a chosen enemy, who must be a creature that has wronged you in some way. If cast on you, the next time you are in combat with that enemy, you gain the benefits of a *rage* spell. If cast on a lover, he or she gains the benefits of a *rage* spell the next time the lover is in combat against your enemy. This variant of the spell must be cast within 1 hour of an intimate encounter with the target. The *rage* effect lasts 1 round per level. If the creature that triggers the *rage* effect is one of your lovers or ex-lovers, the benefits granted by the rage spell double. This spell counts as a *contingency* spell on the target for the purpose of multiple contingent effects. Worshipers of Calistria are fond of using this spell, and many keep the effect running whenever possible.

SHIELD OF THE DAWNFLOWER

School evocation [fire, good, light]; **Level** bard 4, cleric/oracle 4, magus 4, paladin 4, ranger 4
Casting Time 1 standard action
Components V, S, DF
Range personal
Target you
Duration 1 round/level
Saving Throw see text; **Spell Resistance** no

You create a disk of sunlight on one arm. Any creature that strikes you with a melee attack deals normal damage, but also takes 1d6 points of fire damage + 1 point per caster level (maximum +15). Creatures with reach weapons are not subject to this damage if they attack you. The shield provides illumination as if it were a *continual flame* spell. You can only have one instance of this spell in effect at a time. It does not stack with similar damaging aura spells such as *fire shield*.

TELEPORT TRAP

School abjuration; **Level** sorcerer/wizard 7
Casting Time 10 minutes
Components V, S, M (powdered lodestone and silver worth 100 gp per 40-ft. cube)
Range medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Area one 40-ft. cube/level (S)
Duration 1 day/level
Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance** yes

Teleport trap wards an area, redirecting all teleportation into or out of the area to a specific point within the area determined by you at the time of casting. The destination must be an open space on a solid surface. The spell's area overlaps walls and other solid and liquid objects (preventing intruders from bypassing the ward by teleporting into a wall or through similar means). A teleporting creature that is affected by a *teleport trap* can resist the effect with a Will save—if the save is successful, the creature simply doesn't teleport at all (but the use of the teleport effect is still consumed)—either to the intended location or the *teleport trap*'s actual destination. A DC 27 Knowledge (arcana) allows such a creature to recognize the *teleport trap*'s presence, but does not reveal the trap's linked destination.

At your discretion, the *teleport trap* can exclude a category of creatures, such as an alignment, a type of creature, or creatures that carry a specific item or know a password (though this only works if the creature is teleporting out of the area, not into it). You select this option and the conditions at the time you cast the spell. Overly complicated conditions may cause the spell to fail entirely. Multiple castings of *teleport trap* can be linked to cover a larger area, allowing teleported creatures to be directed to a single point within the combined area of the spells.

Teleport trap can be made permanent at the cost of 7,000 gp. A single *permanency* spell can be used on all *teleport traps* that share a linked destination, but the gold piece cost must be paid for each individual spell.

The Pathfinders of the Grand Lodge make use of permanent *teleport traps* in several key locations, trapping would-be intruders in a small wing of jail cells. At least one crypt of the Whispering Tyrant makes use of the spell as well, trapping grave robbers in coffin-sized stone cysts, there to die a slow and agonizing death from thirst and starvation.

UNBREAKABLE HEART

School enchantment (compulsion) [mind-affecting]; **Level** bard 1, cleric/oracle 1, paladin 1, ranger 1, witch 1
Casting Time 1 standard action **Components** V, S
Range close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect 1 creature
Duration 1 round/level
Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

The target creature gains a +4 morale bonus on saving throws against mind-affecting effects that rely on negative emotions (such as *crushing despair*, *rage*, or fear effects) or that would force him to harm an ally (such as *confusion*). If the target is already under such an effect when receiving this spell, that effect is suppressed for the duration of this spell. It does not affect mind-affecting effects based on positive emotions (such as *good hope* or the inspire courage bard ability). A creature can still be charmed or otherwise magically controlled while under this spell's effects, but if such a creature ever receives a new

saving throw against that effect as a result of being ordered to attempt to harm or otherwise oppose a true ally, he can roll that saving throw twice and take the better result as his actual roll. *Calm emotions* counters and dispels *unbreakable heart*.

VERMIN SHAPE I

School transmutation (polymorph); **Level** druid 3, sorcerer/wizard 4, witch 3
Casting Time 1 standard action
Components V, S, M (a piece of the creature whose form you plan to assume)
Range personal
Target you
Duration 1 minute/level
When you cast this spell, you assume the form of any Small or Medium creature of the vermin type. If the form you assume has any of the following abilities, you gain the listed ability: climb 30 feet, fly 30 feet (average maneuverability), swim 30 feet, darkvision 60 feet, low-light vision, scent, and lunge. You don't gain full immunity to mind-affecting effects, but you do gain a +2 resistance bonus on all saving throws against such effects.

Small vermin: If you take the form of a Small vermin, you gain a +2 size bonus to your Dexterity and a +2 natural armor bonus.

Medium vermin: If you take the form of a Medium vermin, you gain a +2 size bonus to your Strength and a +3 natural armor bonus.

VERMIN SHAPE II

School transmutation (polymorph); **Level** druid 4, sorcerer/wizard 5, witch 4
This spell functions as *vermin shape I*, except that it also allows you to assume the form of a Tiny or Large creature of the vermin type. If the form you assume has any of the following abilities, you gain the listed ability: burrow 30 feet, climb 60 feet, fly 60 feet (good maneuverability), swim 60 feet, darkvision 60 feet, low-light vision, tremorsense 30 feet, scent, blood drain, constrict, grab, lunge, poison, pull, trample, and web. You don't gain full immunity to mind-affecting effects, but you do gain a +4 bonus on all saving throws against such effects.

Tiny vermin: If you take the form of a Tiny vermin, you gain a +4 size bonus to your Dexterity, a –2 penalty to your Strength, and a +1 natural armor bonus.

Large vermin: If you take the form of a Large vermin, you gain a +4 size bonus to your Strength, a –2 penalty to your Dexterity, and a +5 natural armor bonus.

VISION OF LAMASHTU

School illusion (phantasm) [mind-affecting, evil]; **Level** cleric/oracle 7, inquisitor 6, witch 7
Casting Time 10 minutes (see text)
Components V, S
Range unlimited
Target one living creature
Duration instantaneous
Saving Throw Will negates (see text); **Spell Resistance** yes
This spell functions exactly as the spell *nightmare*. In addition to the effects of that spell, you can cause a second spell to be delivered when the target wakes at the *nightmare*'s conclusion. You must have this second spell prepared, and it must be cast immediately after *vision of Lamashtu* (effectively adding the two spells' casting times). This second spell "rides along" with the *nightmare*, affecting the target as soon as it wakes from its fitful sleep. Any spell can be sent along with the nightmare, so long as it is of 6th level or lower, affects one target (which is always the *nightmare*'s recipient), and does not deal hit point damage. The second spell's range is irrelevant for the purposes of *vision of Lamashtu*, and even touch attacks can be delivered in this manner (you must still make a successful touch attack in order to affect the target, though, with the act of touching occurring within the context of the victim's *nightmare*). The target is allowed to save against the second spell if a save is allowed. For example, a cleric of Lamashtu could send *bestow curse* along as part of a *vision of Lamashtu*, but not *blade barrier* (affects an area), *destruction* (too high level), or *inflict moderate wounds* (deals hit point damage).

WATERS OF LAMASHTU

School conjuration (creation); **Level** alchemist 2, cleric 3, druid 3, witch 3
Casting Time 1 standard action
Components V, S, M (250 gp of powdered amber)
Range close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect up to 1 draft of the waters of Lamashtu per 2 levels
Duration instantaneous
Saving Throw Fortitude partial; **Spell Resistance** no
This spell generates what appears to be clear, pure water, but is in fact a foul secretion known as the *waters of Lamashtu*. The liquid functions in all the same ways as unholy water (see *curse water*). In addition, any creature that is anointed with or drinks this fluid must make a Fortitude save (drinking the *waters of Lamashtu* is particularly effective—creatures who drink the stuff take a –4 penalty on their save to resist its effects). Success causes the creature to become violently ill, vomit the fluid, and become sickened for 1d4 rounds. Failure indicates the water takes root and drives the victim mad (dealing 1d6 points of Intelligence damage) and twists and deforms the body (dealing 1d6 points of Dexterity damage). The subject's Dexterity and Intelligence cannot drop below 1 as a result of this effect. Casting this spell creates approximately 2 ounces of the *waters of Lamashtu*, enough for one draft or use (if bottled) as a thrown weapon. The fluid can be created and stored indefinitely, though it cannot be created inside a creature. Extensive exposure to the *waters of Lamashtu* (such as drinking nothing else for months at a time) can have other long-term effects on the target, including the development of monstrous deformities or even total transformation into a beast, depending on the GM's whim (these mutations are rarely, if ever, beneficial to the victim).

