Second Edition

Pathfinder®

Impossible Lands

Lost Omens

Impossible Lands

PATHFINDER

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APG ***Advanced Player's Guide***

INTRODUCTION

There's a land where the dead toil in the fields, where a mortal can walk alongside bleached-bone skeletons and pale and hungry ghouls, where the quick and the dead live under one roof. It's a land where a goddess once ruled, a ghost now reigns, and blood is currency. It's a land where forever has a different meaning entirely, and eternity is a matter of law and not luck. Impossible? Not in Geb.

There's a land where wizards build things of steel and sinew and spell, where great colossi of otherworldly metals guard the gates to a city of wonder, where monsters walk and talk and trade on the streets. It's a land of piercing spires and spiraling stairways, skewering the heavens and shattering reality. It's a land where things live that shouldn't live, lakes and weapons and stranger things besides. Impossible? Not in Nex.

There's a land where one can learn to speak with the moon and the stars; where flame and iron, wind and wave are courses of study for the devout and the dedicated. It's a place where genies dwell and wishes become wonders; where the elements are matters of heritage and experience, not merely philosophy. It's a land of curses and cycles, where all things come round once more. Impossible? Not in Jalmeray.

There's a broken land where magic runs wild and rampant, or else dead and stagnant. It's a land where the souls of armies still shamble in misery, and where storms of broken glass and poisonous fog arise without warning. It's a land where there's life without wizards, and also a land where wizards broke the world in their wars. It's a land where, on a clear night, you can see through the great spell-storms and look across a hundred worlds. Impossible? Not in the Mana Wastes.

There's a city where artisans make weapons that can kill gods and demons. It's a city in the shadow of an ancient fortress, but it's a place of new things and new ideas, where new people make new wonders and new horrors. It's a city of guns and cannons, from little pistols to great, belching bombards, as powerful as any archmage. Impossible? Not in Alkenstar.

The Impossible Lands aren't. But they might seem so to outsiders.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

The Impossible Lands were founded through unmitigated hubris and unprecedented bloodshed, and the nations within the region are often disturbing and cruel. One of the most prominent kingdoms, Geb, is infamous for raising humans and other sapient beings like cattle and eating them! Even the kindest or most inoffensive locales are stained with the legacy of colonialism, genocide, war

crimes, nonconsensual experimentation, suicide, enslaved genie servitors, and deep-rooted prejudice. This is a dark setting, filled with material that can be uncomfortable or outright unwelcome. Please talk your players through the subjects they might encounter through the course of a campaign—and use specifics where needed, as terms like "mature" are often too vague. You might realize that this setting isn't for your group, and that's perfectly fine!

CHECK IN

The X Card mentioned on page 485 of the Core Rulebook is a useful tool for ensuring safety at your table, but it can put a lot of pressure on the people who most need to use it. Few people feel comfortable interrupting and ending a scene that everyone else seems to be enjoying. This can especially be true if the player is stressed or uncomfortable but doesn't feel the issue is severe enough to warrant the X Card. Consider adding another card to indicate a "Check In." When used, the GM can pause the game action and allow the player to voice what they need to without automatically ending the scene. For example, a player could raise the Check In card to have a moment to cool down from an intense encounter, or to make their concerns clear to ensure the game doesn't go in a direction that they don't want (for example, "I'm fine if something happens to my character, but I can't handle it if my PC fails to save this NPC" or "This character reminds me of my ex, can you adjust their behavior slightly?").

IMPOSSIBLE NATIONS

The modern nations of the Impossible Lands are inextricably defined by the legacy of their pasts and the monuments to progress they've made in the face of uncertain futures. Though independent from one another and often in competition or conflict, the nations of the Impossible Lands all share a common origin as sites of colonial conquest and cultural diasporas. It was the height of the Osirion's Ascension reign, during the union of the Four Pharaohs, that saw expansion southward down the eastern coast of Garund, conquering and assimilating whatever fledgling powers would challenge the pharaonic rulers in Tumen. Under the might of Osirion, the lands were plundered for their plentiful ores and resources until the time of the pious Kenaton, who reigned in an era of decline over the Osirian Empire and who would cede the southernmost colonial lands to the exiled necromancer Geb. It's from Geb that the legacy of colonization, revolution, and independence is most notable.

After the necromancer's conquest and the ceding of lands from the failing Osirian Empire, the newly founded eponymous nation ruled in relative peace. War wasn't the trade of Geb, or so they claim—not until the coming of the wizard-king Nex, which led to a thousand-year war that ravaged the populace across the eastern coast. In the face of famine and supernatural blighting by the northern conqueror, Geb raised his fallen into an endless legion of the walking dead. To this day, the scars of Nex's conquest linger, both in the borderlands of the Mana Wastes that

divide the territories and in the shift in Gebbite culture. The dead reign in Geb now, and though their society is ordered, it's unkind to the living. The nation's lush fields and ample farmlands are worked by unloving hands, reaping the fruitful bounty of the earth to sell in foreign markets as a show of good will in mutual trade.

Nex tells a different tale, claiming that the workings of Geb provoked their conflict, the necromancer's hunger for further dominion driving him northward to Quantium and the lands that the wizard-king would claim to reforge in his name. Whatever the truth might be, there's no refuting that it was Nex who conquered and subjugated Oenopion and Ecanus before plundering other nations beyond Golarion for the benefit of his kingdom. As Geb is belligerent and recalcitrant in its cultural lynchpins toward a failing Osirian imperial state, Nex is a study in contrasts: a willful embrace of all that's opulent in aesthetics across the sensory spectrum. Nex is a nation of astonishing, magically augmented cities and barren wilds populated by those discarded and untamed by the wizard-king's march toward arcane supremacy. With his alleged reemergence into the world, it remains unclear what role he shall take in the state of his nation.

KING GEB

This in turn leads to growing worries within the Grand Duchy of Alkenstar, a city-state formed during the centuries-long conflict between Nex and Geb, populated by the displaced survivors of the rival wizards' hatred. Founded by a fugitive engineer from Nex, Alkenstar has long been on the path of technological innovation, producing works of steam and black powder with power enough to rival the arcane might of their neighbors. Nestled within the Shattered Range and enriched with resources from the long-abandoned Sky Citadel of Dongun Hold, Alkenstar has a wealth of weapons and metallurgic commodities, but it finds itself in a precarious position should Nex come to enforce its claim of ownership over those it once displaced or should trade with Geb for foodstuffs be viewed as anything more than a mutual trade alliance.

Should any power within the mainland of the Impossible Lands find itself once again drawn into the horrors of the world, the desolation of the Mana Wastes might expand and claim new victims to its ravaged state. Though the lands of Nex show the bitter wounds of the rival wizards' long conflict, such devastation is a mere grazing strike when compared to the broken earth that now separates Geb and Nex. For want of sovereignty, both nations and their masters warped once-sublime grasslands into a wasteland pockmarked with zones where the very laws of the cosmos are forced into flux. Magic dies here, is reborn here, takes forms here in the most unlikely and horrifying manifestations. Safety is never assured, and the dangers of the wasteland have helped ensure the long but tenuous peace between Nex and Geb. The Mana Wastes aren't worth dying for.

Mostly removed from mainland conflicts sits the Vudran colony of Jalmeray, an island nation granted to the legendary maharajah Khiben-Sald after formally opening relations between Vudra and Garund in the courts of Nex. Its splendid marble palaces and adherence to Vudran aesthetics make modern Jalmeray a shining beacon for pilgrims and immigrants, and the current reigning Thakur and his supplicants appeal to the image of Iroran wisdom and wondrous magical alliances with genies upon the national stage. In judgment of their neighbors' bickering, they'll click their tongues, yet one can't help but note that the island's history has been stripped from any archives and the indigenous inhabitants given the terrible ultimatum of exile or uncertain fealty to foreign masters. When called to answer for the bloodied

history of their own people upon the isle, few will have anything to say.

RELATIONS

Despite animosities that have defined centuries, the Impossible Lands currently enjoy a period of relative peace among one another and their foreign neighbors. The Shattered Range keeps the political intrigue of the Mwangi Expanse mostly isolated from the eastern coast of Garund, and despite its origins as a founding power within the Impossible Lands, Osirion and other nations upon the Golden Road hold only as much influence as can be afforded when posturing between the rival mage-founded nations and those that border them.

Geb shall always hate Nex, even in times so long removed from their ancient conflict—no matter how far removed the next generation is from those devastations. Trade and wealth won't change this hate, but both parties know well that knives are best sharpened in the dark, such that those born in foreign lands and unaware of ancient grudges wouldn't be remiss in thinking the two nations to be on amicable, cooperative terms. The Gebbites trade in good faith with Katapesh and Qadira, as well as with Jalmeray, affording grand luxuries only the unliving could truly appreciate. Alkenstar trades ice wine for food, and the technological state is all too aware of how their supply lines would be severed in the event of a war. Geb is a patient state, and the only nation to truly hold their friendship is the Darklands city of Nemret Noktoria, whose ghouls share ancient alliances with the Blood Lords.

The wizard-king Nex was notably well traveled, and in greeting Khiben-Sald, he opened up trade relations with the Vudran homeland. As such, the city of Quantium houses embassies to most nations in the known world as well as more than a few from lands, planets, and planes of existence beyond. Navigating the obtuse bureaucracy and politics of guilds within Nex will often leave foreign traders with an ill taste in their mouths, but the profits for successful navigating the system offer riches few would turn away. Few but Geb would spit at the name of Nex, for such are their riches and their influence.

Alkenstar's niche place in the region and the relative scarcity of its influence see that it holds little influence in global affairs but is still courted by Avistani states such as Taldor, who see potential in the proliferation of black powder and firearms. They trade resources as far as Vudra and are held in good company with the dwarven people of Dongun Hold.

The island nation of Jalmeray is held in high esteem by its neighbors and contemporaries, for while they might intercept and funnel trade from the Vudran mainland through their ports, they also call for the Vudrani to trade openly in Garund. Alliances with Katapesh, born of trade with the Golden City, have seen many fruitful returns. The flow of wealth and foreign courtiers in the nation has historically garnered the attention of the Aspis Consortium, who have long sought to entrench themselves within the state and gain further contacts for trade in distant Vudra.

ADVENTURES

Intrigue and ancient grudges abound throughout the Impossible Lands, as even an era of peace and mutual cooperation between independent nations won't stop the subtle machinations of ancient archmages—or the cosmic upheavals of a region so thoroughly saturated in both arcane power and the ruination it has long carved into the very earth. The Impossible Lands are well charted, settled by the encroachment of generations of colonies. Though chances to make a name for oneself abound within the polities and city-states, most who seek wealth and fame must cleave into the ravenous desolation of the Mana Wastes.

KING NEX

IMPOSSIBLE LANDS
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The threats of mana-warped mutants and horrid beasts escaped from the Nexian fleshforges stymie all but the bold and foolhardy, who abandon caution to pursue rumors of treasure and ancient vaults lost to the ravages of the Mana Wastes, unblemished by the ancient conflict between Nex and Geb. Mages from across Golarion have sought to study, contain, and manipulate the wild energies of the Wastes; those who don't fall into despondence at the task or die trying all too often find themselves in the drinking lounges of Quantium, gazing in avarice at monuments to powerful magics that might never again grace the world. Many an Avistani venture will dare to brave the Wastes or act as patron to those with more mettle to their name, all for want of war weapons forged in the Gunworks of Alkenstar.

In the courts of Niswan in Jalmeray, newly arrived courtiers for the Vudran rajahs posture for influence with the Thakur, often requiring interlopers to serve as proxies in matters that would sully the honor of their noble birthright. Genies, rakshasas, asuras, and all manner of both local and foreign spiritual beings seek to guide the fate of the nation's soul toward their own ends, often at the expense of mortals. Martial arts tournaments by the Houses of Perfection offer chances at enlightenment through combat and a fine purse to any savvy enough to gamble away from the judging eyes of monks. Those of academic hubris or a particularly self-destructive bent might seek to unravel the mysteries of the Murmur Dome of Prada Hanam, which warps the blood and very soul of those who enter its mirrored halls, destroying trespassers as their insides churn with warping, manifest metals.

Geb and Nex rattle their sabers in acts of subterfuge that risk untold collateral as their animosity returns to its ancient fever heights. Though trade profits the Blood Lords of Geb, the low nobility hunger to slake their dread cravings for the flesh of the "quick," perhaps to the fool's end of provoking war. Legalists in service to Abadar and Pharasmin insurgents seek greater understanding of the nation's Dead Laws, so as to better make sense or war against the unliving and their capacities. Living souls in need of stewards and saviors to liberate them from a life destined for butchery will eye any foreign traveler with pitiable despondency and what little coin they can offer, ever hopeful for a hero.

In Oenopion, the City of Alchemists, the fleshforges churn terrible new works, and sludge percolates with malign intelligence. Warlords across the ravaged lands await any moment of dissent or chaos, hungering to avenge their ancestors who were left to suffer in the hubristic wake of a wizard-king and his hated southern foe. Nightmarish creatures roam the wilds here, each worthy of a tall tale and toasting to, should one be cunning enough to hunt them.

As a haven for refugees and immigrants, Alkenstar buckles under generational shifts and compromises made to the industrial powers that strip the common people of their wealth, liberty, and dignity, often by ways of debt or servitude. In the frontier city's backstreets, families, gangs, outcasts, and orphans of other nations look upon the dreams of safety they were promised and spit the bitter taste upon the dusty ground. Black powder and firearms will light the path forward, be it a revolution among the underclass or a terrible new war machine in need of freelancers to help smuggle it into another nation.

CURRENT AFFAIRS

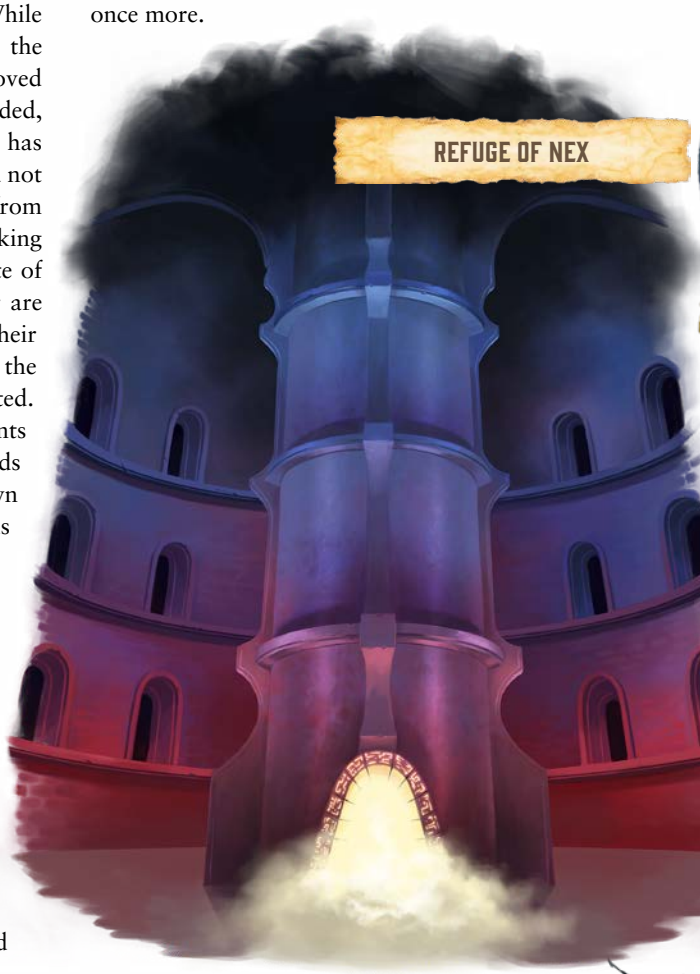
The subject on everyone's mind in the Impossible Lands today is the return of the archmages. In 4716 AR, after thousands of years of quiescence, the gates of the Refuge of Nex opened once more, prompting a tidal wave of speculation that the great wizard had survived the fall of Quantium eons ago and now aimed to return to his namesake nation. Not long afterward, the fleshforges rumbled once more to life, giving the rumors wings. A few years later, the Lich-Queen Arazni, the former herald of Aroden and the effective ruler of the land of Geb, contrived to throw off her bondage and escape the Ghost King's control. In the aftermath of this great shock, the necromancer has taken renewed interest in his own kingdom, and as rumors of Nex's return grow, Geb has worked to put his land on a war footing.

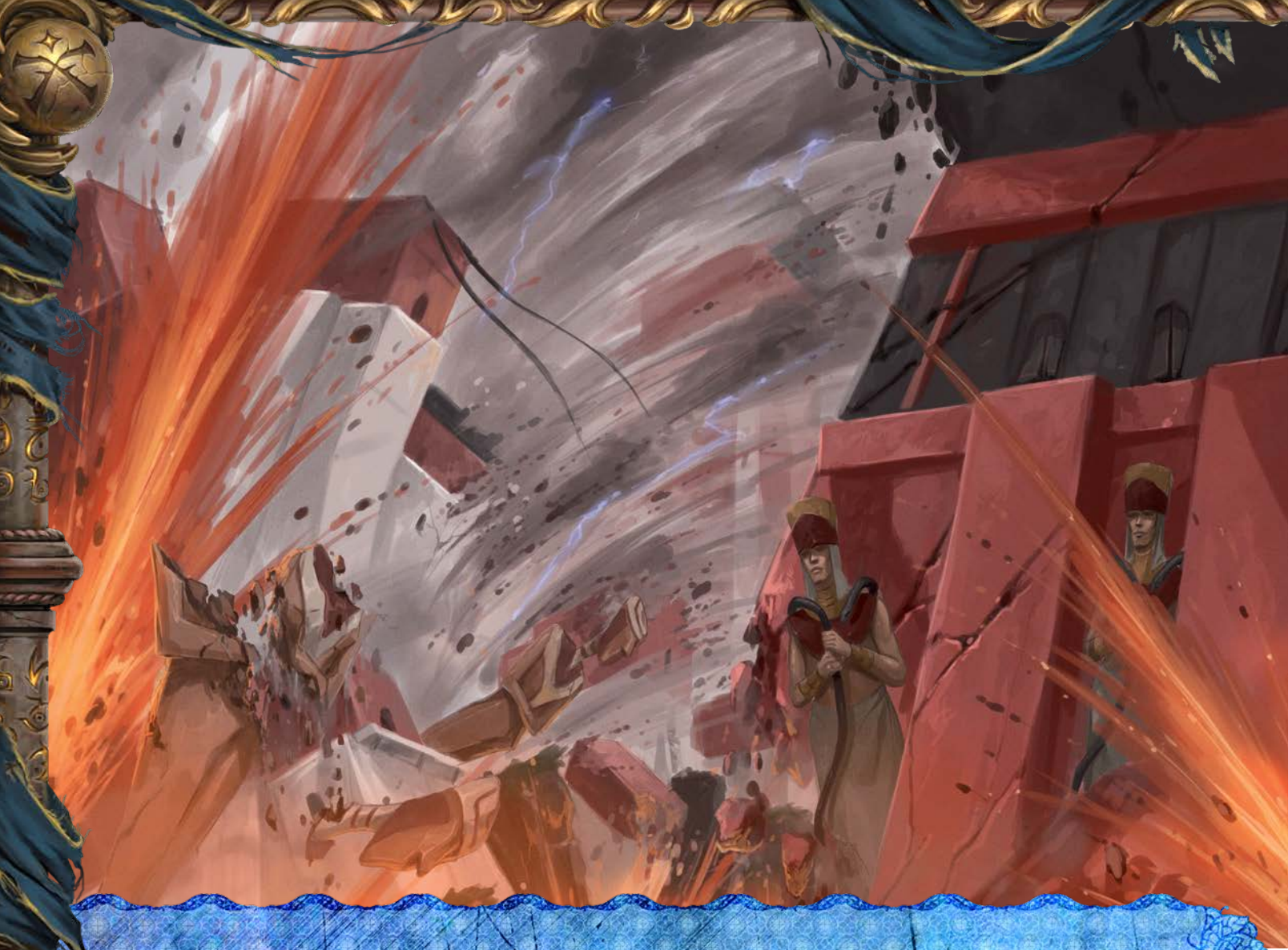
This isn't a situation that pleases everyone. While Geb, and presumably Nex, are eager to return to the great conflict of the past, most everyone else has moved on—it has been a good 4,000 years since the war ended, after all. In Nex, the Council of Three and Nine has become accustomed to ruling over their country, and not everyone is interested in ceding their seat to a figure from the past, however notorious. Should the wizard-king truly have returned, Nex will be thrown into a state of flux. The Council of Three and Nine in Bandeshar are equally fearful of both their founder's response to their stewardship and how his resurgence would threaten the comfort of power to which they've long acclimated. The Arclords, descendants of Nex's household servants and apprentices, seek any collaborators whose deeds might assure they cling to their station or cast down those who have long spurned them. The Blood Lords of Geb have likewise had a very long time to get used to casually trading food, easy to grow in Geb's fertile farmland and of little interest to its skeletal farmhands, for wealthy goods from other parts of the world. A great war would disrupt their comfortable existence.

Both countries also have their war parties, whether the more bloodthirsty undead in Geb or the Arclords of Nex who view peace with the dead as a blasphemous affront. If the two archmages will it, all the opposition in the world might not stop them. But the two countries are bigger than they once were, wealthier and wiser and more sophisticated, and even an archmage might not command the absolute loyalty they once did.

In Alkenstar, tucked away in the Mana Wastes between the two warring sides, the prospect of a war has sent all into panic. The Duchy has long benefited from being a third option between the wizard-formed lands on either side, but this simply means that if a war comes, Alkenstar will be a prize to be plucked—or a thorn to be ripped out. A few in the Duchy believe that some technological superweapon might secure their independence, but cooler heads doubt the small nation can do anything to stop a determined army of dead or conjured beasts. Only a diplomatic solution will save the city, which already faces other problems. Rapid industrialization, soaring inequality, and a new philosophy of biological essentialism—the concept that unaltered humans and dwarves are superior to the mage-wrought mutants of the Mana Wastes or the clockwork constructs of the city—have all sparked unrest.

In Jalmeray, scandal still hovers over the bizarre Challenge of Sky and Heaven of a few years past, when all of the Houses of Perfection were disqualified for reasons not entirely clear. This has consumed much of the attention of Jalmeray's people and of its ruling class, but a few have been casting uneasy glances toward the mainland. While currently on the sidelines of the great conflict, Jalmeray was once part of Nex's kingdom, and if a war breaks out, it might get dragged into conflict once more.





HISTORY

The history of the Impossible Lands seems strangely locked-in—merchants trade, soldiers fight, rulers scheme—but the presence of the immortal and the unliving lends stability, or perhaps stagnancy, as ghosts and genies and golems march unceasingly through the ages. Scratch beneath the surface, however, and one discovers a surfeit of events, a hundred swirling eddies of migration, innovation, and destruction.

THE STATUE BUILDER CULTURE

Little is known of the mythic history of Eastern Garund. Based on a few picked-over ruins and obscure mentions in ancient texts, it appears both serpentfolk of the Mwangi interior and cyclopes of Ghol-Gan had a few scattered outposts on the continent's eastern coast, but no great cities or mighty fortresses. Visitors to the Shattered Range's foothills can still make out a few cyclopean towers—now just hollow husks—interesting for their size and little else.

The main pre-Osirian civilization in Eastern Garund was a culture known to history as the Statue Builders. They left behind few ruins and no writings and remain largely a mystery to modern scholars. They might have been humans from the Mwangi Expanse or possibly the Inner Sea region. They built mostly in wood and animal hide. Only a few ditches or earthen hovels mark their settlements. How they lived and who they worshipped remain unknown, but they did leave behind one thing: statues.

The Statue Builder culture carved hundreds of curiously stylized statues crafted from soft marble or soapstone. Typically between 8 to 12 inches in height, though some were much larger, the statues depict faceless humanoid forms with a sharply angular style of art unique to the region. Most of the figurines have their arms folded, though some carry weapons or musical instruments, and a few hold their hands in an odd, finger-laced gesture that indicates more fingers than normal.

It was during these early days that the dwarves first emerged onto the surface of Golarion, tunneling up into

an otherwise unexceptional stretch of farmland. These dwarves had been sent far to the south and east of the main body of dwarves to establish a new outpost. It was with some surprise that they found the place already inhabited, though not nearly as much surprise as the locals had for these strange, subterranean people. Initial encounters might have given way to violence were it not for a novel solution of from a local nomarch, a wily old politician named Pethraseth. The newly arrived dwarves were given a large territory to call their own, and in exchange, every year they had to deliver a small coffer of silver to the nomarch—who, purely of his own free will and initiative, would send a few wagon-loads of food and goods to the support the new dwarven settlement. This face-saving arrangement avoided a war, and for several centuries the dwarves dutifully upheld their end of the bargain. The dwarven Sky-Citadel of Dongun Hold was founded as High King Taargick had planned, though little of its earliest records remain, destroyed by war and lost in migration.

What ultimately became of the Statue Builders is a mystery. Most believe they were conquered by and absorbed into the growing Osirian Empire during the early Age of Destiny.

OSIRIAN RULE

With the coming of Osirion, or more properly, with the coming of Osirian writing, recorded history of the Impossible Lands truly began. The Osirians called this region the Southern Reach and saw it as a vital route into central Garund. From the fertile valleys of Osirion came pottery and metalwork in bronze and copper, to be exchanged at trading posts for skins, ivory, and polished wood. Forts and trading posts sprang up and, in time, transformed into citadels and cities as the Southern Reach of Osirion grew wealthy, powerful, and eventually, independent-minded.

Remaining records suggest rebellions in the Southern Reach were a perennial problem for the pharaohs of Osirion's First Age, as generals and nomarchs saw a chance to line their pockets rather than send tribute north, declaring themselves kings and high lords. Most of these minor kingdoms were crushed in short order, of little interest now to anyone but antiquarians, but a few lasted longer, surviving for a century or two before being suppressed by the might of Osirion's armies.

The most successful of these petty kingdoms was founded by the Queen of Ebon Feathers. Though the accounts of her reign were purged with some thoroughness after her fall, a few stelae escaped destruction. One, now on display in Absalom, claims "she came garbed in the light of the dying sun, and claimed to be to death as a daughter." Beginning her conquest in a small town not far from modern-day Mechitar, she routed Osirian armies thrice the size of hers within a decade using skilled generalship and startling luck. The first army to face her was riven by a camp fever long before reaching her, while the general of a second perished of a sudden stroke on the eve of battle.

Osirian scribes later accused her of foul magic and the worship of evil gods, claiming her palace, now lost to time, was the scene of blood-curdling depravity and debauchery. Such things would be easy enough to write off as the sour mutterings of war's losers, but the accounts clearly indicate the Queen of Ebon Feathers ruled for more than 400 years without aging a day. She was eventually defeated by the combined might of the Pharaohs of Ascension, culminating in a grand battle at the Field of Charish, where the diabolic legions of the Fiend Pharaoh Hetshepsu defeated the Queen's "armies of dust and woe." Supposedly, the queen was eternally bound beneath the battlefield. The location of the Field of Charish has long since been forgotten, though it's believed to be somewhere in the modern-day Mana Wastes.

QUEEN OF EBON FEATHERS

TIMELINE

–7000 to –4000 AR	The Statue Builder culture resides in the modern-day Impossible Lands.
–4980 AR	The Sky Citadel of Dongun Hold is founded.
–3000 AR	The region is colonized and turned into Osirion's Southern Reach.
–1000 AR	The Queen of Ebon Feathers forges a rebel kingdom in the Southern Reach.
–1456 AR	The Fiend Pharaoh Hetshepsu defeats the Queen of Ebon Feathers at the Fields of Charish.
–1140 AR	Geb is born in Sothis to an Osirian noble house.
–1119 AR	The necromancer Geb flees Sothis during the reign of the god-favored Pharaoh Kenaton.
–1108 AR	Geb conquers the town of Mechitar and begins to slowly expand his kingdom.
–1070 AR	Nex is born in the city of Quantium, of uncertain parentage.
–987 AR	Nex arrives at the gates of Quantium with an army and takes control of the region.
–929 AR	Osirion formally cedes control of the Southern Reaches to the archmages Geb and Nex.
–892 AR	The Thousand-Year War between Geb and Nex begins.
–585 AR	Nex attempts to destroy the land of Geb with the Rain of Venomous Tears.
–147 AR	Geb sends a great undead leviathan to shatter Quantium. Nex builds the pair of Quantium Golems in response.
166 AR	The Archmage Nex unsuccessfully launches a siege against Absalom, erecting the mile-tall Spire of Nex in the Cairnlands.

THE RISE OF NEX AND GEB

Following the fall of the Queen of Ebon Feathers, the Southern Reach continued to blossom. Goods once more flowed over the mountains from the Mwangi Expanse, roads and irrigation systems were built across the badlands, and towns gradually grew into cities. During this time, Quantium first rose to prominence as a major seaport on the eastern coast of Garund, receiving ships from Vudra, Iblydos, and far-off Tian Xia.

Then came the Pharaoh Kenaton. Pious, cunning, and equally skilled in war and administration, Kenaton brought a temporary halt to Osirion's slow decline. In a lightning series of military campaigns, he reunited the disjointed Osirian lands and brought the Southern Reaches back under the control of Sothis. In the process, he put many warlords and renegade mages to flight to the farthest edges of the empire.

One of them was the man who would become known to history as Geb, the Ghost King. A lesser son of one of Sothis's greatest noble houses, Geb's appointed role in life was to become a wizard and mortuary priest so he might better support his family's ambitions to the throne. Though brilliant, determined, and ruthless, Geb couldn't save his house when it went against the favored of the gods. Kenaton sundered the family's armies, entombed alive their leaders, and sent the rest into exile. Most vanished from the face of history. But not Geb.

Traveling from Sothis to the southernmost reaches of what the Osirians considered the civilized world, Geb arrived in the port town of Mechitar, old home of the Queen of Ebon Feathers. He tarried there for a little while before politely asking the nomarch of the province to make him king. When the provincial governor laughed at the young upstart, Geb tore the nomarch's soul from his body. In short order, Geb was crowned king of a new country, which he named after himself and his lost house.

A few decades after Kenaton's death, another great mage arose in the Southern Reach. Nex was no scion of the nobility, but a Quantium wharf orphan who learned his first spells from the weather wizards and sea mages there. Eerily attuned to the Great Beyond, the young Nex became a wanderer and an adventurer, guided by the tantalizing hints of power and glory and immortality he saw in his visions. Where exactly he went during those years is a matter of considerable conjecture, but it's known that Nex traveled several times to the Mwangi Expanse and found a great deal of occult lore there. Persistent rumor holds he visited the Lost City of Ird and learned some of the forbidden magics that brought about its end.

When Nex returned to Quantium, he came at the head of an army of summoned monstrosities: squamous and twisted things that hailed from the furthest corners of the Great Beyond. The city surrendered without a fight, and so Nex became the Wizard King, ruler of the northern part of what had been Osirion's Southern Reach.

THE ARCHMAGES' WAR

No one quite knows the truth of how the grand necromancer Geb and master archmage Nex came to blows, save for the two main participants, and neither has ever seen fit to illuminate the matter. Nevertheless, the historical consensus is that it was a professional rivalry gone sour in the most spectacular way possible.

Initially, the two mage-ruled lands seemed relatively comfortable with one another, engaging in trade, diplomatic missions, and all the standard trappings of peaceful neighboring nations. At this time, the land of Geb was still an overwhelmingly living land, with the dead appearing only in the necromancer's armies or toiling at the most thankless tasks. The two wizards visited with one another, and while they might not have been precisely friends, they were cordial. Geb and Nex were the only two archmages in the region; indeed, they were the most powerful wizards of their age. No one else

understood the nature of magic and power on that level. No one else could appreciate the finest points of occult theory and thaumaturgical control they demonstrated. Geb and Nex had no peers but each other, and it was only natural each would begin to show off their powers to the one person in the world who could grasp the significance of their achievements.

What had started as a friendly, professional sort of competition grew ever more vicious, for neither wizard could stand being second-best at anything. The two mages began to quarrel, and then to fight. Historians mostly agree Nex, who was brash, confident, and aggressive, made the first attack against his more phlegmatic rival, though Nex's partisans have long claimed it was in response to some hidden Gebbite gambit. In any case, war erupted between the two countries and lasted for well over a thousand years.

The Geb-Nex War, the Mage War, the Thousand-Year War—it was one of the most destructive conflicts Golarion had ever seen, before or since. The two archmages had immense supplies of power and equally vast reserves of spite. Time and time again, they assaulted one another with summoned hosts, killing spells, and mundane weapons. The number of battles was so great that even the chroniclers grew weary of cataloging them all.

On one occasion, Geb cast a pall of night across the land, an endless darkness that was pierced by only the faintest rays of sunlight at high noon. Curtains of murk obscured vision, and shapeless things of wind and malice crept across the border. Nex developed a countermeasure and sent a baleful fire racing through every strand of shadow in the land, burning Geb's spell away. Another time, Nex developed a new ritual, the Rain of Venomous Teeth. The archmage found and slew an old dragon, and then used the wyrm's broken fangs to make an elixir in a great pit on the border. Once the viscous potion was ready, Nex summoned a mighty wind to carry it over Geb and rain the mixture on the land. Each drop held a fleck of dragon bone suspended inside, like an insect in amber. As each drop landed, it transformed into a venomous serpent that slithered away to kill all it could find. Faced with the mass poisoning of his people, Geb summoned a clammy, gray mist from somewhere deep beneath the earth, and then had undead servants kill every now-sluggish serpent they could find.

On another occasion, Geb uncovered an ancient leviathan in the abyssal depths of the sea; he raised it with necromancy and labor alike. Of its bones, he made a monstrosity as big as a cathedral that walked on its ribs and lashed at its foes with three fluke-tipped tails. Geb had the horror creep toward Quantium under the waves to wait until Nex was absent to attack. The assault was only barely beaten off when an apprentice mage spotted the controlling diadem inside the leviathan's skeletal brain case and gave her life to dislodge it. According to legend, the uncontrolled beast returned to the ocean and still lurks off the coast of Nex. It was after this assault that the archmage constructed the two Quantium Golems, a matched pair of titans, to guard the city in his absence.

Yet there were also some times of peace. The Thousand-Year War is better thought of as an endless series of dreary ceasefires and uneasy truces, punctuated by short, horrific bouts of war. The two mages were evenly matched, and so they would spend years, even decades searching for some new gambit that might give them the edge. During one such foray, Nex ventured north to Absalom and constructed his Spire there, aiming to besiege the city and take the Starstone by force—according to popular legend, he nearly succeeded, only to turn back as being unwilling to pay the final price to ascend to godhood. Though in truth, no one quite knows why the Siege of Absalom ended.

KHIBEN-SALD AND THE FOUNDING OF JALMERAY

During the war between the archmages, the area that was once Osirion's Southern Reach first gained the name Impossible Lands, due to the impossible

253 AR	Nex assumes control of the Isle of Jalmeray, though little is done to bring the island into the Nexian administration.
378 AR	The dwarves abandon Dongun Hold, retreating into the Darklands.
562 AR	Khiben-Sald, the legendary Maharajah of Vudra, arrives at Quantium with the Hundred and One Ships.
563 to 573 AR	Nex bequeaths the Isle of Jalmeray to Khiben-Sald, who spends the next decade bringing Vudrani culture and Vudrani administration to the island.
576 AR	The Thousand-Year War unofficially ends. Nex destroys much of Geb, prompting the necromancer to resurrect a vast undead army and turn Geb into a land of the dead. Nex vanishes from his capital in Quantium during a Gebbite poison attack, and the war peters out afterward.
632 AR	Geb dies in an act of ritual suicide but soon returns as a ghost.
2279 AR	The Arclords of Nex, forced out in one of Nex's interminable power struggles, move to take over Jalmeray.
2822 AR	Vudrani rajahs wrest control of Jalmeray from the Arclords of Nex.
2850 AR	The Arclords of Nex attack Absalom in the event known as the Conjured Siege.
3890 AR	In response to an attack from the Knights of Ozem, Geb steals the corpse of Arazni, herald of Aroden, and raises her as a lich. Arazni takes over the day-to-day administration of the Ghost King's nation.

3996 to 4000 AR	The Cult of Weeping Stars spreads throughout Nex.
4329 AR	Geb petrifies the invading Holomog army of the Pirate Queen Mastrien Slash, creating the Field of Maidens.
4330 AR	Prominent Pathfinder Selmius Foster is killed on the island of Bhopan. His assistant, Adolphus, escapes with the Bhopanese Princess Ganjay.

things Nex and Geb routinely and murderously accomplished. It was also during the war that the third of the region's kingdoms arose.

According to chroniclers of the age, a lookout on the seawall of Quantium gazed across the ocean and saw what looked like an invasion fleet. A fleet it was, but not of Geb, and not of war, for these vessels were the Hundred and One Ships of the Maharajah Khiben-Sald, the Ever-Traveling, the War-King, the Uniter of Vudra. Khiben-Sald claimed direct descent from ancient Vudrani kings who had slain Unyielding Kothogaz, the Dance of Disharmony and the Spawn of Rovagug. Taking this claim as his pretext, Khiben-Sald united Vudra for the first time in its history, with war, diplomacy, and a certain degree of strategic treachery, as he did against the Warrior Princess Chhaya. That act accomplished, Khiben-Sald spent the rest of his life traveling his kingdom and those of his neighbors, spreading the glory of Vudra and not-quite-coincidentally bankrupting most of his rivals. A Hundred and One Ships require a lot of hosting.

At first, Nex was reportedly pleased by the Maharajah's arrival. The charming conqueror and the headstrong archmage became fast friends. But Khiben-Sald's presence quickly began to pall as his vast traveling court seemed set to eat through even an archmage's impressive treasury. Looking for a way to evict the Maharajah without causing a diplomatic incident, Nex gave the island of Jalmeray to Khiben-Sald and encouraged him to explore his new possession.

KHIBEN-SALD

Neither Nex nor Khiben-Sald consulted with Jalmeray's indigenous inhabitants, the Sunghari people, during this process, and the people of the island were much surprised to find they'd been given away by someone whom they'd never met to someone else they'd never heard of. Nevertheless, it wasn't Khiben-Sald's first time pacifying an unruly people, and he set out to win over the populace with gifts of genie-spun magic and Vudrani-funded royal architecture. Most of the local people decided a generous ruler was better than a risky civil war, but a portion chose to flee to the nearby island of Kaina Katakha, preferring to live in freedom and poverty than in purchased Vudrani splendor. Purportedly, Khiben-Sald was so intrigued by their decision that he let them go, treating the island almost as his own preserve of people.

After 10 years, Khiben-Sald returned to Vudra, but he left a Vudrani administration on Jalmeray, along with a great deal of Vudrani architecture and hundreds of bound genies.

THE WASTES AND THE WAR

The Thousand-Year War dragged on. Inexorably, the once-rich land between the warring mage kingdoms became a blasted and forsaken waste. The formerly Osirian residents fled. The dwarves of Dongun Hold, tired of being traded like a token on a game board, collapsed their tunnels and retreated underground to wait out the conflict in one of the subterranean vaults of the Darklands. Slowly, the borderlands became known as the Mana Wastes, the result of centuries of magical saturation, alchemical poisoning, unquiet dead, and dimensional rending. The Mana Wastes were a place of value to no one—a blasted, eldritch testament to the power of its creators and to their unceasing, unchanging spite.