Magic Items

Over the ages, countless strange and wonderful magical items have been invented by spellcasters, but just as many have been lost to the passage of time. The magic items presented here represent a sampling of items associated with the Inner Sea region, from the relatively minor trinkets to actual artifacts.

CHARM OF ALUUM CONTROL

Aura moderate transmutation; **CL** 20th
Slot neck; **Price** 20,000 gp; **Weight** —

DESCRIPTION

This pendant holds a glowing crystal etched with faint runes. Created by the pactmasters of Katapesh to manipulate and control their constructs known as aluums, these charms are much sought after on the black market. Unauthorized possession of a *charm of aluum control* is considered a grave crime in Katapesh, punishable by decades of imprisonment, exile, or even death. Each *charm of aluum control* is attuned to a single, specific aluum, but the magic of the charm allows it to function somewhat against other aluums as well. Against its specific attuned aluum, the charm grants you the ability to command that construct as if you were using *dominate person* on a humanoid creature. This effect functions against other aluums, but non-attuned aluums gain a DC 16 Will save to resist the effect. If an aluum fails such a save, it becomes attuned to that charm and the previous aluum becomes unattuned—a single charm of aluum control can only be attuned to one aluum at a time. For purposes of this effect, ordering an aluum to attack a Pactmaster or someone who appears to be part of Katapesh's government or army or to damage any structure in the city of Katapesh counts as an action against the aluum's nature and allows the aluum a new saving throw with a +2 bonus to resist the charm's effects. If an aluum escapes this effect, it is no longer attuned and typically attacks the target who attempted to command it.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Construct, Craft Wondrous Item, *soul bind*; **Cost** 10,000 gp

GOZ MASK

Aura moderate transmutation; **CL** 8th
Slot head; **Price** 8,000 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.

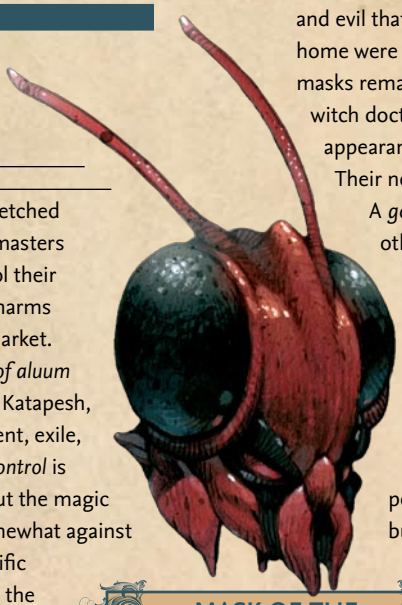
DESCRIPTION

Shortly after the Eye of Abendego began, a fanatical splinter-cult of Gozreh known as the Storm Kindlers flocked to the region, convinced the Eye was a manifestation of the Storm Lord himself. The upper tier of this group created enchanted masks to aid in the navigation of the often storm-lashed swamps. The Storm Kindlers, however, were unprepared for the savagery and evil that had claimed the Sodden Lands, and they and their home were quickly wiped out. Today, many of these distinctive masks remain, now worn by humanoid chieftains and Koboto witch doctors. The masks are often defaced, with the original appearance twisted into a monstrous or demonic visage. Their new owners refer to them as *goz masks*.

A *goz mask* allows you to see through fog, smoke, and other obscuring vapors as if they did not exist (this ability functions underwater as well, allowing the wearer to see through thick silt and other aquatic precipitates). Additionally, you are treated as one size category larger than you are and gain a +4 bonus on all saving throws made to resist the effects of wind while wearing a *goz mask*. A *goz mask* allows its wearer to breathe water for 1 hour per day—these minutes need not be consecutive, but must be expended in minimum increments of 10 minutes each.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *control winds*, *water breathing*; **Cost** 4,000 gp



MASK OF THE MANTIS

MASK OF THE MANTIS

Aura faint divination; CL 3rd
Slot head; **Price** 6,000 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.

DESCRIPTION

A *mask of the mantis* is the traditional headgear of the Red Mantis assassin. Designed both to mask the wearer's identity while on a job and to enhance the wearer's ferocious appearance, a *mask of the mantis* has 3 daily charges that can be used to gain additional bonuses. The wearer can spend a charge to gain darkvision to a range of 60 feet, the effects of *see invisibility*, the effects of *deathwatch*, or a +5 competence bonus on Perception checks. Once a charge is spent, the effect granted persists for 30 minutes before fading. Multiple effects can be active simultaneously. Charges replenish automatically in 24 hours.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *darkvision*, *see invisibility*, *deathwatch*; **Cost** 3,000 gp

Unguent of Revivification

Aura faint necromancy; **CL** 3rd
Slot none; **Price** 300 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.

Description

This foul-smelling gray paste is typically stored in a bone container. When smeared upon a corpse, it preserves that corpse's state of decay for 5 days, as if via the *gentle repose* spell. If smeared upon a corporeal undead creature, it restores that creature's living appearance for 5 days—this has no effect on the creature's abilities, but does grant it a +10 circumstance bonus on Disguise checks to appear as a living creature and imparts a –5 penalty on Knowledge (religion) checks to identify what type of undead creature it is. *Unguent of revivification* is particularly popular in Geb, where many of that nation's movers and shakers view it as a vanity item to mask the hideous truths of their undead flesh.

Construction

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *gentle repose*; **Cost** 150 gp

Wayfinder

Aura faint evocation; **CL** 5th
Slot none; **Price** 500 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.

Description

A small magical device patterned off ancient Azlanti relics, a *wayfinder* is a compact compass typically made from silver and bearing gold accents. A badge of office for agents of the Pathfinder Society, a *wayfinder* is as much a handy tool as a status symbol. With a command word, you can cause a *wayfinder* to shine (as the *light* spell). A *wayfinder* also acts as a nonmagical (magnetic) compass, granting you a +2 circumstance bonus on Survival checks to avoid becoming lost. All *wayfinders* include a small indentation designed to hold a single *ioun stone*. An ioun stone slotted in this manner grants you its normal benefits as if it were orbiting your head; some *ioun stones* can grant additional powers once they are fitted into a *wayfinder*, at the GM's discretion.

Construction

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *light*; **Cost** 250 gp

Zoic Fetish

Aura faint enchantment (compulsion); **CL** 5th
Slot none; **Price** 7,500 gp; **Weight** —

Description

Originally invented by shamans of the Kellid tribes of the Realms of the Mammoth Lords, *zoic fetishes* have spread throughout the Inner Sea region and are much sought after in any area where dangerous animals dwell. Each *zoic fetish* looks different, but is essentially a small fetish made from branches, grass, twine, and bone crafted into one of several shapes—a mammal, a bird, a reptile, an amphibian, or a fish.

As long as you carry a *zoic fetish*, you are somewhat protected against attacks from animals, gaining a +1 insight bonus to AC against all animals. In addition, possession of a *zoic fetish* grants a +4 insight bonus on wild empathy checks. Finally, once per day, you can present a *zoic fetish* to an animal of the same classification as the fetish (mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian, or fish) to use *dominate animal* on that creature.

Construction

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *dominate animal*, *hide from animals*; **Cost** 3,750 gp

Artifacts

Not all of the magic items found in the Inner Sea region are of the mundane variety that any spellcaster with the proper prerequisites can create. Some are powerful indeed, either requiring specific and hidden formulae and recipes for creation, or even being beyond the capability of most mortal spellcasters to build. While not all of these artifacts are hideously powerful, they all have magical effects that operate on a different level than typical magic items. Listed below are numerous minor and major artifacts that have had (or continue to have) a significant impact on the Inner Sea region.

Blackaxe (Major Artifact)

Aura strong conjuration; **CL** 20th
Slot none; **Weight** 50 lbs.

Description

Treerazer's favored weapon is *Blackaxe*, a Huge *+5 plant bane greataxe* carved from obsidian but as strong as adamantine—this weapon is considered epic and can penetrate epic damage reduction. Virulent acid constantly seeps from *Blackaxe*'s blade, dealing +1d6 points of acid damage on a successful hit. On a successful critical hit, *Blackaxe* deals an additional +2d10 points of acid damage. Once per minute, the weapon's wielder can use *heal* on himself by striking a living and nonmagical tree with *Blackaxe*—this act causes the tree to wither to ash in a heartbeat. Treerazer can call *Blackaxe* to his hand as a free action, despite any intervening distance, as long as *Blackaxe* is not kept in an area that prevents teleportation effects from occurring. The nascent demon lord often loans *Blackaxe* to favored minions, and uses this ability to reclaim his weapon should he become aware that the wielder has failed in a mission. While *Blackaxe* is wielded by another creature, Treerazer always knows that creature's location and status (as via the *status* and *discern location* spells), and by concentrating can observe the world around the wielder as if using that wielder's senses. While in this state, Treerazer may use any of his spell-like abilities through the link, treating *Blackaxe* as if it were the source of the spell-like ability. Each time Treerazer

does so, *Blackaxe*'s wielder must make a DC 25 Will save to avoid being staggered for 1 round from the flow of power. These spell-like abilities trigger during the wielder's turn in initiative, but do not consume any of the wielder's actions in that round.

DESTRUCTION

Blackaxe, it is rumored, was stolen by Treerazer from the demon lord Cyth-V'sug. In order to destroy it, *Blackaxe* must be used against a powerful magical tree, and while the sap on the blade is still fresh it must then be used to sever one of Cyth-V'sug's many fungoid limbs. Doing so causes *Blackaxe* to explode in a burst of obsidian shrapnel and acid that inflicts 20d6 acid damage and 20d6 piercing damage to all within a 60-foot burst (DC 30 Reflex half).

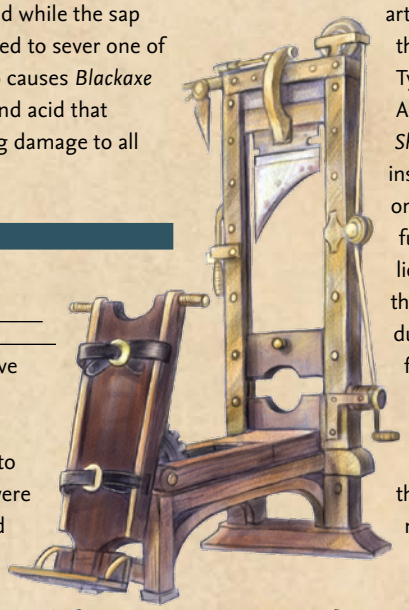
FINAL BLADE (MINOR ARTIFACT)

Aura strong ; **CL** 20th

Slot none; **Weight** 1,000 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

The guillotines known as the *final blades* have become symbols of Galt and the bloody excesses of the Red Revolution, yet the first of these horrific devices were actually built to serve the cause of justice. The *final blades* were originally designed to provide a condemned prisoner a swift and painless death, but also to prevent the resurrection of said victim by trapping her soul within the guillotine's blade upon execution. Every blade has a unique appearance and citizens speak of them as if they are people. In speaking of a condemned prisoner, someone might say, "He'll lie with Bloody Jaine before the sun falls."



FINAL BLADE

Only Large or smaller helpless (or willing) creatures can be executed by a *final blade*. When a *final blade* scythes down to decapitate the target, treat this as a coup de grace attempt on the victim that inflicts 6d6+12 points of damage. A *final blade*'s damage penetrates all damage reduction (save epic damage reduction) and negates all regeneration effects. A creature slain by this effect is immediately targeted by a *soul bind* effect that automatically places her soul into the blade itself (no save). A *final blade* has no limit to the number of souls it can hold. It is possible to release a soul from a *final blade* to allow that creature to be resurrected, but the ritual involved is a closely guarded secret known only to the Gray Gardeners.

DESTRUCTION

Although the *final blades* are minor artifacts, they can be destroyed by damage. The exact defenses of each vary, but all have hardness 20 and 200 hit points. When one is destroyed, the trapped souls explode in a wave of necromantic power—some of these souls manifest as incorporeal undead and immediately attack all living creatures in sight. The number and nature of these angry souls varies, but should usually consist of at least a CR 12 (or higher) encounter.

SHIELD OF ARODEN (MAJOR ARTIFACT)

Aura strong abjuration; **CL** 20th

Slot none; **Weight** 10 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

During the battle between the Whispering Tyrant and General Arnisant, the lich unleashed terrible magic upon the outnumbered mortal army. Despite the lich's power, Arnisant was protected from the onslaught by his magical shield, an artifact known as the *Shield of Aroden*. When the two finally faced off, the Whispering Tyrant attempted to use a *wish* to summon Arnisant's heart to his waiting claws. The *Shield of Aroden* prevented this dire fate and instead shattered into a dozen fragments, one of which appeared in Tar-Baphon's hand, fusing with the undead flesh and burning the lich with holy fire. When the flames subsided, the crippled lich was soon locked away in the dungeons beneath Gallowspire, there to rot for all eternity. The *Shield of Aroden* lost all of its power. Its broken remnants have been passed down from one watcher-lord to another without fail. Some say that should the Whispering Tyrant ever become free, the missing piece of the shield would have to be recovered from his bony claw for the fiend to truly be defeated.

This item is normally kept on display in the city of Vigil in Lastwall, though at first glance it is just a collection of wooden shards on a large black silk pillow. If assembled, these 12 shards would form a round shield with a piece in the center missing. The shield's face is carved to look like Aroden's holy symbol—a winged eye in a circle.

Originally known as the *Shield of Aroden*, most today call it by its new name—the *Shattered Shield of Arnisant*. If restored to its former glory (a task that could in and of itself be a campaign), the *Shattered Shield* becomes the *Shield of Aroden* once again—a *+5 light fortification spell resistance (17) heavy wooden shield*. Once per day, you can invoke a form of *fire shield* that protects against cold attacks and damages opponents with fire and holy damage like a *flame strike* (it is likely that this ability is what burned the lich in his final battle). Once per round as an immediate action, if an adjacent ally is hit by a ranged or melee attack, you can use the shield to redirect the attack to yourself, suffering all effects from that attack as if you were its intended target. All allies within 100 feet of you gain the effect of *bless* and *prayer*. As with a *status* spell, all allies within 100 feet know your relative position and condition. The *Shield of Aroden* bestows two negative levels on any chaotic creature that attempts to wield it. The negative levels remain as long as the shield is held or carried. These negative levels never result in actual level loss, but they cannot be overcome in any way (including *restoration* spells) while the creature holds or carries the shield.

Destruction

The *Shield of Aroden* has the special purpose of protecting its bearer from death no matter the consequences to itself. Any attack that would kill you (not merely make you unconscious or dying) triggers this ability, redirecting the attack fully upon the shield and leaving you unharmed, even if the attack normally only works on living creatures. For example, if you failed a saving throw against *flesh to stone*, the shield would turn to stone instead of you, whereas if you failed your save against *horrid wilting* or *implosion*, the shield would turn to dry splinters or crushed pulp. Depending on the nature of the attack, it may be impossible to reassemble or restore the shield to full functionality again.

Any attempt to repair the shield requires all of its pieces, and barring the direct intercession of a deity, it is likely that any repairs would be imperfect. Anytime the bearer fails a saving throw by rolling a 1, the shield must attempt the same saving throw (regardless whether the shield would normally be the item to suffer the effects of failure), and if it fails by rolling 1, it shatters again, perhaps with disastrous effects. Despite their lack of active magic, the individual pieces themselves cannot be damaged by mortal means.

SHIELD OF ARODEN

SUN ORCHID ELIXIR (MINOR ARTIFACT)

Aura strong necromancy; **CL** 17th

Slot none; **Weight** —

Description

Thuvia's *sun orchid elixir* is a nearly perfect solution for those who seek eternal life. A single dose of *sun orchid elixir* cannot stop the aging process, but it does the next-best thing—it restores youth. A creature that drinks the elixir is restored to its starting age as a young adult. The drinker's new age is randomly determined using Table 7–1 on page 169 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*. All penalties to Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution the drinker may have suffered as a result of advanced age are removed, but all bonuses to Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma that result from advanced age remain (although as the character ages again into middle age and beyond, he does not gain any of these bonuses a second time).

Vanity-seekers go to nearly any length to acquire the elixir, resorting to bribery, extortion, and murder. To curtail such troubles in the land of its creation, the use of the elixir is outlawed in Thuvia (except by the formula's creator). Each vial of *sun orchid elixir* requires six mature sun orchids and 1 month's time to ferment, although the exact formula used is a secret known only to the denizen of Alchemist's Keep in Thuvia. Prices for a dose of the elixir vary wildly since the elixir is sold at auction, but no dose has ever sold for less than 50,000 gp.

Destruction

A dose of *sun orchid elixir* is simple to destroy—merely pouring the elixir out and allowing the fluid to evaporate or be absorbed into the ground is enough to ruin it, as is mixing it with any other fluid or solvent. Of course, if word gets out of this fantastic waste of powerful magic, any number of enraged or scandalized organizations might seek out the character responsible for the elixir's waste to extract bloody vengeance.

WARDSTONE (MINOR ARTIFACT)

Aura strong abjuration; **CL** 20th

Slot none; **Weight** 2,500 lbs.

Description

When the Worldwound destroyed the nation of Sarkoris, the faithful of Iomedae seized upon the event as a balm against the horror of Aroden's death. The invention of the first *wardstones*, giant menhirs infused with holy magic meant to contain and repel demonic creatures, was perhaps the greatest result of the crusader's initial response to Sarkoris's destruction. Today, dozens of *wardstones* stand sentinel along the borders of the Worldwound. The primary purpose of the *wardstones* is to contain the growing influence of the Worldwound itself, but they also exude a powerful field similar to that generated by a *forbiddance* spell. A single *wardstone* exerts this aura in a 300-foot radius, but when multiple *wardstones* are linked (as in the case of those running along the border of the Worldwound), they create a 300-foot-wide path of *forbiddance*, with the *wardstones* running down the middle. The *forbiddance* area, be it a radius or path, deals 12d6 points of damage per round to any demon within that area (DC 18 Will save half; spell resistance applies). Teleportation effects do not function in this zone at all. The *wardstones* that bolster the eastern and southern borders of the Worldwound have a further effect as well—focused on the Worldwound as they are, they prevent demons from teleporting into or out of the Worldwound and effectively contain the threat. The arrangement of the *wardstones* along the Mendev, Numeria, and Ustalav borders is such that even the unwarded borders to the west and north work to hamper demonic incursions.