The war ended quite abruptly and a trifle unexpectedly when the two archmages succeeded too well. The proximate cause was a blight unleashed by Geb on its northern neighbor; a twisted fungal infection devoured all that lay in its path

and brought the country of Nex to the brink of starvation. Nex retaliated by sending a series of magical cataclysms—earthquakes, hurricanes, sudden volcanoes—not at his foe directly, but at all of Geb. Tens of thousands of people died until there wasn't a family in the land that had not lost at least a third of its members.

Geb ruled as a necromancer-king, but he had still ruled over a living land. No more. Driven by rage and grief, Geb animated his entire nation, calling up and binding the souls of all who had ever perished in his self-named country, and then forced this entire host of the dead north against Nex and against Quantium. Before the walls of the city, Geb conjured a poisonous, yellow-brown fog, which he sent on enchanted winds throughout the city. Thousands died, only to stand up as Geb's new soldiers, and all marched on the Bandeshar, the fairytale palace of Nex.

Only to find the archmage missing.

Somehow, Nex escaped, or vanished, or died without anyone noticing. Some say he fled to the Refuge of Nex, a demiplane only he could access. Others thought he perished, and none of his household mages, the Arclords of Nex, cared to give Geb the satisfaction of knowing. In any case, after a few days, the Arclords repelled the overstretched Gebbite army.

The war more-or-less petered out afterward. Nex didn't return, and Geb became consumed with paranoia, uncertain as to where his nemesis had disappeared. After half a century of doubt, Geb took his own life in an act of ritual suicide, only to return to his land as a ghost, bound by chains of obsession too strong to break.

With Nex gone and Geb ever more withdrawn, the Thousand-Year War came to an unceremonious close. Officially, the war never concluded, and every so often, one side or the other launched some token raid or minor punitive expedition. Without the driving force of the two mages, no one else had the stomach to keep this conflict going.

THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED

In the years following Geb's death and Nex's disappearance, the Impossible Lands settled into a sort of peaceful, prosperous status quo. Each of the three major nations was borderline impregnable, whether defended by the golems of Quantium, the bound genies of Jalmeray, or the countless undead of Geb. The times someone tried to interfere with those lands often ended very badly.

On one occasion, the Knights of Ozem, fresh from their victories over the Whispering Tyrant, chose to attack the other great undead nation of Golarion. Hostilities began when a poorly thought-out infiltration of Geb by a team of knights roused the Ghost King from his usual torpor. After reanimating the heroic knights as undead horrors, he dispatched them to steal the corpse of Arazni, the Herald of Aroden. When the furious Knights of Ozem invaded in force, they were met with an army of the dead led by the revivified Arazni, who came to rule Geb as the necromancer's Lich Queen.

Another aborted invasion was that of the Holomog a few centuries later. Led by the Pirate Queen Mastrien Slash, Holomog was a kingdom south of Geb undergoing a period of profound military expansion. Feeling more powerful than ever before, Mastrien chose to invade north into Geb, only to discover why rousing the Ghost King was never wise. With a single spell, Geb turned the entire army of warrior women to stone, forming the Field of Maidens that mark the dead land's southern border today.

Despite their status quo, the nations didn't utterly stagnate. On the contrary, with foreign adventures out of the question, internal politics became ever more vicious and cultural ferment ever more exciting. The country of Nex, for instance, suddenly had to deal with creating a new approach to governance after more than a thousand years of magical dictatorship. Over the centuries, numerous factions struggled to control Nex, among them various city-states and religious leaders, and the descendants of Nex's household mages, the Arclords.

4333 AR	Adolphus and Ganjay found Nexus House in Quantium, Nex. It's recognized as the Society's second official lodge.
4374 AR	The reign of the Beggar-Rajah Jharka begins on Jalmeray.
4588 AR	Fleeing an arrest warrant in Quantium, Ancil Alkenstar enters the Mana Wastes and discovers the ruins of Dongun Hold.
4601 AR	The Duchy of Alkenstar is founded; construction of the Gunworks begins with the aid of the dwarves of Dongun Hold.
4620 AR	The Gunworks of Alkenstar are completed. The first firearms begin emerging from Alkenstar.
4690 AR	The Gorilla King of Usaro attacks Alkenstar and steals the largest cannon as a trophy.
4716 AR	The Refuge of Nex opens in Quantium, prompting rumors that Nex himself will soon return.
4718 AR	All the Houses of Perfection are disqualified from the Challenge of Sky and Heaven, leaving it unfinished.
4719 AR	Arazni abandons the nation of Geb. Stirrings from the Refuge of Nex prompt the Ghost King to take an active part in world affairs once more.
4720 AR	A group of Pathfinders following Selmius Foster's notes reestablishes contact with Bhopan on more peaceful terms.

MISSING RECORDS

The constant devastation of the Impossible Lands resulted in the loss of countless historical records, through warfare, unnatural disasters, or deliberate destruction. For every ancient scroll or written record found in libraries, there are ten more hidden in the oceans, sealed in caverns, or buried beneath cracked earth, and the past of the Impossible Lands is rewritten as often as the present.

MASTRIEN SLASH

At one point, the Arclords managed to fully regain control of their homeland and, in time, began hoping to challenge Geb once more. However, they were forced out in a palace revolution. Several supposedly almighty mages were murdered in their beds, and the coterie fled to Jalmeray. There, they evicted the now-isolated Vudrani administration. For several centuries more, they ruled in something that approached peace and tranquility, or at least as much of it as a land rife with genies and curses and ruled by experiment-minded wizards can reach. The Arclords' rule ended with the advent of the Fleet of the Hundred Rajahs, a massive armada of Vudrani warships led by Khiben-Sald's heirs, or at least claimants to the same title, who put the Arclords to flight and reconquered Jalmeray. The furious Arclords made a few efforts to regain the island and then to conquer Absalom in the Conjured Siege of 2850 AR, only to fail as their master did before.

Other movements and challenges arose, and some stood the test of time. A few centuries ago, a beggar in Niswan came upon a stoppered bottle. When uncorked, the bottle unleashed a mighty and puissant marid, bound since Khiben-Sald's day. The marid had stood at Khiben-Sald's left hand during his conquests, and still could command an army of a hundred djinn and ifrits. She asked the beggar to make three wishes, and so he did. The first is not spoken of today. The second saw the young man become the Beggar-Rajah Jharka, ruler of all Jalmeray. The third outlawed the practice of genie binding forever on Jalmeray. Jharka ruled for 60 years before dying peacefully in his sleep. To this day, many cakes in Jalmeray are marked with the marid's ring.

Other movements proved more ephemeral. The Cult of Weeping Stars was a religious movement that swept through Nex at the turn of the millennium, proclaiming an apocalypse would soon arrive in the form of 11 new stars in the sky, which would rain 56 burning tears upon the world until all was drowned in flames. The cult spread rapidly, and on the promised day, several great sacrificial rituals were prepared outside Ecanus. When the prophesized apocalypse day came and went without incident, the cult entered a deep decline. A few scattered cultists still remain, however, insisting their predecessors simply miscalculated and that the apocalypse would come soon.

Some moments in history fizzled out, and the relics of their actors lay dormant. The famous Pathfinder Selmius Foster, following a lead initially discovered in the Mwangi Expanse, found his way to the island of Bhopan off the coast of Nex. The Bhopanese people were rendered insular by the devastation of their civilization by the fey monarch Qxal, but enough clues and records existed for Selmius to make the trip. The purpose of his journey was somewhat darker than mere academic exploration, however; driven by whispers from Qxal, Selmius sought to steal an artifact known as the *Perennial Crown* from the royals of Bhopan. Selmius and his assistant, Adolphus, allied with the revolutionary Bhopanese Princess Ganjay to pull off the theft, but Selmius was caught during the heist and executed. Adolphus and Ganjay succeeded in fleeing Bhopan with a substantial portion of the royal treasury, later using their massive wealth to found the Pathfinder Lodge of Nexus House in Quantium. Selmius was mourned, and Bhopan was left cut off from the greater world once more.

THE FOUNDING OF ALKENSTAR

In 4588 AR, the balance of power in the region shifted permanently when a young Nexian engineer named Ancil Alkenstar escaped

an arrest warrant by fleeing into the Mana Wastes. He discovered an entire community of refugees and outcasts had taken up residence in the ruins of Dongun Hold. How exactly Alkenstar rallied that motley band, how he took them deeper into the ruins and past the old gates, how he met the dwarves and convinced them to return—these questions are the subject of hundreds of songs, paintings, and cheap pamphlets.

The key fact is Alkenstar convinced the dwarves to return to Dongun Hold, and they didn't come empty-handed. During their long sojourn beneath the earth, they invented a new weapon, the firearm, that could change the face of warfare on Golarion forever. In one stroke, Dongun Hold was restored to the dwarves, and the Duchy of Alkenstar was founded. On paper, the united polity is theoretically beholden to Nex, but in practice, the twin kingdoms form a new, fourth nation, a city-state huddled between the titans of Geb and Nex, surrounded by the Mana Wastes.

Alkenstar's rise wasn't without a few bumps. Firearms, though effective, were also an irresistible temptation. Over the decades, several organizations made off with contingents of guns, the most famous of these being the Gorilla King of Usaro. These thefts combined with the rigors of living in the blasted Mana Wastes to give Alkenstar something of a siege mentality, a feeling of being eternally under pressure from all sides, one false move from disaster.

AN AGE OF LOST OMENS

When Aroden perished a century ago, his death ushered in a time of increasing instability in the Impossible Lands. Though the changes took some time to pick up steam, they're now hurtling through the former equilibrium of the region, overturning old certainties and replacing them with excitement and fear in equal measure.

In Nex, the gates of the Refuge of Nex have opened once more, and rumor runs rampant that after more than 4,000 years, the great archmage will return to his land. Some treat this return as if it were Aroden reborn, the coming of a great and long-awaited lord, but not everyone is thrilled at the prospect of seeing the Thousand-Year War ignite anew.

In Geb, the Ghost King had long withdrawn from mortal concerns until he was awakened when the Lich Queen Arazni broke free of his control. Suddenly, the long-prosperous and stable dead nation of Geb was cast rudderless into a tense future. Geb readies his war machine once again, but as in Nex, not all who serve the Ghost King are entirely happy with the thought of replacing peace and security with the vicissitudes of war.

In Alkenstar, the siege mentality of the Duchy has only deepened, and debates over the nature of humanity threaten to spill from the parlor and into the street. Surrounded by Mana Waste mutants, clockwork servitors, and undead neighbors, the people of Alkenstar cling to the idea that natural humanity, that the living form without alteration or transformation, is the apex of possibility. This idea will be tested soon enough.

In Jalmeray, unrest and uncertainty sparked among the populace when, a few years ago, all the Houses of Perfection were disqualified from the Challenge of Sky and Heaven, the greatest martial arts tournament in the land. Sparse details have made it to the wider public, and rumors devise more scandalous explanations every month.

In isolationist Bhopan, a skeleton from the past has opened a door in the present. A group of Pathfinders, following notes from Selmius Foster's journal, retraced his steps to the island. After driving off the fey tyrant Qxal, the explorers contacted the Bhopanese royals on more peaceful terms, potentially opening their city and people to the greater world. Whether this development bodes good or ill is up to the actions taken in the present and the future.

Soon, the world might once more learn nothing is impossible in the Impossible Lands, not even change.

ADDITIONAL READING

While this book in meant to be a comprehensive guide to the Impossible Lands metaregion, providing enough information to run any adventure or campaign, other Pathfinder products can supplement this material. For further reading, consider the following sources.

***Pathfinder Lost Omens: World Guide*:** This book provides a high-level overview of the Impossible Lands metaregion, as well as the other metaregions within the Inner Sea setting of Golarion. While not as robust as this setting book, it is a helpful resource for players to read in order to get a sense of the world of Golarion without revealing all of its potential secrets.

***Pathfinder Lost Omens: Legends*:** This book provides profiles on many of the major power players in the Inner Sea, including the two ancient wizards Nex and Geb. It also provides information on more recent influential figures, including King Anong Arunak of Dongun Hold.

***Pathfinder Book of the Dead*:** Written by King Geb himself, this tome provides his thoughts on both undead hunters and the undead themselves, as well as offering rules for player characters to play as undead creatures.

Outlaws of Alkenstar: A prewritten campaign for a GM and players to run, this Pathfinder Adventure Path takes PCs to the City of Smog in the Mana Wastes, where a band of outlaws seek to unravel an explosive criminal plot.

Blood Lords: A prewritten campaign for a GM and players to run, this Pathfinder Adventure Path takes PCs to the undead-ruled nation of Geb, where the PCs play agents of the nation's insidious Blood Lords.

PEOPLE OF THE IMPOSSIBLE LANDS

Residents sometimes boast that the Impossible Lands have more strange and diverse peoples living there than anywhere else in the world, and there's certainly a grain of truth to this claim.

The Impossible Lands are one of the great crossroads of the world. The legacy of Geb and Nex means that one finds not merely human or halfling residents but also more outlandish beings, such as genies or ghouls, walking about in city markets. This mingling of peoples isn't quite like anything else, and it gives the whole region a very cosmopolitan flavor.

ASURAS

The perfidious presence of the immortal asuras permeates the wastes and ill-kept places of the Impossible Lands, where these living blasphemies scheme the doom of all the immortal divine. In myriad, often unimaginable forms, they seek their retribution against the heavens for robbing them of both the entropic, infinite nothing and the unimaginable potential of everything that could have come to being if not for the hubris of entities that desire mortal worship. Asuras don't abide the divine, nor the imperfect existence they've been blighted to inhabit.

Yet here in the Impossible Lands they exist in a vile capacity unseen elsewhere in the world. They scorn the false doctrine of ancient gods and castigate those who bind their souls to such fickle beings, but when made to consider the acts of Geb and Nex, of the temples to Irori and other mortals who have gained such cosmic potential, asuras find new, terrible things to say. Though all things divine are worthy of scorn to them, the venues of formerly mortal power are broader and warrant foul considerations. Asuras can't help but applaud such paths to bleak enlightenment, and while they spit at the names of ascended mortals who worshipped petulant gods in life, they're jubilant at the concept of heavenly usurpations that can yet come to pass. They cackle from endless gnashing maws and unclean forms, for though asuras revile the divine, they know in theory one of their own might yet claim such a mantle. If one of the great asura ranas could reach true deific heights of power, infuse forsaken domains rather than merely subsist upon the marrow of such potential, then there would be a chance to unmake this accursed existence. The lesser schemes and petty plots of endless reincarnation cycles would no longer be necessary. The oblivion they seek, the great unmaking to a more perfect state of infinite potential, would finally become reality.

Asuras exist across the Impossible Lands in increasing numbers, wandering the Mana Wastes like flagellant pilgrims. They stalk the shadowed hearts of those who dwell in Jalmeray; they preach false paths to apotheosis and knowledge of divine frailty in the streets of every nation that will abide their heinous touch. They proselytize the potential all beings have to be more than

what they currently are, staining souls with sin and corrupting those who should know better with hubristic promises of stations just out of their reach. They plant all manner of blasphemous seeds, and in time, they'll cultivate doubt enough to upturn the heavens. With enough mortals corrupted under their influence, asuras will have enough power to challenge their many heavenly foes and taste retribution for this accursed, erroneous existence.

CALIKANGS

Calikangs were born from shame and cast down in failure from the hand of divine Vineshvakhi himself. These six-armed azure giants roam the Impossible Lands, driven by their sorrows and the fettering divine spark that brought their people into being. Created from the severed fingers of their patron god, calikangs are a people defined by their shame. Though guardians without peer or equal—to be anything less would see them further castigated in the eyes of the divine—many have known the mortal world to be only a place of butchery.

Many calikangs served the great mage Nex, forced to pursue his machinations and desires for power no mortal should dare ever dream of. Others have spent their long centuries in existence as guardians seeking to atone for the failure of their origins. In the current era, many have migrated to the Mana Wastes, seeking to repair the warped realities and magical confluences by way of pilgrimage into neighboring lands and by purging the realm of their hated foe: the asuras. They seek to safeguard this blighted place against further corruption, but shame tarnishes their goals, and all that they hope for is colored by penance. Nex and Geb could easily have been stopped, yet no hand of providence delivered the land from these evils; if calikangs were to be that hand, they were hamstrung by the bitter poetics of that which spawned them.

As a people, there's little that brings them joy or egress from their mournful station. Doubt clouds their cultures, and some calikangs have even bent to the whims of the most hated asuras—but such outlier traitors are seldom spoken of and are hunted when known. Across the Impossible Lands, they're viewed strangely by most and considered a folk best left to their own devices. Only the most deeply read of Vudrani have theological opinions on calikangs, though such thoughts are seldom asked for or heard by the calikangs themselves.

To those who seek to know them, calikangs portray themselves as though they were still representatives of the god Vineshvakhi. They're a safeguarding people; they seek to protect people, places, items, and cultures from that which would subvert the will of the divine. Whether it's good or evil doesn't matter, for the cosmic schemes of those beyond their station are of little concern. Thus to some, calikangs are heroic souls who watch over the land like kindly neighbors, while to others, they're but morally tenuous strangers whose devotion to the interpretations of a self-mutilating god's will has led them into perfidy and wickedness.

DWARVES

Throughout their long history, the sturdy clans of the Kulenett and Donguni have steadily withstood and adapted to the turmoil of the Impossible Lands. A deliberate, patient, and communitarian people, these dwarves deploy their signature industry and precision to making their living in a region torn apart by the squabbles of human mages, and they do their best to retain their traditional ways and beliefs while confronting each passing day. The Grondaksen Kulenett who dwell in hidden tunnels below Geb favor a policy of active camouflage to reduce attention from the blood-drinking, flesh-eating nobles of the land above, while the Holtaksen Donguni are torn between a similarly cautious approach of retreat into anonymity and a proud desire to restore and realize the glory of their Sky Citadel home. While the dwarves' long-term planning remains impeccable, the changes hurtling toward the Age of Lost Omens challenged their long-held assumptions and practices, sparking upheavals in their conservative societies.

CALIKANG

DWARF

GIANT

GNOLL

LANGUAGES

There is no one common language in the Impossible Lands, and anyone who works in diplomacy or trade would be well-served by learning multiple tongues. The most common languages in the region are Osiriani, Kelesh, and Vudrani; a traveler is likely to find someone who knows one of these languages in any major locale they visit.

The subterranean Kulenetts are masters of tunneling, sapping, and counter-sapping; their skills at creating and destroying underground passages are one of the main reasons their cities can remain undetected by a neighbor so hostile to the living. Even those undead who lurk in the dark are stymied by the Kulenett's sinuous tunnels, deadfalls, and blank walls, and they often give up their searches for these dwarves in favor of easier prey. Rumors persist of Kulenett tunnelers carving runes imbued with positive energy to discourage undead approach and distort undead senses. In honor of this nation-building craft, many Kulenetts go nowhere without their tunneling and cartographic tools, as well as small batches of alchemical explosives and holy water; in the event of capture by Geb's spies, Kulenett dwarves destroy their maps and other clues that could reveal the secrets of their treasured homelands. Despite the tense relations between the Kulenetts and Geb, they maintain official diplomatic ties as a matter of tact and practicality.

The fortress-building Donguni, in contrast, live in a feudal suzerainty that stands proudly on the surface of the Mana Wastes. A valued part of the Alkenstar nation, Dongun Hold is a black powder state that uses superior firepower and defensive engineering to overcome their enemies. The economic and industrial powerhouse also mines and sells vast quantities of the Mana Wastes' ores to foreign traders. The Donguni are accustomed to life in the absence of magic, given both the wellspring surges that overwhelm spellcasters and their life in a permanent magical dead zone, but they're no less religious or combat-ready for this fact. Armored in chain and plate, bearing muskets and clan pistols, the vaunted Donguni vanguards are elite soldiers famed across the Impossible Lands for their lethality, discipline, and devotion to their gods and their fellows. Due to their long history of suffering under their neighbors' conflicts, Donguni are always ready for war and craft tirelessly to prepare for any continuation of strife.

GENIE

GENIES

Many years ago, the people of Jalmeray called upon the might of genies to build their nation. The genies built palaces and cleared harbors, leveled forests and erected great walls of stone. Stones rose from quarries like so many flocking birds, while trees were cut and stripped to lumber with the clap of a djinn's hand. They served at the pleasure of Maharajah Khiben-Sald and later served his descendants and heirs. This wasn't a willing servitude, and the people of Jalmeray still tell tales of wishes willfully misinterpreted and turned to destruction.

Some four centuries ago, the beggar-rajah Jharka came to power in Jalmeray and proclaimed all genies on the island freed of their shackles, out of the goodness of his heart and in gratitude for the gifts a genie had given him. Effecting such a great change wasn't as simple as proclaiming it, even with the power of marid magic. Jharka largely succeeded and, to this day, genie binding is illegal in Jalmeray by royal decree. This decree isn't universally obeyed, and some genies in remote parts of the island are still bound from Khiben-Sald's day. However, Jalmeray remains a great inspiration to those in Qadira who would free their own genies.

After Jharka's reign, many genies returned to their elemental abodes, but some remained out of familiarity, curiosity, or for unclear reasons of their own. They're few in number, relatively speaking, though still more common in Jalmeray than most anywhere else. Broadly, they might be divided into three groups.

The first portion lives apart from humanity. They claim territories of their own, typically in places where few mortals would care to venture, and build their own palaces and their own lives. Such genies are rarely aggressive, but they're certainly prickly and standoffish,

remembering well their bondage. To call upon such a genie is to take one's life in one's hands.

A rather smaller portion lives openly among Jalmeray's people. They live as noble lords most often, with mortal servants and peasants sworn to their cause, or else become priests, sages, and scholars. Such genies can be generous, and many are considered better lords than human ones, for the mind of an immortal isn't quite like that of a mortal.

The final portion, greater than the other two combined, dwells in secret among the people of Jalmeray. They adopt mortal guises to avoid curious strangers and hide their nature from all but a few of their most trusted confidants. Such a hidden genie might choose to devote themselves to study or might become the protector of a particular line—a common tale in Jalmeray is of a genie who adopts the family of some beloved mortal and shepherds them for centuries. This tale has more than a few grains of truth in it.

GIANTS

While most of Golarion's peoples find the Mana Wastes harsh and unapproachable, the gentes of hill giants, ettins, and ogres who make their homes in these spell-torn wildlands instead find them welcoming and resonant with their discordant souls. The Wastes' hill giants have a great degree of organization and technical aptitude, exhibiting a working understanding of the destructive firearms favored by Alkenstar and Dongun Hold. These societies also possess high theological sophistication. Organizing themselves into gentes, communities of giants trace biological and imagined lineages to famous heroes of their people, considering themselves children of that heritage.

Possessed of prodigious durability and pain tolerance, these giants find themselves uniquely positioned to survive the Wastes' dangers as well as withstand its storms. Most giants, in fact, welcome these sorcerous tempests, braving these storms in search of transfiguration for their bodies and minds so they might gain the power to manifest their desired heroic heritage. While these mutations often prove more harmful than beneficial, many giants continue to seek them out. In the spell-warping Wastes, where even the simplest prayers to the gods might precipitate vortices of bone-melting corrosion, the giants have come to interpret these occurrences as divine will. If the gods answer prayers with thunder that kills some and strengthens others, so be it; each storm survived is a sign of godly favor, a providential mark of validation that the gods can't, or won't, kill them yet. The strong survive and thrive, the weak endure until they're strong, and the weakest simply die as food for their betters.

This rough-hewn gospel of brutish prosperity, plucked from the flensing wind of roiling storms, appeals to the mutant giants of the Mana Wastes. The rare theologians who have observed (and survived) these giants' liturgies detect strands of Rovagug nihilism embedded within their vicious mysticism. For these giants, heaven isn't a faraway afterlife to be reached through platitudes and prayer; heaven is in the here and now, in a world to be destroyed, in the meals to be made of weaklings, and the strength to be gained from howling spell-storms that actualize all of these devastating possibilities. As far as giant philosophers are concerned, the Mana Wastes are their utopia and paradise, a place that rewards and strengthens them even as it weakens and punishes others.

This belief influences their relations with others in the Wastes. The humans and dwarves who hide in their cities are misguided fools to be taught the loving lash of mutation's kiss; if they fail to appreciate such lessons, then they're simply food. Other mutants in the Wastes fare little better. Few appreciate the abusive games of the mutant giants, who see smaller mutants as simply tougher playthings that can withstand more of their horrendous amusements. Some giants, especially the oddly gregarious ettins, might occasionally cultivate friendships with other mutants and become their guides and protectors.

ELVES

Elves are an uncommon presence in the Impossible Lands, preferring Alkenstar or Jalmeray if present at all. It is likely this is related to the tendency of elves to physically shift to attune to their environment; long stays in the magically warped nations near the Mana Wastes might make an elf uncomfortable or even ill.

GOBLINS

Goblins are technically accepted in the Impossible Lands, as stranger and more dangerous beings than a goblin are common sights in almost every major city. Goblins have a tendency of making poor decisions that in turn makes them unwelcome, however, meaning they are most commonly found in the Mana Wastes.

CATFOLK

Nex and Jalmeray are known for roving populations of Askedhaki, diaspora catfolk who eke out a living as nomadic traders. Askedhakis wear expensive jewelry and cap their long fangs with metal as a sign of prowess and prestige. This, along with their striped fur, often gives them a resemblance to rakshasas, and rakshasas lying low often pose as Askedhaki, which the catfolk despise. As a result, Askedhaki often wear holy symbols and blessed objects even if they are not religious, and some become stalwart rakshasa hunters.

DHAMPIRS

Though more common in Geb than in other locales, dhampirs often find themselves in the frustrating position of being treated as more mortal than undead, leaving them dependent on their vampire parent for societal standing. Most grit their fangs and bear it, but a few wander north into the Mana Wastes every decade.

RATFOLK

Scrappy and adaptable, ysoki can be found in every corner of the Impossible Lands. In Jalmeray they are considered a fastidious and spiritual people, and they often choose to serve in one of the land's many temples.

RAKSHASA CASTES

In a dark mirror of Vudrani society, rakshasas have their own versions of social castes.

Pagala: Traitors, a caste reserved for rakshasas who act in a manner antithetical to rakshasa ideals.

Goshta: Literally "food," this caste applies to almost all non-rakshasas.

Darshaka: Servants, the lowest caste a fledged rakshasa can be born into.

Paradeshi: "Rakshasa-kin," or evil non-rakshasas that are powerful enough to be considered worthy of respect.

Hakima: Rakshasa lords, who count other rakshasas as their servants.

Samrata: Lords of Lords, the most powerful rakshasa emperors.

GNOLLS

In the centuries before Geb and Nex founded their empires, gnolls were a common people along the eastern coast of Garund. Scraps of historical records suggest that both kings encountered nations of spellcasting gnolls on their path to conquest. However, like all of the rival wizards' other foes, the gnolls fell against their might. A few clusters of powerful witch gnolls in Nex survived, worshipping Mahathallah and seeking out dark arcane secrets as many of their fellow citizens do, but they're far from a common sight. A handful of gnoll mummies likewise reside in Geb, but their rarity suggests that for the gnolls of the ancient past, the embrace of undeath was a step down a path they were unwilling to follow.

The majority of the region's gnolls dwell in the Mana Wastes, adapting startlingly well to the capricious and sometimes murderous environment. These gnolls are rarely friendly to strangers, as the unpredictable chaos they've been subjected to over the centuries has caused them to embrace Lamashtu wholeheartedly, clinging to the "Old Mother" to find exaltation in unavoidable pandemonium. These gnolls seek and cherish anything that might give them an edge over others, from warped limbs to advanced technology. Gnolls are known to conduct raids on Alkenstar to steal guns and other machines, giving them a poor reputation with Alkenstar's Shieldmarshals.

GNOMES

The nation of Nex has a policy to do anything needed to get answers—one that appeals especially to Keenspark gnomes. Innovators and boundary pushers par excellence, gnomes have flocked to the country in droves and integrated themselves into the many schools of magic and engineering that are at the country's leading edge of both epiphany and catastrophe. In the capital city of Quantium, scores of alchemical laboratories compete for the newest researchers or engineers. They advertise, pilfer, and sabotage the top minds of each lab, hoping to get the perfect mix of folly and brilliance to find the next big discovery. Those gnomes who are more arcane-minded and can work without such "comforts" as safety can easily find work in one of the many competing schools of magic in search of the next great breakthrough.

GNOME

Among themselves, Nexian gnomes form "idea clans," lines of research that different gnome families agree to follow no matter which labs they work for. This can lead to intense rivalries between families and even minor idea wars where a family's fame and status in the community rises or falls according to their recent successes. In fact, families often wed themselves to cooperative theorems, marrying their children and their resources to other gnome families with shared goals. Competing theorems can likewise cause vast schisms between families; for instance, children from the Telegraphic Communications Consortium are forbidden from marrying into the Projective Abjurations Complex.

Gnome godparents are particularly responsible for protecting the careers of their favorite godchildren, and they aren't above quick alliances, sabotage, or even deception to further their family's theories and successes. Only the poorest gnome families will wed their children to unproven theorems, regardless of the family's wealth or possessions.

In smaller cities throughout Nex, idea rivalries aren't nearly so pressing, and young gnomes marry themselves to research centers or each other without interference. In fact, many Quantium youths have fled to the factories of Oenopion or Ecanus for that very reason. There, gnomes can compete or cooperate on any project they wish—sometimes returning to Quantium should they stumble upon a particularly novel theorem. Such returning figures always cause a major shakeup of gnome loyalties as families scramble to attach themselves to the newest technology or spellcasting.

Individual gnomes or gnomes from other countries might sometimes find it difficult to integrate into these idea clans, but even the strangest gnome will

expect to find shelter and acceptance as long as they're willing to support the families of the towns they move to. "Even lab rats can thread a maze" is a popular Nexian gnome saying, and even a humble gnome lab assistant can overhear some vital piece of information that forms the next idea clan overnight.

HALFLINGS

Nex is home to a large community of halflings in the western part of the country, who call themselves the Nearic people. They are cousins of the mountain-dwelling Jaric halflings of the Barrier Wall mountains and resemble them to some extent. Both groups of halflings have tanned, coppery skin, dark hair and eyes, and a cultural fondness for extravagant hairstyles, and both will usually agree that they had some common ancestor. Whether some Jaric halflings came down to seek a safer life in the lowlands, or some Nearic halflings decided to find a freer life in the mountains, is lost to history.

Nearic halflings typically live in small farming villages or towns and swear a nominal fealty to the Arclords of Nex, though in practice, this arrangement works out to the Nearics paying their taxes and hoping that everyone else forgets about them. Nearic communities are run as an elected gerontocracy, overseen by a three-person council of a Grandfather, Grandmother, and Other—the former two being the most respected town elders (not necessarily strictly male and female), while the latter is usually an outsider of some sort brought in for their different perspective, often a Jaric but sometimes a non-halfling or even non-humanoid. Purportedly, the town of Whistle-Berry Gulch has a dryad as the Other, and Hogshead Village elected a very clever clockwork.

Nearic halflings are usually seen as calm and even-tempered, verging on fatalistic, and somewhat obsessed with ritual and tradition. The former qualities are essentially a community-wide coping mechanism to living in the magically dangerous land of Nex, as Nearics believe firmly that worrying never helps a situation. Either a problem can be solved, in which case, go and solve it, or it can't be solved, and worrying just means you're stressed in addition to being doomed.

The Nearic love of rituals is part and parcel of their defense against hostile magic. Every Nearic community collects rituals, rites, and good luck ceremonies that supposedly ward off danger or summon guardians, and conducting these rituals is a major part of civic life. The knowledge of which ones actually work having long since been lost, Nearics figure it's safest to conduct all of them. Many rites are harmless—little more than an excuse for an outing. Some are actually effective, banishing ghosts or laying down protective spells. And there are always a few rumors of darker rites, of sacrificed travelers or pacts with dreadful things. Most Nearics take great offense at these whispers, though if pressed will admit that, on very rare occasions, some desperate community does go dangerously off-kilter. In the last few years, scholars from the Magaambya and the Arcanamirium have taken an interest in the ceremonies of the Nearics, wondering if forgotten rituals might still be practiced in some tiny village in the Nexian foothills.

HUMANS

Wherever one goes in the world, humans live there in glorious profusion, and the Impossible Lands are no different. Most of the residents of the Impossible Lands hail from one of three major ethnic groups: the Garundi coming in from the northwest, the Keleshites arriving from the northeast, and the Vudrani from across the sea. A smaller but nontrivial number of Mwangi citizens have also traveled across the Shattered Range to the west.

Over eons of war, trade, and migration, these populations have become thoroughly intermixed and tumbled about. A region might exist where the local population was mostly Garundi, until a wizard's army marched through and depopulated a strip of land right down the middle. Not long afterward, Keleshite immigrants might live in that abandoned strip of land. A Vudrani

HALFLING

HUMAN

NAGA

RAKSHASA

ADDITIONAL READING

More information about the referenced people can be found in the following Pathfinder Second Edition sources.

Asuras: *Bestiary 3* 22
Calikangs: *Bestiary 3* 42
Catfolk: *Advanced Player's Guide* 9, *Ancestry Guide* 16
Dhampirs: *Advanced Player's Guide* 32, *Ancestry Guide* 24
Dwarves: *Core Rulebook* 35, *Advanced Player's Guide* 42, *Character Guide* 16, *Guns and Gears* 190, 200
Genies: *Bestiary* 162
Giants: *Bestiary* 156, 170; *Bestiary 2* 124; *Bestiary 3* 108
Gnolls: *Bestiary* 178, *The Mwangi Expanse* 111
Gnomes: *Core Rulebook* 43, *Advanced Player's Guide* 44, *Character Guide* 28
Halflings: *Core Rulebook* 51, *Advanced Player's Guide* 46, *Character Guide* 40
Humans: *Core Rulebook* 55, *Advanced Player's Guide* 47, *Character Guide* 5
Lizardfolk: *Character Guide* 57, *Ancestry Guide* 44
Nagas: *Bestiary* 242
Ogres: *Bestiary* 252
Ratfolk: *Advanced Player's Guide* 21, *Ancestry Guide* 52
Rakshasas: *Bestiary* 274, *Bestiary 3* 210
Undead: *Core Rulebook* 637, *Book of the Dead* 30

trading enclave might then spring up on a coast, until another marching army sent them further into the mainland. Such events have repeated for a thousand years or so, and today the Impossible Lands are a patchwork quilt of idiosyncratic little communities, especially in the area around the Mana Wastes.

The result is a region with a very tolerant and cooperative culture, where live-and-let-live is the order of the day for the common folk. Certainly, the various great and good of their different countries hold grudges spanning millennia, and if pressed, most of their residents would agree that certainly Geb or Nex or Jalmeray or various warlord bands ought to be destroyed and torn asunder. This is all a very theoretical concern, however, compared to the reality of needing to take one's vegetables to the market of a different community or buying carpets from a passing trader.

A few shared values help cement this particular shared culture. To begin with, there's a strong tradition of hospitality in the region. A traveler can knock on any door in the Impossible Lands and be reasonably confident of receiving, at the very least, a warm corner by the fire and a bowl of rice or a stuffed turnover. Guest and host are expected to protect one another, and local legends are rife with stories of hospitality violated, only to result in some gruesome comeuppance.

There's a certain idea that one should never judge by appearances, for good or for ill. Plenty of beings live in the Impossible Lands that seem other than they are, and one never knows whether an old woman is actually a mighty djinn in disguise or if the humble scholar is secretly a flesh-eating ghoul. In such situations, caution and courtesy are simply good sense.

NAGAS

In the time known as the Age of Serpents, the nagas ruled over a powerful empire in Vudra, treating their vishkanya, grippli, catfolk, and human subjects as lower-class citizens. The Naga Empire proved exceptionally long-lived, outlasting many of its fellows and their successors; it took almost 3,000 years after Earthfall for the nation's crumbling remnants to finally fail. Though relations between humans and nagas have improved immeasurably since then, the history between the two people is long, and the memories even longer. Nagas aren't unwelcome sights throughout eastern Garund, but there's almost always some measure of distrust when dealing with them, as one can never be sure if a naga visitor might still hold to the concept of other people as property.

Many of the first naga residents came to Jalmeray on boats from Vudra, so it's of little surprise that their presence is heaviest upon that island—some cities have enough nagas for them to be a significant political power. While not out of the ordinary to see one traveling through Nex or Geb, these inherently magical beings unsurprisingly give the Mana Wastes a wide berth.

RAKSHASAS

The corrupt and immortal beings known as rakshasas dwell in large numbers within Jalmeray and throughout the rest of the Impossible Lands. Though loathed by those who seek to appease the heavens, rakshasas view themselves as but another people, and of a more honest sort than any other. They make no obfuscation of their values—they venerate ambition through the darkened mirror of domination and bloodlust—but like any soul, corrupt or mortal, they're inevitably drawn to temptations of luxury, hedonistic delights of mortal existence, and frivolous displays of strength. For all the cruelty they bring into the world, they'll gladly reveal similar sins within the allegedly immaculate hearts of mortals who dare view themselves as a rakshasa's moral superior.

The rakshasas of Jalmeray have long cultivated the poetic idea that they arrived on the island in the shadowed hearts of mortals who sought empire and dominion over the enlightenment of travel. To servants of beneficent deities, the presence of such fiends is a festering tumor within the region, one that claims heritage and equal standing with the first Vudrani to inhabit the island.

The rakshasas' exact origins on the isle remain hidden to all but the most scheming maharajahs in their ranks, and such baleful creatures say only that they were invited here as cherished guests and comrades.

Beyond their insular communes and hierarchical posturing, most rakshasas encountered in the Impossible Lands are in service to the conceptual corruption of mortal souls who require their aid. Their strength of arms, shapechanging powers, and fiendish resilience ensure their easy employment as bodyguards, mercenaries, and all manner of brutish laborers who revel in bloodshed.

In mockery of the Vudrani castes, these rakshasas classify their states of being by the sins and services of their previous lives—transitioning from the souls of craven traitors to sacrificial pawns, to servants of darkness and those who aid in such perfidy, to the souls of corrupted lords. No one caste is of greater importance, for even the lowliest of traitor souls could plunge a knife into a king and emerge their better in the next life.

The schemes of rakshasas throughout the region are seldom truly unified, but all act in accordance with a singular desire to reveal the flaws of Vudrani culture, to subvert the hegemony of the mortal Vudrani familial castes, and to bring disgrace upon the heavens by showing that the Vudrani deities reward only wicked souls who profit off generational wealth and false pursuits of enlightenment. Each rakshasa enclave believes they'll produce an Immortal Maharajah of greater standing than even the rakshasa Ravana, the First and Last. They seek the birth of their Lord of Lords, who'll supplant the Vudrani rulers of Jalmeray and bring about an age of resplendent earthbound evils.

THE UNDEAD

In the haunted nation of Geb, the undead fill the ranks of the rulers, the ruled, and the layers of society in between. Those living folk unlucky enough to be born in that country wait in an uncomfortable limbo of becoming potential laborers at best or, at worst, a convenient food source. At each tier of Gebbite society, only a heartbeat separates those in power and those who fuel them.