Destruction

If a *wardstone* misses its yearly maintenance ritual, it becomes vulnerable to damage. At this point, a *wardstone* can be damaged by mortal attacks, but it still has hardness 25 and 500 hit points. If a *wardstone* along a series of linked *wardstones* is destroyed, the resulting "hole" in the path of the *forbiddance* effect can be as narrow as a few dozen feet or as wide as several miles, depending upon numerous other variables (such as the terrain, the strength of the other *wardstones*, and other factors).

7

Monsters

The bulky figure burst into motion, spraying coins and priceless relics in every direction. It had more arms than Seltyiel and Lem combined.

Seltyiel let loose with a blast of electricity. The lightning crackled and then disappeared. The creature didn't even seem to notice.

"Not good," Seltyiel whispered. "Not good at all."

"Look at the size of those gems!" Lem breathed, staring at the guardian's jeweled armor. Seltyiel grabbed the halfling's cloak and hauled him roughly backward.

"Somehow, bard, I don't think you're going to talk him out of them..."

Monsters of Golarion

Monsters are everywhere.

While none deny that the wild regions of the world are the habitations of monsters, they also dwell in the sewers below major cities, lurk in old dungeons and ruins, and even walk among us—disguised or not. Yet not all monsters are evil, cruel creatures of havoc—some are benign or actively helpful to humanity and the other core races of Golarion. And some simply want to be left alone in their exotic, distant lairs.

While the remainder of this chapter features nine monsters with unique or specific ties to Golarion, presented in the same format found in the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* (see pages 5–6 of that book for details on how to read a monster's stat block), there are many more monsters than these nine dwelling in the world. The following section explores the roles and niches of the more important or infamous monsters on Golarion.

Monster Roles

Listed below are brief descriptions of several key monsters that have important cultural, regional, or historical roles on Golarion. Obviously other monsters exist, but those mentioned here are particularly notorious or important in the Inner Sea region.

Aboleths: Perhaps the oldest intelligent race on Golarion, the aboleths ruled vast empires in the depths of the world's oceans for eons before the first humans came to be—indeed, according to some aboleth wall carvings, the aboleths created the first races of humanity. Whether or not this claim is true is impossible to prove, but aboleths have certainly been a part of the world for a long, long time—their claim to have existed on Golarion before the gods themselves turned their divine eyes upon the world carry with them some disturbing implications.

Boggards: Ranging widely in appearance, the squat, batrachian boggards of Varisia and the River Kingdoms and their leaner Mwangi cousins inhabit dense swamplands, obeying the whims of corpulent priest-kings and foul, croaking demon lords—primarily the frog demon Gogunta, although some tribes worship Dagon or Cyth-V'sug. Many ally themselves with amphibian monsters like chuuls, froghemoths, or even stranger creatures.

Centaurs: Originally thought to hail from the distant realm of Iblydos, centaur tribes are a common sight across the face of Golarion today. They generally live tribal existences in steppe lands, grasslands, or veldts. They're particularly common on the rural areas of the Isle of Kortos, on the plains of Iobaria and the eastern River Kingdoms, and in the less civilized regions of Cheliax. In fact, many Chelish centaurs have abandoned their tribal ways to join human society in Cheliax—some have even risen to significant ranks among the Hellknights.

Demons: Normally bound to the Abyss, demons can be found wherever cults or evil spellcasters exist to call them to this world. Two notable locations, the Worldwound and the Tanglebriar in southern Kyonin, deserve special mention, however, for here the demons of the Abyss have established lasting presences in the world—presences that seem to be growing.

Derros: Mysterious denizens of the upper reaches of the Darklands, derros dwell in blue-lit caverns, where they perform sadistic experiments on victims abducted from the surface world. Descended from ancient creatures that dwelt in the deepest vaults of Orv, the derro race today is obsessed with the sun—they seek a way to alter their bodies so that they can exist on the surface world, yet their racial madness prevents them from learning much from the foul experiments they perform on their abducted victims.

Devils: Although the rulers of Cheliax maintain that Hell is but a blueprint and devilkind is little more than a tool clever spellcasters can use to maintain control and the decadent quality of life enjoyed by the ruling House of Thrune, devils have a much more insidious hold over that nation. With the state religion being devoted to Asmodeus and the powerful orders of Hellknights serving as mercenary arbiters of law, it should come as no surprise that devils are unusually common in Cheliax and the neighboring realms.

Dragons: Dragons are rightfully counted among the most legendary of monsters in the Inner Sea region. Most prefer to dwell in remote lairs, swooping down to interact with humanity when their violent tempers push them to raid. Good dragons seem less common than their evil kin, but only because they have less of an urge to mix with "lesser races" like humanity; yet obvious exceptions exist, such as the ruler of the strange island of Hermea.

Driders: The driders of Golarion are the creation of specialized drow spellcasters (known in dark elf society as "fleshwarpers")—they twist and transform the bodies of drow subjects, typically slaves or prisoners, and transform them into half-spiders for use as soldiers or guardians. Female drow who undergo this painful process retain the beauty of their upper torsos and faces, but males do not—they become chitinous horrors with faces more akin to a spider's visage than a dark elf's. The process of fleshwarping can be applied to other races (generating different horrors from

driders), but driders remain unique for their ability to breed true—as a result, all-drider societies composed of creatures who have escaped from drow slavery exist in remote corners of the Darklands and even near the surface.

Genies: The nation of Qadira has a long history with genies, but geniekind's involvement with the Inner Sea is certainly not limited to that nation. They serve as architects and creators of impossibilities on the isle of Jalmeray, and in Katapesh their kind is rumored to be infused into the very stone and soil of the land itself.

Giants: Countless tribes and varieties of these lumbering behemoths rule the rugged reaches of the world, from volcanic mountain ranges to stinking marshlands, and from trackless badlands to steaming jungles. They were used as slaves in ancient Thassilon, ruled by magically bred "rune giants" and forced to erect many of the monolithic monuments that remain today in Varisia, Belkzen, and the Lands of the Linnorm Kings. Today, giant tribes of northern Avistan are spread across the land, little aware that they once had a society that was destroyed and reshaped by the ancient human empire.

Gnolls: Hyena-headed gnolls, ever seeking new slaves to perform those tasks they abhor, make for unreliable mercenaries but excel at hunting intelligent prey. Gnolls dwell primarily in northern Garund, and are particularly common in Osirion, Katapesh, and Nex. Indeed, gnolls can be found openly operating as slavers, bodyguards, or mercenaries in cities like Katapesh.

Lamias: Perhaps the most successful of Lamashtu's children are the lamias. While the common feline variety of these sinister creatures is relatively well known throughout all of the Inner Sea region, lamias are particularly troublesome in Varisia and Belkzen as a result of the race's ancient ties to Thassilon. Here, stranger and more powerful lamias with the lower bodies of snakes or stranger shapes are not unknown.

Lizardfolk: Once widespread in Avistan and Garund, the primitive tribes of isolationist lizardfolk have been forced farther and farther into their swamps by climate change and the rapid expansion of other humanoids. Normally peaceful, tribes of lizardfolk can be driven to war by both encroaching civilization and power-hungry chieftains—such conflicts seem disturbingly common in the Mwangi Expanse and the River Kingdoms.

Lycanthropes: The curse of lycanthropy is well known in the Inner Sea region, particularly in central Andoran and northern Ustalav, where werewolves have long been the bane of loggers and hunters. Wererats can be found in most major cities—in many, they form entire guilds of thieves, scavengers, and murderers. More exotic lycanthropes, such Katapesh's werehyenas, the weretigers and wereleopards of the Mwangi Expanse, and even stranger things like the Darklands drow werebats or the savage werecrocodiles and weresharks of the Sodden Lands, are known to exist.

Ogres: Ogres can be found throughout the Inner Sea region, but none are more notorious than those of central Varisia. These violent and destructive tribes have long served as a buffer between the giants dwelling in the rugged highlands of the Storval Plateau and the humans settlements in the more verdant forests and plains of the lowlands to the south and west. The ongoing civilization of Varisia may soon force the scattered ogre tribes into outright war with humanity, but for now they are content to continue bickering among themselves and tormenting their smaller neighbors.

Sahuagin: Akin to the shark, the sahuagin are the scourge of many seas, their relentless drive to harvest flesh from coastal settlements making them one of Golarion's most hated races. Whenever a sahuagin army rises from the deep, nations band together to push back the monsters, creating a perpetual cycle of violence. Their kind is known throughout Golarion's seas, but they are particularly active in the Obari Ocean and the Inner Sea.

Serpentfolk: A nearly extinct race today, the serpentfolk once ruled all of Sekamina and much of the surface of Garund and Avistan. The expansion of Azlant into the Inner Sea region long before Earthfall saw a terrible war between the two peoples—when Azlant proved the victor, the surviving serpentfolk fled into their hidden cities in the Darklands and went into hibernation. Those that survived degenerated over the following millennia into savages, but recently reports and sightings of civilized serpentfolk are spreading, giving rise to rumors that the serpentfolk empire may finally be waking from its long torpor.

Troglodytes: These brutal reptilians dwell in tangled warrens, where they worship the demon lord Zevgavizeb and draw their war plans against hated foes who lurk in the world above. Troglodytes can be found throughout the Inner Sea region—those dwelling under the drier regions of Osirion, Katapesh, and Thuvia tend to be of lighter coloration than those dwelling to the north in Varisia or around Lake Encarthan. They are common throughout the Darklands as well, and a particularly advanced and organized nation of these normally savage monsters is reputed to lie somewhere deep under the eastern reaches of the Realm of the Mammoth Lords.

Trolls: Trolls are common in northern Avistan but can be encountered throughout the Inner Sea region. The River Kingdoms and Numeria have a particularly longstanding problem with trolls, and in the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, they are counted among that realm's most hated foes. Curiously, in neighboring Irrisen, trolls are often found living in cities—the capital of Whitethrone even utilizes ice trolls as city guards. Tales of troll augers who use their own entrails to make divinations, immense two-headed trolls, rock trolls who turn to stone in sunlight, and aquatic scrags in many of northern Avistan's rivers merely show how widespread this race of giants actually is.

Aluum

This looming humanoid figure is made of rune-etched metal and polished stone, with crystalline eyes that glow with blue light.

ALUUM **CR 10**

XP 9,600

N Large construct

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 10, flat-footed 24 (+1 Dex, +15 natural, –1 size)

hp 107 (14d10+30)

Fort +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +4

DR 10/adamantine; **Immune** magic, construct traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 slams +21 (2d10+8 plus paralysis)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks soul shriek

STATISTICS

Str 27, **Dex** 12, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 1

Base Atk +14; **CMB** +23; **CMD** 34

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Katapesh)

Organization solitary or squad (3–4)

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Immunity to Magic (Ex) An aluum is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the creature. A magical attack that uses negative energy (such as channel negative energy, *inflict light wounds*, or *enervation*) deals no damage, but speeds up the aluum's attacks and movement as if it were under the effects of a *haste* spell for 1d6 rounds. A magical attack that uses positive energy slows the aluum as if by a *slow* spell for 1d6 rounds and dispels any haste effects currently affecting it. *Magic jar* confuses the creature for 1d6 rounds.

Paralysis (Su) The touch of an aluum paralyzes living creatures that fail a DC 17 Fortitude save for 1d4 minutes. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Soul Shriek (Su) As a free action every 1d4 rounds, the aluum's enslaved souls may emit a keening wail in a 15-foot cone. Creatures in the cone take 10d6 points of sonic damage and are stunned for 1 round. A DC 15 Will save halves the damage and negates the stun effect. This is a sonic mind-affecting effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Aluums are magical constructs created from metal and stone native to Katapesh. They are the fighting juggernauts that maintain order within the city of Katapesh when the city's normal means of doing so fail. Aluums are powered by the souls of Katapeshi slaves and prisoners bound into glowing gems in their chests.

An aluum stands approximately 14 feet tall and weighs over 2 tons. They are controlled by magical pendants called *charms of aluum control* (see page 298).

Construction

Although the secret to the creation of aluums is closely guarded by the Pactmasters, near approximations have appeared elsewhere, indicating that some have either reverse-engineered the process or have stolen those secrets from Katapesh. During the creation process, the souls of a dozen slaves are siphoned from their bodies as they die. Fragments of these souls are placed within the inert body of the aluum, giving it its animating force.

ALUUM

CL 13th; **Price** 80,000 gp

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Construct, *geas/quest*, *hold monster*, *limited wish*, *magic jar*, creator must be caster level 13th; **Skill** Craft (armor) or Craft (weapons) DC 18; **Cost** 40,000 gp

Calikang

This blue-skinned, six-armed giant lurches to life, its armor and twin swords glittering with jewels.

CALIKANG **CR 12**

XP 19,200

LN Large monstrous humanoid

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *true seeing*; Perception +20

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 11, flat-footed 25 (+2 Dex, +12 natural, +4 shield, –1 size)

hp 157 (15d10+75); fast healing 5

Fort +12, **Ref** +11, **Will** +11

Defensive Abilities defensive slam, energy absorption, suspend animation; **Immune** electricity, mind-affecting effects, negative energy; **SR** 23

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *longsword* +18/+13/+8 (2d6+8/17–20), +1 *longsword* +18 (2d6+8/17–20), 4 slams +16 (1d6+3)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks breath weapon (60-foot line, 14d6 energy damage, Reflex DC 22 half, usable 1/day)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th; concentration +15)

Constant—*air walk*, *magic weapon*, *true seeing*, *water walk*

3/day—*lightning bolt* (DC 16)

1/day—*chain lightning* (DC 19)

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 15, **Con** 20, **Int** 8, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +15; **CMB** +23; **CMD** 35

Feats Critical Focus, Double Slice, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (longsword), Improved Initiative, Staggering Critical, Two-Weapon Fighting, Vital Strike

Skills Intimidate +21, Perception +20, Use Magic Device +18

Languages Common, Giant

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate or tropical hills

Organization solitary, gang (2–4), or tribe (5–12)

Treasure standard (2 +1 *longswords* plus other treasure)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Defensive Slam (Ex) A calikang gains a cumulative +1 shield bonus to its AC for each of its arms that does not wield a manufactured weapon, to a maximum of +4 for four hands. A calikang can make slam attacks with these arms without losing this AC bonus.

Energy Absorption (Su) A spell that inflicts energy damage that is defeated by the calikang's SR or immunity to electricity is absorbed into its body, healing it for an amount of damage equal to the absorbed spell's caster level and granting an additional daily use of its breath weapon.

Breath Weapon (Su) A calikang can choose what kind of energy damage its breath weapon inflicts when it uses this ability, choosing from acid, cold, electricity, fire, or sonic energy. Calikangs are particularly adept at using electricity in this manner, and inflict 1 additional point of damage per die (+14 for most calikangs) when they elect to inflict electricity damage with their breath weapon.

Suspend Animation (Su) As a full-round action, a calikang can enter a state of suspended animation, freezing in place and becoming motionless. It remains aware of its surroundings. In this state, the calikang is immune to disease, inhaled toxins, poison, starvation, and thirst, and receives a +4 bonus on all Fortitude saves. The calikang can exit this state as an immediate action—if it does so to attack a foe or initiate combat, it gains a +4 insight bonus on its Initiative check.

The calikang is a much sought-after guardian of treasuries, harems, and fortifications. Legend holds that, an untold number of eons ago, one of the thousand deities of Vudra failed at a task, and the first calikangs were born from that god's severed fingers. Calikangs have powerful sense of guilt and shame over their divine source's ancient failings, and they believe that if enough calikangs protect worldly holdings from robberies or destruction, this inherited sin will someday be wiped clean.

Calikangs are 14 feet tall and weigh 4,000 pounds. They can live for 200 years—though many extend their lives beyond this via suspended animation.

Charau-Ka

This limber, shrieking creature has the visage of an enraged monkey, but it walks upright like a man.

CHARAU-KA **CR 2**

XP 600

CE Small humanoid (charau-ka)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +2

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural, +1 size)

hp 19 (3d8+6)

Fort +3, **Ref** +4, **Will** +2

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee club +5 (1d4+3), bite +0 (1d3+1)

Ranged rock +5 (1d4+2/19–20)

Special Attacks shrieking frenzy, thrown-weapon mastery

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 13, **Con** 14, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 14

Feats Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Throw Anything[B]

Skills Climb +14, Fly +0, Perception +2, Stealth +10; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth

Languages Abyssal, Polyglot

ECOLOGY

Environment warm forests

Organization solitary, pair, patrol (3–8), or tribe (9–20 plus 1–3 dire apes, 1–3 fighter sub-chieftains of 2nd level, 1 cleric of Angazhan of 3rd–5th level, and 1 chieftain of any class of 4th–8th level)

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Shrieking Frenzy (Su) Once per day, a charau-ka can enter a state of shrieking frenzy as a free action. While in this state, the charau-ka automatically fails Stealth checks and cannot speak or cast spells that use verbal components (or use items that require command words to activate), but functions as if under the effects of a *haste* spell. The charau-ka can continue shrieking for up to 3 rounds, after which it is staggered for 1 round.