At the lowest level of society, legions of skeleton and zombie laborers tend the lush farmlands that produce Geb's main exports. The tons of foodstuffs produced each year sit unused by its mostly unliving populace, allowing the nation to trade for the materials that sustain the next layers of society. By law, every living person who dies within Geb's borders, citizen or foreigner alike, can be raised as undead to sustain this workforce, allowing a continuous surplus of replacement labor.

In the cities, the return of Geb to active rulership after centuries of neglect has sparked a national renaissance. Living artisans and unliving administrators work past their limits, trying to complete the next great work or vanity project in the ghostly king's honor. Ghoulish marching bands and ghostly choruses haunt the air with their sonatas, proclaiming Geb's glory and trying to drown each other out or subtly hide the schemes happening in the alleyways and noble houses. Necromancers become assassins, culling the weaker undead noble houses and organizing power shifts almost overnight. Mohrgs, bodaks, and devourers become the enforcers, settling rivalries and cementing strangleholds enacted by the machinations of the next layer of society. The Blood Lords make up this next tier: powerful aristocrats with members such as vampires, liches, necromancers, and mummies. They praise their nation while in open court, then send out their wraith and specter assassins to steal each other's secrets.

RARITY

GMs looking to reflect the cultural makeup of the Impossible Lands might make geniekin and ratfolk common, vishkanya and elves uncommon, and gnolls and lizardfolk common in the Mana Wastes. Due to the incredible nature of the Impossible Lands, however, almost any PC ancestry or heritage could be considered appropriate for the setting.

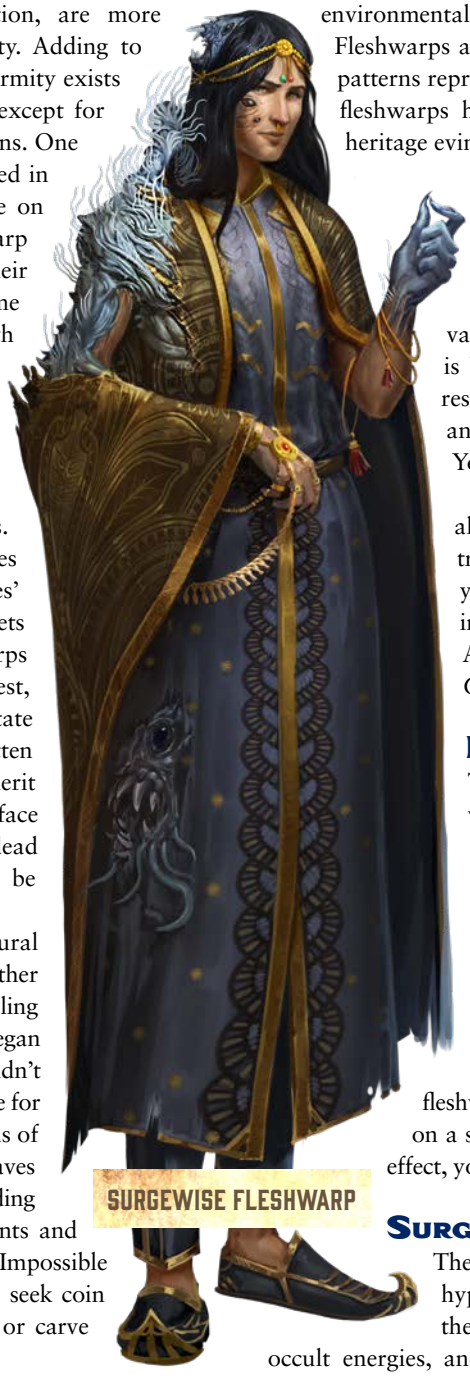
FLESHWARP

As a term, "fleshwarp" is an imprecise appellation, a blanket phrase referring to members of Golarion's diverse peoples whose bodies have changed fundamentally and dramatically through the agencies of magic, mutation, or stranger forces.

Beyond their transformations, little binds these people into a shared identity: some, especially those who experience their corporeal changes later in life, reject identifying as fleshwarps and cling to the ancestries of their birth, while others, often those who were born into these states of transfiguration, are more accepting of the fleshwarp identity. Adding to these disparate origins, scant uniformity exists for fleshwarps' physical features, except for those literally built to certain designs. One fleshwarp might have limbs swathed in brilliantly plumed patagia to glide on the surge winds. Another fleshwarp might look like the rest of their battle batch, their prodigious frame crisscrossed symmetrically with thousands of tiny hook quills to facilitate rigging armored plates.

Fleshwarps in the Impossible Lands face a slew of widespread discrimination that arises largely from ingrained cultural assumptions. Battle-scarred Alkenstar associates all fleshwarps with the Mana Wastes' mutants; countless florid broadsheets and matinees scapegoat fleshwarps as monstrous villains. At best, Nexian fleshwarps are treated as state property; at worst, they are written off as arcane accidents that merit destruction. In Geb, fleshwarps face violent persecution from the undead authorities, who assume them to be Nexian bio-weapon spies.

These bio-essentialist cultural attitudes have begotten another transformation. Under the prevailing ethno-chauvinism, fleshwarps began to dream of a world where they didn't have to run, hide, suffer, or apologize for their features and forms. In the wilds of the Mana Wastes, fleshwarp enclaves have formed, offering and defending communal shelters for other mutants and outcasts. In the great cities of the Impossible Lands, some fleshwarp adventurers seek coin and glory to empower themselves or carve out a space for other fleshwarps.



SURGEWISE FLESHWARP

More information about fleshwarps can be found in pages 88–93 of the *Ancestry Guide*.

FLESHWARP HERITAGES

The magic-rich Impossible Lands provide unique environmental stimuli for fleshwarp adaptations. Fleshwarps across the region exhibit certain trait patterns represented in the heritages below. While fleshwarps have all sorts of appearances, each heritage evinces typical characteristics.

Cataphract Fleshwarp

Your battle-hardened skeleton is laced with additional cartilage and muscle to help bear armor across vast areas of operation, and your skin is bedecked with tiny spurs of pliable, resilient keratin to optimize the grip and weight distribution of your armor. You gain the Armor Proficiency feat.

If your class makes you trained in all types of armor, you instead become trained in Athletics (or a skill of your choice if you're already trained in Athletics) and gain the Armor Assist skill feat (*Advanced Player's Guide* 203).

Discarded Fleshwarp

The biomancers and mutagenists who warped your form labeled you a "discard on discovery"—a euphemism for destroying you on sight. An anomaly among anomalies, your body stubbornly repudiates the efforts of fleshcrafters seeking to mold you to their grandiose visions, and your immune responses blunt the worst effects of unwanted fleshwarping attempts. If you roll a success on a saving throw against a transmutation effect, you get a critical success instead.

Surgewise Fleshwarp

The undulations of your body's cilia are hyper-attuned to wellsprings of magic; they trill and thrum with insights into occult energies, and their vibrations alert you to the

presence of secrets. You gain the trained proficiency rank in Occultism. If you're trained in Occultism, you instead become trained in another skill of your choice. You also gain the Oddity Identification skill feat.

FLESHWARP ANCESTRY FEATS

The following ancestry feats are available to fleshwarps.

1ST LEVEL

EMBODIED LEGIONARY SUBJECTIVITY — FEAT 1

UNCOMMON FLESHWARP

Access You're from Nex.

Prerequisites cataphract fleshwarp heritage

Nex's Fleshforges shaped you not to achieve individual greatness at arms, but rather to become a part of a legion, a modular piece integral to the combined arms stratagems of Nexian battlemages. You become trained in Arcana and Athletics. If you would automatically become trained in one of those skills, you instead gain the trained rank in another skill of your choice. You also become trained in Warfare Lore.

5TH LEVEL

EMBODIED DREADNOUGHT SUBJECTIVITY — FEAT 5

UNCOMMON FLESHWARP

Access You're from Nex.

Prerequisites cataphract fleshwarp heritage

Your colossal might marks you as a behemoth, the pride of Nex's Fleshforges, and the heaviest ordnance is a child's toy in your monumental grasp. You're a dreadnought, a living siege weapon, albeit one that wields other siege weapons in battle as your endoskeleton and flesh toughens. You gain the Hefty Hauler skill feat, and your maximum Bulk limit further increases by 3, for a total of 2 to your encumbered limit and 5 to your maximum limit.

TRANSPOSABLE COMPLIANCE — FEAT 5

FLESHWARP

Your protean vitality is fecund and many-succoring: your veins run with life-giving ichor that adapts to the blood and physiology of any body, and your skin molts on command, creating wound-stanching sheaths of tissue for yourself and others. You become trained in Medicine. If you were already trained in Medicine, you instead become trained in a skill of your choice. You can Administer First Aid without healer's tools by using your physiology instead, but you must take 1 damage to make the attempt. Similarly, you can Treat Wounds without healer's tools but take 2d8 damage. You gain a +1 circumstance bonus on all Medicine checks to Administer First Aid and Treat Wounds using your own physiology.

9TH LEVEL

EMBODIED DRAGOON SUBJECTIVITY — FEAT 9

FLESHWARP

When your allies call for swift reinforcements or lightning raids, you're ready to answer. Your titanic form encompasses both cavalry and rider so that you're able to traverse vast distances and exploit opportunities in the theater of war. Your pores distend and extrude copious amounts of blood, subcutaneous fat, and lymphatic fluid for you to harden and flash-sculpt into gliding wings or a swift-hurtling mount. You can cast *feather fall* and *phantom steed* each once per day as innate occult spells. When you cast *feather fall* in this way, gliding wings slow your fall, and when you cast *phantom steed* in this way, the steed physically protrudes from your own lower body. Neither of these cosmetic changes alter the spells' effects; for example, foes can still attack the *phantom steed* as normal.

THE MANA WASTES

The Mana Wastes are the vast swaths of desolation adjoining once-warring Geb and Nex. Over more than a thousand years, both nations' unrestricted use of magical fusillades, creeping plagues, and other atrocities of spellcraft transformed a once fertile and beautiful land into a desert where reality screams and bleeds. Wellspring surges of magic form into riptides and whirlwinds of chaotic force throughout the Mana Wastes, rending and twisting everything in their path. Many fleshwarps make their homes in this inhospitable land. Some are native to the region, mutated by the Mana Wastes' volatile outbursts, while others are exiles and refugees from across the Impossible Lands who find the otherworldly hazards of the Mana Wastes preferable to the all-too-worldly persecution of their former homelands and compatriots.

FLESHFORGES

In the city of Ecanus, the archmage Nex created the Fleshforges—massive edifices that churn and tremble with the birth sequences' roar of smelting flesh and printing bone—to produce fleshwarp soldiers to fuel his war against Geb. The Fleshforgers still engineer a bedazzling array of fleshwarps here, from chimeric messengers, who meld house pet and golem, to disciplined scale-sheathed cataphracts and stupendous dreadnoughts, whose fists and footsteps bend steel and pulverize stone. Recently, the Fleshforges have experienced uninitiated activations with alarming frequency, delivering atypical fleshwarps unconfined by design purviews or production schedules. Ecanus's authorities fervently hunt these unlicensed creations, but some escape, lurching into the night to hide in the city's recesses or venturing afield into the Mana Wastes.

GENIEKIN

Elemental forces wearing mortal flesh, geniekin are descendants of a planar heritage. While typically born in Golarion, they're inheritors of primordial strength passed on to them by elemental ancestors.

Most geniekin count genies among their predecessors, though descendants of other elementals also fall under this umbrella. For the most part, geniekin fit the humanoid nationality of their native land while also expressing their elemental nature in some visible way.

VAMPIRE SYLPH

Geniekin can't be missed in the Impossible Lands. Despite the dangers of travel in these lands, geniekin tend to be natural explorers driven by elemental passions. Ifrits and oreads work in blistering forges and carve deep mines to feed Alkenstar's hunger for ore. Undines dive deep into the Obari, sylphs guide ships through storms, and sulis fulfill various diplomatic roles in nearly every major city.

Despite the allure of these foreign places, the song of elements belongs to Jalmeray—from the airy heights of the Pure Temple of the Maharajah to the depths of Bagia Bay, from the fires burning in the hearts of its monasteries to the earthen roots of the island itself. This song calls the geniekin home. Even geniekin born beyond the boundaries of Jalmeray will make their way to the island nation to find extended family members and learn more about their nature. Most lean on their connection to Jalmeray to claim diplomatic standing, referring to themselves as travelers from the island under the protection of its government.

More information about geniekin can be found in pages 98–119 of the *Ancestry Guide*.

GENIEKIN ANCESTRY FEATS

The following ancestry feats are available to geniekin. The feat's traits indicate which geniekin can take the feat.

When you choose a feat with multiple geniekin traits for your geniekin character, the feat loses the traits for the other types of geniekin and retains only the trait for your character's type of geniekin. For example, if you're an ifrit and you take the Planar Sidestep feat, it loses the oread, suli, sylph, and undine traits.

1ST LEVEL

MOLTEN WIT **FEAT 1**

IFRIT

Your elemental soul has sparked not just your body but also your mind. You either become trained in Deception and gain the Charming Liar skill feat, or you become trained in Diplomacy and gain the Group Impression skill feat. If you're already trained in one of these skills, you must take the other and can choose from either skill feat. If you're trained in both skills, you become trained in a different skill of your choice instead and can choose from either skill feat.

NATIVE WATERS — FEAT 1

UNDINE

You were born with or obtained a special connection to either fresh water or salt water. Once made, this decision can't be changed. Whenever you take your full rest in a natural body of water of the type corresponding to your connection, you recover additional Hit Points equal to your level, and if you have the doomed or fatigued conditions, you reduce them by 2 instead of 1.

SILENT STONE — FEAT 1

OREAD

You've lived in the shadow of the Shattered Range, and the patience of those ancient mountains expresses itself in your stillness. Your body might have veins of granite, sandstone, or similar sedimentary rocks that make it easier for you to camouflage yourself in certain regions. You become trained in Stealth, and you gain the Terrain Stalker skill feat. If you're already trained in Stealth from another source, you become trained in a skill of your choice instead.

WIND PILLOW — FEAT 1

SYLPH

The winds have whispered to you all your life, and the essence of air itself helps you at times, making you somewhat buoyant when you're suspended in space. Treat all falls as though they were 10 feet less than the actual distance traveled. You also gain the Powerful Leap skill feat, even if you don't meet that feat's prerequisites.

5TH LEVEL

NOBLE RESOLVE — FEAT 5

IFRIT OREAD SULI SYLPH UNDINE

Once, genies ruled vast kingdoms, and a remnant of that confidence and power is reflected in your strong will. You gain a +1 circumstance bonus to Will saves against effects with the mental trait. Regardless of success or failure, you become aware of the person who used the effect on you if they were visible to you at the time of use.

9TH LEVEL

MIRACULOUS REPAIR ◆◆◆ — FEAT 9

ARCANE CONCENTRATE IFRIT OREAD SULI SYLPH TRANSMUTATION UNDINE

Frequency once per day

Geniekin can't grant magical wishes, but some echo of power lingers within you. Faced with a mechanism that is damaged but not destroyed, you can wish it back into a functional state for a period of 10 minutes. The object must be mundane and no larger than 5 Bulk, such as a disabled locking mechanism in a door. For 10 minutes, the object functions as it should, ignoring any damage to its mechanism. This doesn't grant you any knowledge of what a device might do or how it ought to function. Once the 10 minutes are up, the object falls back into disrepair and is temporarily immune to Miraculous Repair for 1 day.

13TH LEVEL

PLANAR SIDESTEP ↷ — FEAT 13

ARCANE CONCENTRATE CONJURATION IFRIT OREAD SULI SYLPH UNDINE

Frequency once per day

Trigger A creature hits you with a melee Strike.

You shift your body briefly between planes, reducing the damage from your foe's attack. You gain resistance 25 to all damage against the triggering attack. Observers simply see you shimmer with elemental energy for a moment, just as the attack lands.

GENIEKIN TRENDSETTERS

Geniekin often find tight clothing restrictive and prefer generous, flowing garments. Recently, this trend has spread from geniekin to everyone in Jalmeray, with people of any gender wearing skirts, though the fabric tends to be cut and folded differently based on the outfit. Jewelry, perfume, and makeup, which geniekin of any gender use to express inner elemental identity, are likewise broadly fashionable there.

Geniekin dancers enjoy the benefits of celebrity and patronage among the urban elite across the Impossible Lands. For geniekin, dance forms a narrative, and they often recreate ancient Vudrani tales with elemental flair. Performers accompany the music with ankle bells or, in places of great natural beauty, with the sounds of the elements themselves. In recent decades, geniekin dance companies have emerged, touring the Impossible Lands and spreading their cultural influence.

GENIEKIN CUISINE

For geniekin, food is about elemental unity. The tradition of tea is particularly important in Jalmeray, and geniekin tea makers—undine and ifrit in particular—are known for their ability to tease subtle flavors and aromas out of blends. Oread and sylph cuisine emphasizes aroma above all things, infusing rice or wheat with cardamom, cloves, anise, and other spices that create complex and intense tastes.

In recent years, ifrit cuisine has taken a turn toward eating dangerous animals and plants. Whether it be snapping flytrap salad, lemon-fried dragonfish fillet, or herb-crusted cockatrice breast, the thrill of taming a dangerous creature into culinary art has become a trend. Oread cooks use components from spellcasters and alchemists in Nex and machinists in Alkenstar; with such ingredients, they create dumplings that hold far more soup than they should, cakes that produce bursts of sparks, and even entrées whose steam spells out the cook's name.

TIEFLING

Be it through a long-forgotten exchange of power, an unsavory ancestor, or just an unfortunate confluence of timelines, some people are born with fiendish influence in full display. Those in Jalmeray tend to be marked by fangs, claws, and extra appendages.

Though Jalmeray permits tieflings to migrate and live there, the arrangement can be fraught; working the most degrading jobs, acting as menagerie oddities, or making a name in the underworld are the only choices available to most tieflings.

FAULTSPAWN TIEFLING

The Impossible Lands teem with unusual tieflings reincarnated from immortal beings, such as beastbrood from rakshasas and faultspawn from asuras. The exact conditions that lead to the birth of a beastbrood or faultspawn tiefling are unclear. One legend tells of a punishment for a reincarnating immortal: if this immortal questions their role within the cosmos too deeply, they'll be reborn across seven bodies in seven places after seven years, seven weeks, seven hours, seven minutes, and seven seconds. These seven parts must then try to find each other to piece together their memories, along with newfound knowledge, to reincarnate as an immortal once more when all seven die, which will happen within eight breaths of each other.

ANCESTRY FEATS

The following ancestry feats are available to tieflings.

1ST LEVEL

FAULTSPAWN **FEAT 1**

LINEAGE TIEFLING

You bear a grudge, inherited from a blasphemous asura forebear in your bloodline, against a particular deity and their works. You also have some vestigial signs of your previous incarnation, such as a second set of shoulder blades without usable arms, a set of mostly closed eyes where no eyes belong, or strange scarring reminiscent of a mouth.

You gain the Find Fault reaction.

Find Fault ↻ (concentrate) **Trigger** You attempt a saving throw against a spell or magic effect but haven't rolled yet; **Effect** You find some kind of fault with the magic, using that flaw to protect yourself from the effect. You gain a +1 circumstance bonus to your saving throw against the triggering effect, which increases to a +2 circumstance bonus if the effect is divine and originates from a worshipper of the deity you chose for your grudge.

5TH LEVEL

REVEAL HIDDEN SELF ◆▶▶▶ **FEAT 5**

CONCENTRATE DIVINE ILLUSION TIEFLING

Prerequisites Beastbrood (*Ancestry Guide* 61)

Frequency once per day

Requirements You're hidden to at least one enemy.

While hidden, you manifest a version of your animalistic nature. You create an illusion of a Large or smaller creature within 60 feet of your location with the effects of the *illusory creature* spell.

The creature shares your animalistic beastbrood features. Unlike most actions taken while hidden, using Reveal Hidden Self and Sustaining the Spell don't automatically end your hidden condition. Use the higher of your class DC or spell DC against attempts to disbelieve the illusion. If a creature observes you, it automatically disbelieves the illusion, and if you're no longer hidden to at least one enemy, the effect ends.

TOWERING PRESENCE ❖ FEAT 5

CONCENTRATE DIVINE ILLUSION POLYMORPH TIEFLING TRANSMUTATION

Prerequisites Faultspawn

Frequency once per hour

You fill an area with your force of will, towering beyond where your true form should be. Increase your size to Large until the beginning of your next turn. Your equipment grows with you but returns to natural size if removed. You're clumsy 1. Your reach increases by 5 feet (or by 10 feet if you started out Tiny), and you gain a +2 status bonus to melee damage. Towering Presence has no effect if you were already Large or larger.

9TH LEVEL

ASURA MAGIC FEAT 9

TIEFLING

Prerequisites Faultspawn

You can cast *blood vendetta* and *death knell* once per day each as 2nd-level divine innate spells.

JALMERI RAKSHASA MAGIC FEAT 9

TIEFLING

Prerequisites Beastbrood (*Ancestry Guide* 61)

You can cast *dispel magic* and *reaper's lantern* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 223) once per day each as 2nd-level divine innate spells. *Reaper's lantern* manifests as a lantern shaped like the head of your rakshasa incarnation.

13TH LEVEL

IDOL THREAT ❖ FEAT 13

TIEFLING

Prerequisites Beastbrood (*Ancestry Guide* 61)

Requirements You're holding something sacred or precious to a creature, such as a relic or personal depiction of their deity or a precious personal memento.

You brandish the precious object you're holding menacingly, at once mocking it and threatening its safety. Attempt to Demoralize the creature whose precious item you threaten. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus to the Intimidation check to Demoralize, and on a success, the creature is flat-footed for 1 round out of distraction for the object's safety and is stupefied 1 for 1 minute (or stupefied 2 on a critical success). These conditions are both in addition to the normal effects of Demoralize. The creature is then temporarily immune to any Idol Threat using that specific object for 1 day.

17TH LEVEL

DOMINION AURA ❖❖ FEAT 17

AURA DIVINE EVOCATION FORCE TIEFLING

Prerequisites Faultspawn

Frequency once per day

For a short time, you fully manifest the expectations of the god destroyer within you. All creatures within a 10-foot emanation take 8d6 force damage with a basic Fortitude save. A creature that fails this save is also knocked prone. For 1 minute, any creature who ends its turn within the 10-foot emanation takes 5d6 force damage with a basic Fortitude save. If you aren't drained, you can choose to become drained 2 when you use Dominion Aura to increase the radius of the emanation from 10 feet to 20 feet.

FAMILY MATTERS

Powerful raja rakshasas see those beastbrood tieflings who can hide or disguise their fiendish features as potential infiltrators or agents and thus valuable pawns in the games they play to cement their influence. Rakshasas willing to wait for untold time might even seek out old enemies who reincarnated as tieflings and gain their trust so that, once the tieflings regain former status or achieve a new station, there's a debt to be repaid.

Very few rajas do anything out of the kindness of their hearts, but some ask less of those they take a liking to—they might even become doting. This special treatment happens most often when they share a familial connection, see something of themselves in a beastbrood, or recognize the potential for greatness.

THE SHADED LIBRARY

The Shaded Library is a whispered network of dire claims about various deities of the multiverse. Though the name was given derogatorily, many immortals and extraplanar beings have come to embrace the Shaded Library. Tieflings, especially faultspawn, often catch wind of these truths:

- Desna isn't simply carefree and filled with wanderlust—she actively distances herself from the woes and near catastrophes she has caused.
- What Torag truly craves most is complete control.
- Milani is likely an exceptionally powerful asura or lucky faultspawn.
- Many rakshasas believe newly minted gods who perform the Test of the *Starstone* are reincarnations at best and, at worst, future asuras who don't believe the truth about themselves. Neither is complimentary.
- Only a few deities are never held in contempt by the Shaded Library, and Groetus is one of them.

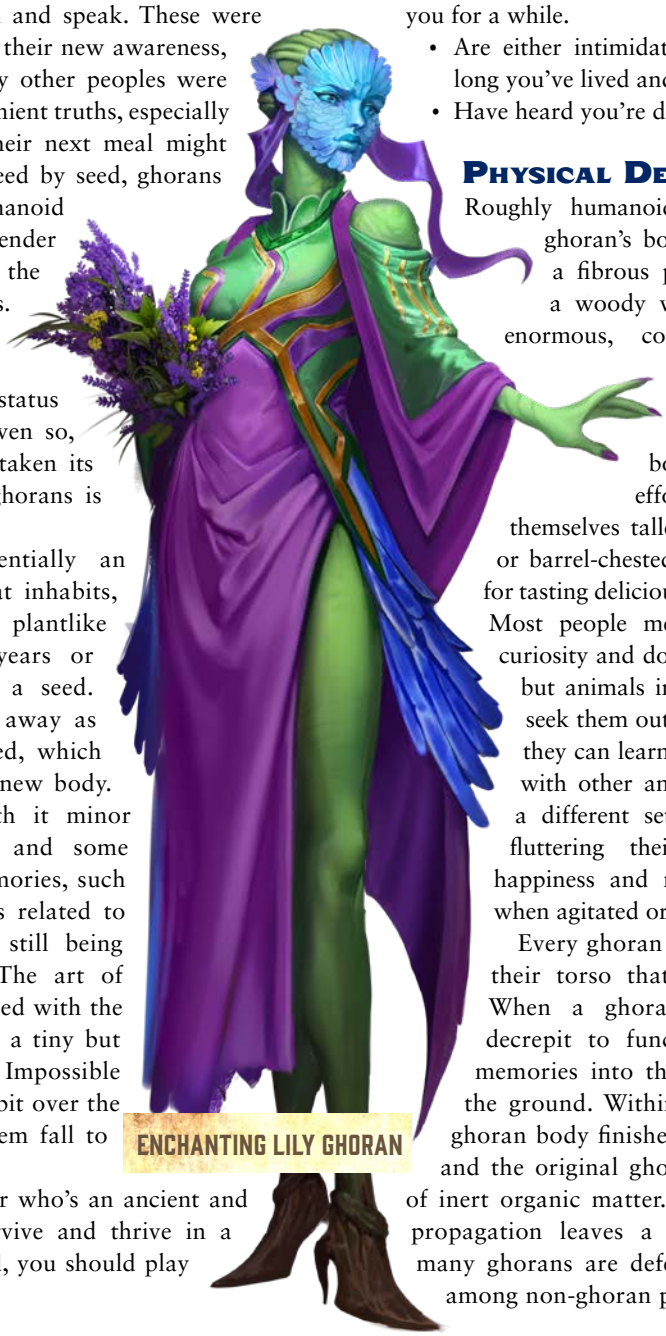
GHORAN (RARE)

These intelligent plant people, created by a long-dead druid, possess a sort of immortality through their seeds—unless these are destroyed by external events other than merely the ravages of time.

During the height of the wars between Geb and Nex long ago, the archmage Nex asked the renegade druid Ghorus to create a plant that would feed his people even in the most inhospitable land. Ghorus did so, developing a flower that would adapt to every environment and withstand every sort of magecraft and spellworking. He succeeded too well. In the strange soil of the Impossible Lands, the flower grew and soon began to think—and then to walk and speak. These were the first ghorans. Despite their new awareness, ghorans found that many other peoples were adept at ignoring inconvenient truths, especially those involving where their next meal might come from. Bit by bit, seed by seed, ghorans grew themselves into humanoid forms, hoping to engender sympathy by mirroring the appearance of humanoids. It eventually worked, and the ghorans won citizenship and protected status in the nation of Nex. Even so, time and predation has taken its toll; the population of ghorans is small and ever dwindling.

Each ghoran is essentially an ancient spark of life that inhabits, successively, a series of plantlike bodies. Every twenty years or so, a ghoran produces a seed. Their old body withers away as their soul enters the seed, which then swiftly produces a new body. The process brings with it minor changes in personality and some loss of more distant memories, such that each new ghoran is related to their predecessor while still being a different individual. The art of creating more ghorans died with the druid Ghorus, so they're a tiny but stable minority in the Impossible Lands, dwindling bit by bit over the centuries as a few of them fall to violence and mischance.

If you want a character who's an ancient and alien soul, trying to survive and thrive in a strange and hostile world, you should play a ghoran.



ENCHANTING LILY GHORAN

You Might...

- Offhandedly mention events from thousands of years ago.
- Find "animal" behaviors strange.
- Constantly make small changes to your body.

Others Probably...

- Have a hard time recognizing you after not seeing you for a while.
- Are either intimidated or fascinated by how long you've lived and how much you know.
- Have heard you're delicious.

Physical Description

Roughly humanoid in size and shape, a ghoran's body is mostly made up of a fibrous plant material resembling a woody vine, with a face like an enormous, colorful flower. Ghorans have a great deal of control over the shape and structure of their bodies: with a few hours of effort, a ghoran might make themselves taller or shorter, long-limbed or barrel-chested. They have a reputation for tasting deliciously sweet and herbaceous. Most people merely find this quality a curiosity and don't attempt to take a bite, but animals in the wild will sometimes seek them out and attack them. Though they can learn to smile or laugh to fit in with other ancestries, they tend to use a different set of emotional signifiers, fluttering their face-petals to show happiness and making a rustling sound when agitated or upset.

Every ghoran has a large cavity within their torso that contains a large seed. When a ghoran's body becomes too decrepit to function, they impart their memories into the seed and plant it into the ground. Within 1 to 2 months, a new ghoran body finishes growing from the seed, and the original ghoran collapses into a pile of inert organic matter. This curious method of propagation leaves a ghoran vulnerable, and many ghorans are defensive about the process among non-ghoran peoples.

Being plants, ghorans have no innate understanding of gender in the human sense. Ghorans who find themselves in the company of other ancestries sometimes adopt a more masculine or feminine form, though just as many don't bother.

Society

Ghorans originated in Nex, and most reside as a tiny minority population in that land. In its major cities, they have built little enclaves of their own in neighborhoods featuring sweeping parks and massive trees, with the largest of these enclaves being in Quantium. While they don't possess the magical ability to enter an extradimensional home within a tree like dryads, ghorans live among the trees, typically making their homes within the neighborhoods' big parks. They are extremely skilled at building their abodes so that they don't disrupt the lives of the local flora. Visitors to a ghoran enclave might not realize initially that they've entered a home, assuming instead that they're in a recreational public space. Ghorans don't typically mind the unexpected company so long as the visitors are respectful of the park, of their homes, and of any ghorans they meet. The ghorans who live in major cities are relatively social and accepting of other ancestries, and they tend to be eager to interact, learn about others, and engage in trade.

Outside of these cities, ghorans inhabit small, remote communities in the foothills of the Shattered Range and dwell in secluded forests, and they tend to be much more isolationist. Remembering well that Ghorus originally created their ancestry as food for the "animals," they generally have no great desire to get to know other ancestries. However, as each new incarnation slightly shifts a ghoran's personality, they sometimes develop a wanderlust that spurs them to leave an isolated home and travel into the wider world. Often, such ghorans hold bits—or even troves—of ancient lore lost to the outside world for many years, so their journeys can sometimes lead to important new discoveries for others in the Impossible Lands and beyond.

Among themselves, ghorans cooperate easily and instinctively, with no need for a formal government. Work is apportioned by a silent consensus derived from thousands of years of experience, as everyone does what they're best at to cover necessary tasks. This silent consensus is already practiced at determining how to adjust and adapt when one ghoran falls ill or changes in a new incarnation. The addition of new ghorans traveling from afar or of members of other ancestries can sometimes throw off this natural rhythm. The new addition is an unknown quantity, so the entire community keeps tabs on the newcomers, to a potentially unsettling extent, for a short period of analysis. This practice isn't out of any distrust or desire for harm, but rather out of curiosity and a need to understand what the newcomers do well and where they need assistance. Once the ghoran community has drawn a conclusion, they adjust their actions accordingly—everyone simply begins to perform tasks differently to allow newcomers to fit in and contribute, with no official meeting or declaration. In most cases, one of the members of the community realizes they should tell non-ghoran newcomers what the community expects of them, but sometimes no one realizes there's a need to communicate. When this happens, it can leave the ghoran community and the newcomers perplexed at the others' actions and choices, as the community expects the newcomers to simply pitch in and fill the need while the newcomers wait to be told what the community expects of them.

Ghoran communities, operating on this ancient consensus, generally don't have anything resembling leaders. Nonetheless, a community will sometimes appoint a single ghoran as an envoy to outsiders and even give them a title to make the "animals" more comfortable when receiving a message from the whole community.

Rarity

Rare

Hit Points

8

Size

Medium

Speed

25 feet

Ability Boosts

Constitution
Free

Languages

Common
Sylvan
Additional languages equal to your Intelligence modifier (if it's positive). Choose from Aklo, Draconic, Elven, Gnomish, Jotun, and any other languages to which you have access (such as the languages prevalent in your region).

Traits

Ghoran
Humanoid
Plant

Low-Light Vision

You can see in dim light as though it were bright light, so you ignore the concealed condition due to dim light.

Photosynthesis

You gain nourishment from photosynthesis. You typically don't need to pay for food. If you go without sunlight for 1 week, you begin to starve. You can derive nourishment from specially formulated bottles of alchemical sunlight instead of natural sunlight, but these bottles cost 10 times as much as standard rations (40 sp).

GHORAN BACKGROUNDS

Born of magic and hailing from a magical land, acolytes (of the Green Faith, typically) and fortune-tellers are both common backgrounds for adventuring ghorans. Rural- or forest-dwelling ghorans might be farmhands, herbalists, or hermits, while those who reside in Nex's great cities might be artisans, artists, or scholars.

Alignment and Religion

Ghorans typically lack driving forces toward good or evil, though their plant-derived values can sometimes make them come across as amoral to people who are not likewise plant based. They have a slight tendency toward law, especially in their own communities.

While most ghorans aren't particularly religious, spiritually oriented ones tend to worship nature by means of the Green Faith or, less commonly, Gozreh or one of the Eldest (such as the plantlike Green Mother). They rarely find interest in human-centric deities, as ghorans have distinctly different thought processes and priorities. Faith is a matter that usually doesn't change much from seed to seed and incarnation to incarnation, and that means that the newer deities, especially those ascended in the last few millennia ("recently," from the ghoran perspective) have almost no foothold in ghoran communities.

Names

Most ghorans pick a new name with each incarnation, usually selecting a name or concept that they found pleasing in a past life. Occasionally, a ghoran might reuse a name for several incarnations in a row, especially if remaining in a community of other peoples, though each incarnation is still a distinct person.

Sample Names

Amsalu, Ash, Emnet, Sieri, Ooniel, Arshmarish, Velt, Delphinium, Hach, Emerald, Sable

STRONG OAK GHORAN

GHORAN HERITAGES

Created with the express purpose of adapting to their environment, ghorans display several distinct physical morphs. Choose one of the following ghoran heritages at 1st level.

Ancient Ash

Your memory is sharp and clear, and you remember so much. You remember the calm before the storm and the soil after the rain, the acrid tang of magic and the whisper of a song. You remember it all. You become trained in one skill of your choice. At 5th level, you become an expert in that skill.

Enchanting Lily

You smell ever so sweet—a delicate, floral scent like the intoxicating fragrance of lilies and the soft scent of lilacs. You're trained in Diplomacy (or another skill if you were already trained in Diplomacy). You also gain a +1 circumstance bonus to checks to Make an Impression if the target can smell your fragrance.

Strong Oak

Most ghorans have bodies of pliable vines and tough stems, but you're covered in sturdy, rough bark and your legs are stable as roots. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus on your Fortitude or Reflex DC against attempts to Grapple or Trip you. This bonus also applies to saving throws against effects that would grab you, restrain you, or knock you prone. You also gain a +2 circumstance bonus on Acrobatics checks to Balance.

Thorned Rose

Your beautiful petals and seemingly smooth skin hide silent barbs to pierce the unwary. Your body is covered with wickedly sharp thorns to discourage those that might prey upon you. You gain the Wicked Thorns reaction.

WICKED THORNS ↷

Trigger You're hit with an unarmed Strike or a Strike with a non-reach melee weapon.
Frequency once per day

Several of your thorns break off and hook into your attacker's body. You deal 1d8 piercing damage to the triggering creature. It attempts a basic Reflex save against the higher of your class DC or spell DC. On a critical failure, the creature also takes 1d4 persistent bleed damage as your thorns embed in its flesh.

At 3rd level, and every 2 levels thereafter, this damage increases by 1d8, and the persistent piercing damage increases by 1.

GHORAN ANCESTRY FEATS

At 1st level, you gain one ancestry feat, and you gain an additional ancestry feat every 4 levels thereafter (at 5th, 9th, 13th, and 17th levels). As a ghoran, you choose from among the following ancestry feats.

1ST LEVEL

ANCIENT MEMORIES — FEAT 1

GHORAN

In the long years since Ghorus's day, you've done pretty much everything at one time or another. During your daily preparations, you can explore your memories of your past lives to become trained in one skill of your choice. This proficiency lasts until you prepare again. Since this proficiency is temporary, you can't use it as a prerequisite for a skill increase or a permanent character option like a feat.

FLEXIBLE FORM — FEAT 1

GHORAN

Prerequisites any heritage except strong oak

Your body is as supple as a sapling, capable of bending without breaking. You become trained in Acrobatics, and if you roll a success to Squeeze, you get a critical success instead. If you would automatically become trained in Acrobatics (from your background or class, for example), you instead become trained in a skill of your choice.

GHORAN LORE — FEAT 1

GHORAN

The very first memories ghorans have are those of their creation, and even after thousands of years, those memories have never faded for you. You become trained in Arcana and Nature. If you would automatically become trained in one of those skills (from your background or class, for example), you instead become trained in a skill of your choice. You also become trained in Ghoran Lore.

GHORAN WEAPON FAMILIARITY — FEAT 1

GHORAN

Over the course of your long, long existence, you've had a chance to practice with traditional ghoran weapons. You're trained with the glaive, greatclub, hatchet, scythe, and sickle. In addition, you gain access to all uncommon ghoran weapons. For the purpose of determining your proficiency, martial ghoran weapons are simple weapons and advanced ghoran weapons are martial weapons.

HIDDEN THORN — FEAT 1

GHORAN

Some flowers can hide their thorns, and yours happen to be hidden along your arms. You gain a thorns unarmed attack that deals 1d6 piercing damage. Your thorns are in the knife weapon group and have the finesse and unarmed traits.

GHORAN ADVENTURERS

While many ghorans learn a bit of magic, some become wizards or druids. Others are sorcerers with an elemental bloodline dating back to the moment of creation or an imperial bloodline recalling a particularly masterful past life. More martial ghorans become fighters or rangers, and some careful and methodical living plants make excellent alchemists and investigators.

THORNED ROSE GHORAN

GHORAN ENCLAVES

Ghorans were created in Nex, and the bulk of their population still resides there. The single largest ghoran population in the world is in Quantium, where ghorans have an entire park-neighborhood, flanked by ancient trees planted thousands of years ago, to call their own. Other ghorans live in remote villages in the foothills of the Shattered Range, as far away from outsiders as they can contrive.

ANCIENT ASH GHORAN

5TH LEVEL

GHORAN WEAPON PRACTICE — FEAT 5

GHORAN

Prerequisites Ghoran Weapon Familiarity

With plenty of practice, the memories of previous fights from previous lives come flooding back. Whenever you critically hit using a glaive, greatclub, hatchet, scythe, sickle, or ghoran weapon, you apply the weapon's critical specialization effect.

MURDEROUS THORNS — FEAT 5

GHORAN

Prerequisites Hidden Thorn or thorned rose

Your thorns are many, vicious, and sharp. If you have the Hidden Thorn feat, your thorn attack gains the deadly d6 trait. If you have the thorned rose heritage, you can use the Wicked Thorns reaction once every hour.

SPEAK WITH FLOWERS — FEAT 5

GHORAN

At your very heartwood, you're a flower animated by elder magic, and with a little effort, you can speak to your kindred. You can ask questions of, receive answers from, and use the Diplomacy skill with flowering plants of all types.

TREE'S WARD — FEAT 5

GHORAN

You've lived among trees for so long they recognize your presence and seek to protect you from harm. You can cast *protector tree* (*Pathfinder Secrets of Magic* 123) as a primal innate spell once per day.

9TH LEVEL

ENDLESS MEMORIES — FEAT 9

GHORAN

Prerequisites Ancient Memories

You've lived a thousand lives and done a hundred-thousand things. When you choose a skill in which to become trained with Ancient Memories, you can also choose a skill in which you're already trained and become an expert in that skill. This lasts until your Ancient Memories expires. When the effects of Ancient Memories and Endless Memories expire, you can retrain one of your skill increases. The skill increase you gain from this retraining must either make you trained in the skill you chose with Ancient Memories or make you an expert in the skill you chose with Endless Memories.

FLOWER MAGIC — FEAT 9

GHORAN

Certain magics in the world flow easily through your sap. You can cast *barkskin* and *tree shape* as 2nd-level arcane innate spells once per day each. A *tree shape* spell you cast this way transforms you into a Large flowering plant like a rosebush or lilac bush instead of a tree.

PERFUME CLOUD ◆◆ — FEAT 9

DISEASE GHORAN

Frequency once per hour

You issue a cloud of your fragrance like a full-body sneeze—but one that might save your life as the powerful perfume makes your attackers' eyes sting and water. Plants and fungi are

immune to this effect, but all other creatures in a 10-foot emanation must attempt a Fortitude save against your class DC or spell DC (whichever is higher) with the following results.

Critical Success No effect.

Success The creature is dazzled for 1 round.

Failure The creature is dazzled and can see only 10 feet away for 1 round.

Critical Failure The creature is blinded for 1 round.

SOLAR REJUVENATION — FEAT 9

GHORAN

The warmth and light of the sun gives you life. If you rest outdoors for 10 minutes during the day, you regain Hit Points equal to your Constitution modifier × half your level. You gain this benefit in addition to any healing from Treat Wounds.

13TH LEVEL

ETERNAL MEMORIES ❖ — FEAT 13

GHORAN

Frequency once per day

Prerequisites Endless Memories

You have lived longer than most realize, and due to your many lifetimes of practice you remember almost everything from your previous incarnations now. You examine your memories, changing the skills you selected with Ancient Memories and Endless Memories.

GHORAN WEAPON EXPERTISE — FEAT 13

GHORAN

Prerequisites Ghoran Weapon Familiarity

It's as if you've been training for a thousand years. Whenever you gain a class feature that grants you expert or greater proficiency in a given weapon or weapons, you also gain that proficiency in the glaive, greatclub, hatchet, scythe, sickle, and ghoran weapons in which you're trained.

LOOK BUT DON'T TOUCH ❖❖ — FEAT 13

GHORAN POISON

Frequency once per day

Many flowers are beautiful to look upon but deadly to touch—and you're one of them. For 1 minute, any creature that touches you or damages you with a melee weapon without the reach trait or with a melee unarmed attack takes 3d6 poison damage.

VIOLENT VINES — FEAT 13

GHORAN

When angered, you can imbue nearby vines with your wrath, provoking them into a murderous rampage. Once per hour, you can cast *murderous vine* (*Secrets of Magic* 117) as a primal innate spell.

17TH LEVEL

GHORAN'S WRATH — FEAT 17

GHORAN

You have such a strong connection to the natural world that you can inspire it to attack at those who threaten you. You can cast *nature's reprisal* (*Secrets of Magic* 117) once per hour as a primal innate spell.

GHORAN TRAVELERS

Outside of Nex, ghorans rarely have the numbers to form their own communities, though other major cities in Golarion with trade routes to Nex might have as many as a half-dozen living plants dwelling in them. Ghorans prefer to seek out others of their own kind, or failing that, find local druids or other defenders of nature who could give a ghoran support during their unusual life cycle.

KASHRISHI (RARE)

Kashrishi make their homes in remote areas of the world. These quiet beings have stout, durable frames and distinctive crystalline horns. Their inherent psychic abilities make them natural empaths but also occasionally burden them with the unceasing thoughts of their neighbors.

Kashrishi occupy a unique evolutionary branch native to the lands bordering the northern stretches of the Obari Ocean. Resembling halfling-sized bipedal rhinoceroses with the occasional odd insectile feature, kashrishi adapt to their environs with unusual efficiency, using a combination of rapid physical evolutions and inherent psychic powers. Kashrishi are often mistakenly referred to as having hive minds, though they're actually natural empaths, capable of discerning a creature's emotional state and impulses through proximity. This near-oracular behavior occasionally leads to misunderstandings with humanoids who think a kashrishi is reading their thoughts or otherwise magically influencing the conversation, though peoples more familiar with kashrishi come to value their unique insights and intuitive diplomacy.

Kashrishi have an atypical level of control over their physical forms, thanks to their psychic powers, and can evolve new features over the course of a single generation. Typically, these features are intentionally cultivated to help deal with a particular environmental obstacle, such as a change in weather patterns, or if an invasive species affects available food supplies near their settlements.

ATHAMASI KASHRISHI

Kashrishi often tailor their evolutions to match the most successful creatures in their environment. Whether a testament to the resilience of insects or simply a quirk of their environment, many kashrishi evolutions are directly inspired by creatures like the rhinoceros beetle or giant water bug.

If you want a character that's visually distinct, able to naturally access the occult powers of the mind, and great at quickly making friends wherever they go, you should play a kashrishi.

YOU MIGHT...

- Be easily taken aback by people who are particularly loud, expressive, or emotional.
- Prefer the peaceful quiet of remote islands, treetops, and caverns.
- Act as a parental figure for the more excitable among your companions.

OTHERS PROBABLY...

- Underestimate your strength and resilience.
- Mistake you for being unsociable when you're actually taking time to process mental and physical cues of which they're completely unaware.
- Value you for your patience and insights.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Kashrishi have short but wide frames with remarkable strength for their size. All have signature crystalline horns, though these can grow in a variety of configurations. The most common kashrishi, xyloshis, have a large primary horn and between one and three smaller horns, typically arranged linearly from the tip of their nose and spanning along their nose and brow.

While most kashrishi have light sandy or gray skin tones, their coloration can also echo the tones of their crystalline horns; sapphire, ruby, or emerald patterns aren't so uncommon as to cause another kashrishi to take notice. Kashrishi with strong connections to specific creatures with whom they share their home environments might take on skin patterns or colorations that mirror those creatures. Some stories even talk about

kashrishi with wings and butterfly patterns that cover their bodies, though no such kashrishi has been seen in the Impossible Lands for at least a century.

SOCIETY

Despite their small stature, kashrishi tend to be terrible at hiding. Their crystalline horns are likely to flare with magical light when they exercise their innate magical powers, and they're raised in an environment where their parents or guardians can almost always find them by feeling for their emotions. As a result, kashrishi tend to be excessively honest and kind, avoiding harmful deceptions but also employing enough tact to ensure they don't evoke unpleasant emotional reactions from others.

Kashrishi lack a clear concept of charity, not because they're cruel or inconsiderate, but rather because their worldview is inherently inclusive of the people around them. Rare indeed is the kashrishi who exercises casual cruelty or who leaves another member of the community in need. Such actions lead to emotional reactions that cause turmoil for all kashrishi in the vicinity.

Kashrishi enjoy various team games, employing games of trivia as measures of both knowledge and psychic ability. They also appreciate games that involve bluffs and double-bluffs with blind cards, testing their abilities to keep their minds clear and their thoughts organized. Kashrishi don't generally condone the act of gambling with outsiders, as many find it challenging to deal with the implications of their psychic abilities, even if they strive to keep their powers secret.

Kashrishi generally engage in monogamous relationships with no real preference toward any particular gender pairing. The height of intimacy for a kashrishi is opening their mind fully to the psychic link of another kashrishi, an act much more personal than anything physical. This act doesn't let kashrishi know whether someone is perfectly compatible with them or that the two mesh entirely—simply that from moment to moment, their inner feelings are more accessible and open, so communication becomes not a guessing game but an entirely wholesome, true experience. Some kashrishi believe that psychic communication should be held exclusively for these intimate moments.

Kashrishi can be found in small groups on the island of Jalmeray and in larger communities occupying the many smaller islands surrounding it. Kashrishi in the Inner Sea region rarely venture beyond the Impossible Lands, though some of their oldest stories speak of a harrowing voyage across the Obari Ocean when their kind fled some long-past disaster.

Kashrishi have no natural enemies. They host pirates and merchants with equal hospitality, so long as that hospitality is respected by their guests. While kashrishi are exceptionally tolerant of the quirks and foibles of other species, they draw a hard line at anyone bringing outside conflicts into their communities. More than one canny pirate captain docks their ship at a kashrishi island after a particularly heated conflict, knowing the pirate hunters and military vessels seeking them won't encroach on kashrishi lands. Escaped criminals hoping to find a new lease on life might also hide in a kashrishi community, doing whatever they can to assist their hosts until whoever is hunting them gives up the chase.

ALIGNMENT AND RELIGION

Most kashrishi are good, and almost instinctively kind because of their empathic abilities and tight-knit communities. Kashrishi are rarely interested in religion, though a few deities are more likely to be worshipped by kashrishi than others. Desna is known to kashrishi as "The Crystal Butterfly," and when a kashrishi child goes missing, their parents might pray the Crystal Butterfly uses the light of her wings to guide the child home. Besmara is also unusually likely to be worshipped by kashrishi, though her dogma among them is essentially a splinter faith that focuses on her primacy over sea monsters and storms with little regard to the piratical teachings for which most other ancestries know the goddess.

HIT POINTS
8

SIZE
Small

SPEED
25 feet

ABILITY BOOSTS
Constitution
Free

LANGUAGES
Common
Kashrishi
Additional languages equal to your Intelligence modifier (if positive). Choose from Aquan, Celestial, Draconic, Sylvan, Terran, and any other languages to which you have access (such as the languages prevalent in your region).

TRAITS
Humanoid
Kashrishi

EMPATHIC SENSE
Kashrishi are able to get a vague sense of the current emotional state of others within 15 feet of them. This manifests as a general feeling of happiness, anger, or fear, without any specific details. For those with whom kashrishi have an emotional connection, physical touch can heighten this sense to greater degrees of detail and understanding, increasing with the strength of their bond. This also functions as an imprecise sense alerting you to the presence, but not the precise location, of non-mindless creatures within the area. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus on Perception checks to Sense Motive against non-mindless creatures within the area of your empathic sense.

GLOWING HORN
Your horn reacts to psychic energy by softly glowing. The horn emanates dim light in a 10-foot emanation until the start of your next turn whenever you use an occult action you gained from an ancestry feat, cast an innate occult spell, or Cast a Spell that has the mental trait.

KASHRISHI ADVENTURERS

Most kashrishi never become adventurers, content in their remote homes. Those kashrishi who do become adventurers often do so from necessity after being conscripted by pirates or washed away to distant locales by tropical storms. Occasionally, more adventurous lethoci and trogloshi kashrishi intentionally leave their islands to either found new colonies or to seek adventure. Any kashrishi might also take on the adventuring lifestyle in response to overcrowding on their home island.

Kashrishi rely on their inherent occult powers to ward off monsters, and they use their inherent empathic abilities to form bonds with allies. Kashrishi make natural bards, champions, and psychics. Typical kashrishi backgrounds include the artist, emissary, fortune teller, and herbalist backgrounds.

NAMES

The empathic sense of a kashrishi has its own "mental fingerprint" that's unique to each member of the species, and this mental fingerprint can be conveyed through psychic communications as a name. Kashrishi who adventure with non-kashrishi often adopt descriptive names that their companions can more easily speak and remember.

Sample Names

Climber, Firehorn, Guardian, Healer, Lantern, Mother, Scout, Softhand, Tempest, Warrior

KASHRISHI HERITAGES

A kashrishi's heritage reflects the unique evolutionary qualities they've adapted for their chosen environments. Choose one of the following kashrishi heritages at 1st level.

Athamasi

You have a set of small secondary arms adapted for climbing and hanging from trees. You can't hold or retrieve objects with these limbs, but you can Climb or Grab an Edge even if one or both of your primary hands are full. You aren't flat-footed while Climbing.

Lethoci

You come from a kashrishi family adapted to coastal shores, or inland ponds and lakes. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus to Athletics checks to Swim. If you critically fail an Athletics check to Swim, you get a failure instead.

Nascent

While most kashrishi are fully adapted to their environment by the time they reach adulthood, some retain unrealized potential well into adulthood before unlocking it. You gain a 1st-level kashrishi ancestry feat for which you meet the prerequisites, if any.

Trogloshi

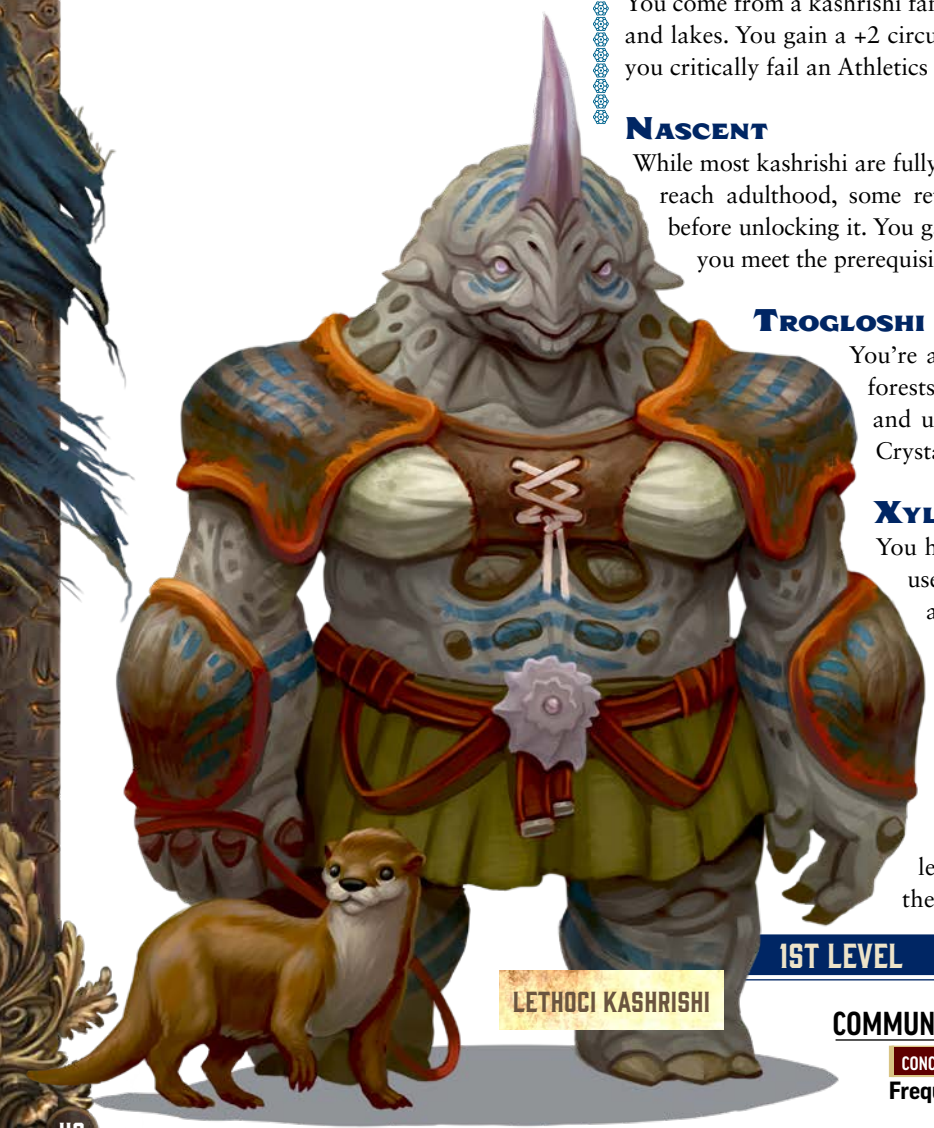
You're adapted to the sunless regions of dense jungle forests and deep caves, with soft flesh lacking pigment and unusually clear crystalline horns. You gain the Crystal Luminescence ancestry feat.

Xyloshi

You have prominent neck muscles that allow you to use your facial horn as a tool or weapon. You gain a horn unarmed attack that deals 1d6 piercing damage. Your horn is in the brawling group, and has the finesse and unarmed traits.

ANCESTRY FEATS

At 1st level, you gain one ancestry feat, and you gain an additional ancestry feat every 4 levels thereafter (at 5th, 9th, 13th, and 17th levels). As a kashrishi, you select from among the following ancestry feats.



LETHOCI KASHRISHI

1ST LEVEL

COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE ↷ **FEAT 1**

CONCENTRATE | DIVINATION | KASHRISHI | OCCULT

Frequency once per hour

Trigger You attempt a skill check requiring 3 actions or fewer.

You commune with the psychic echoes of your ancestors and community, channeling their experiences into yourself. You gain a +2 status bonus on the triggering skill check.

CRYSTAL LUMINESCENCE ❖ FEAT 1

CONCENTRATE KASHRISHI LIGHT

Your horn glows with bioluminescent color, casting bright light in a 20-foot emanation (and dim light for the next 20 feet). This light can be any color. The most common colors are blue and purple, except for trogloshi, who normally shed white light. The light shuts off when you take this action again or fall unconscious.

If a spell or ability would activate your glowing horn while Crystal Luminescence is active, it instead increases the radius of the bright light and dim light by 10 feet each until the start of your next turn. This isn't cumulative, so using another such ability doesn't increase the radius again.

Special If you have the trogloshi heritage, you can select this feat a second time (in addition to gaining it automatically from your heritage). If you do, you increase the area to a 40-foot emanation (and dim light for the next 40 feet). In addition, you can use Crystal Luminescence as a free action the first time you use it on each of your turns.

EMOTIONAL PARTITIONS FEAT 1

KASHRISHI

You have created strong mental partitions in your mind to filter out negative emotional influences. You gain a +1 circumstance bonus on saving throws against emotion effects. If you roll a success on a saving throw against an emotion effect, you get a critical success instead.

MENTAL SUSTENANCE FEAT 1

KASHRISHI

You can sustain yourself with the power of your mind. You need only a single serving of food and water each week to avoid starvation or dehydration. You can hold your breath for an additional 5 rounds before running out of air.

OPEN MIND FEAT 1

KASHRISHI

You have inherent psychic abilities that allow you to tap into the power of your mind. Choose one cantrip from the occult spell list. You can cast this spell as an occult innate spell at will. A cantrip is heightened to a spell level equal to half your level rounded up.

PUNCTURING HORN FEAT 1

KASHRISHI

While many kashrishi never use their horns for more than cracking open hard-shelled fruits or amplifying their psychic powers, you've practiced using yours offensively. You gain a horn unarmed attack that deals 1d6 piercing damage. Your horn is in the brawling group and has the finesse and unarmed traits.

Special If you have the xyloshi heritage, your horn instead deals 1d8 piercing damage.

SCUTTLE UP FEAT 1

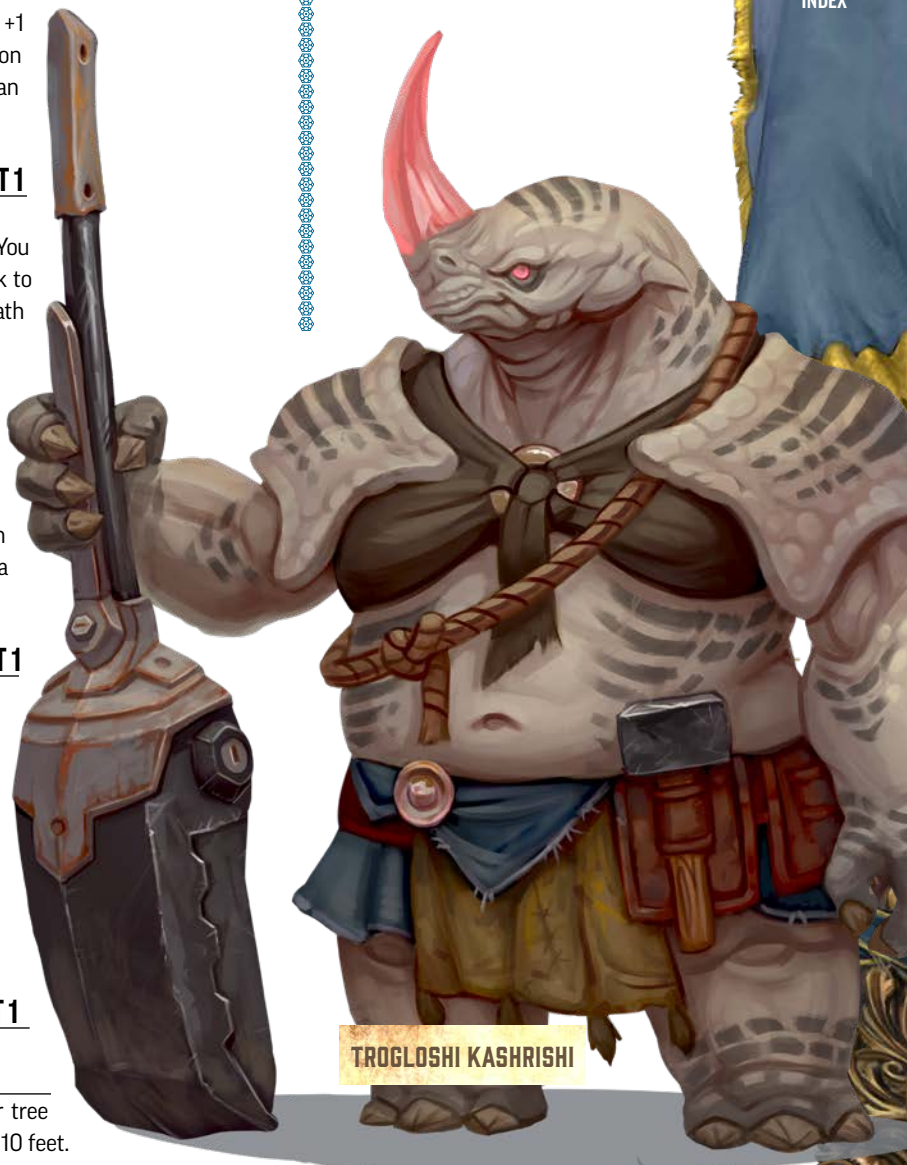
KASHRISHI

Prerequisites athamasi or xyloshi

Your environment requires you to climb cave walls or tree trunks with great regularity. You gain a Climb speed of 10 feet.

KASHRISHI GUESTS

Kashrishi communities welcome visitors and happily host all kinds of guests. Despite their welcoming nature, kashrishi settlements are often relieved when visits from larger groups, such as merchant ships and other trading vessels, end. Most humanoids take few precautions to conceal their thoughts and emotions, so a kashrishi might hardly distinguish even the politest ship crew from a barge full of rowdy pirates.



TROGLOSHI KASHRISHI

KASHRISHI AND RELIGION

Kashrishi can worship any god, and they often lean toward deities most commonly worshipped in Jalmeray (page 180), but most kashrishi don't feel the need for religion. Kashrishi communities are so deeply connected through their empathic and psychic links that religion is often considered superfluous. Religion tends to have specific benefits in a community: care for the poor, unifying and teaching community morals, providing gathering spaces, and such. Almost all of these functions come inherently to kashrishi, thanks to the hive-like nature of their empathic communication.

TOUGH SKIN — FEAT 1

KASHRISHI

Prerequisites lethoci heritage or xyloshi heritage

Your skin is medium armor in the plate armor group that grants a +4 item bonus to AC, and has a Dex cap of +1, a check penalty of –2, a Speed penalty of –5 feet, a Strength value of 16, and the comfort trait. You can never wear other armor or remove your hide. You can etch armor runes onto your hide.

If you're a lethoci kashrishi who takes this feat, your modifications also make you more buoyant, allowing you to Swim across the surface of even turbulent bodies of water without needing to make an Athletics check.

Special You can take this feat only at 1st level, and you can't retrain into this feat.

5TH LEVEL

EMPATHIC CALM — FEAT 5

KASHRISHI

Once per day, you can cast either *calm emotions* or *sanctuary* as an innate occult spell, heightened to half your level rounded up.

FIGHTING HORN — FEAT 5

KASHRISHI

Prerequisites Puncturing Horn or xyloshi

You can modify the size and shape of your horn over time using your mental powers. Choose two of the following weapon traits: disarm, grapple, shove, and trip. Your horn gains the chosen traits.

Special You can take this feat a second time, adding the traits you didn't choose when you first took it.

SKILLED CLIMBER — FEAT 5

KASHRISHI

Prerequisites athamasi or xyloshi

You can navigate vertical surfaces with ease. You gain a climb Speed of 10 feet. If you also have the Scuttle Up ancestry feat, your climb Speed increases to your land Speed when climbing trees or cavern walls.

UNLOCK SECRET — FEAT 5

KASHRISHI

Prerequisites Open Mind

You delve deeper into your psychic potential. Choose a 1st-level occult spell, either a common spell or another to which you have access. You can cast that spell once per day as an innate occult spell.

WELL OF POTENTIAL ❖ — FEAT 5

KASHRISHI

Frequency once per day

Prerequisites focus pool, at least one innate spell from a kashrishi heritage or ancestry feat that shares a tradition with at least one of your focus spells

Your mind is a deep well of psychic potential. You regain 1 Focus Point, up to your usual maximum.

9TH LEVEL

FORTIFIED MIND — FEAT 9

KASHRISHI

Your mind is unusually resilient and resistant to influence. When you would gain the fascinated or stupefied condition,

XYLOSHI KASHRISHI

you can attempt a DC 17 flat check. On a success, you don't gain the fascinated or stupefied condition.

TELEKINETIC SLIP ↻ — FEAT 9

EVOCATION KASHRISHI OCCULT

Frequency once per day

Trigger Your turn begins, and you're grabbed or restrained.

A thin shell of telekinetic energy pushes from your skin, widening your enemy's grasp enough for you to slip free. You gain a +2 status bonus to checks to Escape from whatever has you grabbed or restrained. This bonus lasts until either you're no longer grabbed or restrained, or you fall unconscious.

TRANSCENDENT REALIZATION — FEAT 9

KASHRISHI

Prerequisites Unlock Secret

You've unleashed even more of your mind's limitless potential. Choose a 3rd-level occult spell, either a common spell or another to which you have access, including a lower-level spell heightened to 3rd level if you wish. You can cast that spell once per day as an innate occult spell.

13TH LEVEL

KASHRISHI REVIVIFICATION ◆ — FEAT 13

KASHRISHI

Frequency once per day

Trigger You have the dying condition and are about to attempt a recovery check. You can use Kashrishi Revivification even if you're otherwise unable to act.

The well of psychic energy held within your mind can exceed the limitations of your physical body. You're restored to 1 Hit Point, lose the dying and unconscious conditions, and can act normally on this turn. You gain or increase the wounded condition as normal for losing the dying condition.

REIMAGINE — FEAT 13

KASHRISHI

Prerequisites Transcendent Realization

You can cast *dreaming potential* as an innate occult spell. You can cast this spell targeting yourself as your last activity before falling asleep to receive its normal benefits and effects.

17TH LEVEL

BEND SPACE — FEAT 17

UNCOMMON KASHRISHI

Prerequisites Transcendent Realization

Not even space itself is a match for the unleashed power of your mind. You can cast *teleport* as an innate occult spell. You don't need to touch creatures to target them with this innate spell as long as they're in range of your empathic sense.

CLEANSING LIGHT ◆◆ — FEAT 17

CONCENTRATE KASHRISHI LIGHT NECROMANCY OCCULT

Frequency once per day

A burst of light from your horn cleanses your allies of ailments and sends your foes reeling. You and all allies in a 20-foot emanation benefit from a 4th-level *restoration* spell. All enemies within the emanation are dazzled until the end of your next turn.

THOUGHTS ON KASHRISHI

Most people on Golarion beyond the island of Jalmeray aren't aware kashrishi exist. Jalmeri humans might trade with kashrishi, and they might hire athamasi scouts to staff the crow's nests of their ships or xyloshi warriors to serve as guards; however, people beyond Jalmeray's borders and shipping lanes are likely to mistake a kashrishi as a magical experiment or even an extraplanar visitor. While such misunderstandings can make kashrishi targets for ignorant villagers afraid of the unknown, the halfling-sized rhinos usually have the diplomatic skills to safely extricate themselves before situations turn violent.

NAGAJI (UNCOMMON)

With humanoid figures and serpentine heads, nagaji are heralds, companions, and servitors of powerful nagas. They hold a deep reverence for holy areas and spiritual truths, an aspect many others find as intimidating as a nagaji's appearance.

Nagaji are creations of the goddess Nalinivati, who was inspired by both humans and nagas. This inspiration, alongside nagaji's devotion to nagas, has led many to claim nagaji were created to be servants. However, Nalinivati created nagaji simply for the sake of creating. She envisioned a world where nagas and nagaji worked together to succeed, with nagas serving as sacred guardians, and nagaji living as mortals upon Golarion, respecting nagas for their strength and wisdom. Nagaji live up to this expectation, forming nations, temples, and villages with as many varied governments, societies, and traditions as there are scales on a serpent's back. If nagaji can be said to share any trait, it's devotion, be it to a community, a temple, a concept, or a lifestyle. Most nagaji are also drawn to the spiritual in all its expressions, even the darker aspects of philosophies and religions.

If you want a character who combines the crushing strength and the sinuous mystery of a serpent, you should play a nagaji.

HOODED NAGAJI

YOU MIGHT...

- Enjoy the intersection of spirituality and everyday life.
- Have deep reserves of patience for tasks others might find boring.
- Adhere to strong beliefs and traditions about your place in the universe.

OTHERS PROBABLY...

- Assume you have no goals or interests beyond serving nagas.
- Find your unblinking eyes and serpentine features intimidating.
- Are awed by your connection and dedication to holy natural places.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Nagaji are prone to sharp differences in appearance. Some have tails alongside legs, some have sharp claws on their hands and feet, and some are so unique from their kin that they're mistaken for lamias rather than nagaji. The most common nagaji features are a serpentine head and a humanoid body. They usually have the unblinking eyes of a snake, though other peoples often claim a nagaji's gaze is far more intense. Scales cover nagaji bodies, with patterns that resemble those of snakes or nagas. Depending on their heritage, a nagaji's neck might be as long as a swan's or as short as a human's, and many have a frill of skin or scales down their back. Nagaji tend to possess crushing strength, but how it manifests can vary; some have bulky figures, while others have the slender yet powerful musculature of a snake.

SOCIETY

Nagaji communities widely vary, from ancient empires to tiny fishing villages. They tend to be isolated from

other peoples, more as a matter of convenience than choice; nagaji have different physical needs than most ancestries, so even when integrated into mixed communities, they tend to live with other nagaji. Everything from marriage traditions, religion, social roles, valued arts, and methods of governance differs in specific nagaji communities. Within these communities, however, nagaji often have very strict and traditional views on these topics. Multiple instances of wars between nagaji have come about due to one group of nagaji finding another's practices unacceptable. This perspective applies to relations with other peoples as well. For instance, most nagaji consider themselves rivals and enemies of garudas due to their historical legends, even if the nagaji involved have never even seen a garuda.

Nagaji originated in the Tian Xia region of Nagajor. Though they have since spread across Golarion to regions such as Vudra and Jalmeray, many of them still carry traditions from their ancestral homeland. Tian and Vudrani concepts of elements, medicine, and spirituality are highly common among nagaji, especially given their tendency of seeing themselves as highly pious beings. Nagaji mostly eschew the human concept of castes, beyond the vague view of a "natural order" that sees nagas as holy guides to mortal nagaji, but they can see the appeal of the concept of karma and the righteousness of fulfilling their proper role in the universe. While they have little physical need for clothes, as they stick to hot and humid environments, nagaji wear them with pride and treat them as decorative elements in the same manner as jewelry.

As nagas are usually matriarchal, nagaji have a strong respect for women in leadership positions. Not all nagaji follow suit with matriarchal societies, but they tend to trace lineage through the mother, and almost no nagaji societies are strictly patriarchal.

Alignment and Religion

Nagaji are most commonly neutral but otherwise don't have any strong pull toward specific alignments. The presence of a naga can sway nagaji toward that naga's ethos, but a nagaji's view on life tends to be determined by the culture to which they belong.

Nagaji overwhelmingly worship Nalinivati, their creator, to the point that any nagaji who pay homage to a different god over Nalinivati provoke strong negative reactions from their kin. While nagaji believe reverence for Ravithra, the supposed mother of nagas, to be proper and accept it more readily than other faiths, most believe Ravithra shouldn't be troubled with the requests of mortal adherents. A very small minority of nagaji in Jalmeray are drawn to the worship of the war god Diomazul; these adherents are tolerated by other nagaji, but seen as just as terrifying and dangerous as their patron god and usually avoided.

Names

Nagaji names vary depending on what region of the world they occupy, but they tend to possess short vowels when they have any at all. Nagaji usually name themselves or allow groups of siblings to name each other as children, a tradition that often sees nagaji eagerly shedding these names for new ones when they reach adulthood.

Sample Names

Adesha, Garija, Kaya, Kuwana, Onok, Paravata, Sheni, Takasha, Tasi, Ulu, Vaski, Yulbin

Nagaji Heritages

Nagaji physiology commonly varies between individuals. Choose one of the following nagaji heritages at 1st level.

Rarity

Uncommon

Hit Points

10

Size

Medium

Speed

25 feet

Ability Boosts

Strength
Free

Languages

Common
Nagaji
Additional languages equal to your Intelligence modifier (if positive). Choose from Aklo, Amurrun, Aquan, Celestial, Draconic, Undercommon, Shadowtongue, Tengu, Vanaran, and any other languages to which you have access (such as the languages prevalent in your region).

Traits

Humanoid
Nagaji

Low-Light Vision

You can see in dim light as though it were bright light, so you ignore the concealed condition due to dim light.

Fangs

Your mouth contains either rows of hooked, needle-sharp teeth or a pair of vicious serpent fangs. You gain a fangs unarmed attack that deals 1d6 piercing damage. Your fangs are in the brawling group and have the finesse and unarmed traits.

NAGAJI BACKGROUNDS

As the backbone of naga-ruled societies, nagaji can have any background imaginable, reflecting their intended role in society. Outside naga realms, nagaji adventurers often have the acolyte, emissary, guard, or merchant backgrounds. A nagaji's strength means they excel as fighters and champions, but they're flexible enough that they can do well in any role they put their mind to, and clerics, sorcerers, and alchemists are popular professions.

Hooded Nagaji

You bear the hooded head of a spitting cobra, and like such cobras, you can shoot streams of venom from your mouth. You gain a venomous spit ranged unarmed attack with a range increment of 10 feet that deals 1d4 poison damage. On a critical hit, the target takes persistent poison damage equal to the number of weapon damage dice. Your spit doesn't have a weapon group or a critical specialization effect.

Sacred Nagaji

You stand out from most nagaji, with the upper body of a beautiful human and the lower body of a green or white snake. Legends claim your ancestors were faithful snakes uplifted by Nalinivati rather than nagaji created by the goddess. Instead of a fangs unarmed attack, you have a tail attack that deals 1d6 bludgeoning damage, is in the brawling weapon group, and has the finesse and unarmed traits. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus to your Fortitude or Reflex DC against attempts to Grapple or Trip you. This bonus also applies to saving throws against effects that would grab you, restrain you, or knock you prone.

Titan Nagaji

You were raised to be a warrior or a bodyguard, and your specialized diet and bulging muscles have made your scales as strong as armored plates. Your scales are medium armor in the plate armor group that grant a +4 item bonus to AC, a Dex cap of +1, a check penalty of –2, a Speed penalty of –5 feet, a Strength value of 16, and have the comfort trait. You can never wear other armor or remove your scales. You can etch armor runes onto your scales.

Venomshield Nagaji

Your intrinsic connection to nagas and mundane serpents grants you an innate resistance to toxins of every sort. You gain resistance to poison equal to half your level (minimum 1 resistance), and you gain a +1 circumstance bonus to all saving throws against poison.

Whipfang Nagaji

You have a long, flexible neck that can curl into a striking pose like that of a snake. Your deceptively powerful muscles allow you to bite with surprising distance and speed. You gain the Raise Neck action.

RAISE NECK ❖

You raise your head into a striking position. The fangs Strike granted by your nagaji ancestry gains a reach of 10 feet until the end of your turn.

SACRED NAGAJI

ANCESTRY FEATS

At 1st level, you gain one ancestry feat, and you gain an additional ancestry feat every 4 levels thereafter (at 5th, 9th, 13th, and 17th levels). As a nagaji, you select from among the following ancestry feats.

1ST LEVEL

COLD MINDED **FEAT 1**

NAGAJI

The subtle strands of beguiling magic leave little impression on your mind. You gain a +1 circumstance bonus to saving throws against emotion effects, and whenever you roll a success on a saving throw against an emotion effect, you get a critical success instead.

NAGAJI LORE — FEAT 1

NAGAJI

You're the vassal or apprentice of a learned naga, and you've studied the secrets of naga magic and concocting intricate poisons. You gain the trained proficiency rank in Crafting and Occultism. If you would automatically become trained in one of those skills (from your background or class, for example), you become trained in a skill of your choice. You also become trained in your choice of Nagaji Lore or Naga Lore.

NAGAJI SPELL FAMILIARITY — FEAT 1

NAGAJI

Either through study, exposure, or familial devotion, you have the magic of nagas bubbling in your blood. During your daily preparations, choose *daze*, *detect magic*, or *mage hand*. Until your next daily preparations, you can cast the chosen spell as an occult innate cantrip. A cantrip is heightened to a spell level equal to half your level rounded up.

SERPENT'S TONGUE — FEAT 1

NAGAJI

You subconsciously flick your tongue through the air to taste the world around you. You gain imprecise scent with a range of 30 feet.

WATER NAGAJI — FEAT 1

NAGAJI

Much like a water naga, you've formed a connection to a sacred or pristine body of water, either as a home or a place to protect. You gain the Breath Control general feat as a bonus feat and a swim Speed of 10 feet.