Thrown-Weapon Mastery (Ex) Charau-ka are masters of thrown weapons. All charau-ka gain Throw Anything as a bonus feat. In addition, a charau-ka gains a +1 racial bonus on all thrown weapons, and their threat range for thrown weapons is doubled, as if the charau-ka possessed the Improved Critical feat for all thrown weapons. This effect doesn't stack with any other effect that expands the threat range of a weapon.

Although they call themselves the charau-ka, these dangerous jungle dwellers are often known to colonists and explorers as ape-men. Legend holds that the charau-ka stem from the demon lord Angazhan, who transformed the bodies of the first humans that tried to wage war against his cult, causing the dead to rise as the first ape-men. Rumors that charau-ka clerics have perfected a hideous ritual to force those slain to reincarnate as new charau-ka are popular tales among jungle explorers—but proof of such a magic spell has yet to reach civilization.

Today, the charau-ka are one of the most fecund and widespread races of creatures in the Mwangi Expanse. Not all of them serve the Gorilla King or worship Angazhan; some have become feral monsters little more organized than apes, while others may have turned to the worship of other demon lords or even the snake-god Ydersius.

Charau-ka generally dwell in small tribes of a few dozen members. They often keep dangerous jungle creatures as pets or guardians, trusting to their druids or animal handlers to keep the deadly beasts under control. A typical charau-ka village extends from the jungle floor up into the canopy above, and usually includes several treehouse-style structures connected by vines or rope bridges.

Daughter of Urgathoa

What was once a woman now towers as a monstrosity of ectoplasmic flesh, horns, and a tremendous scythelike claw.

DAUGHTER OF URGATHOA CR 8

XP 4,800

NE Large undead

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +17

Aura desecrate (20-ft. radius)

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 18 (+3 Dex, +9 natural, –1 size)

hp 115 (11d8+66)

Fort +9, **Ref** +7, **Will** +11

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; **Immune** undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed fly 40 ft. (perfect)

Melee great claw +16 (2d6+9/×4 plus disease), claw +16 (1d8+9)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th; concentration +16)

Constant—*desecrate* (centered on self)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 6th; concentration +9)

3rd—*bestow curse* (DC 16), *contagion* (DC 16), *dispel magic*[D], *inflict serious wounds* (DC 16)

2nd—*death knell*[D] (DC 15), *hold person* (DC 15), *inflict moderate wounds* (DC 15), *resist energy*, *spiritual weapon*

1st—*cause fear*[D] (DC 14), *command* (DC 14), *divine favor*, *obscuring mist*, *shield of faith*

0—*bleed* (DC 13), *detect magic*, *guidance*, *resistance*

D domain spell; **Domains** Death, Magic

STATISTICS

Str 27, **Dex** 17, **Con** —, **Int** 18, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 21

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 30

Feats Ability Focus (disease), Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Vital Strike

Skills Acrobatics +14, Bluff +16, Fly +23, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (religion) +18, Perception +17, Sense Motive +17, Spellcraft +18, Stealth +0

Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal, Necril

ECOLOGY

Environment any

Organization solitary or cult (1 daughter plus 2d8 human clerics)

Treasure double

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Desecrate (Sp) The bonuses granted from the daughter of Urgathoa's constant *desecrate* spell-like ability (which is always centered on herself) are calculated into the stats above.

Disease (Su) *Bubonic Plague*: Great claw—injury; *save* Fortitude DC 20; *onset* immediate; *frequency* 1/day; *effect* 1d4 Con damage and target is fatigued; *cure* 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Great Claw (Ex) One of the daughter's hands is a tremendous scythe-shaped claw. This attack inflicts ×4 damage on a critical hit, and is treated as an evil weapon for the purposes of penetrating damage reduction.

Spells A daughter of Urgathoa casts spells as a 6th-level cleric of Urgathoa—but although she selects two domains to determine bonus spells, she does not gain any domain powers.

Within the church of the goddess of undeath, few more coveted stations exist than daughter of Urgathoa, yet no high priest can bestow the title, and no living worshiper can take the role. Rather, daughters of Urgathoa are selected by the fickle goddess herself, chosen from her most zealous and accomplished priestesses only at the moment of their deaths. Even after their transformations into things of pestilence and dead flesh, daughters of Urgathoa remain social beings who typically surround themselves with fanatical cults.

Gillman

A handsome, well-formed man walks out of the waves, the gill slits on the side of his neck flexing.

GILLMAN **CR 1/3**

XP 135

Gillman warrior 1

N Medium humanoid (aquatic)

Init +1; **Senses** Perception +2

DEFENSE

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10 (+1 Dex)

hp 6 (1d10+1)

Fort +3, **Ref** +1, **Will** –1; +2 vs. enchantment

Weaknesses water dependent

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

Melee spear +2 (1d8+1)

Ranged light crossbow +2 (1d8+1/×3)

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 13, **Con** 13, **Int** 9, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 13

Feats Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Perception +2, Swim +13

Languages Aboleth, Common

SQ amphibious

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate ocean

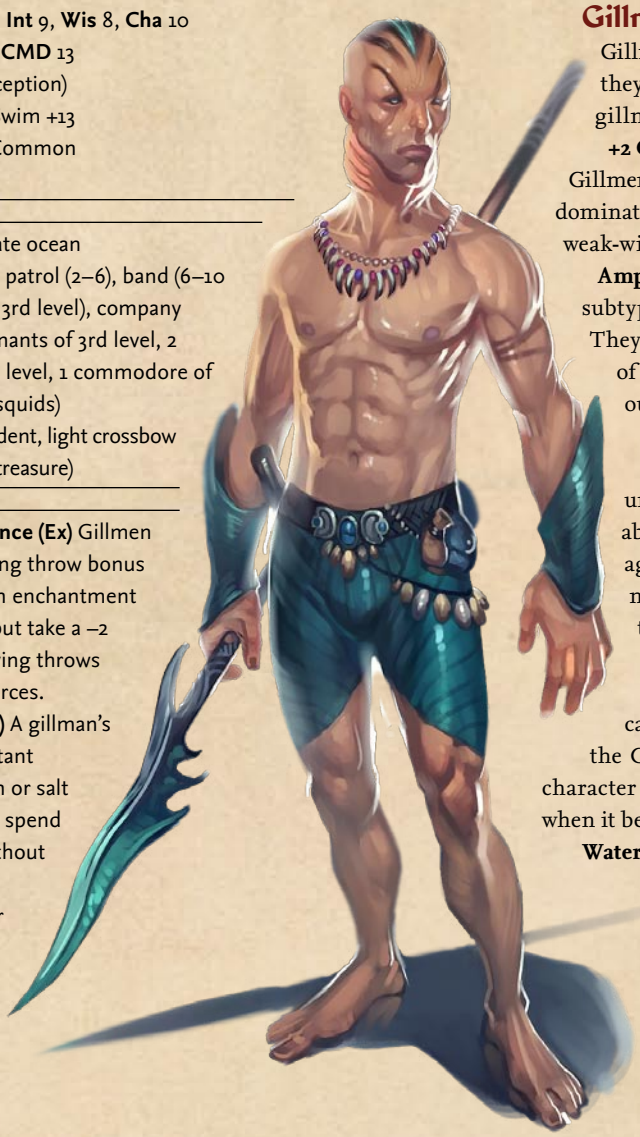
Organization solitary, patrol (2–6), band (6–10 plus 1 lieutenant of 3rd level), company (11–60 plus 3 lieutenants of 3rd level, 2 commanders of 5th level, 1 commodore of 7th level, and 3–12 squids)

Treasure NPC gear (trident, light crossbow with 10 bolts, other treasure)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Enchantment Resistance (Ex) Gillmen gain a +2 racial saving throw bonus against non-aboleth enchantment spells and effects, but take a –2 penalty on such saving throws against aboleth sources.

Water Dependent (Ex) A gillman's body requires constant submersion in fresh or salt water. Gillmen who spend more than 1 day without fully submerging themselves in water risk internal organ failure, painful cracking of the skin, and death within 4d6 hours.



The enigmatic and reclusive gillmen (known to some as "Low Azlanti") are the aquatic descendants of the vanished Azlanti race. When Earthfall struck Golarion and the continent of Azlant was shattered, most of the Azlanti dwelling died in the fires or drowned in the waves. Yet a number found succor with their undersea aboleth enemies. For reasons that remain unknown to this day (but which surely have nothing to do with compassion), the aboleths rescued a small fraction of these drowning humans, warping their flesh to help them survive in the aboleths' uncontested undersea realm. Yet with that action, the aboleths seemed to lose interest, and in the thousands of years that followed, the gillmen formed a society of their own.

Physically, gillmen resemble their ancient ancestors, with expressive brows, pale skin, dark hair, and bright purple eyes. Three slim gills mark each side of their necks, near the shoulder, but they are close enough in appearance to humans that they can pass as such (for a time) without fear of detection.

Gillman Characters

Gillmen are defined by their class levels—they do not possess racial Hit Dice. All gillmen have the following racial traits.