5TH LEVEL

HYPNOTIC LURE ◆◆ — FEAT 5

CONCENTRATE ENCHANTMENT MENTAL NAGAJI OCCULT VISUAL

Frequency once per hour

Your unblinking gaze is so intense it can befuddle the mind of others, drawing your victims toward you even against their better judgment. You stare at a creature within 30 feet. The target must attempt a Will save against the higher of your class DC or spell DC.

Success The target is unaffected.

Failure On its turn, the target must spend its first action to approach you. It can't Delay or take reactions until it has done so.

Critical Failure The target must use all its actions on its next turn to approach you. It can't Delay or take any reactions until it has reached a space that's adjacent to you (or as close to you as possible if it reaches an impassable barrier).

NAGAJI SPELL MYSTERIES — FEAT 5

NAGAJI

Prerequisites at least one innate spell from a nagaji heritage or ancestry feat

You've learned more naga magic. During your daily preparations, choose *charm*, *fleet step*, or *heal*. You can cast the chosen spell as a 1st-level occult innate spell once that day.

SKIN SPLIT ◆◆ — FEAT 5

NAGAJI

Frequency once per day

You claw open the top layer of your scales and peel off the premature shed in order to remove harmful substances from your skin.

NAGAJI ADVENTURERS

The most common reason for nagaji to adventure is at the behest of a naga superior or for the benefit of a nagaji community, but their reasons can be as varied as any other people on Golarion. Nagaji might set out seeking holy sites in the world, searching for enlightenment, looking for material treasures, or for personal reasons related to their background, family, or city.

WHIPFANG NAGAJI

NAGAJI ENCLAVES

The original nagaji home is Nagajor, a hot and jungle-covered land in the south of Tian Xia. Here, polities of naga rulers and nagaji citizens dominate the area, each unique in its own right; a left turn might bring a traveler to an overbearing tyranny, while a right turn might take one to an idyllic paradise. Wherever nagas can be found, however, nagaji are quick to follow. Nagaji settlements are also found in Vudra, central and southern Tian Xia, and Jalmeray, with a few slipping into Garund and Casmaron.

You immediately end all persistent damage from effects that coat your skin (such as fire and most persistent acid damage). If you're suffering from an effect other than persistent damage that depends on continuous contact with your skin, and if that effect allows a saving throw, immediately attempt a new saving throw against that effect.

VENOM SPIT — FEAT 5

NAGAJI

You've learned the art of lobbing toxic spittle at vulnerable spots on your foes, especially the eyes. You gain a venomous spit ranged unarmed attack with a range increment of 10 feet that deals 1d4 poison damage. On a critical hit, the target takes persistent poison damage equal to the number of weapon damage dice. Your spit doesn't have a weapon group, nor a critical specialization effect.

Special If you have the hooded nagaji heritage, in addition to your venomous spit's normal critical hit effect, the target is also dazzled until the start of your next turn.

9TH LEVEL

ENVENOM STRIKE ❖ — FEAT 9

NAGAJI

Prerequisites you possess a Strike from a nagaji heritage or ancestry feat that deals poison damage

Frequency once per 10 minutes

You spit venom onto a weapon you're holding or a weapon held by a willing creature within 30 feet; you can also use this ability to envenom your nagaji fangs unarmed attack. If the next Strike with the chosen weapon before the start of your next turn hits and deals damage, the Strike deals an additional 2d6 poison damage.

GUARDED THOUGHTS — FEAT 9

NAGAJI

Your mind, like a dark naga's, foils attempts to read your thoughts. Any effect that specifically attempts to read your mind to glean information must succeed at a counteract check against the higher of your class DC or your spell DC to do so successfully; otherwise, it gains no information. The counteract level is equal to half your level rounded up.

SERPENTCOIL SLAM ❖ — FEAT 9

NAGAJI

Frequency once per minute

Your people's ancient and storied rivalry with garudas led you to develop special techniques against flying foes. Make a melee Strike against a flying creature up to one size larger than you; if you hit, you use your neck or coils to smash the creature into the ground. In addition to the normal effects of your Strike, the creature moves to the nearest unoccupied ground space adjacent to you and can't Fly, *levitate*, or otherwise leave the ground for 1 round. On a critical hit, it can't Fly, *levitate*, or otherwise leave the ground for 1 minute.

SERPENTINE SWIMMER — FEAT 9

NAGAJI

Prerequisites Water Nagaji

You undulate your body in a series of sinuous serpentine motions as you swim, drastically improving the speed at which you move through the water. Your swim Speed increases from 10 feet to 25 feet.

TITAN NAGAJI

13TH LEVEL

DISRUPTIVE STARE — FEAT 13

MENTAL NAGAJI VISUAL

Trigger A creature within 30 feet attempts to Cast a Spell with the concentrate trait.

Your frigid gaze can turn a foe's blood to ice. The triggering creature must attempt a Will save against your class DC or spell DC, whichever is higher. It then becomes temporarily immune for 24 hours.

Failure The triggering spell takes a –2 status penalty to its spell attack rolls and DCs.

Critical Failure The triggering spell is disrupted.

NAGAJI SPELL EXPERTISE — FEAT 13

NAGAJI

Prerequisites Nagaji Spell Mysteries

Your magical skill rivals that of accomplished naga spellcasters. During your daily preparations, choose *blink*, *control water*, or *subconscious suggestion*. You can Cast this Spell as a 5th-level occult innate spell once that day. You become an expert in occult spell DCs and occult spell attack rolls.

PIT OF SNAKES — FEAT 13

CONCENTRATE CONJURATION MANIPULATE NAGAJI OCCULT

Frequency once per day

Mundane serpents obey your summons. You call forth a writhing mass of snakes, raising your hands to cause the snakes to emerge from the ground in a 20-foot burst within 120 feet. The snakes appear on all squares of the ground in the area and remain for 1 minute. When you use Pit of Snakes, all creatures in the area must attempt a Fortitude save against the higher of your class DC or spell DC. Any creature that fails is grabbed by a snake and takes 3d6 bludgeoning damage. Whenever a creature ends its turn in the area, the snakes attempt to Grab that creature if they aren't already grabbing it. Any creature already grabbed instead takes 2d6 bludgeoning damage.

The snakes' Escape DC is equal to the higher of your class DC or spell DC. A creature can attack a snake in an attempt to release its grip. The snake's AC is equal to the higher of your class DC or spell DC, and it's destroyed if it takes 12 or more damage. Even if a specific snake is destroyed, additional snakes continue to cavort in the area until the duration ends. You can Dismiss the effect.

17TH LEVEL

BREATH OF CALAMITY — FEAT 17

NAGAJI

Your roar shakes the earth and splits the heavens. Once per day, you can cast *chain lightning* as a 7th-level innate occult spell. Any creature that critically fails its save against the spell is blinded and deafened for 1 round.

PRISMATIC SCALES — FEAT 17

NAGAJI

You can cause your scales to glow with scintillating, many-hued colors, protecting you from energy while dazzling foes. Once per day, you can cast *prismatic armor* (*Secrets of Magic* 122) as an occult innate spell, except the spell alters the coloration of your scales instead of causing you to be clad in armor. This difference is cosmetic, and the spell has all the same effects as normal.

NAGAJI TRAVELERS

Nagaji are very rarely found outside hot and humid climates. Their ophidian natures leave them sluggish in cold weather, and they require a certain amount of moisture to shed easily—excessive dryness can result in dead skin unpleasantly sticking to their scales. Areas that are unfamiliar with nagaji are also likely to mistake them for serpentfolk, a tragic misunderstanding that halts nagaji communities from spreading further.

VANARA (UNCOMMON)

Vanaras are inquisitive and mischievous monkey-like humanoids with short, soft fur, expressive eyes, and long, prehensile tails. Their handlike feet and agile builds serve them well in the jungle realms where most vanaras live.

Vanaras were born of the monkey god Ragdya's ambitious folly ages ago, to spread and applaud his mischief and to serve as ba-sadhak, blessed seekers of fortune who would draw their creator's eye to the cruelly hoarded treasure of mortal lords and immortal fiends. They earned the enmity of ancient rakshasa maharajahs for their derring-do, the scorn of the naga empire for their valor, and the friendship of many rural Vudrani who viewed them as a wild folk of deep divine portent. Such is the history of vanaras and their long survival against their many foes, from within the mahajanapadas of the deep jungle lands, the mountain ghats of Vudra, and the Impossible Lands.

If you want to play a character who embodies the struggle between self-betterment and self-expression, you should play a vanara.

BANDAAGEE VANARA

YOU MIGHT...

- Find it difficult to avoid pursuing a mystery or exploring a hidden area.
- Thoughtfully consider the consequences of your pranks or actions.
- Enjoy sharing the knowledge of things you've discovered with your friends.

OTHERS PROBABLY...

- Assume you have an animalistic demeanor and habits.
- Take a dismissive or hostile view of your pranks.
- Covet your easy grace and unquenchable curiosity.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Vanaras are humanoids with simian features, including a long, prehensile tail and handlike feet. They're rarely much taller than 5 feet, but they usually look smaller because of their slight, nimble builds. Vanaras are covered with a thin layer of soft fur over their entire bodies. This fur can be tan, brown, or golden and rarely has spots or stripes. The hair on a vanara's head grows thicker and more luxurious; it's easy to arrange into elaborate hairstyles, and many vanaras like to do so. This hair is nearly always of the same color as the vanara's body fur, with the exception of rare "whitecape" vanaras with manes of fine, pale hair, who might be born into any vanara family. Vanaras have large, expressive eyes and mouths with blunt teeth and pointed incisors. Vanaras are adults at 13 years old and usually live about 60 years.

SOCIETY

Vanaras are a varied folk who seek balance and comfort in their lives. Many are devout without being fanatics, tricksters without being malicious, daring without being foolish, and curious without being obsessive. Although aware of their deep ancestral connection to Ragdya, many vanaras feel a powerful desire to live beyond the grace of their god and his weight in their history, pursuing their own paths to enlightenment. Those vanaras who live in Vudra feel this need the most strongly, as they want to pursue virtue and self-knowledge to be fulfilled when their souls are next reborn into the world.

Although created by Ragdya, vanaras feel themselves apart from him in a way some find uncomfortable. Ragdya is the eternal trickster with supreme recklessness yet unchanging in his immortal permanence. Though most

vanaras cherish Ragdya's mischief and feats of folly on religious holidays, they also know he shall never fade from this world or find himself reincarnated into forms other than that from which the vanaras were shaped. Yet, vanaras aren't so immutable. A vanara must reflect on their own impermanent nature and consider its effect on their soul and their soul's quest for enlightenment. For all the mischief and daring Ragdya might enjoy without consequence, vanaras know recklessness and harmful tricks can impede their personal pursuit of enlightenment. The drive toward mischief and spontaneity instilled within them by their creator is hard for many vanaras to overcome and can create a lifetime of internal turmoil. This source of conflict has colored their development as a people who seek balance and virtue.

Vanaras look to the legends of heroic vanaras of the past for lessons on how to live their lives. The most notable and lauded accomplishment of these legendary vanaras, that which has them known even in the most far-flung ashram in the snow-capped border mountains of Vudra, was their grand act of trickery against Ravana, the greatest of all the rakshasa immortals. Ravana had tyrannically forced many noble souls, vanara and human alike, to construct a resplendent bridge of azure stones that would cross the planes from Vudra to the rakshasa's realm. Ravana demanded that each stone be carved to display a mewling visage of the mortal who toiled to cut and shape it. Through mischief and artifice, vanaras altered the carvings so that, when assembled, they subtly displayed components of a prayer to all the Vudrani pantheon. When the bridge was finally finished and Ravana marched across it with his army of fiends in a profligate parade, the shuddering of the stones beneath their footsteps mimicked the movements of the communal prayer. Deities drawn by this display toppled the immortal maharajah, and he still blames mischief-making vanaras for this humiliation. Many vanaras thus see it as their legacy to bring shame to the wicked and powerful by means of clever tricks and communal effort.

ALIGNMENT AND RELIGION

Vanaras are tricksters who love pranks, but they temper this tendency toward mischief with good intentions and a love of their community—however they personally define that community. They're rarely agitators or troublemakers simply for the sake of causing chaos; they do so to encourage humility among the inflexible or humorless. Most vanaras are mindful of the virtues necessary to elevate their immortal souls and try to act accordingly. Vanaras are thus most likely to be neutral good.

Most vanaras live in Vudra, where they're exposed to the dizzyingly abundant array of Vudran deities. Nevertheless, devout vanaras nearly always venerate Ragdya above all others. Priests of Ragdya lead most vanara villages. Even vanaras who aren't religious might call upon Ragdya to help them make wise decisions in times of danger or for guidance when an unlucky prank has caused them trouble they're unsure how to escape. Vanaras interested in developing self-control might worship Irori instead, and regions with local vanara hero-gods or avatars might engender faithful sects of worshippers on a small scale. Some vanaras revere the evil simian hunter Lahkgya, but almost never openly, as this deity of ferocious and sudden violence is unwelcome in most vanara communities. Some communities instead make offerings to turn Lahkgya's attention from them.

NAMES

Newborn vanaras aren't given names other than descriptors of their infant personalities or habits, like "Grip-Hand" or "Wailer." When they learn to speak, vanaras are given another name based on important historical or mythological figures, or they're given the name of a specific ancestor they resemble in appearance or attitude (or whom their community hopes they'll grow to resemble). The chosen name usually contains consonants or vowels the young vanara frequently uses, as vanaras don't see a lot of use in giving someone a name they can't easily pronounce.

RARITY
Uncommon

HIT POINTS
6

SIZE
Medium

SPEED
25 feet

ABILITY BOOSTS
Dexterity
Free

LANGUAGES
Common
Vanaran
Additional languages equal to your Intelligence modifier (if it's positive). Choose from Elven, Gnome, Infernal, Goblin, Sylvan, and any other languages to which you have access (such as the languages prevalent in your region).

TRAITS
Humanoid
Vanara

PREHENSILE TAIL
You can use your long, flexible tail to perform Interact actions requiring a free hand, even if both hands are otherwise occupied. Your tail can't perform actions that require fingers or significant manual dexterity, including any action that would require a check to accomplish, and you can't use it to hold items.

VANARA BACKGROUNDS

Vanara society, and its complex relationship with Ragdya, produces many adventurers who journey in search of greater insight into their nature of being and into other means that might provide them peace and enlightenment. Nearly all children are raised on the many embellished tales of their ancestors, vanara folk heroes, and their progenitor deity, and they emulate those stories as soon as they can. Thus, many vanaras have a background that evokes a colorful life prior to adventuring, such as criminal, entertainer, gambler, sailor, or scout.

Sample Names

Ashpaka, Chichipi, Haangeno, Hasa, Huanu, Kana, Nammem, Roprutu, Thathona, Unulu, Vivatu

VANARA HERITAGES

Both within and outside Vudra, vanaras have a variety of heritages. Choose one of the following vanara heritages at 1st level.

Bandaagee Vanara

Your family is one of many who claims to be descended from the regal vanara peacekeeping family called the Bandaagee. Bandaagee are the most common kind of vanaras. You're very familiar with the trappings of civilization and move easily through the most crowded communities. You ignore difficult terrain from crowds.

Lahkgyan Vanara

Your vanara ancestors might have been born in Ragdya's image, but they found survival only in service to his enemy: the red-faced Lahkgya. You have sharp teeth meant for gnashing and ripping into flesh. You can subsist on raw meat alone. You have a jaws unarmed attack that deals 1d6 piercing damage. Your jaws are in the brawling group and have the finesse and unarmed traits.

LAHKGYAN VANARA

Ragdyan Vanara

Keepers of traditions and tellers of ancient tales, your family traces its lineage to those born directly from Ragdya's whims. When you speak, others are inclined to listen to you, perhaps due to the divine spark of your connection to Ragdya. You gain one cantrip from the divine spell list; this cantrip can't deal damage or otherwise cause direct harm. You can cast this spell as a divine innate spell at will. A cantrip is heightened to a spell level equal to half your level rounded up.

Wajaghand Vanara

Your ancestors were forced into labor by the rakshasa immortal Ravana, the First and the Last. Although their cleverness while in captivity saved countless lives, and they're bound no longer, the time marked your family with scars upon the mind that will never truly heal, even across the generations. You gain a +1 circumstance bonus to saving throws against emotion effects, and whenever you roll a success on a saving throw against an emotion effect, you get a critical success instead.

VANARA ANCESTRY FEATS

At 1st level, you gain one ancestry feat. You gain an additional ancestry feat every 4 levels thereafter (at 5th, 9th, 13th, and 17th levels). As a vanara, choose from among the following ancestry feats.

1ST LEVEL

CANOPY SIGHT **FEAT 1**

VANARA

You can see equally well even in dense jungles where only a small amount of light shines through. You gain low-light vision.

CLIMBING TAIL — FEAT 1

VANARA

Your tail makes it much easier for you to climb. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus to Athletics checks to Climb, you gain the Combat Climber skill feat, and you reduce the number of free hands required to Climb or Trip by one.

SUDDEN MINDFULNESS ↻ — FEAT 1

VANARA

Trigger You roll a success on a saving throw against an effect that would make you fascinated or dazzled.

Your mind retains full awareness despite the best attempts of others, and your focus throws others off-balance. You get a critical success on the triggering saving throw, and if the triggering effect was caused by a creature, that creature is flat-footed to you until the end of your next turn.

VANARA LORE — FEAT 1

VANARA

You attained the cultural training of a ba-sadhak, a seeker of treasures and rare delights. You become trained in Survival and Thievery. If you would automatically become trained in one of those skills (from your background or class, for example), you instead become trained in a skill of your choice. You're also trained in the Vanara Lore skill.

VANARA WEAPON FAMILIARITY — FEAT 1

VANARA

You favor weapons steeped in vanaran tradition. You gain access to, and are trained with, the bo staff, chakram, katar, panabas, and urumi (*Pathfinder Lost Omens: Gods & Magic* 121). In addition, you gain access to all uncommon vanara weapons. For the purpose of determining your proficiency, martial vanara weapons are simple weapons, and advanced vanara weapons are martial weapons.

WHITECAPE — FEAT 1

VANARA

You're shorter and wider than many vanaras of your heritage, and the hair on your shoulders and your head is particularly thick and luxurious, like a majestic cape. This hair grows back supernaturally quickly if shorn. You gain the Steady Balance skill feat, even if you aren't trained in Acrobatics, and you can Step into difficult terrain caused by uneven ground.

Special You can take this feat only at 1st level, and you can't retrain out of or into this feat.

5TH LEVEL

DARTING MONKEY — FEAT 5

VANARA

You have a heightened awareness in combat, and your darting strikes prevent your foes from distracting you or breaking your focus. When you hit a creature of your level or lower while that creature is flanking you, flanking doesn't make you flat-footed to that creature. This benefit lasts until the start of your next turn or until the creature moves, whichever comes first. The creature can still help its other allies flank.

JUNGLE RUNNER — FEAT 5

VANARA

You run through the jungle as easily as you would through an open field. You ignore difficult terrain from underbrush within forests and jungles. You can always use the Take Cover action when you're within forest or jungle terrain to gain cover, even if you aren't adjacent to an obstacle you can Take Cover behind.

VANARA ADVENTURERS

Vanaras found afield are often champions, rangers, or rogues, but vanaras of every class view themselves as aligning with their beliefs, often with a special focus on their relationship with Ragdya and other gods. Vanaras who rely upon magic often find themselves serving as witches under the patronage of distant karmic entities or ancient spiritual allies to the gods, or oracles with unusual curses and mysteries.

WAJAGHAND VANARA

VANARA ENCLAVES

Outside Vudra, where their numbers are plentiful and their presence relatively high, vanaras are typically seen only in the city of Niswan in Jalmeray, where they dwell as any other citizen under the thakur's influence. They've accompanied various Vudrani settlers to coastal settlements and communities in deep jungles or forests.

RAGDYAN VANARA

RAGDYA'S REVELRY ↷ FEAT 5

VANARA

Frequency once per day

Trigger An adjacent creature you can see fails an attack roll against you.

You dart away from your foe's attack with a casual laugh, using the opening to cause mischief. You attempt to Steal an item from the triggering creature, ignoring the usual restriction that the creature can't be in combat.

SKILLFUL CLIMBER FEAT 5

VANARA

You can scamper up or down surfaces as nimbly as a monkey. You gain a climb Speed of 10 feet. If you have the Climber's Tail ancestry feat, your total climb Speed increases to your land Speed when climbing trees.

TAIL SNATCH ❖ FEAT 5

VANARA

You can whip your tail around to lash items from the unwary's grip. You attempt to Disarm a creature, ignoring the requirement that you must have at least one hand free. As normal, your tail can't hold the items it disarms.

VANARA WEAPON TRICKERY FEAT 5

VANARA

Prerequisites Vanara Weapon Familiarity

You've learned how to trick your foes using vanara weapons. Whenever you critically hit using a bo staff, chakram, katar, panabas, urumi (*Gods & Magic* 121), or vanara weapon, you apply the weapon's critical specialization effect.

9TH LEVEL

DANGLE ❖ FEAT 9

MOVE VANARA

Prerequisites Climbing Tail

You can hang by your tail from any suitable anchor point, such as a tree branch, balcony, or rocky outcropping (subject to the GM's discretion), typically while climbing. While hanging, you have free use of all your other limbs, so you can perform tasks that require both hands, such as firing a bow or swinging a bo staff. You can Release your tail to drop down, and you cease hanging if you take an action with the move trait.

LEGENDARY SIZE FEAT 9

VANARA

The vanaras of old were tricksters able to step across wide rivers or slip into impossibly small spaces. You can cast *enlarge* and *shrink* once per day each as 2nd-level divine innate spells. You can target only yourself and other vanaras with these spells.

RAGDYA'S DANCE ↷ FEAT 9

VANARA

Frequency once per hour

Trigger An adjacent observed creature succeeds at an attack roll against you.

Even when faced with deadly danger, you fight with the rapturous laughter of Ragdya in your heart and can play impossible tricks. After resolving the successful attack, the triggering creature must attempt a Will save against the higher of your class DC or your spell DC. On a failure, you and the triggering creature switch places. You and the triggering creature must each be able to fit in the new space, and your positions must be unoccupied.

RAKSHASA RAVAGED — FEAT 9

VANARA

Prerequisites expert in Occultism

You and your family know well the ravages of rakshasa predations, and you know how to best defend yourself against their growing corruption in the world. You gain a +1 circumstance bonus to saving throws against occult spells.

13TH LEVEL

MONKEY SPIRITS — FEAT 13

VANARA

Vanaras generally consider the spirits of departed monkeys to be less informative or interesting than their own ancestors traveling the cycles of existence, yet these monkey spirits can prove useful when the situation is dire. You can cast *mad monkeys* (*Pathfinder Advanced Player's Guide* 222) once per day as a 5th-level primal innate spell. You become an expert in primal spell DCs and primal spell attack rolls. If you choose flagrant burglary for this casting of *mad monkeys*, you can have the monkeys use your Thievery modifier instead of your spell DC – 10.

UNBOUND FREEDOM — FEAT 13

VANARA

Your future is no other person's to control, and the cycles of your fate sometimes step in to protect you when that control would be taken from you. Whenever you would gain the controlled condition, you can attempt a DC 17 flat check. On a success, you don't gain the condition.

VANARA BATTLE CLARITY — FEAT 13

VANARA

Your focus in combat is practically unshakable. While you can act, you aren't flat-footed to hidden, undetected, or flanking creatures of your level or lower, or to creatures of your level or lower using surprise attack.

VANARA WEAPON EXPERTISE — FEAT 13

VANARA

Prerequisites Vanara Weapon Familiarity

Thanks to numerous joyous practice exercises, you've become an expert in vanara weapons. Whenever you gain a class feature that grants you expert or greater proficiency in a given weapon or weapons, you also gain that proficiency in the bo staff, chakram, katar, panabas, urumi (*Gods & Magic* 121), and all vanara weapons in which you're trained.

17TH LEVEL

UNFETTERING PRANKSTER — FEAT 17

VANARA

You can uplift all around you with your pranks, causing you and your allies to receive divine guidance in all your movements to effortlessly avoid environmental hindrances. Once per day, you can cast *unfettered pack* as a divine innate spell. When you do so, you cast the spell by performing a divinely inspired prank.

NATURAL EXPLORERS

Vanaras might be found anywhere throughout the Impossible Lands. Those who seek discipline and greater insight into the arcane mysteries of existence have been known to gather within Nex's city of Quantium, where they trade knowledge of fiends and ancient koans as easily as others trade coins.

Vanaras are a known, albeit quite unusual, sight within the metropolis of Absalom. From there, a vanara's journey to find enlightenment and self-knowledge—or to escape the relentless cycles of their past—might take them anywhere in the world.

VISHKANYA (RARE)

Vishkanyas are ophidian humanoids who carry potent venom within their blood and saliva. Largely misunderstood due to old tales of their toxicity and natural finesse, vishkanyas work to grow into more than just what stories paint them to be.

The true nature of vishkanyas' origin is a matter of debate. Some vishkanyas believe they are rejected spawn of Ravithra, which explains the animosity between vishkanyas and nagas. Others believe themselves the stolen offspring of a forgotten progenitor whose name was excised from history. Regardless, one thing is quite clear: vishkanyas are survivors. Throughout history, fear of their deadly abilities forced vishkanyas to experience subjugation, exploitation, and ostracizing. Yet through it all, they endured. Now free of chains to bind them, vishkanyas live in close-knit groups, and use their love of storytelling and the arts to keep a detailed history of their people while they determine how best to proceed in a world ripe with opportunity.

YOU MIGHT...

- Have a powerful sense of community.
- Find peace and fulfillment in having a creative pursuit.
- Be adept at matching the environment around you to fit into any number of diverse situations.

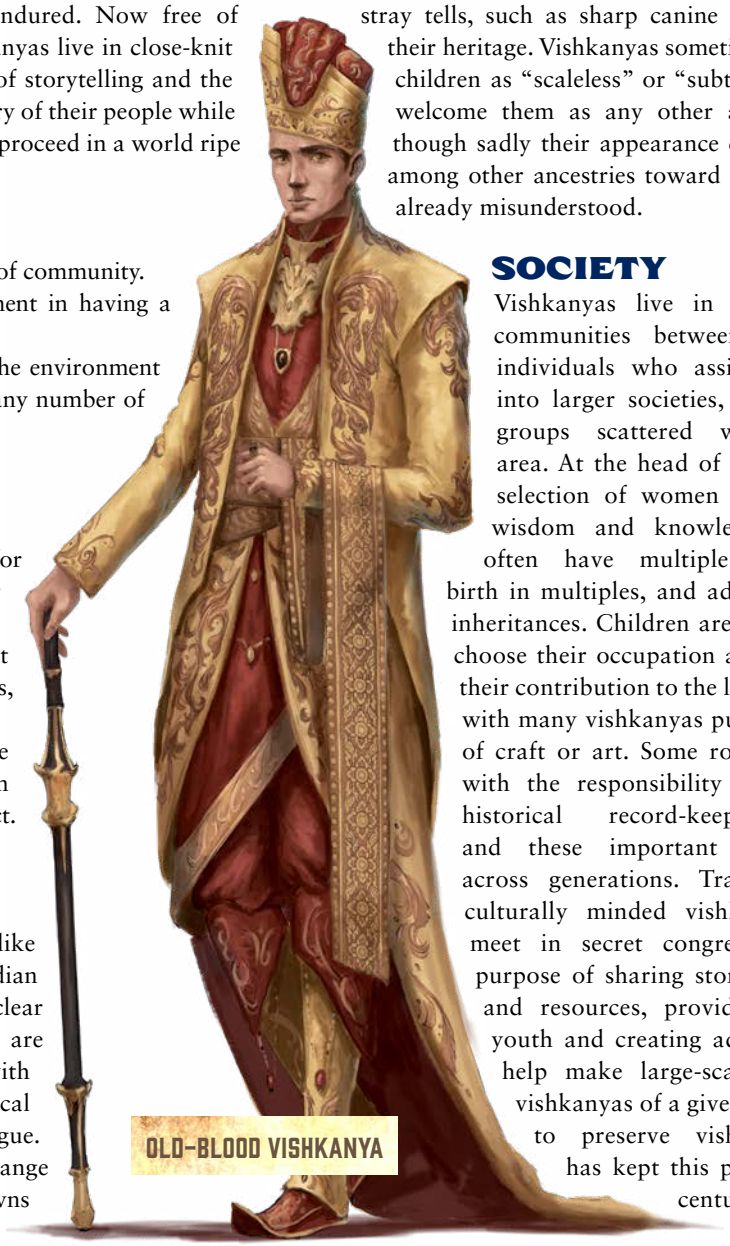
OTHERS PROBABLY...

- Initially mistake you for having a tiefling or draconic heritage.
- Think you are an expert in poisons, toxins, and espionage.
- Misunderstand the nature of your venom and fear physical contact.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Vishkanyas are humanlike in appearance with ophidian features that become clear in close proximity. They are naturally tall and lithe with bright golden eyes, vertical pupils, and a forked tongue. Their small, smooth scales range from earthy tones of browns and greens to bright displays of colored patterns. Hair color is typically of darker shades, though there are occasional instances of brighter colors through parts of the hair. Vishkanyan women are usually taller than the men, though neither ever truly stops growing. As such, vishkanyas can reach heights of 7 feet or taller in old age.

Mixed vishkanya families aren't unknown. Vishkanya offspring from this background sometimes strongly resemble their non-vishkanya parent, with only a few stray tells, such as sharp canine teeth, to indicate their heritage. Vishkanyas sometimes refer to these children as "scaleless" or "subtle" but otherwise welcome them as any other among their kin, though sadly their appearance can fuel paranoia among other ancestries toward a people who are already misunderstood.



OLD-BLOOD VISHKANYA

SOCIETY

Vishkanyas live in small, tight-knit communities between 50 and 100 individuals who assimilate discreetly into larger societies, with many such groups scattered within a larger area. At the head of these groups is a selection of women chosen for their wisdom and knowledge. Vishkanyas often have multiple partners, give birth in multiples, and adhere to maternal inheritances. Children are generally free to choose their occupation and the nature of their contribution to the larger community, with many vishkanyas pursuing some sort of craft or art. Some roles are burdened with the responsibility of cultural and historical record-keeping, however, and these important tasks continue across generations. Traditionally, these culturally minded vishkanyas regularly meet in secret congregations for the purpose of sharing stories, information, and resources, providing support for youth and creating advisory bodies to help make large-scale decisions for vishkanyas of a given area. The desire to preserve vishkanyan culture has kept this practice going for centuries, yet recently, some have called

for more open interaction with the world in an attempt to proudly share vishkanyan culture.

Vishkanyas are often mischaracterized as indiscriminately venomous or inherently malicious by other ancestries, which has led to them having very strong concepts of their own ethnicity and their separation from those they consider "outsiders." While most vishkanyas are gracious and hospitable to non-vishkanya visitors, a large stir often arises around the concept of allowing such people into their communities in a more involved capacity. Parents carefully watch any children who seem too attached to non-vishkanya friends, and talk of romance and marriage with another ancestry will inevitably provoke many a long family discussion—though not necessarily hostile ones.

Alignment and Religion

Concerned mainly with the preservation of their communities, vishkanyas tend to adopt neutral alignments. Vishkanyas who take to individualistic travel to teach others about their ancestry, or simply to experience the world, might be neutral or chaotic good. The topic of faith can be quite different among vishkanyan groups, with some sticking to old vishkanyan beliefs, and some to Vudrani deities like Likha or Ashukharma. Other groups outside Vudra might embrace local gods with tenets of freedom or the arts, such as Arazni, Cayden Cailean, or Shelyn, or divinities more specific to individual pursuits.

Names

Vishkanyan names often include short vowel sounds in the middle of the name, with a large number of fricative consonants pronounced most accurately with a forked tongue. Names are often chosen from momentous events in vishkanyan history or from matters related to the maternal line of the child. When they go through significant life events, vishkanyas may choose new names for themselves, and many often do so multiple times. Each name represents an important part of the individual's story—who they were, and who they have become.

Sample Names

Ashath, Casuthis of Guiding Hands, Enysi, Izith, Othasee, Riddle of Esaviz, Salthazar, Thasi the Ragebreaker

Vishkanya Venom

All vishkanya carry toxins in their veins, which manifest as follows.

Innate Venom

Your blood carries toxins deadly to all but yourself. You gain the Envenom action, which can deliver minor vishkanyan venom. The save DC for your venom is equal to the higher of your class DC or spell DC.

Envenom ◆

MANIPULATE

Frequency once per day

Through use of either saliva or blood, you use your innate toxins to apply vishkanyan venom to your weapon or a piece of ammunition. To use your blood, you must be injured, or you can deal 1 slashing damage to yourself as part of the action. The vishkanyan venom remains potent until the end of your next turn, or until you expend it as normal for an injury poison by either hitting a target or critically failing an attack roll.

Minor Vishkanyan Venom (injury, poison) **Saving Throw** Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** 1d4 poison damage (1 round); **Stage 2** 1d4 poison damage (1 round); **Stage 3** 1d4 poison damage (1 round)

Rarity
Rare

Hit Points
8

Size
Medium

Speed
25 feet

Ability Boosts
Dexterity
Free

Languages
Common
Vishkanya
Additional languages equal to your Intelligence modifier (if positive). Choose from Aklo, Aquan, Draconic, Elven, Goblin, Undercommon, Vanaran, and any other languages to which you have access (such as the languages prevalent in your region).

Traits
Humanoid
Vishkanya

Low-Light Vision
You can see in dim light as though it were bright light, so you ignore the concealed condition due to dim light.

Innate Venom
See left.

VISHKANYA BACKGROUNDS

Vishkanyan backgrounds commonly reflect the individual's or their family's role in the community, which can include artist, hunter, acolyte, or emissary. Those who leave to explore the world outside might be entertainers, gamblers, or guards. Their natural grace and agility make vishkanyas excellent rogues, monks, or rangers, although bards, swashbucklers, and alchemists are not unusual to see.

VENOM-RESISTANT VISHKANYA

VISHKANYA HERITAGES

Choose one of the following vishkanya heritages at 1st level.

Elusive Vishkanya

Your flexible body seems unnaturally fluid to some, though they can rarely put a finger on what seems strange about you. You can escape foes with ease. You gain a +1 circumstance bonus to checks to Escape. Additionally, you move twice as fast when Squeezing.

Keen-Venom Vishkanya

You're practiced with using your venom in combat, allowing you to employ your venom at a moment's notice. Your Envenom action doesn't trigger reactions that normally trigger on a manipulate action. Additionally, you gain the Venom Draw action.

VENOM DRAW ❖

Requirements Your Envenom action hasn't been expended.

You quickly envenom poisonous saliva on your weapon as you draw it. Interact to draw a weapon, and then Envenom it. This uses up your daily use of Envenom.

Old-Blood Vishkanya

You have a direct matrilineal line to the original group of vishkanyas upon the Vudrani ships that came to reclaim Jalmeray. Since then, your family has adjusted well to a new life in the Inner Sea. You become trained in Society (or another skill of your choice if you're already trained in Society), and you gain your choice of the Courtly Graces or Streetwise feat.

Prismatic Vishkanya

Your scales shimmer and catch the light in an intoxicating display of colors. You become trained in Performance (or another skill of your choice if you're already trained in Performance) and gain the Fascinating Performance feat.

Scalekeeper Vishkanya

You are part of the family of vishkanyas in your community tasked with keeping records of the history and experiences of your people. Your scholarly skill affords you a quick mind. Once per day, you can attempt to Recall Knowledge as a free action.

Venom-Resistant Vishkanya

Your body contains not just venom but numerous antivenoms. You gain poison resistance equal to half your level (minimum 1), and each of your successful saving throws against a poison affliction reduces its stage by 2, or by 1 for a virulent poison. Each critical success against an ongoing poison reduces its stage by 3, or by 2 for a virulent poison.

ANCESTRY FEATS

At 1st level, you gain one ancestry feat, and you gain an additional ancestry feat every 4 levels thereafter (at 5th, 9th, 13th, and 17th levels). As a vishkanya, you select from the following ancestry feats.

1ST LEVEL

ALABASTER EYES — FEAT 1

VISHKANYA

In place of the normal vishkanyan golden eyes, you were born with especially perceptive snow-white eyes. You gain darkvision.

Special You can take this feat only at 1st level, and you can't retrain out of this feat or into this feat.

LESSER ENHANCE VENOM — FEAT 1

VISHKANYA

Prerequisites Envenom

Your venom grows deadlier and more plentiful. You upgrade the vishkanyan venom you can apply with Envenom to lesser vishkanyan venom. Envenom's frequency becomes once per hour.

Lesser Vishkanyan Venom (level 1) **Saving Throw** Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** 1d6 poison damage (1 round); **Stage 2** 1d6 poison damage (1 round); **Stage 3** 2d6 poison damage (1 round)

SOCIAL CAMOUFLAGE — FEAT 1

VISHKANYA

You have the uncanny ability to quickly blend into the lifestyle of whatever settlement in which you find yourself. After residing in a particular settlement for at least 1 day, you gain a +1 circumstance bonus to checks to Impersonate to pass yourself off as a resident of that settlement. Additionally, you can use Deception in place of Diplomacy to Gather Information while in that settlement. The GM might decide you need more time in particularly large settlements to gain these benefits, or might decide you gain the benefits only while in a specific district or part of the settlement.

VISHKANYA LORE — FEAT 1

VISHKANYA

You deeply understand vishkanyan strengths and cultural traditions. You gain the trained proficiency rank in Performance and Stealth. If you would automatically become trained in one of those skills (from your background or class, for example), you instead become trained in a skill of your choice. You also become trained in Vishkanya Lore.

VISHKANYA WEAPON FAMILIARITY — FEAT 1

VISHKANYA

You favor weapons historically used in subtle work and in ceremony. You gain access to and are trained with the blowgun, fighting fan (*Pathfinder Lost Omens: Gods & Magic* 120), kris (page 221), kukri, and shuriken. In addition, you gain access to all uncommon vishkanyan weapons. For the purpose of determining your proficiency, martial vishkanyan weapons are simple weapons and advanced vishkanyan weapons are martial weapons.

5TH LEVEL

DEBILITATING VENOM — FEAT 5

VISHKANYA

Prerequisites Envenom

Your venom is particularly potent, affecting targets in different ways. When you gain this feat, select one of the following debilitations. When you use Envenom, you can choose to apply a debilitation to your venom to adjust its effects. The changes to each stage of the venom are listed. You can apply only one debilitation to your venom.

- **Hampering** (level 5) **Stage 1** –5-foot status penalty to Speed; **Stage 2** –5-foot status penalty to Speed; **Stage 3** –10-foot status penalty to Speed
- **Stumbling** (level 5) **Stage 1** no adjustment; **Stage 2** flat-footed; **Stage 3** flat-footed and a –5-foot penalty to Speed

Special You can select this feat a second time to gain the other debilitation.

RESTORING BLOOD — FEAT 5

VISHKANYA

Prerequisites Envenom

VISHKANYA ADVENTURERS

Vishkanyas may answer the call of adventure for many reasons: providing income for their community, developing self-expression and fulfillment, spreading knowledge and understanding of vishkanyas, accumulating stories of other peoples, or simply experiencing the world outside their family.

PRISMATIC VISHKANYA

VISHKANYA ENCLAVES

Vishkanya homes can be found wherever a community decides to settle, usually in or around other major settlements. Some reclusive groups can be found in the jungles or wetlands of Vudra. Those who traveled to Jalmeray typically make their homes in Niswan, as the Niswan community has slowly become more open. Other vishkanyas decided instead to settle in the forests or coasts of the island to create their own ideal communities.

SCALEKEEPER VISHKANYA

Your body can process an alternative to your venom that heals wounds. You can use your Envenom action to produce a blood restorative instead of vishkanyan venom. You can make a blood restorative at most once per 10 minutes, even if your Envenom action can be used more frequently. You or an adjacent creature can Interact to consume the restorative to regain 3d6 Hit Points. This is a positive healing effect. A restorative spoils at the start of your next turn.

When you reach 15th level, the restorative restores 5d6 Hit Points instead.

VISHKANYA WEAPON ARTS — FEAT 5

VISHKANYA

Prerequisites Vishkanya Weapon Familiarity

You are graceful and efficient in the use of vishkanyan weapons. Whenever you critically hit using a blowgun, fighting fan, kris, kukri, shuriken, or vishkanya weapon, you apply the weapon's critical specialization effect.

9TH LEVEL

ALLURING PERFORMANCE ◆◆ — FEAT 9

INCAPACITATION MENTAL VISHKANYA VISUAL

Requirements trained in Performance

Frequency once per day

You command the attention of those around you with an elegant display. Attempt a Performance check and compare it to the Will DC of each creature in a 15-foot emanation.

Critical Success The target is fascinated with you for as long as you perform (unless it breaks from the fascination, as normal for the condition) and is dazzled for 1 round or as long as it's fascinated, whichever is longer.

Success The target is fascinated for 1 round and is dazzled for 1 round.

Failure The target is dazzled for 1 round.

Critical Failure The target is unaffected.

MODERATE ENHANCE VENOM — FEAT 9

VISHKANYA

Prerequisites Lesser Enhance Venom

You upgrade the vishkanyan venom you can apply with Envenom to moderate vishkanyan venom. Envenom's frequency becomes once per 10 minutes.

Moderate Vishkanyan Venom (level 9) **Frequency** once per 10 minutes; **Saving Throw** Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** 3d6 poison damage (1 round); **Stage 2** 4d6 poison damage (1 round); **Stage 3** 5d6 poison damage (1 round)

SWIFT APPLICATION ◆ — FEAT 9

VISHKANYA

Prerequisites Envenom

You expertly combine the motions of attacking and coating your weapon with venom. You Envenom a weapon or piece of ammunition, and then Strike with that weapon. This counts against your uses of Envenom normally and can't be used if your venom is exhausted.

VIPER STRIKE ◆◆ — FEAT 9

VISHKANYA

Frequency once per minute

You move and attack with a swiftness that most can't follow. You Stride and then Strike. Your movement doesn't trigger reactions based on movement.

13TH LEVEL

STRONGER DEBILITATING VENOM — FEAT 13

VISHKANYA

Prerequisites Debilitating Venom, Moderate Enhance Venom

Add one of the following to the debilitations from which you can choose when you Envenom. These debilitations reduce the damage of all stages as noted.

- **Bungling** (level 13) Reduce damage by 1 die; **Stage 1** no effect; **Stage 2** clumsy 1; **Stage 3** clumsy 2
- **Devitalizing** (level 13) Reduce damage by 3 dice; **Stage 1** no effect; **Stage 2** drained 1; **Stage 3** drained 2
- **Nauseating** (level 13) Reduce damage by 2 dice; **Stage 1** no effect; **Stage 2** sickened 1; **Stage 3** sickened 2
- **Weakening** (level 13) Reduce damage by 1 die; **Stage 1** enfeebled 1; **Stage 2** enfeebled 1; **Stage 3** enfeebled 2

Special You can select this feat multiple times, choosing a different debilitation each time.

VENOM PURGE ❖ — FEAT 13

VISHKANYA

Prerequisites trained in Medicine

Frequency once per day

You produce a specialized venom that burns out other toxins and impurities in your body. For each disease or poison currently affecting you, attempt a Medicine check to counteract that disease or poison. As normal, your counteract level is equal to half your level rounded up.

VISHKANYA WEAPON EXPERTISE — FEAT 13

VISHKANYA

Prerequisites Vishkanya Weapon Familiarity

Extensive training has granted you an elegant control in the use of vishkanyan weapons. Whenever you gain a class feature that grants you expert or greater proficiency in a given weapon or weapons, you also gain that proficiency in the blowgun, fighting fan, kris, kukri, shuriken, and all vishkanyan weapons in which you are trained.

17TH LEVEL

GREATER ENHANCE VENOM — FEAT 17

VISHKANYA

Prerequisites Moderate Enhance Venom

You upgrade the vishkanyan venom you can apply with Envenom to greater vishkanyan venom. Envenom's frequency becomes once per minute.

Greater Vishkanyan Venom (level 17) **Frequency** once per minute; **Saving Throw** Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** 7d6 poison damage (1 round); **Stage 2** 9d6 poison damage (1 round); **Stage 3** 11d6 poison damage (1 round)

VICIOUS VENOM — FEAT 17

VISHKANYA

Prerequisites Envenom

The venom you produce is exceptionally potent and difficult to overcome. Your vishkanyan venom gains the virulent trait, requiring two consecutive saves to reduce the venom's stage by 1. A critical success reduces your venom's stage by only 1 instead of by 2.

VISHKANYA TRAVELERS

Outside Jalmeray, vishkanyas are rare. A small number found their way into the Mwangi Expanse, the Shackles, and even Absalom. Only a handful are known to have gone past that, as intercommunity communication covers only so much. Even so, vishkanyas might find their way anywhere that has need of a skilled blade or a talented artist.

Alkenstar

Nations

ALKENSTAR [LN]
Constitutional Monarchy
Capital: Alkenstar City (53,600)

Peoples

Dwarf
Fleshwarp
Garundi
Gnome
Halfling
Keleshite
Osiriani
Ratfolk

Languages

Dwarven
Kelish
Osiriani

Factions

Brass Guild

Goldhand Lodge

Shieldmarshals

Religions

Abadar

Brigh

Erastil

Irori

Torag

Resources

Alcohol

Jewelry/ Gems

Mercenaries

Ores

Seafood

Spices/Salt

Technology

ALKENSTAR
Shattered Range
Ustradi River
Lake Ustradi
Dongun Hold
Alkenstar
Gitna
Gunworks
Martel
MANA WASTES
Samsara Oasis
Geb's Rest
75 MILES
N
W
E
S

To many in Golarion, Alkenstar is synonymous with devastating firearms and advanced machinery, but the city-state is so much more. Even by the Impossible Lands' unique standards, the technologically-advanced Grand Duchy of Alkenstar is an impossible nation, a clockwork anomaly amongst archmage-founded empires. Alkenstar maintains a prosperous if precarious existence within the magic-ruined Mana Wastes, where wellspring surges of magical energy make spellcasting an incredibly difficult prospect. Without reliable access to spells to master their environment, Alkenstar has adapted to their chaotic surroundings by utilizing lab-forged science and soot-stained engineering. Unlike neighboring **Geb** and **Nex**, where supernatural coteries dominate politics, the Grand Duchy is a constitutional monarchy, where a High Parliament of mortal representatives elects the titular Grand Dukes and Duchesses. As increasing numbers of Gebbite and Nexian warmongers ready enchantments and forge monstrosities to renew their ancient hostilities, Alkenstar's gunslingers and inventors hone their twin disciplines of cannon and clockwork in vigilant pursuit of a detente.

Alkenstar might seem like a tiny beacon of civilization at the mercy of dangerous landscapes, roving monsters, and godlike wizards. However, it exists as a nation because of these challenges, not in spite of them. The Mana Wastes' magical storms might boil the earth in acid-blossoms and freeze the sky with lightning-snow, yet they're also cosmic forges, shaping the land into useful minerals and unknown substances for Alkenstar experimentation. The Mana Wastes' mutants and monsters might mount habitual attacks, but their raids also provide a clear and present existential threat, rallying the Alkenstari toward cohesion and unity. Even the systemic disenfranchisement of their neighbors provides enrichment for Alkenstar. While many societies in the Impossible Lands stake their stability and wealth upon magical privilege, such as Geb's hierarchy favoring the undead or Nex's scholarly mage-bureaucracy favoring the arcane, Alkenstar flourishes by opening its doors to their displaced migrants, such as living Gebbites or Nexians dispossessed of spellcraft, who in turn direct their valuable talents to benefit the Grand Duchy's industries and operations.

These examples showcase how Alkenstar transforms challenges into opportunity, but they don't explain how the city-state developed this resilient attitude, its tendency to meet daunting adversity with finesse and grit. Alkenstar's propensity to direct community efforts and individual innovations toward overcoming threats is a hard-earned tradition that goes all the way back to the city-state's founding. Many Alkenstari are proud of their people's ability to accomplish tremendous feats under pressure. They believe that incorporating the efforts of their smaller communities into the larger system will lead to their nation's success and stability.

This productive philosophy is bolstered by the foundational myth of how Alkenstar came to be. The nation started as a dream of amity and safety for the disenfranchised. **Ancil Alkenstar** (LN male human arcane engineer), the city-state's founder, was an outlaw inventor fleeing Nexian prosecution. A persuasive visionary, Ancil brokered alliances between various nomadic Ustradi human clans and fugitives of the Impossible Lands, all while using his technological prowess to improve life in the Mana Wastes. Following Garundi naming conventions, and in recognition of Ancil's seminal nation-building efforts, the inventor was appointed the leader of this allied polity, whose people named it "Alkenstar" in his honor.

Seeking to future-proof this alliance and transcend mere survival, the ambitious Ancil sought to broker alliances with the isolationist dwarves of Dongun Hold, undisputed masters of defensive engineering and gunsmithing. Against her advisors' wishes, **High King Anong Arunak** (LG female dwarf aristocrat; *Pathfinder Lost Omens: Legends* 14) of Dongun Hold met with him. After conferring assiduously with Ancil, High King Anong, in defiance of her court's conventions, authorized a policy of alliance with the Ustradi clans for mutual benefit and shared security—one which has lasted to this very day.

Thus Alkenstar began and remains a unity of visions shared by war-battered survivors and pragmatic technologists who work together to outpace entropy and refuse the status quo. Dongun Hold shared their secrets of firearms and siegecraft, while Ancil shared his knowledge of clockworks and alchemy to mechanize and innovate the city-state's industries and operations. This fellowship proved immensely successful; their alliance generated sufficient strength and innovation to fend off their many shared enemies of the Mana Wastes: mutant gnolls and giants, avaricious mages, ghostly legions, and worse.

This alliance has grown from strength to strength, resulting in Alkenstar's present status as a small yet potent city-state and contributor to the Impossible Lands' geopolitical stability and economic significance. On a nation-wide level, Alkenstar's openness to working with different peoples and adopting their skills has impelled them to their present apex of advancement. In recognition of how their technological dominance is predicated upon their multicultural history, Alkenstar continues to welcome migrants and transients, especially those with scientific and technical talents, or those possessing bravery and perseverance. The city-state's numerous guilds, hungry for infusions of new ideas, methods, and resources, eagerly court these newcomers to join their organizations. Dwarf pilgrims reconnecting with their Donguni kin, fugitive inventors of the Technic League, clockwork researchers from Absalom's Clockwork Cathedral—all these and more have ample opportunities to thrive in Alkenstar's workshops and factories.

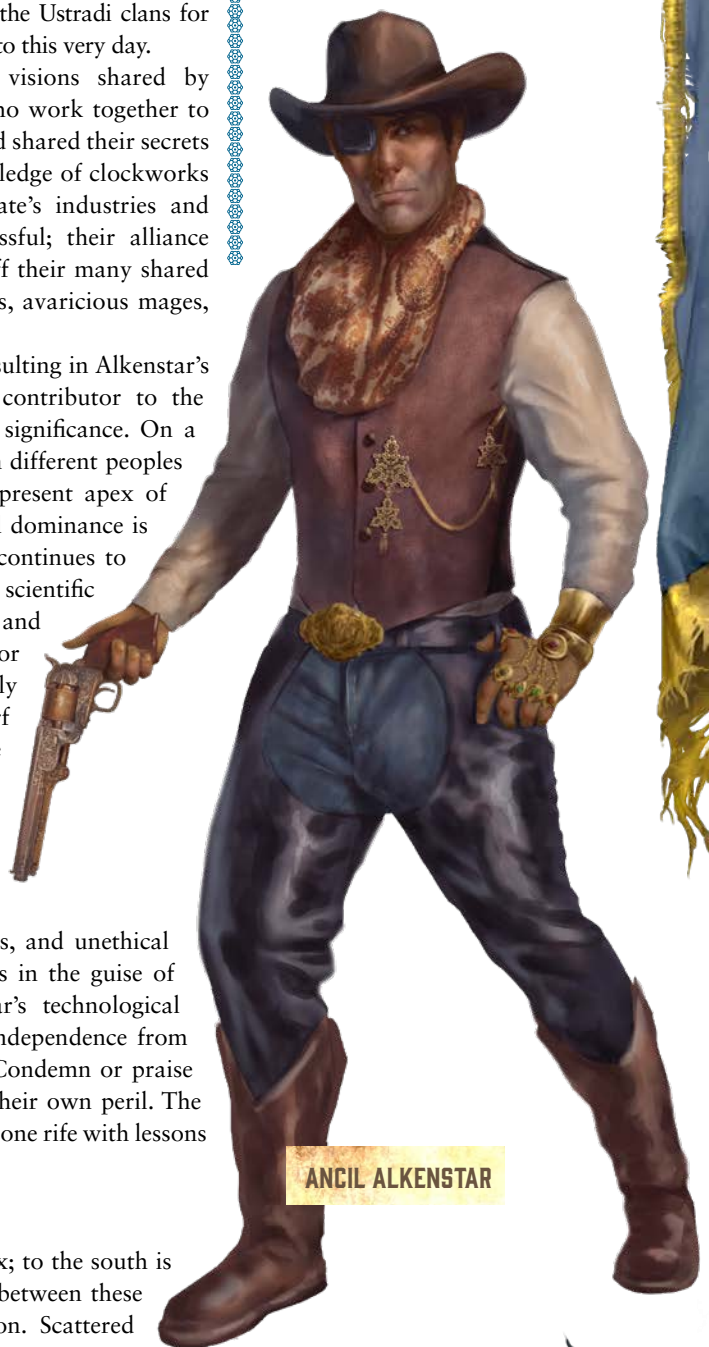
Detractors of Alkenstar lambaste the city-state as a polluted den of predatory politics, unstable weapons, and unethical experimentation, where the haves prey upon have-nots in the guise of stability and progress. Admirers marvel at Alkenstar's technological and diplomatic expertise in assuring their continued independence from abutting imperialists and belligerent marauders alike. Condemn or praise Alkenstar as one might, those who ignore it do so at their own peril. The Grand Duchy's reach far exceeds its grasp, and its path is one rife with lessons for every observer of politics in this Age of Lost Omens.

GEOGRAPHY

To Alkenstar's north is the magocracy of wondrous Nex; to the south is the necropoli of intractable Geb. The ancient conflicts between these two states brought about the Mana Wastes' ruination. Scattered

A GROUP EFFORT

While contemporary accounts cast Ancil as a singular genius who instantly gained the Ustradi clans' confidence and support, the actual process was far more gradual and methodical, requiring delicate negotiations and relationship-building before Ancil's leadership was firmly established. While it's true Ancil is the founder of Alkenstar, it can't be denied that the Ustradi clans of the region were critical in helping Ancil establish the city state.



ANCIL ALKENSTAR

RISING TENSIONS

Ostensibly, the Gunworks protects the Ustradi waters from giants, but that's often a politically convenient fiction. The main threats to the waters aren't usually giants in recent years, but increasingly common incursions from Gebbite agitator-saboteurs using necromantic poisons to further taint Lake Ustradi's headwaters. Alkenstar analysts hypothesize these saboteurs might be acting in hostility against the Gebbites' ancient Nexian rivals, as the river runs all the way into Nex. Despite the official policy of regional rapprochement, Alkenstar's overtures to Geb officials to cease such actions receive only performative, almost arrogant, disregard. The Gunworks thus find themselves tasked to protect these waters discreetly without causing international incidents.

across the Wastes are relics of this abandoned war: forgotten contingents of fragmented war-machines, half-cast spells sputtering havoc, and ruined battlemage towers. To the west are the mountains of the Shattered Range, where mutant-giants vie with jagged blade and stolen cannon for supremacy, and the headwaters of the mighty Ustradi River. Far past the coasts of the east is the Obari Ocean, wherein the wondrous island of Jalmeray resides.

The Gunworks

The primary source of firearms for Alkenstar—and by that merit, the entirety of Golarion—the Gunworks sits on the shores of the Ustradi River and Lake Ustradi. Its walls resemble a fortress, heavily armed and built to withstand sieges from those tempted by its stockpile of advanced weaponry. The Gunworks' pragmatic commanders have come to understand it's much easier to have local mutant-giants protect their water supply for them and thus continually co-opt these creatures as proxies into their regional security effort. Whenever Alkenstar intelligence discovers Gebbite intrusions, the Gunworks dispatches covert ranger-teams to deposit strategically-located caches of defective or outmoded weapons for mutant-giants to discover. Some giants already own such weapons, and many covet them, yet they remain scarce due to the giants' inability to mass-produce them, and so Alkenstar armaments have become greatly desired in giantish society. By allowing these caches to be found by smaller giants, the Gunworks also reduces the number of summertime giant raids on their facilities. The more powerful giants wage wars on their weaker kin to take their weapons, a process which reduces the overall giant population. In addition, when cannon-toting giants encounter Gebbite saboteurs, the ensuing violence usually thins both ranks. The Gunworks' ranger-teams then efficiently clear the area of survivors and retrieve these weapons, as well as evidence of Gebbite intrusion for the High Parliament to use as they see fit.

THE GUNWORKS

Hellfallen Cliffs

Perhaps no greater testament to Alkenstar audacity exists than the decision to build Alkenstar City atop the Hellfallen Cliffs, where the majestic 500-foot-high Alken Falls precipitates the great Ustradi River's rush to the Elemion. The Hellfallen Cliffs' steep ascent stymies scouts and warbands from Nex and Geb while affording Alkenstar snipers multiple positions for laying down deadly fire. Meanwhile, the mighty tread of the Ustradi River generates immense amounts of hydropower for the city's industries.

A gigantic rotating cylinder stands at the foot of the cliffs—laconically dubbed the Screw by locals, both for its looks and the taxes they paid for its construction. This clockwork contrivance facilitates trade and transportation. The Screw raises and lowers a massive iron grate (and everything on it, such as ships, cargo, and passengers) from the river's base to Alkenstar City above the waterfall. This process takes several hours, so an entire industry of Alkenstar money-changers, hawkers, entertainers, and other enterprising tradespeople have mushroomed along the Hellfallen Cliffs to cater to the platform's passengers, creating the affectionately-named Hellside district. While this mobile shantytown does a roaring business with merchants and travelers ascending to Alkenstar, the resultant hubbub and grime have also caused the annoyance of wealthier neighbors.

Martel

This trading hub along the Ustradi River to the west of Alkenstar City made its riches from mining the surrounding hills and plains for minerals both prosaic and unfamiliar. Alkenstar's industries have an insatiable appetite for ores and alloys of all sorts, and Martel's miners have shoveled lode after lode to feed the ravenous engines of Alkenstar manufacturing. Stately Martel's most prominent buildings are its massive, ornate bridge-towers, which serve as landing bays capable of servicing large fleets of dirigibles to and from Alkenstar City. The bridge-towers also house Martel's banks, clearing houses, and commodity markets, making financial transactions more convenient to process. Whenever the Mana Wastes' erratic magical weather permits, dirigibles waft to Martel in a steady stream, disgorging harried messengers and purposeful entrepreneurs into the bridge-towers to conduct their business.

While many of the nearby mineral veins have long since been depleted, the remaining mining companies which tough it out in Martel still send teams of prospectors westward into the Shattered Range to seek out newer veins to exploit, as well as north and south into the Mana Wastes to search for the ruins and rusted hulks of Gebbite and Nexian fortifications and war machines for them to dismantle and recycle. The intrepid Martelians' confidence is doubtlessly bolstered by the Gunworks' proximity, in addition their own sizable garrison of shieldmarshals—Alkenstar's renowned gunslinging lawkeepers—and clockwork guardians. Such extensive security has created rumors of massive underground treasury vaults beneath Martel, which are said to contain Alkenstar's national monetary reserves.

The Ustradi Waters

The large Lake Ustradi in the western Mana Wastes is the source of the Ustradi River. Coruscating lights and noisome mists dance across the water's surface, and serpentine shapes—not quite reptilian, not entirely mollusk—slice through their depths. Those drinking from these waters often experience unusual changes, as mutations wrack their forms and grant magical might. The nearby mutant-giants consider these waters sacred fonts and pilgrimage sites, guarding them fervently.

Alkenstar values these waters as well, though for more pragmatic reasons. The city-state processes these waters for safe drinking and industrial applications while also utilizing them for hydropower and steam power. Losing this water supply would severely disrupt the economy, which is why the Alkenstar government built the fortified Gunworks on Lake Ustradi's southeastern shore as both a garrison to protect their resources and a nationalized factory to perfect firearms production. While the main focus of the Gunworks is on the manufacture and selling of weapons, it also forms the front line of Alkenstar's defense from the mutant-giants' yearly raids.

Alkenstar City

City of Smog

Sitting on the cutting edge of technology in the Impossible Lands and beyond, Alkenstar is a place obsessed with time. Clocks are everywhere, allowing Alkenstari to measure, conceptualize, and work with time on a societal scale and level of precision unlike anywhere else on Golarion.

A simple way to understand the Clockwork Metropolis would be to compare the city with its horological namesake. Like a clock, Alkenstar constantly moves forward, marking time's passage with ceaseless research into new sciences and inventions. Alkenstar embraces the future, its population boasting a vast number of scientists and engineers, each striving to outdo competitors with discoveries and breakthroughs. A place which seems to run so it might stand still, Alkenstar seems forever on the cusp of innovations that both eclipse and elevate its previous accomplishments.

Continuing this metaphor, the city can be imagined as a clock with three wheels of different sizes. The balance wheel is intricate yet rugged and served by two escape wheels—one gleaming and immaculately maintained, the other pitted with verdigris and rust. As the three wheels move together, the clock moves, even as the movements generate friction and cumulative error. The balance wheel represents the city's leadership; like how the balance wheel and balance-spring are the mechanical heart of an actual clock that manages its timekeeping accuracy, the synergies and squabbles between Alkenstar's elite maintain the city's path and plan its developments. The two escape wheels represent Alkenstar City's twin districts, bisected by the Ustradi River; the pristine gear is the towering grandeur of eastern Skyside, while the corroding wheel symbolizes the magic-dead Smokeside's smog-marked industry to the west. Even as both districts' shared interests and movements keep the city running, their tensions and inconsistencies threaten to splinter the city, requiring constant corrections by citizens and leaders alike.

While Alkenstari aren't necessarily more disposed to collaboration, many understand the importance of innovation and technology, both of which yield exponentially greater results when implemented at wider societal levels. Innovation and technology are the mainsprings of Alkenstar's clockwork mechanism, the driving forces that propel energy into the system's gears. As a result, the Clockwork City is a cosmopolitan, meritocratic nation which eagerly accepts new members, albeit with the caveat they should possess technical expertise or, failing that, grit and capacity for hard work. Alkenstar's clans and guilds court individuals of resource and wealth, including deposed nobles seeking asylum and financial security and talented scholars desiring patronage. Different dialects and languages pose less of a problem to community integration when these various communities have the ability to communicate in the universal language of mathematics and numbers, allowing for an unusually vibrant concurrence of cultural diversity and scientific competency.

This isn't to say the city welcomes everyone. Due to the nation's position as a buffer state between nearby Geb and Nex, the geography of the magic-warping Mana Wastes, and Alkenstar's violent history of fighting the Wastes' mutant communities, many Alkenstari—especially older citizens—are notoriously suspicious of spellcasters and

ALKENSTAR CITY SETTLEMENT 14

LN METROPOLIS

Government constitutional monarchy

Population 53,600 (93% dwarves, 4% humans, 3% other)

Languages Dwarven, Kelish, Osiriani

Religions Abadar, Brigh, Erastil, Irori, Torag

Threats criminals, magical surges, Mana Wastes monsters, mechanical malfunctions, pollution, rogue clockworks, saboteurs, union busters, wasteland raiders

Source of Guns Firearms and cannons are available in Alkenstar even though they're uncommon in most of the world, and such items of up to level 18 can be purchased or commissioned in its specialized Gunworks.

High Chamberlain Lael Branain (LN male half-elf aristocrat 9) prominent bureaucrat

High Clockmother Athenth Llanalir (N female human cleric 15) head of the Church of Brigh

Ironmaster Ytharia Vulane (LN female human shieldmarshal16) commander of Alkenstar's shieldmarshals

Trietta Ricia (NG female human inventor 11) grand duchess of Alkenstar

mutants. Spellcasters visiting the city must register their presence with the shieldmarshals, Alkenstar's law keepers, and assist them with any magic-related investigations; strict curfews also confine spellcasters within the vicinity of Blythir College, the nation's only officially recognized magical academy, which teaches spontaneous spellcasters how to control their potent magics as well as trains Alkenstar officials in appropriate methods of dealing with chaotic magic. Mutants have it worse. The city fears and denies them entry then drives them away with gunfire. Since mutants aren't easily understood or categorized, most Alkenstari use "mutant" as a blanket term referring to anyone whose appearance doesn't conform to Golarion's common ancestries.

These contradictions sometimes leave the city lurching on the verge of collapse and, at other times, hurtle it toward unimaginable growth. In the face of looming geopolitical anxiety and constant geomagical catastrophe, the Clockwork Metropolis doesn't always run smoothly, yet it remains a bastion of industry and tenacity.

A DAY IN ALKENSTAR

Regardless of whether one resides in Skyside's luxurious penthouses or Smokeside's spartan tenements, many residents of the Clockwork City plan their day around the whispersheets—probabilistic projections of magical weather patterns around Alkenstar. Whispersheets define any given hour into two major categories—an hour of Bronzetime means higher chances for magical stability and predictable weather, while an hour of Surgetime indicates increased likelihood of magical surges and climate fluctuations. The production of whispersheets is a joint project between Alkenstar's temples of Abadar and Brigh; the Brigh priests use horometrical rituals and statistical analysis to generate the whispersheets, and the Abadarans handle the distribution and publication to everyone every day, free of charge. For the Brighite clergy, this arrangement allows them to share the liturgies and blessings of the Whisper in Bronze, while the Abadarans enjoy the publications' ability to condition public behavior and increase social order.

While some citizens decry the whispersheets (particularly Alkenstar elites who resent and envy the ideological power they provide the two temples), they remain popular with pragmatic Alkenstari. In an environment as chaotic as the Mana Wastes, any chance at security is desirable. In addition, the whispersheets also include news updates, discussions of technology and politics, and pedagogical materials on science and mathematics (all with a none-too-subtle slant toward Abadaran and Brighite values), making them valuable for the meritocratic city's lower classes seeking to educate themselves.

In Skyside, where the temples stand, the wealthy and powerful start each morning breaking their fast with dishes of saffron-spiced couscous and small cups of mint-spruced green tea while their viziers provide a rundown of what today's whispersheets portend for their business and political interests. This leisurely scene belies the bustle several hours earlier; as their employers comfortably slept, the household servants already started preparing the day's meals, rewound the keys for the estates' clockwork assistants, and dispatched their swiftest runners to collect whispersheets from the temples for viziers to study and analyze.

On days when Bronzetime is prevalent, Skyside's noble scions and captains of industry show greater appetites for risk; they make more ambitious plans, and some make the best of the day's projected stability to undertake business trips outside Alkenstar via their private fleets of ships and dirigibles. A daring few even visit Blythir College, the city's legitimate supplier of spellcasting services and magical goods, where they make discreet inquiries and unusual commissions of the college's mages. The High Parliament often chooses such days to hold sessions and debate motions. While members of Parliament vote and filibuster to profit allies and oppose rivals, scribes furiously pen the day's proceedings into meticulously annotated hansards.

On Surgetime-heavy days, Skyside is a picture of austerity. The well-paved thoroughfares become vacant boulevards as the rich ensconce themselves safely and entertain themselves with elaborate, time-consuming coffee rituals, with only their servants venturing out to run errands. On such days of magical flux, tradition dictates the city's mages cloister themselves within Blythir College, so as to contain any arcane accidents within the institution's premises. Guardians, living and clockwork, take long vigils over the college as well as Skyside's gates, walls, and waterways; sometimes particularly influential Skysiders requisition shieldmarshal protection for their holdings, a practice frowned upon but not expressly prohibited by Alkenstar's laws.

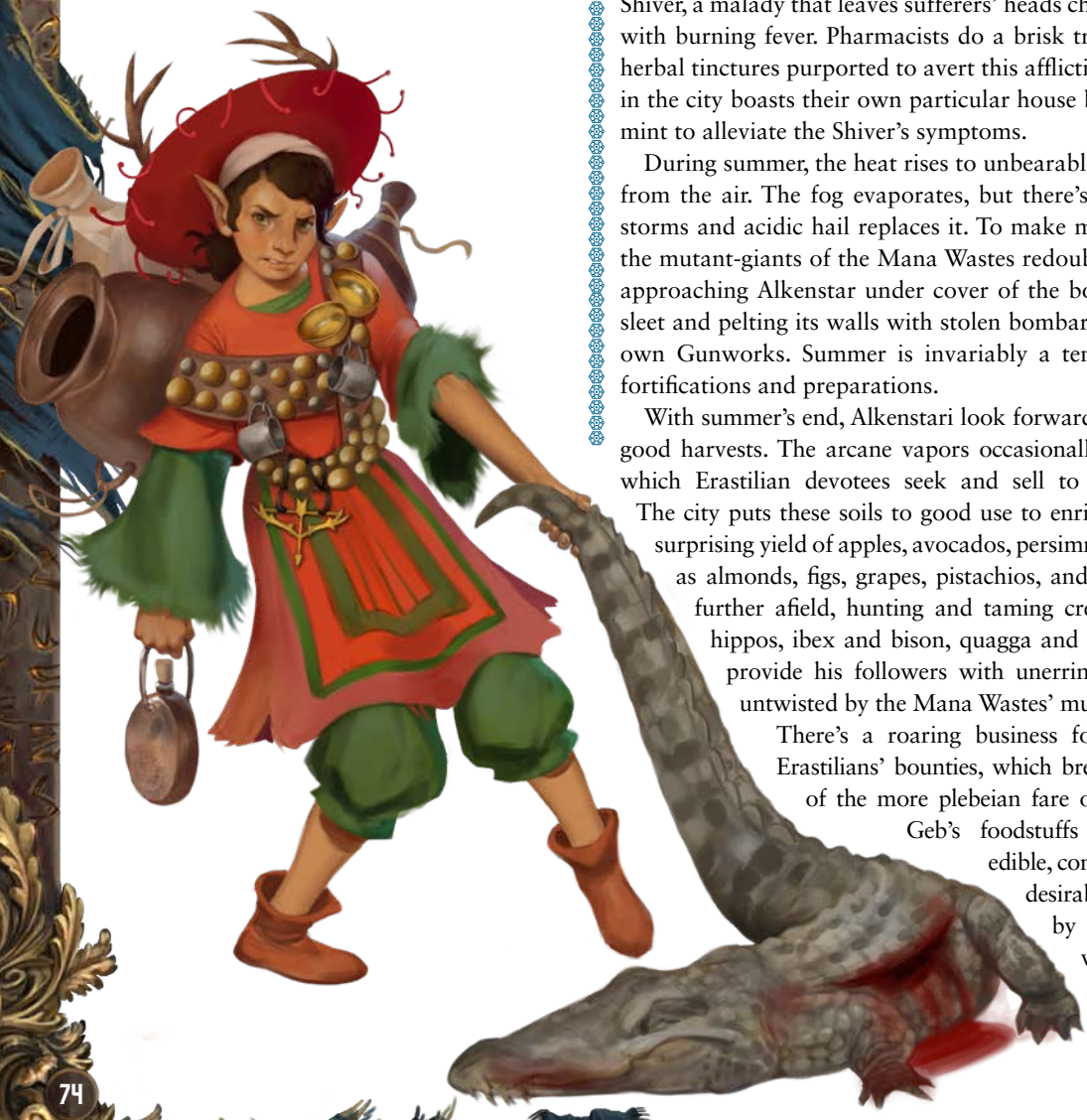
Across the Ustradi River, Smokeside is less precise with changing its behavior on account of Bronzetime or Surgetime. Smokeside exists within a permanent null-magic bubble, a fact that might lead newcomers to wonder how Surgetime's projections of arcane flux affect the district. During Surgetime, Alkenstar's inequities become even more pronounced, as municipal resources are deployed to protect and serve Skyside's elites, leaving scant policing for Smokeside—an open invitation for Smokeside's gangs and cartels to brazenly execute whatever heists, schemes, and atrocities they've been planning: robberies, kidnappings, assaults, contract killings, hate crimes. During Surgetime, Skyside's streets might be as silent as the grave, but Smokeside's streets often become literal graves for the vulnerable and poor. Whatever few shieldmarshals remain in Smokeside on these days are often overwhelmed by emergent crime waves, and officers often abandon their precincts in favor of providing private security to wealthy slumlords.

Due to the distance between Smokeside and the temples, by the time most Smokesiders get whispersheets, they're already several hours behind Skyside in accounting for the day's projections. This unequal access to information accentuates the many inequalities between the two districts; since Smokeside's factory owners refuse any drop in production, they direct their employees to start work early regardless of Bronzetime or Surgetime. When workers' unions voice objections, Smokeside's industry barons smile, claiming these work hours simply take advantage of natural light during daytime, and surreptitiously arrange for union-busters to handle the disappearance or subversion of union leaders. Thus, rain or shine, the foundries and smokestacks blaze with the relentless fires of industry while workers numb their fatigue and pain with endless cups of thick, milky tea brewed and kept hot in sizzling tins.

Conversely, Bronzetime sees more peaceful days for Smokeside. Shieldmarshals and clockwork guardians tirelessly patrol the streets; as much security protocol as security theater, this spectacle emboldens Skyside's agents and factors to venture into Smokeside to place and collect their orders. On these days, come nightfall, Smokeside

TROUBLED TIMES

Though kinder than the wastes, Alkenstar hosts more than enough of its own concerns. Criminals target those from beyond their borders, a disdain for those who seek to procure a future forged in shot and powder being the cause of their unceasing exploitation. Those who know the value of a firearm, be it an Avistani kingmaker or a mercantile prince of distant Vudra, would be more than amicable to fund acts of terror and sabotage if it would allow them to better secure a choke hold on the supply lines. Agents of the fallen Gorilla King and giants displaced by the coercive presence of the Great Maw of Rovagug plot their own schemes against Alkenstar, for no expansion is possible when the great bombard remains aimed at their people.



becomes an entertainment district popular among Skysiders seeking risqué pleasures frowned upon in their stuffy district. Many Smokeside workers pull double shifts, laboring in factories by day and becoming croupiers, taxi-dancers, cooks, and other thrill-providers at night, to feed the Skysiders' appetite for danger and excitement. Factories become casinos and brothels, and five-foot ways become coffee stalls and restaurants. While some of these workers own their businesses and enjoy the fruits of their labors, most are pressed into service (and poorly paid, if at all) by their rapacious employers. Drawn from Smokeside's luckless refugees, orphans, and outcasts, these workers experience days and nights that meld into smudges of exhaustion and exploitation; all too often, their blood and tears lubricate the wheels of the Clockwork City's wealth and pleasure.

A YEAR IN ALKENSTAR

For most of the year, a dismal mix of dust and fog envelops the city-state of Alkenstar. The Mana Wastes' magical surge winds churn the Ustradi's warm waters into drizzling backflows, which are tossed to the Shattered Range's colder peaks before dipping back again into the Ustradi, creating arcane fogs that hug the river's surface. Since Alkenstar is built on the Hellfallen Cliffs, where the river runs through and cascades into the mighty Alken Falls, this fog often drapes over the city, melding with the fumes and smog of Smokeside's countless workshops to form a uniquely Alkenstar miasma of clag and muck.

During spring, this oppressive mugginess gives rise to the notorious River Shiver, a malady that leaves sufferers' heads chilly even as their limbs perspire with burning fever. Pharmacists do a brisk trade in alchemical potions and herbal tinctures purported to avert this affliction, and every cafe and tea stall in the city boasts their own particular house blend of green tea infused with mint to alleviate the Shiver's symptoms.

During summer, the heat rises to unbearable levels and scours all moisture from the air. The fog evaporates, but there's no respite to be had, as dust storms and acidic hail replaces it. To make matters worse, summer is when the mutant-giants of the Mana Wastes redouble their raids on the city-state, approaching Alkenstar under cover of the bone-dry siroccos and sulfurous sleet and pelting its walls with stolen bombards and cannons from the city's own Gunworks. Summer is invariably a tense time which tests the city's fortifications and preparations.

With summer's end, Alkenstari look forward to both the giants' retreat and good harvests. The arcane vapors occasionally create soils of great fertility, which Erastilian devotees seek and sell to Alkenstar nationalized farms. The city puts these soils to good use to enrich the farms, which produce a surprising yield of apples, avocados, persimmons, and pomegranates as well as almonds, figs, grapes, pistachios, and dates. Erastilians also venture further afield, hunting and taming creatures such as crocodiles and hippos, ibex and bison, quagga and eland; the Stag God's blessings provide his followers with unerring wisdom in finding livestock untwisted by the Mana Wastes' mutating surge storms.

There's a roaring business for this local produce and the Erastilians' bounties, which break up the year-long monotony of the more plebeian fare of Gebbite food imports. While Geb's foodstuffs are certainly nutritious and edible, connoisseurs claim a certain lack of desirability in food produced and sold by the undead. The trade balance with Geb is maintained by selling the desired Alkenstar ice wine to Gebbite patricians; during the fall and winter months, the

Ustradi fog sometimes condenses into erratic, icy swathes, flash-freezing patches of berries and grapes. These fruits, frozen on their vines, are integral for producing Alkenstar's ice wine, a prestigious and potent beverage sold at high premiums to the eager aristocrats of Geb.

Each year, the citizenry also looks forward to the safe launch and return of the Observation and Research Expeditions. These publicly funded expeditions—often shortened to 'Observers'—take place once a year, setting off and returning usually, but not always, before summer's flensing dust storms. These expeditions involve deploying fleets of dirigibles and ships across the Mana Wastes to study, discover, and understand new phenomena and resources. Each vessel is served by a diverse crew of Smokesiders and Skysiders, selected every year in grueling examinations that produce the city's most promising and intrepid scientists and explorers. Taking advantage of the anti-magic zone's stability, sizable docks have been built in Smokeside to launch these vessels. When the Observers set forth or return, Smokeside becomes a sea of fluttering sails shining in the gleam of gunmetal and flashing of proudly painted flags. Every urchin in Smokeside beholding this splendor dreams of joining the Observers to leave their lives of squalor, while every Skyside noble across the river gripes and grouses over the hefty taxes to fund this spectacle.