+2 Constitution, +2 Charisma, –2 Wisdom: Gillmen are vigorous and beautiful, but their domination by the aboleths has made them weak-willed.

Amphibious: Gillmen have the aquatic subtype, but can breathe both water and air. They prefer not to spend long periods out of the water, however, as their skin dries out very easily.

Enchantment Resistance: See above.

Servitor: Gillmen serve the dark, unfathomable schemes of the reclusive aboleths, but unless the gillmen go against the orders of their aboleth masters (which are often unknown to them, masked in the form of hidden memories triggered by key events), they are free to act as they wish. In a campaign, these orders are wholly up to the GM, meaning the player of a gillman character cedes some elements of self-control when it best serves the story of the campaign.

Water Dependent: See above.

Languages: Gillmen begin play speaking Common and Aboleth. Gillmen with high Intelligence scores can choose any of the following bonus languages: Aklo, Aquan, Azlanti, Draconic, Elven, and Sahuagin.

Sandpoint Devil

This mangy horselike beast walks perversely upright. Wings, a dragon's tail, and a fanged mouth complete its vile appearance.

SANDPOINT DEVIL **CR 8**

XP 4,800

NE Large outsider (native)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +18

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 13, flat-footed 18 (+3 Dex, +1 dodge, +9 natural, –1 size)

hp 114 (12d10+48)

Fort +12, **Ref** +7, **Will** +11

DR 5/cold iron; **Immune** fire, fear effects; **SR** 19

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 60 ft. (poor)

Melee bite +17 (2d6+6/19–20), 2 hooves +17 (1d8+6)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks bay, hellfire breath, kick, trample (2d6+9, DC 22)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +13)

At will—*fog cloud*, *gust of wind*, *pyrotechnics* (DC 15)

3/day—*dimension door*, *phantasmal killer* (DC 17)

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 17, **Con** 19, **Int** 8, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +19; **CMD** 33 (37 vs. trip)

Feats Dodge, Hover, Improved Vital Strike, Mobility, Spring Attack, Vital Strike

Skills Fly +12, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (geography) +5, Perception +18, Stealth +14, Survival +18

Languages Abyssal, Varisian

ECOLOGY

Environment any (Varisia)

Organization solitary

Treasure incidental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bay (Su) When the Sandpoint Devil screams as a standard action, all creatures within a 300-foot-radius spread must succeed on a DC 19 Will save or become panicked for 2d4 rounds. This is a sonic, mind-affecting fear effect. Whether or not the save is successful, creatures within the effect are immune to the Sandpoint Devil's bay for 24 hours thereafter. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Hellfire Breath (Su) Once every 1d4 rounds, the Sandpoint Devil can unleash a blast of infernal flame from its mouth as a standard action. This hellfire fills a 30-foot cone and causes 10d6 points of fire damage (Reflex DC 20 half). Anyone who takes damage from this breath weapon must also make a DC 20 Will save to avoid becoming cursed by the infernal flames—those who become cursed take a –4 penalty on all attack rolls, saving throws, and skill checks for a number of days equal to the damage taken—during this time, the victim's skin appears to be horribly burned in places regardless of any healing applied. This curse effect functions at caster level 12th. The save DC for both saves is Constitution-based.

Kick (Ex) The Sandpoint Devil's hoof attacks are primary attacks that deal bludgeoning and slashing damage.

The legendary Sandpoint Devil has haunted the lands around its namesake town on the western Varisian coast for well over a decade. It most commonly appears on misty, moonless nights, sometimes leaving behind strange clues to its passing, such as brimstone-smelling hoofprints in odd places (such as along the eaves of a steep roof).

A thief of livestock, kidnapper of children, and bringer of woes—countless tales surround the beast. Some explain away the creature as an ancient, wizard-warped beast from a forgotten age. Others hold that the monster was borne by a cursed witch who broke an oath with a devil. Yet perhaps the most disturbing rumors point to the possibility that the creature is but one of many that dwell in the wilds.

Spine Dragon

This dragon bears a forest of razor-sharp crystalline spines. Its wings are transparent and seem almost to be made of glass.

SPINE DRAGON **CR 16**

XP 76,800

CN Gargantuan dragon (earth)

Init +2; **Senses** blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision; Perception +25

DEFENSE

AC 31, touch 9, flat-footed 28 (+2 Dex, +1 dodge, +22 natural, –4 size)

hp 248 (16d12+144)

Fort +19, **Ref** +12, **Will** +16

Defensive Abilities ray deflection, spines; **DR** 10/adamantine; **Immune** paralysis, sleep effects, sonic; **Resist** cold 20, electricity 20, fire 20; **SR** 27

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee bite +23 (2d8+11), claws +23 (2d6+11), tail slap +18 (2d8+16)

Ranged 4 spines +14 (2d8+11)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks breath weapon, spines

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th; concentration +20)

3/day—*spike growth* (DC 17), *spike stones* (DC 18), *telekinesis* (DC 19)

1/day—*telekinetic sphere* (DC 22), *wall of force*

STATISTICS

Str 32, **Dex** 15, **Con** 29, **Int** 16, **Wis** 22, **Cha** 19

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +31; **CMD** 44

Feats Awesome Blow, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Bull Rush, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Vital Strike

Skills Appraise +22, Bluff +23, Fly +15, Intimidate +23, Knowledge (engineering) +22, Knowledge (nature) +22, Perception +25, Sense Motive +25, Stealth +9

Languages Common, Draconic

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate hills

Organization solitary

Treasure triple

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Breath Weapon (Ex) Once every 1d4 rounds as a standard action, a spine dragon can emit a devastating shriek of powerful sonic energy in a 60-foot cone. Creatures caught in this cone take 20d6 sonic damage and are permanently deafened. A DC 27 Reflex save halves the damage and negates the deafness. This sonic damage is particularly devastating to constructs—they take a –4 penalty to save against its effects, and if they fail the save, they are staggered for 1d4 rounds as well. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Ray Deflection (Su) A spine dragon's scales deflect rays and *magic missile* spells, rendering the spine dragon immune to such effects. There's a 30% chance a deflected effect reflects back in full force at the caster; otherwise, it is simply negated.

Spines (Ex) A spine dragon's body is covered with long, crystalline spines. It can fire up to four of these spines per round as a full-attack action (or one as a standard action). A creature that attacks a spine dragon with a melee weapon, unarmed strike, or natural weapon must make a DC 20 Reflex save or take 2d8+11 points of piercing damage from the spines. The save DC is Dexterity-based.

Particularly notorious in the badlands of Numeria, spine dragons are similar in appearance to true dragons, but do not progress through draconic age categories. Their abilities and defenses make them singularly adept at handling the alien threats and strange constructs that lurk in this realm, and as a result, spine dragons have become one of Numeria's most successful predators.

Of course, a spine dragon is much more than a predator. As with many true dragons, spine dragons are particularly vain and enjoy being groveled to. It's not uncommon for them to assume the role of god for ignorant tribes of giants. They also have a particular love of crystalline treasure and magic items—a spine dragon's horde is usually sparse on the classic "carpet of coins" but just as valuable overall in content as those of true dragons.

A spine dragon is 60 feet long and 20 feet high, and weighs 16,000 pounds.

Strix

Monstrous black-feathered wings cloak this leanly muscled, onyx-skinned humanoid.

STRIX **CR 1/3**

XP 135

Strix warrior 1

N Medium humanoid (strix)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0 (+2 at night)

DEFENSE

AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10 (+2 Dex)

hp 5 (1d10)

Fort +2, **Ref** +2, **Will** +0; +2 vs. illusions

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (average)

Melee spear +2 (1d8+1/×3)

Special Attacks hatred

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 15, **Con** 10, **Int** 8, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 7

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 14

Feats Improved Initiative

Skills Fly +6; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Perception and +2 Stealth in dim light or darkness

Languages Common, Strix

SQ nocturnal

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate mountains

Organization solitary, hunting party (3–6), war party (5–12), or tribe (22 plus 100% noncombatants plus 1 champion of 2nd level per 10 adults, 1 or 2 seers of 3rd or 4th level, and 1 leader of 5th–7th level)

Treasure NPC gear

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hatred (Ex) Strix receive a +1 bonus on attack rolls against humanoid creatures of the human subtype due to special training against these hated foes.

Nocturnal (Ex) Strix gain a +2 racial bonus on Perception and Stealth checks at night.

Strix fiercely defend both land and air in their mountain territories. Deadly but wise, strix would prefer to live quietly amid the towers of Devil's Perch in Cheliax, yet time and tradition have taught them the wingless peoples of the shores and lowlands cannot be trusted, and that only fear and bloodshed will protect their homes. Fortunately, the strix excel in this regard.

Strix have learned to hate humans. Although the source of this hatred is unclear to all but the strix, it most likely comes from centuries of bloody invasions into their lands, disastrous first encounters, or an even older grudge.