Yet, Alkenstar patricians still fund this spectacle, for the Observers serve three important strategic interests. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, the Observers gather raw data necessary for the temples of Brigh and Abadar to create accurate whispersheets. A society that runs on information has to get its information from somewhere; just like how clockworks require periodic rewinding, the information flowing into the Clockwork City must also be refreshed every year. The Observers are the primary source of information, which eventually grants some measure of much-sought stability to all aspects of Alkenstar life, every single day of the year.

Secondly, the Observers are reconnaissance teams which gather valuable intelligence in plain sight. In the process of conducting scientific research on the Mana Wastes' landforms and societies, the Observers also gather a lot of information about regional opportunities and vulnerabilities, which they analyze and provide to their Parliament backers and guild sponsors.

Lastly, the Observers are unparalleled instruments of increasing political goodwill toward the ruling class. Domestically, they help Skyside elites manipulate and appease Smokesiders; the Observers' egalitarian recruitment policy is a performance of meritocracy that affirms Alkenstar imaginations of their city's opportunities and wonders. Anyone, through the dint of hard work and brilliance, can join the Observers—or so the discourse goes. For all the opportunities the Observers provide impoverished individuals, they serve as a hegemonic tool to reinforce the city-state's systemic

lines of class and privilege. During Parliamentary election years, the Observers become incredibly baroque affairs as individual Parliament candidates spend lavish amounts on dirigibles and vessels to remind voters of their contributions to society.

Internationally, the Observers increase Alkenstar's visibility and improve awareness of Alkenstar technology to the rest of Golarion. In recent years, the Gunworks have licensed these teams to sell small amounts of firearms, which raises the profile of Alkenstar weaponry in other regions—subsequently increasing industrial demand for the Gunworks' munitions. The charismatic Observer teams also captivate onlookers with their verve and brilliance, leading to a swell in the numbers of migrant laborers and capital investments seeking to enter the Clockwork City.

PEOPLE OF ALKENSTAR

Contemporary Alkenstar society displays many influences from the customs and values of the Garundi Ustradi clans who founded the city-state together with Ancil Alkenstar. While Alkenstar's ethnic composition has changed over the years due to the aggressive courtship of migrant laborers and the affluent from all across Golarion, both everyday life and general philosophical ideals remain rooted in Garundi concepts of hierarchy and value.

For example, in accordance with Garundi traditions of hospitality, the Ustradi clans sheltered Ancil Alkenstar when they found him fleeing into the Mana Wastes. Etiquette allowed Ancil to stay for a year as the clans' guest, but thereafter, he would have to leave their community or pay tribute in goods and services to be integrated into the clans as a member of the lowest rung of society. In the Mana Wastes, this tradition took on especial significance; if one turned guests away, they could die from mutant attacks, thus hurting one's reputation and morale. Worse yet, guests could become mutants themselves, creating yet more problems for the community. From enlightened self-interest, the Ustradi clans began to see guests, resources, and challenges as part of larger systems, which allowed them to identify what they wanted to absorb into their society and what they wanted to reject and protect themselves from. Thus, when Ancil provided technological gifts and solutions to each of the clans, and slowly worked his way into prominence and influence, the Ustradi clans perceived Ancil as a useful individual to absorb into their system.

Reflecting this historical relationship, contemporary Alkenstar society is a blend of Garundi traditions of hierarchy with contemporary ideas of meritocracy and corporatism. When confronted with a new situation or phenomenon, Alkenstari are likely to study it to classify what's meritorious and useful (and thus to be incorporated into the Alkenstar system) and what's harmful and not useful (and thus to be discarded). While society remains Garundi dominated, Alkenstar encourages inflows of people and ideas that add value to society, leading to the creation of

today's ethnically diverse population. Gnomes wishing to study the Mana Wastes' outbursts of magic and the city's unusual clockworks as well as dwarves visiting Dongun Hold can often be found in the city. Alkenstar welcomes these visitors in the pursuit of geopolitical stability and economic growth, constantly seeking meaningful diplomatic and economic ties with other nations. Given Alkenstar's position as a buffer between brinkmanship-happy superpowers, along with its industrial status as a producer and exporter of expensive military equipment, this tiny city-state always welcomes more friends and potential markets.

On an everyday level, Alkenstar has a cosmopolitan attitude and appetite for imports. Despite their remote location, its citizens hunger for products, news, and trends from the rest of the world. Alkenstar merchants and designers work tirelessly to import or replicate consumer goods and services from other regions. Visitors might be surprised to find enthusiastic advocates in Skyside for diets and breathing exercises from Jalmeray and Thuvian floral supplements; in Smokeside, one might meet fervent drinkers of Tian Xia fruit teas with tiny tapioca balls, who swear by the efficacy of these drinks to quell the haze of the countless factories. If there's a fad, fashion, or fancy somewhere in the world, there's likely a place for it in Alkenstar.

This openness and consideration of ideas might explain the Alkenstar propensity for working with science and technology. Situated in the spell-twisted Mana Wastes, every aspect of the landscape encapsulates an omnipresent duality of potential pitfall and dormant resource. Alkenstar lionizes the technical knowledge and technological mastery needed to overcome these challenges and exploit these opportunities. Scholars, alchemists, and inventors of all sorts are respected for their scientific expertise and ability to synthesize solutions for the city-state's desires.

After all, science and technology bring the Alkenstari unmistakable benefits. As a people whose insights and industries overcame their sparseness of arable land and surfeit of environmental hazards, Alkenstari are proud of their resourcefulness and technical know-how and tremendously confident in the power of research and development to create all kinds of useful new innovations. Technology allows Alkenstari to change their fates, to transform the bad and dangerous into the good and meritorious; some even wax lyrical that the city itself is a foundry for people that helps Alkenstari become the best they can be in service of the overall community's prosperity and progress. A popular local saying best evokes this ethos: "Industry makes cities out of wastelands; indolence makes wastelands out of cities."

Underpinning this faith in technology and esteem for meritocracy is a darker obsession with personal merit and manifest destiny. The same ethos and environment that provide structure and inspire purpose for many Alkenstari also exhort them to internalize certain pernicious tautologies. Many believe those who succeed deserve to succeed in the first place, while those who fail possess some internal lack of merit which dooms their efforts. Technological paradigms are applied liberally to the self; individuals must improve on themselves like they would fine-tune the machinery of the Clockwork City, to become components that better suit Alkenstar's systems, rather than attempt to effect any systemic change which could improve individuals and communities' lives.

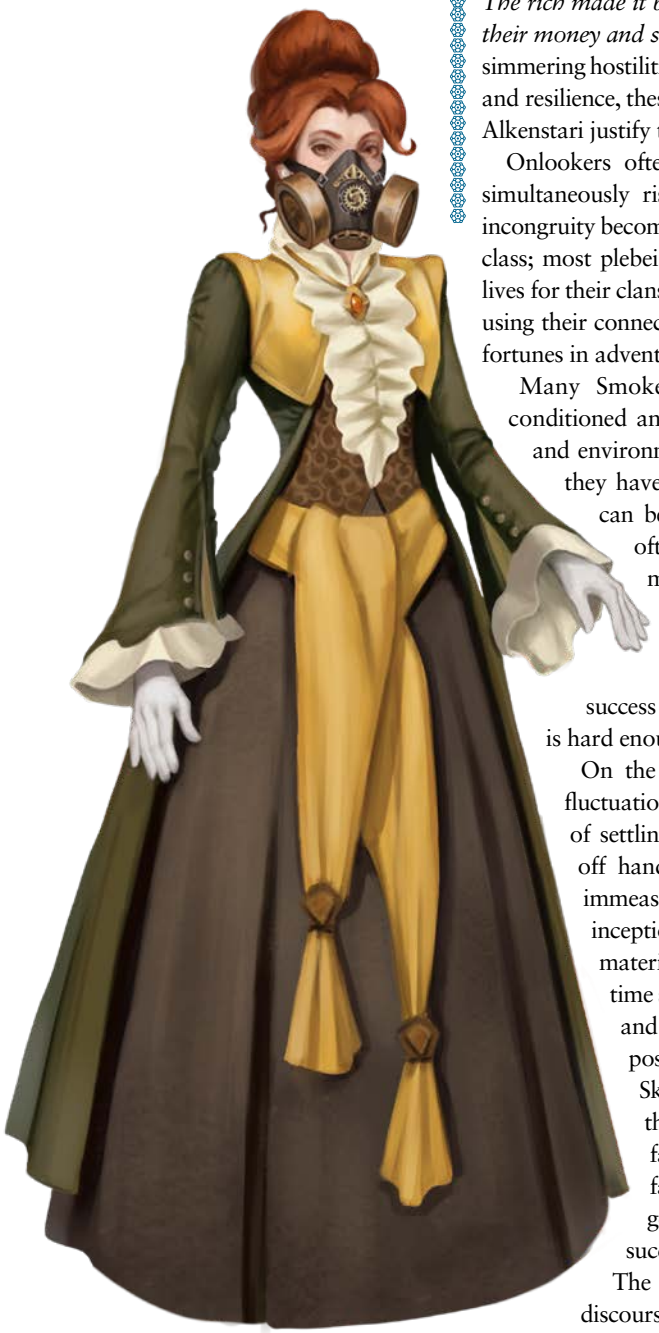
The constant and proximate howling chaos of the Mana Wastes forces many Alkenstari to confront the absurdities and incongruities of creation; Alkenstar's steadfast belief

ALKENSTAR ICE WINE

Brewed from grapes that flash froze in one of Alkenstar's unseasonable magic blizzards, Alkenstar's ice wine has found an unusual market in Geb. Jaded vampiric sybarites and fashionable ghoulish trendsetters savor each rare import with impatient delight. Demand for this beverage in Geb comes from that nation's Dead Laws, which forbid channeling positive energy. Alkenstari ice wine's refreshing effulgence comes from trace amounts of positive energy created by planar essence released by the Mana Wastes' wellspring surges of wild magic. These positive energy fragments are absorbed by the grapes and retained in the wine. Thus, undead drinkers have a slightly reduced immunity to this alcohol's effects, allowing them to enjoy the sensations of inebriation.

ALKENSTAR FASHION

Everyday wear in Alkenstar is a pragmatic admixture, as many eschew high fashion to dress practically for their environment. Citizens favor linen robes and wraps during the hotter seasons and leather longcoats and hats during the long, foggy spells; filter masks are worn year-round to ward off the City of Smog's noxious fumes and airborne malaises.



in technology is perhaps a desire to inscribe the significance of their own continued existence into the insensate furor of the Mana Wastes. Since the city's inception, the forbidding Mana Wastes have killed, maimed, or irrecoverably mutated the majority of settlers and migrants seeking to make their homes in the Clockwork City. Why does this majority die, and why do some survive? Why do surge storms seize and hurl trains of securely-fastened wagons into the warp wastes, only to cease and spare the lives of a solitary wanderer? Why do the healthiest sicken and transform from the waste winds, while graybeards and suckling babes might avoid the worst of these contagions?

Desperate answers to these haunting questions inform the city-state's zeitgeist: "*We made it here because it's our destiny to have a good life*"; "*We made it here because we're better than the others who didn't survive*"; "*We worked hard to survive and so we deserve to thrive.*" Even within the city walls, beyond the ravening bedlam of the Wastes, these thoughts persist, helping Alkenstari account for why some become rich and successful while many others remain penniless and destitute. "*The rich made it because it's their destiny to be rich. The rich made it because they're better than the poor. The rich worked hard for their money and so they deserve to thrive.*" As a militant nation caught between simmering hostilities and founded on national virtues of resourcefulness, industry, and resilience, these meritocratic narratives double back onto themselves to help Alkenstari justify the vast divides between the haves and have-nots.

Onlookers often make the curious observation that Alkenstar society is simultaneously risk averse as well as prone to taking immense risks. This incongruity becomes clearer when one analyzes an additional dimension of social class; most plebeian Alkenstari work hard and bide their time to make better lives for their clans and themselves, while Alkenstar patricians are accustomed to using their connections and reputations to make, lose, and remake unthinkable fortunes in adventurous capitalist endeavors.

Many Smokesiders' aversion to risk comes as a learned response, conditioned and reified by their everyday experiences of how their society and environment functions. Their resolve and tenacity to hold onto what they have is underpinned by their constant awareness of how easy it can be for them to lose everything to the Mana Wastes or, more often, the wealthy Skysiders across the river. The presence of so many uncertainties in Smokesider life, from the hostile climate, mutant attacks, regional tensions, and a predatory Parliament, encourages their cautious conservatism in making decisions and shepherding resources as well as forms their rubric to success and social mobility in the Clockwork City. Life in the Wastes is hard enough, the popular reasoning goes; why make things harder?

On the other hand, it isn't uncommon for Skysiders to treat the fluctuations of gain and loss as a game of luck. The very enterprise of settling in the forsaken Wastes is a huge gamble, one which paid off handsomely for the founding Ustradi clans who have become immeasurably rich since they backed Ancil Alkenstar at the city-state's inception. The clans' wealthy inheritors and nepotists have seen new materials and inventions come and go in Alkenstar's history, each time shaking, disrupting, and eventually shaping the city's industries and economy. With so many uncertainties and complexities, it's possible to make a fortune faster than one can spend it; thus, Skysider clans and guilds use their accumulated wealth to fund their members' plans. When Skysiders tycoons' riskiest ventures fail, Alkenstar society forgives and reassures them it isn't their fault since luck simply wasn't on their side before providing generous funds to try another foray or ten. When a gamble succeeds, Alkenstar society valorizes their courage and foresight. The discussion of luck becomes somewhat muted in public discourse, instead skewing toward discussions of manifest destiny.

With luck playing such a formative position in shaping Alkenstar perspectives, it's no surprise one of the city's most common pastimes is gaming. A board game favored by rich and poor alike is coaches, where two players take turns moving playing pieces, the titular coaches, across and off the board. The player who gets the most pieces off the board in the shortest amount of time wins. Coaches is a game of luck and skill, where dice rolls and movement of pieces represent the harrowing experience of transporting wagons and coaches across the Mana Wastes—bad rolls represent surge storms which can remove entire trains of coaches, while overly cautious play causes slow journeys and decreases the possibility of victory. This game unites the dichotomy of Alkenstar attitudes toward risk and strategy elegantly across social classes. While this game is popular in Skyside coffeehouses as a means for the gentry to practice foresight and risk management, the game reaches its apogee in Smokeside, where every tea stall is well-furnished with game boards, drawing players who wish to test their wits and guts as well as crowds of onlookers, bookmakers, and bettors.

Technically, it's illegal to bet on these games, but the innovative Alkenstari have, of course, developed legally dubious, though not officially disallowed, circumventions of these bans. In Smokeside, florists selling hardy desert flowers and succulents, tagged with distinctive, colorful paper ribbons, are always found near the establishments and gathering places haunted by coaches enthusiasts. Instead of betting on winners or losers, gamblers place orders on the plants sold by these peddlers. Losers of bets must pay for these purchases, while winners receive them as gifts. Every week, the game organizers host a special auction for goods and services, where shoppers can pay with coinage or with suspiciously familiar desert vegetation. The robustness of these plants makes them well-suited for continued loops of sale and resale—after every week's auction session, the much-trafficked greenery returns to the hands of the street florists, who painstakingly create and retie new patterns of ribbons on them to ensure verification and scarcity of this verdant currency.

The influential clergies of Abadar, Brigh, and Irori, concerned with industry, responsibility, and self-improvement, frown upon the widespread playing of this board game and launch many reproachful essays, sermons, and morality plays remonstrating what they view as addiction to this pursuit. Many players attend these sessions, trying to look suitably chastised, after which they collect the priests' pamphlets and sell them to the florists to make ribbons for next week's auction. The Alkenstar government, acting under clerical pressure, has taken action, though as they're loathe to lose out on potential means of revenue, they haven't stopped these games. They've chosen to simply regulate the betting by taxing the city's florists, tea, and coffee, all of which are consumed by players of coaches in one way or another. This taxation doesn't address the priests' concerns but has reduced the number of games in public, placating the outraged clerics. The substantial taxes, which eventually contribute to Parliament's donations to city temples, doesn't hurt either.

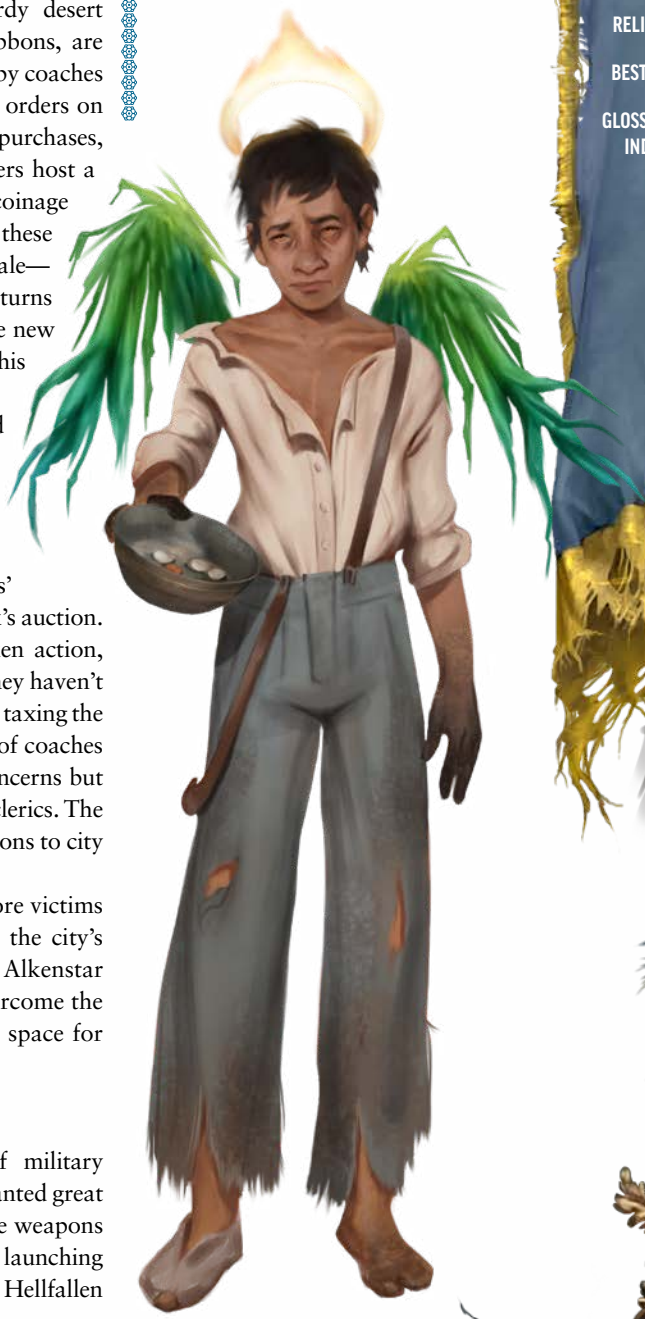
Alkenstar's emphasis on fortune creates a desire to deny and ignore victims of misfortune. The poor, infirm, or wounded who can't work to the city's perfectionist standards are often derided as lazy and indolent. Alkenstar society is quick to blame people for not trying hard enough to overcome the harshness of their circumstances, rather than empathize and hold space for the realities of their experiences and existences.

CULTURE

Alkenstar invests greatly in the research and development of military technology. The ensuing innovations in ordnance and tactics have granted great efficacy in defensive warfare operations. The most infamous of these weapons is the Great Maw of Rovagug, an immense mega-cannon capable of launching devastating three-ton shells. Originally built into the side of the Hellfallen

PERSECUTION

Many Alkenstari see the Mana Waste mutants as the ultimate victims to be avoided, or even destroyed. This animosity toward mutants has led to widespread moral panics. Since most mutants, by definition, are different from each other, it's hard to define what is or isn't a mutant. For a city so enamored with science, Alkenstar has extremely insular and backward views toward ancestries; in addition to the Mana Waste mutants, aasimars, fleshwarps, goblins, orcs, and tieflings have found themselves the targets of Alkenstar anti-mutant persecution.



THE EXARCHATE OF THE INFINITE CLOCK

One of Alkenstar's most sinister secret societies, the Exarchate is a cabal of surgeons, engineers, and mages who are attempting to achieve apotheosis by replacing portions of the brain with magical clockwork. While most of their victims simply die from the process, they've shown some worrying success in their theories. Worse still, there are signs the group has spread cells beyond Alkenstar and into the Golden Road, and possibly further beyond into more remote regions.

Cliffs overlooking the Mana Wastes, the Maw was moved in recent decades to the Gunworks proper, where it sees use every year in repelling wasteland giants' summertime forays. The cannon's sheer visual impact, in addition to its firepower, dissuades massed formations from marching closer. Ironically, such impressive weapons also draw the keen interest of giant warlords and other bellicose entities who covet the ownership of such prodigious armaments; the loss of the Gunworks' mightiest bombard to the Gorilla King's thieving raids a few decades ago still stings the memories of Alkenstar patriots.

Within the city, firearm licenses are usually the preserve of the rich, watch, or military. Nobles collect and admire embellished dueling pistols and ornate specialized muskets, while shieldmarshals and soldiers wield more prosaic but nonetheless effective personal arms; full-time regular troops and shieldmarshals use flintlocks. Hunters who venture outside the city, especially Erastilian foragers, enjoy the use of jezails. Many inherit these heirloom weapons from clan elders and wield them with deadly accuracy honed by familial pride.

Alkenstar embraces a policy of conscription to bolster its defenses, whereby the law requires citizens to serve national defense efforts for two years as combatants and auxiliaries. Migrants seeking citizenship can volunteer for conscription—successful completion all but assures their legal assimilation into Alkenstar society. Particularly daring soldiers volunteer for assignments in the Gunworks, Alkenstar's premier weapons plant, which endures the heaviest assaults from the Mana Wastes' giant raiders. Those volunteering for summertime operations—when the giant raids intensify in force and frequency—count each month's service as two for fulfilling their military obligations. While these assignments are hazardous and onerous, it's an open secret that soldiers who complete tours of duty in the Gunworks often receive licensed gifts of experimental firearms, accessories, and ammunition rarely seen elsewhere in appreciation of their honorable service.

Shieldmarshals serving their national defense liabilities rarely enlist into the rank-and-file; instead, they form elite contingents of gunhunters, who locate and retrieve weapons missing from the Gunworks. Gunhunters embark on these retrieval missions to deal with special situations termed as "empty cartridges," when firearms, especially advanced or unusual ones, disappear from the Gunworks. These excursions both protect Alkenstar's national security and support the city's military industries by preventing experimental weapons from disrupting the markets and battlefields.

Alcohol isn't commonly consumed by more traditional Alkenstari. The influence of Brighite philosophy, promulgated by widespread distribution of the Brighite text *Logic of Design*, has led to the categorization of food and drink into logical and illogical groups. In Alkenstar Brighite thought, alcohol, which reduces precision and lucidity, is an illogical beverage, while coffee and tea, as drinks that give energy and alertness, are considered logical drinks. The famed Alkenstar ice wine is produced almost exclusively for export to Geb and very rarely consumed in the city. Visitors and recent migrants aren't expected to abstain and can purchase a wide range of liquid refreshments in Alkenstar's many taverns and taphouses; in all these establishments, Donguni soldiers drink on the house, in recognition of their invaluable contributions to the city's foundation and defense.

Coffee is a drink enjoyed by well-heeled Skysiders, who enjoy tiny cups of these refreshments often flavored with aromatic spices, floral nectar, or bittersweet chocolate.

Popular among wealthy Alkenstari, these beverages require significant expense and time to prepare due to the costly imports of fresh coffee beans from Katapesh and Jalmeray and the onerous process of roasting and grinding the beans in mortars. The most affluent households can also afford the Tinwound Hydroplant's costly, mechanically filtered water; this premium water retains a perfect mix of acidity and alkali, making it ideal for brewing delicious coffee. Skysiders entertain guests and business associates with coffee rituals, the unhurried process of making and sharing these drinks allowing for the pleasant passing of time with peers.

Though Smokesiders also drink coffee, its time consuming preparation means they drink it after work. Most drink hot coffee as nightcaps after dinner while they relax with friends in street stalls, claiming the beverage's heat helps them unwind and prepare for bed. Throughout the day, Smokesiders instead gulp copious amounts of tea to fuel their exertions. Imported Gebbite green and black teas are steeped with mint and apples, mixed liberally with honey or sugar, and sometimes enlivened with cream or butter. These drinks provide Smokeside laborers with energy to get through the city's enervating smog and masks the metallic taste of the district's distilled water. Smokeside gets its water entirely from the Hydroplant's steamworks, which purifies the Ustradi River through steaming its vapors—this cheaper process makes Smokeside's water taste flatter. Hence, many drinkers sweeten and flavor their tea to overcome the resultant acidic zing, although some patriotic Smokesiders swear by tea with this bitter edge, claiming it as the perfect taste to represent Alkenstar's gutsy iron heart.

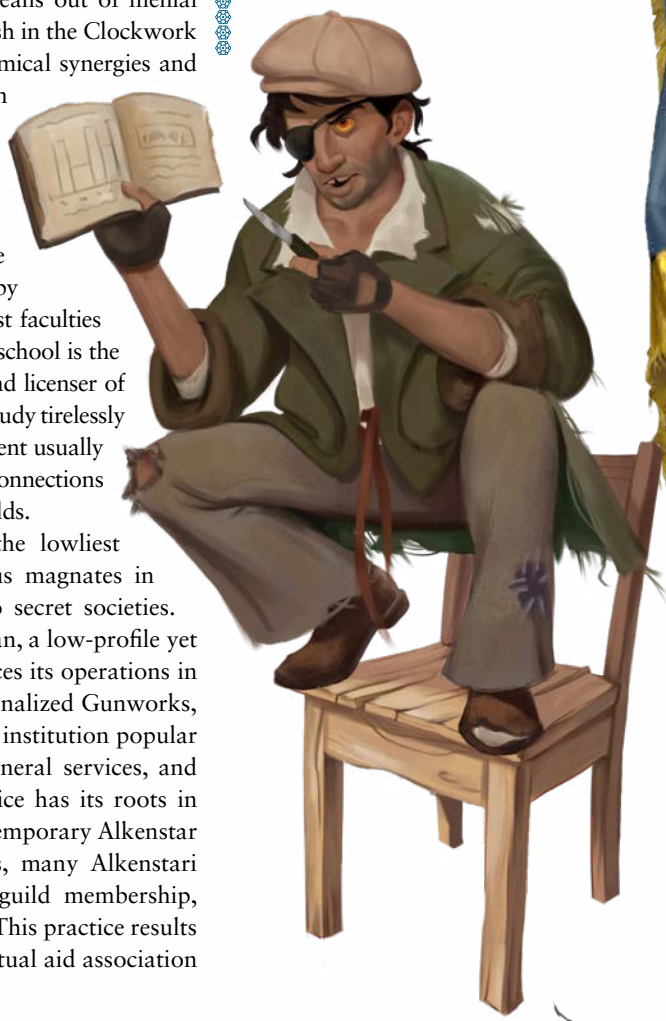
Many Alkenstari see inherent value in education and apprenticeships. Skysider's industrialist clans consider education to be a means of producing the best staff to help their businesses keep their competitive edge; many blue-collar Smokesiders regard education as a distant, if reliable, means out of menial drudgery. Schools, colleges, and institutes of all sorts flourish in the Clockwork City, offering lessons in everything from theoretical alchemical synergies and modular design principles to more hands-on traineeships on steam-bending wood and industrial kiln maintenance.

The most prestigious of these institutions are usually located in Skyside and funded by powerful organizations seeking to keep tabs on each generation's best and brightest inventors and scientists. The Auburn District's exclusive College of the Resplendent Vault, for example, is funded by the temples of Abadar and Brigh and boasts one of the best faculties worldwide for science and technology. Another prestigious school is the Alloy College, run by the influential Brass Guild, creator and licenser of many of the city's clockworks. Ambitious Alkenstari gentry study tirelessly to pass these colleges' acceptance exams; successful enrollment usually results in opportunities to fraternize and make lifelong connections with other scions of the city's most prominent clans and guilds.

Nearly all of the City of Smog's residents, from the lowliest scrap-merchant of Smokeside's slums to the prosperous magnates in the exclusive Cloud District across the river, belong to secret societies. Examples of these societies include the reticent Lithos Clan, a low-profile yet enterprising collective of engineers which unfailingly places its operations in direct competition with the production plans of the nationalized Gunworks, and the Firewind Friendly Society, a community financial institution popular with migrant laborers which handles the cremation, funeral services, and insurance payouts for its members' families. This practice has its roots in traditional Garundi clan structures, which influence contemporary Alkenstar ideas of kinship. Instead of nuclear family affiliations, many Alkenstari instead associate in clans organized along bloodline, guild membership, imagined hinterland of origin, and other affective bonds. This practice results in a proliferation of secret societies, often equal parts mutual aid association and quasi-criminal community protectorate.

PUBLIC SCHOOLING

Smokeside sees a preponderance of street schools—undistinguished, often makeshift, establishments built and funded by community leaders who wish to provide their neighborhoods' children with the chances they personally never had. The city's ethos of hard work and self-improvement resonate with many members of the proletariat, especially migrant laborers, refugees, and exiles desperate to pave an easier life for their descendants. Unfortunately, criminals often target these schools for various reasons. Some gangs treat these classrooms as ideal places to recruit technology-savvy members who can modernize and enable their white-collar operations. More brutish thugs outright attack the schools, seeing these establishments as undesirable competition. They reason that if children in classrooms can't be easily attracted to crime, it's best to get rid of the schools.



These societies flourish due to the city's bureaucratic overreach and administrative inefficiencies; since the city-state's inception, the Ustradi clans composing the plutocracy behind the corrupt government have consistently monopolized the means of production. Flatterers and sycophants rise in position and nip away at public funds, leaving little for essential services and public works. Secret societies meet the resultant gap in needs, creating a shadow economy of support and legitimacy to provide their members with their desired assistance—most provide benign services like employment opportunities and scholarships, though others purvey in sinister deeds, such as vote-buying, union-busting, forced evictions, and contract killings.

While secret societies might have evolved to address organizational malfeasance, too often in the present day their activities perpetuate the occurrence of further systemic injustices and inadequacies. Philanthropic endowments are constantly bestowed to fellow secret society members' ethnic and professional groups, leading to new hierarchies of nepotism and collusion.

GOVERNMENT

In theory, Alkenstar is a constitutional monarchy advised by a High Parliament that melds noble rule with meritocratic systems to locate the most suitable aristocratic candidates for the city-state's ruling elite. All three major state organs—the High Parliament, ministers who manage Alkenstar's daily affairs; the Grand Duke or Duchess, a nominal figurehead and chief executive; and the Equipoise Council, the chief ministers who provide checks and balances—are supposedly staffed by the best of Alkenstar citizens, selected through strict processes of examinations and elections.

The reality is somewhat more nuanced. While Ancil Alkenstar's supposedly apolitical descendants don't rule Alkenstar, it's an open secret the House of Alkenstar forms an unofficial shadow cabinet with significant influence over all three state organs. In addition to their sway over local municipal matters, the House oversees foreign relations, particularly diplomacy with Nex and Geb. They sustain the convenient fiction of the Grand Duchy's vassalage to Nex and manage the complex alliances to keep the Grand Duchy a useful neutral buffer zone to contain both Nex's and Geb's aggressions—an arrangement that assures the long-term viability of Alkenstar independence. The House usually controls at least 36 of the High Parliament's 73 elected representatives, granting an impressive ability to veto or back policies and allowing them to amass kickbacks from guilds and nobles seeking to curry their way into becoming a House-backed representative.

The House is also friendly with Grand Duchess **Trietta Ricia** (NG female human inventor), whose groundbreaking work in locating and reformulating Ancil's missing designs—long thought lost in mysterious fires—earned their patronage. In exchange, reciprocal

patron-client relations also constrain Trietta to consider the House's interests on state affairs. Lastly, they can order audits on the Equipoise Council's affairs, a power they rarely invoke, but one they ensure nobody forgets.

Complementing this shadow cabinet is the actual cabinet—the High Parliament. The members of Parliament are elected ministers who manage different aspects of Alkenstar governance and represent the interests of Alkenstar's various power groups. The High Parliament are kingmakers as well. On paper, they elect and appoint the Grand Duke or Duchess, who serves for life as a first among equals and neutral arbiter to assure Alkenstar's best interests. For many members of Parliament, though, the ideal candidate is an easily manipulated proxy and enabler who'll advance their interests and stymie their rivals as well as a useful figurehead to distract the populace from their harsh lives of toil-filled exploitation.

The current Grand Duchess poorly fits that bill. Trietta, a former adventurer and second-generation Alkenstari, is beloved as a folk hero of humble origins. Gifted in both physical and social sciences, she's a likable, insightful politician. The child of Chelaxian political refugees re-homed in Smokeside, Trietta gathered the overwhelming support of Alkenstar's working class through a shared love of machines, hard work, and Smokeside popular culture. To qualify as a candidate for the position of Grand Duchess, Trietta also leaned on her family's origins as ousted Chelaxian nobles to prove her suitability as one of noble birth.

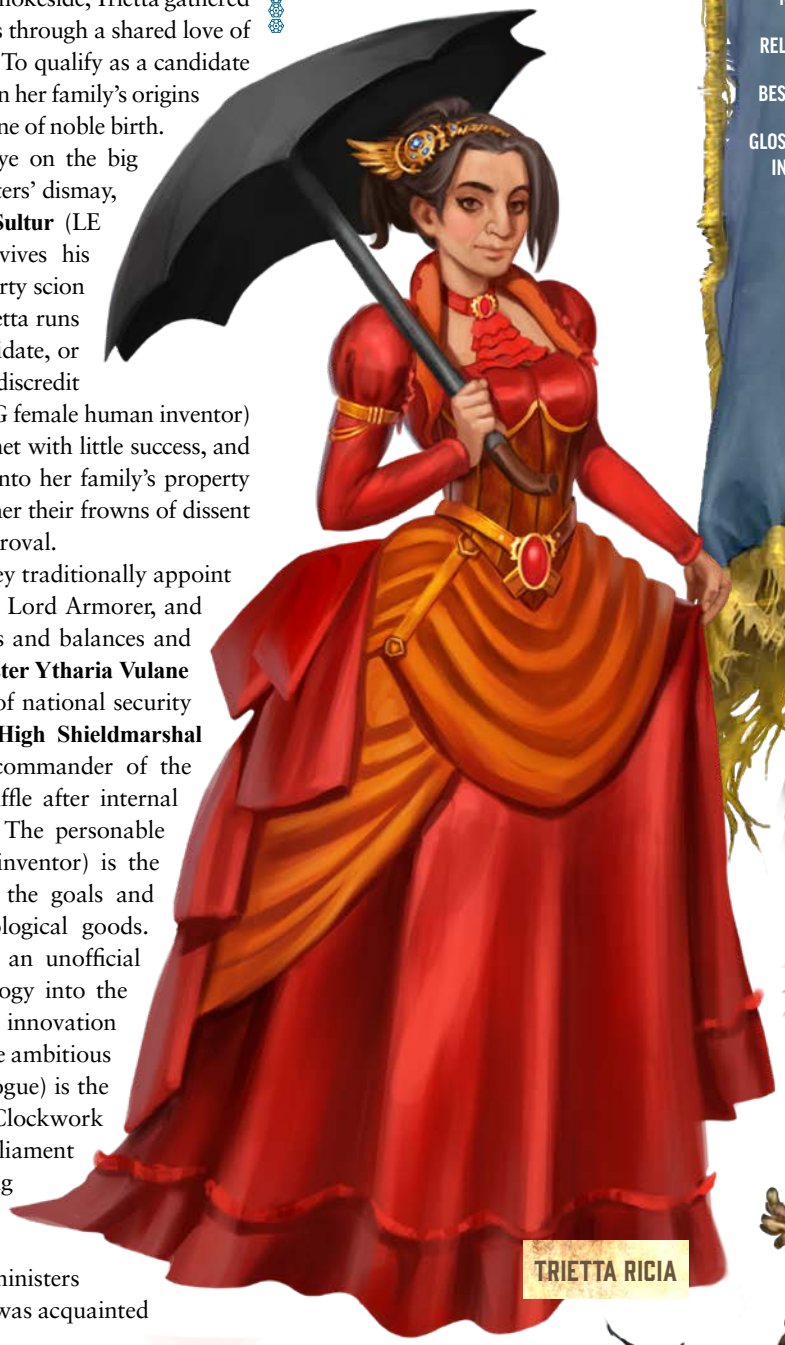
Trietta is a sensible, fair-minded ruler with one eye on the big picture and the other on the long-term. To some ministers' dismay, such as the disgraced engineer-entrepreneur **Aredil Sultur** (LE male human conspirer) whose political career survives his muddied reputation and the brutishly rapacious property scion **Tamrah Graeson** (CE female human opportunist), Trietta runs a tight ship and has proven hard to hoodwink, intimidate, or subvert. Under Trietta's leadership, Aredil's schemes to discredit his Parliament rivals—in particular **Eliza Baratella** (NG female human inventor) of the clockwork-manufacturing Brass Guild—have met with little success, and Tamrah's attempts to absorb poorer neighborhoods into her family's property empire have been blocked. It remains to be seen whether their frowns of dissent might cohere into more concrete expressions of disapproval.

Upon the Grand Duke or Duchess's coronation, they traditionally appoint the Equipoise Council, comprised of the Ironmaster, Lord Armorer, and High Chamberlain, who serve as each other's checks and balances and minimize conflicts of interest. The cold-eyed **Ironmaster Ytharia Vulane** (LN female human shieldmarshal) oversees matters of national security and is ably assisted by her pragmatic lieutenant **High Shieldmarshal Zakim Adarah** (LN male human shieldmarshal), commander of the famed shieldmarshals recently promoted in a reshuffle after internal investigations revealed extensive police corruption. The personable **Lord Armorer Narda Hufftwood** (N male human inventor) is the broker of Alkenstar's industrial complex and sets the goals and quotas for production and distribution of technological goods. The Brass Guild's Eliza Baratella serves Narda as an unofficial advisor and helps him integrate clockwork technology into the city's infrastructure and law enforcement efforts—an innovation tolerated with surprising receptiveness by Ytharia. The ambitious **High Chamberlain Lael Branain** (LN male half-elf rogue) is the chief bureaucrat who greases the wheels of the Clockwork Metropolis; as the intermediary between the High Parliament and Grand Duchess, he keeps tabs on burgeoning conspiracies and questionable alliances.

The High Parliament met these appointments into the Equipoise Council with consternation; several ministers protested what they saw as Trietta's nepotism, as she was acquainted

POLITICAL NON-DYNASTY

The House of Alkenstar, Ancil Alkenstar's descendants, stay aloof from the running of state affairs and don't rule simply through blood ties to the nation's founder. Alkenstar patriots are proud of their country's merit-based transparency and eagerly list their political system's advantages versus nearby dictatorships and oligarchies.