On average, strix stand just over 6 feet tall, with males and females being roughly the same size. Sharply pointed ears, pupilless eyes, and slitted nostrils distinguish the race, though their 12-foot wingspans prove most distinctive. An adult strix weighs around 170 pounds. Most strix live to be about 40 years old, with the eldest reaching ages of up to 60.

Strix Characters

Strix are defined by their class levels—they do not possess racial Hit Dice. All strix have the following racial traits.

+2 Dexterity, –2 Charisma: Strix are swift and elusive, but tend to be stubborn and swift to anger.

Flight: Strix have a fly speed of 60 feet (average).

Low-Light Vision: Strix can see twice as far as humans in conditions of dim light.

Darkvision: Strix can see in the dark up to 60 feet.

Hatred: See above.

Nocturnal: Strix gain a +2 racial bonus on Perception and Stealth checks in dim light or darkness.

Suspicious: Strix receive a +2 racial bonus on saving throws against illusion spells or effects.

Languages: Strix begin play speaking Strix. Those with high Intelligence scores can choose any of the following bonus languages: Auran, Azlanti, Common, Draconic, Giant, Gnome, Goblin, Infernal.

Treerazer

The twenty-foot-tall winged saurian demon wields an acid-dripping axe. Two red eyes glow above a tooth-filled beak.

TREERAZER **CR 25**

XP 1,638,400

CE Huge outsider (demon, native)

Init +14; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *detect good*, *detect law*, *true seeing*; Perception +38

Aura corruption (120 ft.), *unholy aura* (DC 25)

DEFENSE

AC 42, touch 22, flat-footed 32 (+4 deflection, +10 Dex, +20 natural, –2 size)

hp 574 (28d10+420); regeneration 15 (good)

Fort +34, **Ref** +23, **Will** +27

Defensive Abilities *freedom of movement*; **DR** 15/cold iron and good; **Immune** death effects, disease, electricity, mind-affecting effects, poison; **Resist** acid 30, cold 30, fire 30; **SR** 36

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft., fly 60 ft. (good), swim 40 ft.

Melee *Blackaxe* +44/+39/+34/+29 (4d6+24/19–20/×3 plus 1d6 acid), bite +37 (2d6+6), 2 wings +37 (1d8+6)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.

Special Attacks defoliation

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th; concentration +27)

Constant—*detect good*, *detect law*, *freedom of movement*, *true seeing*, *unholy aura*, *water breathing*

At will—*antiplant shell*, *contagion* (DC 21), *desecrate*, *greater dispel magic*, *greater teleport* (within Tanglebriar only), *telekinesis* (DC 22), *unholy blight* (DC 21)

3/day—*control plants* (DC 25), *quickened greater dispel magic*, *wall of thorns*

1/day—*horrid wilting* (DC 25), *summon demons*, *symbol of death* (DC 25), *time stop*

STATISTICS

Str 36, **Dex** 30, **Con** 40, **Int** 21, **Wis** 24, **Cha** 25

Base Atk +28; **CMB** +43; **CMD** 67

Feats Awesome Blow, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Flyby Attack, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (greataxe), Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*greater dispel magic*), Staggering Critical, Vital Strike

Skills Acrobatics +41, Fly +38, Intimidate +38, Knowledge (arcana) +36, Knowledge (nature) +36, Knowledge (planes) +36, Perception +38, Sense Motive +38, Spellcraft +33, Stealth +33, Swim +49

Languages Abyssal, Common, Elven, Sylvan; telepathy 300 ft.

SQ nascent demon lord traits

Gear *Blackaxe* (see page 299)

ECOLOGY

Environment Tanglebriar

Organization solitary or group (Treerazer plus 1d4 nalfeshnees and 2d4 hezrous)

Treasure triple (plus *Blackaxe*)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Aura of Corruption (Su) Treerazer exudes an aura of corruption to

a radius of 120 feet. This aura causes plants to grow hideous, sprouting thorns, twisting, and becoming fungoid in nature. Creatures with woodland stride or *freedom of movement* can move through this fungal bloom with ease. Living creatures within Treerazer's aura of corruption must make a DC 39 Fortitude save each round or their flesh grows pasty and clammy as tendrils of diseased plant matter and fungal growth sprout from it. This condition persists as long as the creature remains within Treerazer's aura of corruption and for 1 minute thereafter. While suffering the effects of this aura, the living creature is treated as a plant for the purposes of spells and effects that harm or otherwise inconvenience plant creatures more than other creatures. The victim would thus be subject to *antiplant shell*, *blight*, and additional damage from *horrid wilting* or a *plant bane weapon*, and could be affected by *control plants*. The corruption does not otherwise impart plant traits to creatures. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Defoliation (Su) As a standard action once every 1d4 rounds, Treerazer can exude a pulse of defoliating energy in a 30-foot-radius spread. This pulse appears as a wave of sickly green energy, and causes all plants and plant creatures in the area to blacken and wither. Such creatures take 20d10 points of damage and 1d8 points of Strength drain, or half with a successful DC 39 Fortitude save. A plant that isn't a creature (such as a tree or a shrub) doesn't receive a save and immediately withers and dies. Treerazer can choose to exclude any number of plants in the area from this effect, and generally does so to preserve twisted and corrupted plants and fungus. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Nascent Demon Lord Traits A nascent demon lord is a powerful demon that has not yet made the full transition from unique demon to full demon lord of an Abyssal realm. Treerazer's current exile to the Material Plane prevents him from achieving full demon lord status. Yet he still possesses the typical nascent demon lord traits, which are similar to those possessed by a typical demon, only more potent, as summarized here.

- Immunity to death effects, electricity, charm and compulsion effects, and poison.
- Resistance to acid 30, cold 30, and fire 30.
- *Summon (Sp)* Once per day, nascent demon lords can summon any demon or combination of demons whose total combined CR is 20 or lower. This ability always works, and is equivalent to a 9th-level spell.
- Telepathy 300 ft.
- A nascent demon lord's natural weapons, as well as any weapon it wields, are treated as chaotic, epic, and evil for the purpose of resolving damage reduction.
- Nascent demon lords can grant spells to their worshipers. Granting spells does not require any specific action on the nascent demon lord's behalf. All nascent demon lords grant access to the domains of Chaos and Evil—in addition, they grant access to two other domains and a favored weapon that vary according to the nascent demon lord's themes and interests.

Treerazer, the self-styled Lord of the Blasted Tarn, was once the favored minion and lieutenant (some even say child) of Cyth-V'sug, Demon Lord of Fungus and Parasites. After a failed attempt to wrest that crown away from Cyth-V'sug, Treerazer fled to the Material Plane. Cyth-V'sug was unable (or perhaps only unwilling) to pursue, but took steps to ensure that Treerazer would remain there by exiling him, transforming Treerazer into a native outsider and severing his bond to the Abyss—if the Lord of the Blasted Tarn is slain, his animus will not return to the Abyss and reform. Death, to Treerazer, is a permanent thing.

Treerazer arrived on Golarion near the end of the Age of Darkness, and found the savaged planet much to his liking—so much so that the sting of exile was somewhat ameliorated. He spent many centuries wandering the remote corners of Golarion before finally coming upon the abandoned elven nation of Kyonin in 2497 AR. In the *Sovyrian Stone*, he found an artifact that he believed he could use to reinstate his Abyssal link and, perhaps, even uproot the entire nation and refocus the portal from Sovyrian to the Abyss, thereby reclaiming his position there and taking one more step toward revenge against Cyth-V'sug. Yet the elves sensed his tamperings and returned to confront the demon. A terrific battle resulted, and while the elves were able to drive Treerazer out of Iadara and into southern Kyonin, they were unable to slay him or force him out completely—they merely concentrated his power in a smaller region. Instead, the elves "walled off" this region, a perverted realm known today as the Tanglebriar. Treerazer lurks at the Tanglebriar's heart to this day, the greatest bogeyman in elven mythology and a very real and constant threat to the nation's security.

Treerazer begins most combats by casting *time stop* and raising an *antiplant shell* to prevent plant creatures (including creatures under the effect of his aura of corruption) from approaching. If he has time, he also creates *walls of thorns* and summons demons (usually four nalfeshnees and 12 hezrous). In melee, Treerazer gleefully takes up *Blackaxe* and makes full attacks against the closest foe, or Greater Vital Strikes if he's forced to move or charge. During the first 3 rounds of combat, he targets obvious spell effects with quickened *greater dispel magic*. If Treerazer is reduced to fewer than 150 hit points, he teleports back to his fortress, Witchbole, to recover and plan his revenge.

Treerazer's Cult

Cults of Treerazer are quite rare beyond Kyonin, where secret cabals of cultists venerate him. When they do appear beyond these borders, they are secretive but sadistic groups, eager to sacrifice nonbelievers yet cunning in remaining undetected by the law of the land. Treerazer's symbol is a bleeding dead tree that's been split in half. His clerics have access to the Domains of Chaos, Destruction, Evil, and Plant. His favored weapon is the battleaxe.

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