TRIETTA RICIA

with these individuals from her adventuring career. These protests lost momentum when it became apparent these individuals weren't on good terms with Trietta or each other. During their tenure as independent contractors, Lael and Trietta's different methods created longstanding acrimony, while Ytharia and Narda come from feuding noble clans presiding over rival guilds. Once the High Parliament was reassured Trietta wasn't consolidating a power base, and realized they could play off existing tensions, they ceased their complaints, even if they didn't stop their murmurs, snubs, and other aggressions. If the council takes umbrage at this, they don't show it; the council might be a house of cards, but its members are united at keeping these cards close to their chests.

Locations

The following are a sample of some of the most prominent locations found in Alkenstar City.

The Bridge of the Gods

This grand Smokeside bridge began construction a century ago, a mega-scale engineering project initiated by militant allied clerics of Sarenrae, Desna, Torag, and Erastil. The Bridge of the Gods was equal parts evangelical adventurism and quixotic hubris; the priests wanted a roadway spanning the entire Mana Wastes lengthwise to connect once-warring Nex and Geb with Alkenstar as a hub. The Bridge's chief architect was **Vijeri Ghazi** (NG male half-elf demagogue), High Priest of the Dawnflower, who envisioned the Bridge standing tall above the Mana Wastes as a symbol of divine power both uplifting people from the wastelands and building peace in the Nexian-Gebbite cold war. The charismatic Vijeri united both priests and lay-members of allied faiths and persuaded many investors and patrons to back this ambitious project.

It was an utter failure. While Vijeri had garnered support from Nex and Geb, as well as many temples and international organizations, he neglected to gain Alkenstar's approval. Many Alkenstari, wary of their contentious neighbors, opposed being linked so closely. When the legions of priest-masons arrived, Alkenstar rejected them politely, but when they persisted, the city restated its points with black powder. The histories don't officially record the ensuing nastiness involving sabotage and assassinations as a war, but for many Alkenstari, this encounter was a formative test of their abilities to resist foreign intervention. The settler-builders left, and the triumphant Alkenstari took the aborted Bridge's foundations and name for themselves to build a causeway to nearby Dongun Hold.

Kasbah Alkenstar

This awe-inspiring citadel of rose-red tadelakt and luminous bronze stands in the center of Skyside, a geometric

marvel of tiled elegance and reinforced engineering eminently distinct from the brick-and-iron architecture more commonly found in the city. Overlooking the Ustradi River's eastern banks, the Kasbah's ravelins and bastions fortify angled walls against gunfire—nestling within the star-shaped compound are beautiful riads of flowered walkways and overhanging gardens arrayed in Brigh-blessed symmetry, the shaded paths proving perfect for peacetime trysts and excellent for misleading enemies during war.

The citadel's network of minareted towers is home to Grand Duchess Trietta Ricia, who has broken with tradition in choosing not to reside in the lavish Gunpowder Tower, resting every night in a different tower. Since mysterious clockwork malfunctions and sabotages eight years ago, Trietta moved High Parliament sessions from the Grand Hall into the more secure Gunpowder Tower, a decision earning her considerable favor from many members of Parliament.

North-South Medina

The streets and walls of this old Skyside quarter are pristine and immaculate, yet the overall spotlessness belies a growing, lurking tension in the air. Blending architectural influences from Nexian and Gebbite aesthetics, this neighborhood serves as a locus for Nex's and Geb's diplomatic missions. Legally speaking, this walled quarter is extraterritorial property belonging to Nex—the Grand Duchy, after all, is a Duchy of Nex by historical provenance. Practically speaking, only the most hawkish of Nex's Arclords would imagine their nation's ability to enforce Alkenstar compliance.

Instead, the North-South Medina houses those moderate factions in Nex, Alkenstar, and Geb who recognize the city-state's sovereignty as part of a joint security area that maintains regional stability. Diplomats from Quantium seeking to preserve the uneasy Nex-Geb peace (and lucrative trade agreements) often seek postings here, where they analyze geopolitics, build relations, and occasionally practice the most noncommittal forms of espionage—actions designed to tip off their supposed Alkenstar and Gebbite enemies as much as discover national secrets.

This situation was once mirrored by their Gebbite peers but has turned grim as of late. Staffed by undead loyalists to Arazni, former ruler of Geb, the Gebbite embassy handles food exports from Geb's zombie-crewed farms to feed Alkenstar's population and oversees negotiations with Alkenstar and Dongun Hold. Occasionally, they might even remember to engage in perfunctory spying attempts to fulfill their espionage quota. Following the more diplomatic Arazni's disappearance, the ghostly archmage Geb's return to active rulership has seen the recalling of these envoys to Mechitar for trials of treason. Many remaining stragglers consider defection, but few seem willing to shelter Geb's notorious necromancers and undead.

Pastilla Street

This street of humble restaurants in Smokeside's Ferrous Quarter is popular with locals and adventurers alike. Nearly every stall here sells the eponymous dish of the pastilla, a delicious pastry encasing layers of spiced lemon dove and ground almonds, sprinkled with powdered sugar and cinnamon sugar. This enclave of eateries is led unofficially by the respected **Adil Brothers** (NG male gnome gourmands) who use everyday ingredients to create wonderful Garundi meals fit for royalty—conical clay pots of couscous and meatballs in tomato stew, roast

Tourist Attractions

The Grand Hall of Kasbah Alkenstar houses the Royal Science Museum, a depository of ever-updated exhibitions showcasing the intrepid Observers' findings and the Parliamentary Archives, a collection of hansards chronicling the High Parliament's decisions. In the interest of civic education, these records are open to the public, as are the fresh fruits and water fountains within the Kasbah's gardens. More visitors come to gawk and marvel at the **Blackwork Ephemeron** (LN nonbinary unique self-aware clockwork amalgam), the massive, one-of-a-kind construct guarding the Kasbah's gates. Some guards swear the Ephemeron sings to itself at night; others dismiss these claims as superstitious claptrap.

KASBAH ALKENSTAR

FAMILIAR PLACES

Players might have visited Alkenstar in the Pathfinder module *Wardens of the Reborn Forge*. This book assumes that a group of concerned citizens, as played by the PCs, solved the sabotage of Alkenstar's clockwork guardians and revealed the prominent entrepreneur and politician Aredil Sultur as the mastermind behind the plot.

chicken basted in turmeric-aged butter, sausages of ibex and lamb, all served with braided loaves of chewy bread perfect for mopping up delectable sauces.

The alleys behind the main street house makeshift classrooms, with copies of whispersheets and Brigh's *Logic of Design* stacked neatly under the awnings, safe from the smog's damp dustiness. Both Adil brothers, while illiterate, highly value education and believe everyone should have opportunities to learn. Following the brothers' lead, many restaurants here allow people of letters to eat without paying in exchange for teaching lessons to the streets' urchins and orphans.

Important Faces

The highest-ranking cleric of Brigh, High Clockmother **Athenth Llanalir** (N female human cleric) oversees both the Auburn District's temple of Brigh and House Llanalir's foundries. Athenth combines her ecclesiastical and temporal resources to improve the Auburn District's creation of technological wonders as well as strengthen House Llanalir and the temple of Brigh. Athenth's tireless efforts have brought Alkenstar society numerous benefits, such as the proliferation of whispersheets and refinement of the Divine Wardens of Brigh.

However, Athenth's ambitions have also earned her many enemies. She's aware yet heedless of these animosities; she reckons it more befitting of the High Clockmother to foster invention, rather than worry about lesser intellects' petty schemes. Athenth believes as long as the temple of Brigh and House Llanalir develop beneficial technologies, they hold Alkenstar in technological dependency; she reasons no rational Alkenstari would risk disrupting the Auburn District's flow of innovations. Alas, while Athenth is a brilliant researcher-priest, she often overestimates the power of rationality in determining her fellows' perspectives and behavior.

Espara (CN female human gang leader) is one of Smokeside's countless orphans. At only 27 years old, she has forged an impressive alliance between the city's orphans, runaways, and outcasts, uniting various gangs under her command. This gang calls themselves Espara's Paladins, in mockery of knightly ideals that have no place on the grim streets; still, the gang has a tendency to perform deeds of rough justice and community protection. Espara is better at motivating her followers than organizing or leading them, and the strain of management is taking its toll.

SHADOWSTING

Many Alkenstari attribute their technological wonders to the esteemed intellectual **Professor Radpol** (CG male wellspring gnome polymath inventor), a genius at repurposing ancient Nexian artifacts into modern miracles of engineering. Radpol's most impressive work is his optimization and overhaul of the Tinwound Hydroplant, the arcane power plant which utilizes the Ustradi River as a steam and hydropower source for Alkenstar industries. Previously, the Hydroplant primarily served powerful Alkenstari, such as the government and guilds. Radpol's redesigns added new functionality, allowing it to serve as a water-purification facility using distillation and mechanical filtration to render the Ustradi's waters potable and safe for consumption. This improved access to water has brought poorer Alkenstari immeasurable conveniences, as they no longer risk sickness and mutation from consuming river water.

Few know this accomplishment isn't entirely of Radpol's design; his muse and partner in this endeavor is the reclusive **Ustrasila** (CG female naiad queen). The sole surviving river spirit of the Ustradi, Ustrasila antedates the Mana Wastes' creation, worshipped alongside her deceased sisters across the mountains and deltas. Once, these effervescent spirits blissfully laughed and played, accompanied by their water wraith retainers. Then came the Geb-Nex

Wars; the march of armies, the plague rains, the stone-churning, the burning of bone, and the endless silence. Ustrasila and her sisters collapsed into oblivion, their nightmares mirroring the surges wracking the Wastes. Though Radpol was initially unaware of her existence, his efforts to purify the Ustradi's waters have awoken and inspired Ustrasila. The naiad bestowed inspiration upon the inventor, granting her ancient magic to aid his technomantic efforts. Though melancholic Ustrasila still mourns her loss, her connection with Radpol has brought her respite and purpose. As she begins to reengage with the world, water wraiths nest once again along her river's shores.

Evil doers in Alkenstar must beware the Shadow's Sting! The enigmatic **Shadowsting** (CG nonbinary fleshwarp vigilante) stalks Smokeside's alleys, brandishing smoking pistols and tentacled stingers to terrify malefactors and inspire the downtrodden. The Shadowsting is a rare force for good in Smokeside who uses expert gunplay and psychological warfare in their war against oppression. No evildoer is safe from the Shadowsting, from the gangs who rule Smokeside's streets to their Skyside industrialist paymasters. Nobody knows who the Shadowsting is, but many wish to find out—there's an open contract on them, dead or alive.

The Shadowsting is **Velmin**, a mutant migrant descended from the forcibly evicted mutant residents of Old Ironside. Velmin is a shy, idealistic youth gifted in gunnery and tinkering; they snuck aboveground to explore the home of their ancestors, only to discover a hostile, venal land. Velmin initially created the Shadowsting persona to protect their fellow mutants but has found themself drawn into a larger war against the city's corruption. Due to Velmin's lack of local knowledge, they've picked too many battles. Now, they're way in over their head, but still... evildoers, beware the Shadow's Sting!

Bloodshed Ixora (LE female human Red Mantis assassin) is a feared agent of the infamous Red Mantis Assassins, especially proficient at hunting those fugitives from divine judgment who think themselves safe in Smokeside's dead magic zones. Ixora acts alone—even without access to her divine Red Mantis abilities, she remains a deadly killer. Ixora methodically researches her quarries and uses mundane methods such as blackmail, poisoning, and sabotage to weaken and isolate them. In the battlefield, Ixora is an implacable whirlwind of gun smoke and blood, wielding the trademark sawtooth sabers of her order in lethal tandem with Alkenstar firearms.

Ixora has received holy orders to slay a visitor, **Amed the Coin-Counter** (NE male human economic hitman), a visiting trader from Katapesh representing the business interests of **Hashim ibn Sayyid, Pactbroker of Katapesh** (*Pathfinder Lost Omens: Legends* 50). Amed is in Alkenstar to negotiate a trade deal of firearms with Dongun Hold and has contracted Espara's Paladins as his local security detail, offering princely sums that would secure all the paladins a legitimate, prosperous life out of Smokeside's crime-alleys. To sweeten the deal, Amed has offered a separate contract—if Espara's Paladins can find and capture **Shimon-Je** (NG female gnoll abolitionist; *Legends* 51), a gnoll fugitive slave-abolitionist from Katapesh rumored to also be visiting Alkenstar to purchase firearms, Amed will arrange for the naturalization of Espara's Paladins into Katapesh's citizenry.

Against her doubts, Espara accepted these contracts. These jobs don't involve harming any Smokesiders; furthermore, refusing such a big job would shatter her followers' loyalty. Espara privately considers Amed's offer a poisoned chalice; not only does it place her organization in direct opposition with the inexorable Ixora, but success also threatens to splinter her follower base. Many paladins are excited by this job, both at the extravagant payout and the chance to take down a living legend and supplant her in the mythology of the streets; for some, this job is personal, as more than a few paladins were orphaned by Ixora's hand. Ixora has no desire to slay the paladins—she actually respects Espara. But orders are orders. Ixora hopes to find either Amed or Shimon-Je, and she'll either slay Amed or locate and use Shimon-Je (if she's even in Alkenstar) as leverage.

PROFESSOR RADPOL

USTRASILA

ESPARA

ATHENTH LLANALIR

Dongun Hold

Citadel of the Skyflame

The second of the great Dwarven Sky Citadels, Dongun Hold sat empty for thousands of years, its people driven underground by the constant barrage of devastation from distant archmages. Now returned to the surface, it faces an era of uncertain prosperity.

In contrast to their future-chasing Alkenstar allies, the mixed Grondaksen and Holtaksen dwarves of Dongun Hold constantly grapple between their treasured, storied pasts and the tense, sober realities of the present. The second Sky Citadel ever created, Dongun Hold is an obdurate monument of defensive engineering, civic planning, and historical significance; its inhabitants are heirs to the legacy of the Quest for Sky and survivors of the Impossible Lands' age-old disastrous conflicts. Early settlers built the Hold when they reached the surface, a symbol of their victorious journey, and were received as respected allies of Ancient Osirion. The later wars of Geb and Nex devastated and eroded Donguni domains, impelling them to abandon the Sky Citadel for the relative safety of the Vermarine Vaults within the Darklands. This mark of shame was expunged only within the present lifetime when Donguni enlisted the aid of newfound Alkenstar allies to retake and restore the Hold.

Amidst all this tumult, Donguni endured unceasing privations due to famine and plague, and they clung to their identities as martial craftspeople par excellence. They take inordinate pride in their unbending resolve and devotion to dwarven tradition. This self-worth is undoubtedly important for the city, which faces enemies worse than the undead and mutants who stalk their borders and ravage their homes; many fear invading monsters from the Wastes less than the malaises of creeping gloom and simmering kinstrife inside their hearts. While the Hold stands united behind their High King in front of outsiders, the intrigues of three powerful factions—the radically conservative Keepers of the Skyflame, the aggressively ambitious Goldhand Lodge, and the munitions-obsessed Sparkforge Collective—constantly threaten to tear the city apart from within.

From their mighty Sky Citadel, Donguni stand guard once again over the Mana Wastes, confronted every single day by the howling spell-wracked ruins of a land they once cherished and swore to protect yet also one they ultimately proved powerless to defend from the machinations of mortal mages. Even within the Hold, the triumphalism of the architecture and material culture created during the founding of the Sky Citadel in the wake of the Quest for Sky jars with the present's experiences and memories of inertia and anxiety. These circumstances and inconsistencies breed shame, despair, self-loathing, desire for rejuvenation, and desperation for revenge. Violent passions surge within Donguni hearts, their stoic rectitude belying the storm which engulfs their collective psyche.

Thus, ensconced in stone and steel, bearing black powder and battle axe, the warriors of Dongun Hold swear to never permit a revisit of such humiliation and helplessness. Vanguards patrol the Mana Wastes, slaying monsters with cannon and incendiary. Essayists and moralists encourage strict returns to imagined pasts, proclaiming the wisdom of the old ways to any who would listen and blaming current problems on ancient misdeeds, as if repeating assertions of bygone grandeur and sins would expunge and explain the chagrin of desertion and defeat.

Despite the spilling of so much blood and ink, past traumas yet remain. As embers of the old Nex-Geb war

DONGUN HOLD SETTLEMENT 14

LN TOWN

Government monarchy

Population 4,164 (95% dwarves, 3% humans, 2% other)

Languages Dwarven, Kelish, Osiriani

Religions Abadar, Angradd, Brigh, Torag

Threats Darklands monsters, dwarven politics, mine collapses, saboteurs, wasteland raiders

Besieged By Mage Wars Caught between Geb and Nex, the dwarves of Dongun Hold hold a particular suspicion for undead, fleshwarps, and other creatures often employed in the war that ravaged their home in ancient times. NPCs begin with an attitude one step worse than usual toward such characters and toward characters openly affiliated with Geb or Nex.

Source of Guns Firearms and cannons, though uncommon in most of the world, are available in Dongun Hold. Such items of up to level 18 can be purchased or commissioned from the many dwarven crafters.

Anong Arunak (LG female dwarf aristocrat 16) high king of Dongun Hold

begin to flicker once more, old scars are reopened. Many older Donguni have started debating the merits of abandoning the Sky Citadel for the Darklands' embrace. Younger dwarves, born into an era of the alliance with Alkenstar, stridently reject these sentiments, extolling the virtue of working together with their fellow citizens—a stance which further alienates the cautious, insular elder Donguni. Arguments ring through the halls with mercantilists preaching possibilities of wartime profit, traditionalists clamoring to avenge blood feuds, reformists appealing for increased regional collaboration, and outcasts bitterly resenting their downtrodden status. Perhaps these tensions will force evolution and elevation of the Sky Citadel to new heights—or bring it tumbling down in another spell-blasted dance of ruin.

A DAY IN DONGUN HOLD

In a curious parallel to their Alkenstar neighbors, Dongun Hold's communities adopt the use of different standards of time: Forge-days and Coin-days. Stretching 32 hours, forge-days are named and optimized for the cycles of warming and cooling the Hold's many work-fires, from its industrial forges and kilns to its communal cooking pots. Use of forge-days in Dongun Hold isn't limited to craftspeople; in a show of faith and affinity with their distant relatives and cherished traditions, forge-days are the standard days for most Donguni. Coin-days are a more recent adoption which measure the 24-hour duration familiar to surface dwellers and are primarily used for business and negotiations with envoys from Alkenstar and other nations. Use of coin-days is also burgeoning amongst younger Donguni, who perceive coin-days as being more practical for life on the surface, rather than adhering to the traditional use of forge-days.

For most of the city, days begin with forge-day's opening, where everyone measures and prepares the fuel to be fed for the day. The process of building and maintaining work-fires requires careful attention and precise communication. Miss an instance of feeding the flames, and some projects might be ruined or delayed from the lowered heat of the forge. Adding too much fuel might cause brittleness and ruin the exact tempering of the arms and armor. Many forge-masters task their younger artisans and apprentices to take charge of these matters; the conscientiousness and attention to detail required form suitable foundations for developing greater technical expertise.

Throughout each forge-day, a comfortable rhythm emerges and intensifies, a cycle of crafting and cleaning as well as repairing and discarding. Hours pass in sweat-drenched labor and brow-furrowing concentration to refine and complete projects. In appreciation and allowance for artisans' uninterrupted focus and artistic inspiration, forge-masters hold work meetings at the end of the forge-day, in which workers gather to discuss what they've learned and made for that day and share their insights and observations to help improve each other's craft. Afterward, workers head home to rest and spend time with their loved ones.

This process is mirrored in the mines and excavations of the Darklands and Shattered Range; across all Donguni-heavy industries, time revolves around workers' perspectives and concerns. Policy in these industries is thus set as much by each worker as by overseers' dictates or market demands, effected by a rare concordance between the rivals of the Sparkforge Collective and the Keepers of the Skyflame. Dissatisfied with what they perceive as the inefficiencies of this traditional approach, the mercantilists and executives of the powerful Goldhand Lodge are trying to change policy by enforcing meetings earlier in the forge-day, where they can give more directions to and get more updates from workers as well as gain more control over their labors and processes. Their attempts have met with limited success, as High King Arunak, in respect of the craft traditions, continues to issue her edicts at the forge-day's end.

In the interest of helping workers save time and resources, many Donguni work-chefs gather and clean the leavings and scraps from previous meals, then

reboil them in massive cauldrons of forge stew, recycling leftover suppers into hearty breakfasts. Whenever individual workers wish to have their meals, they can spoon out bowls of stew and add their own condiments to eat at their convenience. The largest kitchens keep these cauldrons heated for centuries at a go; some of the most famous breakfast kitchens in the city are rumored to boast stews cooking from before the Nex-Geb wars. Donguni war cries frequently refer to this lineage, dismissing the archmages Nex and Geb as less storied and substantial than the city's beloved vintage stews. Some even enjoy forge stews so much they eat them out of preference, rather than necessity. Connoisseurs claim the stew stock becomes more delightful as more ingredients are added, transforming simple staples of tubers, off-cuts, and preserved meats into wondrous broths with satisfying body and unmatched flavors.

For Donguni who regularly deal with envoys from other nations, such as commodities traders, arms dealers, and ore brokerage firms, coin-days begin by preparing to receive these visitors and traders. Due to the hours of overlap between forge-days and coin-days, the dwarves complete many of their preparations before sunrise, creating an impression of a city that's always ready for business. To accentuate this image, Donguni businesspeople, diplomats, soldiers, and mercenaries take care to make visitors feel safe and welcome within the Sky Citadel by presenting a friendly and professional image, especially toward their comrades from Alkenstar.

This practiced congeniality runs a little thin when dealing with emissaries from Geb and Nex, who sometimes find themselves receiving more extensive checks, curfews, and security escorts than visitors from other nations—all for their own safety, of course. In any case, despite the city's attempt to embrace visitors, Gebbites or Nexians rarely stay for long. The magic-dead zone of Dongun Hold proves disconcerting to these spellcasting visitors, and few wish to tarry longer than necessary within this reminder of their nations' war crimes.

Due to differences between forge-day and coin-day, few visitors to Dongun Hold ever behold the edicts or presence of the High King Anong Arunak, lending her a greater mystique. The High King holds court and issues proclamation when the work of the forge-day ends; in coin-day terms, those times are often during the wee hours of the morning when few visitors are awake or out and about. This pleases those vigilant Donguni who remember the harrowing wars of the past and remain suspicious of outlanders, as this extra veil of secrecy makes them feel a little more protected and insulated from the intrusions of the outside world.

A YEAR IN DONGUN HOLD

Donguni herald every new year with a cold and somber season of reflection. As winter wheels into spring, tradition dictates no fires can be lit in Dongun Hold. The households' meals are prepared and eaten without

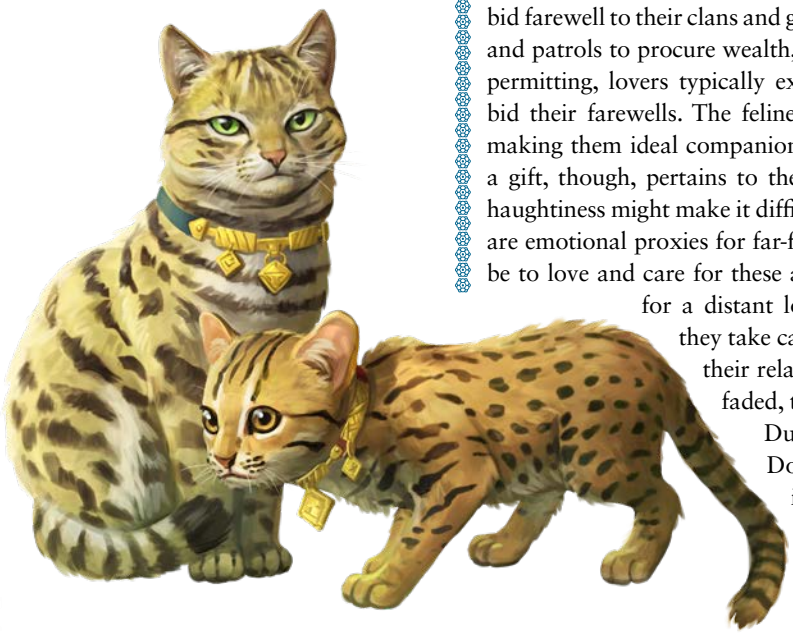
CLAN PISTOLS

Most dwarven clans give clan daggers to their members, a blade specially crafted for a dwarven child before their birth and traditionally used to cut the infant's umbilical cord. Some dwarves in Dongun Hold have transitioned to forging a special "clan pistol" instead, commissioning or crafting a firearm for their children. Despite a few snide jokes from more traditional dwarves, this gun isn't used in any capacity during the birth of the intended child; instead, a specially prepared gunpowder blank is prepared and fired from the pistol to announce the child's birth to the clan.

the application of heat, and production halts as the city's smiths and forges go dark and silent. This period tests one's preparations and contingencies, when dwarves make do with the resources they've stowed away. Clans and guilds cease most of their business, and socializing is conducted only with one's closest family and neighbors. In every Donguni home, younger family members work together to sharpen weapons and polish armor plates with the help and encouragement of their seniors. Every evening, as the whole city dines simply on sticky glutinous rice or hard cassava bread with accompaniments of smoked meats and salted vegetables, the eldest Donguni recite and sing stories of their ancestors' experiences of wartime sorrow, which remind the community of what the Geb-Nex war took from their people. As these grayhairs' voices blend into a patchwork threnody of loss and pain that enfolds the city, the High King joins their songs from a palatial balcony, the famous rich baritones of the Arunak dynasty wafting across the Hold and lending an ephemeral dignity to the Donguni elders' laments.

As spring comes into full bloom, the melancholic months give way to a burst of color and sound as the High King's squadrons ceremoniously fire the royal muskets and cannons in a cacophonous salute to new beginnings. Fire lances and rockets launch streaming fireworks, and nowhere in the city is exempt from the fouling dregs of black powder. Cooking fires joyously roar back to life to prepare communal feasts for clan and guild; families and friends finally meet the people they've missed over the last season. The foundries and kilns bellow and wheeze with the resumption of production. The first things created each year are clan pistols and clan daggers for the year's newborns; every workshop is filled with the smiling faces of Donguni parents and their kinfolk preparing to cast and forge the weapons that the newest generation will inherit. The city's major factions compete to create ever more elaborate and impressive floats of clockwork and wood, which represent the many monsters of the Mana Wastes, Nex, and Geb. These misshapen, mobile sculptures lumber through the city's streets, inciting cries of fear and wonder from dwarven children, and await mock battles with dwarven adolescents, who rush enthusiastically to face these monsters with the weapons and armor they've been working on. This period is filled with energy and hope, an exuberant counterpart to the last season and a time which expresses the Donguni validation of their preparations and vigilance that permit them to safely celebrate the future. When these jubilations conclude, every Donguni works together to clean the wreckage and litter across the city.

For the rest of the year, many Donguni merchants, mercenaries, and militia bid farewell to their clans and guilds as they undertake excursions, assignments, and patrols to procure wealth, safety, and repute for the Hold. Circumstances permitting, lovers typically exchange gifts of small hunting cats when they bid their farewells. The felines are hardy and self-sufficient killers of pests, making them ideal companions on the road. The true sentiment behind such a gift, though, pertains to the notorious independence of these cats, whose haughtiness might make it difficult to show them affection. In this way, the cats are emotional proxies for far-flung lovers—as remote and onerous as it might be to love and care for these aloof cats, it's still harder to keep one's passion for a distant lover. When lovers reunite after their journeys, they take care of their cats together if they wish to continue their relationship. If their romance and commitment has faded, they return the gifted cats to each other.



During this open period, most visitors come to Dongun Hold with the hopes of purchasing innovative black powder weapons not available elsewhere in the world, but many will go away empty-handed and disappointed. Despite the Sparkforge Collective's tireless work to invent and produce ever stronger firearms and the

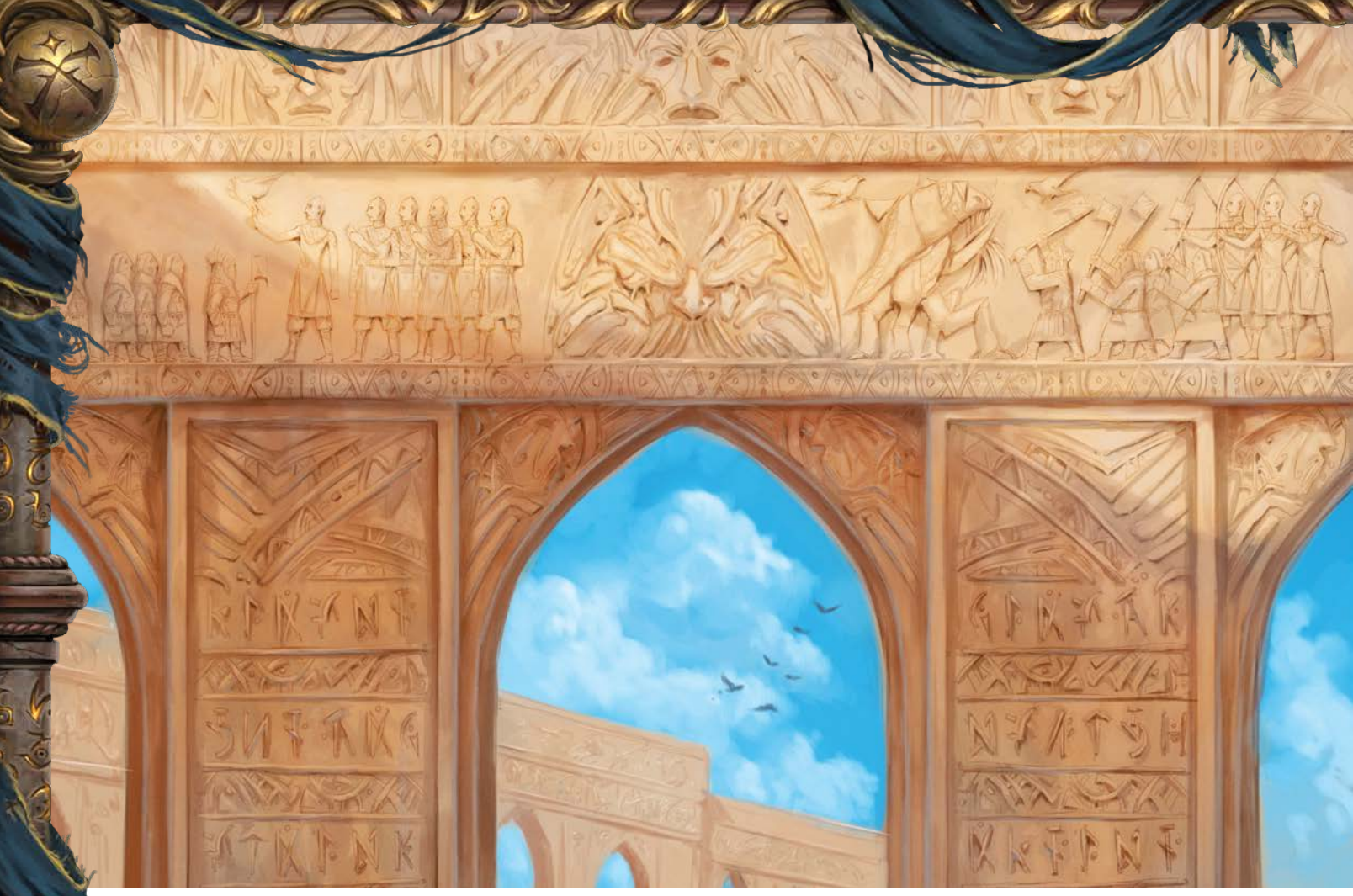
Goldhand Lodge's irrepressible marketing and hawking of these wares, the High King placed a strict quota on the sales of these weapons in an attempt to both enforce a protectionist price hiking control and to maintain the city's technological superiority. The staid Keepers of the Skyflame would prefer foregoing the use of guns entirely but find such a quota barely tolerable. Meanwhile, the Goldhand Lodge and Sparkforge Collective preach for economic liberalization and technological openness, arguing the world outside Dongun Hold can soon create similar or better weapons, and if the Sky Citadel doesn't prepare its markets and workshops for these changes, they might lose this niche. High King Anong Arunak has compromised by loosening (yet retaining) the quota of exports, a move which simultaneously pleases yet annoys every faction in her court.

Other merchants meet with more success, especially those seeking to purchase magnetite, quartz, and gold from the bountiful veins under the Shattered Range. Raw commodities make up the bulk of the Sky Citadel's trade and bring substantial wealth to Donguni coffers. High King Anong Arunak uses these funds to fortify and repair public works while also providing employment opportunities to her fractious courtiers and their cohorts; with this foreign income, Donguni weapons and defenses are maintained in excellent condition year-round. As the year winds down, and visitors and envoys depart for their homes, the city becomes silent and dark once more, and the steady cycle of Donguni ritual and industry begins anew.

PEOPLE OF DONGUN HOLD

Most outside Dongun Hold associate its people with the same formidable resolve, polite professionalism, and uncomplaining attitudes displayed by Donguni mercenaries and vanguards on the surface. While these associations reflect how Donguni idealize themselves and want others to see them as, Donguni society is far more diverse in their perspectives and practices than many might realize. While composure and stoicism remain widespread in many Donguni—traits developed to cope with the challenges of their long exile, remote seclusion, and wartime loss—these characteristics don't form the end-all and be-all of the war-prepared, watchful Donguni.

The present Donguni favor a rugged lifestyle that blends pre-Earthfall dwarven traditions with influences from other societies that made significant impressions during their explorations of the surface world. Dwarven runic calligraphy from before the Quest for Sky stands alongside hieroglyphic metaphors derived from peaceful Donguni interactions with Ancient Osirians. These symbols are hammered together into a sturdy, somewhat martial bricolage that endured the Donguni's many centuries of surviving in the Darklands, aloof from other communities and even from their gods (due to their environment's magic-nullifying qualities).



Nearly everything in Donguni society is both eminently practical and aesthetically significant, with applications for war and peace ranging from heraldry-emblazoned armor detailing the glory of one's ancestors to flame-resistant creams that protect one's hair, beard, and skin while working long hours at the forge.

Using scholarly investigations to painstakingly piece together archaeological theories and historical records of their ancestors' lives, Dongun Hold faithfully preserves and reimagines traditions of dwarven society from before and during the Quest for Sky. The conservators of the Keepers of the Skyflame lead Donguni research into the past and encourage the emulation and adaptation of these traditions for the general public. Some traditions still practiced by Donguni often surprise dwarven visitors from other Sky Citadels, whose homelands might have gone through more cultural developments in tandem with their knowledge and contact of the outside world. Meanwhile, for Donguni, the last few thousand years of isolation have left them determined to hold on to signifiers of cultural identity and historical continuity. This fierce commitment to dwarven ways has attracted the attention of the wider dwarven scholarly community, who consider Dongun Hold a treasure trove of traditional knowledge, customs, and rituals which might have been lost after the Quest for Sky.

Flourishes of Osirian and Kulenett influence permeate Donguni architecture and customs; some outsiders might find these incongruous, given the Donguni reverence for the past. When pressed about these differences, most Donguni simply shrug, seemingly not considering these cultural elements to be alien. Due to the historical length of their ancestors' fraternization and honored friendships with the Osirian pharaohs, as well as the close ties they shared with the Kulenett dwarves, Donguni have thoroughly internalized some cultural elements from these peoples, hinting at a bygone era of Donguni cosmopolitan openness and artistic experimentation.

One of the most obvious signs of Osirian influence is the prevalence of cats in Dongun Hold. After a series of successful visits by the Osirian diplomat and cat enthusiast, Sa-Aber, the dwarf city fell in love with cats—a love that persisted even with the Donguni retreat into the Darklands. Today, the Hold contains many house cats and strays of different breeds and sizes, lounging near forges and workshops to enjoy warmth and company or hunting venomous snakes and pestilential rats in the alleys and granaries. While dourer Donguni might claim the practical functions of cats as pest control, it seems to bring even the sternest dwarves joy to design and build cat-appropriate rest platforms and playgrounds. Older Donguni congregate around these facilities and bond with each other as they fawn over the felines. These little gatherings provide solace to many lonelier dwarven elders who miss their children working outside the Hold as merchants and mercenaries.

The city's ornate aqueducts and sophisticated qanats are also cultural borrowings from their association with the Osirians, who created many riverine settlements based on irrigation and alluvial management. The Donguni tunnels connect the Ustradi River's waters through meandering passages where priests and engineers use the mysterious vermarine of their Darklands vaults to create sifters. These sifters purify the river's mana-tainted flows, providing the city with sufficient water for its industries, households, and underground reservoirs of emergency water supplies.

Kulenett influence in the Hold is subtler but no less substantial. As a show of dwarven solidarity and community, even before Donguni retreated into the Darklands, they'd adopted Kulenett local time as a standard for their own calendars. Despite their Holtaksen heritage, many Donguni adopt the Grondaksen way of telling time, which measures forge-days of 32 hours, rather than the surface world's way of dividing days into 24 hours. Ostensibly, this custom encourages Donguni to think of their Kulenett kin. Even in the absence of physical contact or close communication, by measuring their days and years in tempo with each other, Donguni strive to maintain a living link to their distant relations.

Another sign of Kulenett influence is Dongun Hold's fastidious standard of cleanliness and public hygiene. Their Kulenett kin, residing in the caverns beneath undead-ruled Geb, developed elaborate rituals and procedures of purification of waste materials—for the Kulenett, any widespread increase in disease or infection is a vector for the spread of necromantic magic, and thus a possible security vulnerability for their Gebbite overlords to exploit. These hygiene protocols also aid in the Kulenett's positive energy–imbued wards, which spurn the undead. While such a function is of little value within magic-dead Dongun Hold, these protocols provide a morale boost and comforting sense of regularity for the Sky Citadel's inhabitants. This widespread cleanliness also has practical effects on Donguni life; for a people confronted by the Mana Wastes' otherworldly contagions, the polluting runoff of their own industries, and the toxin-laden effluvia of Alkenstar factories, these habits are invaluable in maintaining and improving public health.

These examples of integration with foreign influences demonstrate how Donguni, through generations of trial and error—as well as the bonds of affection and respect—hybridize their core culture with syncretic elements from others and, over time, make them their own. Careful and pragmatic consideration thus drive Donguni attitudes toward the outside world, alongside no small amount of sentimentalism. The cultural changes which occur most effortlessly not only offer simple utilitarian value, but also possess some degree of resonance with Donguni memories and experiences. This hybridization might be a slow process, but it's a comfortable and stable one that brooks little complaint from its citizens, save for the most stridently conservative Keepers of the Skyflame.

Recent wider changes—the union with Alkenstar, trade agreements with their former oppressors of Nex and Geb, and more frequent exchanges with other dwarf nations—brought an even greater influx of new ideas, situations, and experiences to spur reflection and transformation of Donguni identities and perspectives. Various segments of Donguni society adapt to these widespread changes quite differently. Older Donguni, familiar with the stories of Gebbite and Nexian atrocity, find it hard to shed the garrison mentality built upon by generation after generation of caution and watchfulness, especially when this mindset had allowed their community to survive unimaginably harsh times. Donguni youths disdain their elders' worries, perhaps a little too readily, as they claim the challenges of today differ from the past and embrace the learning of new languages, cultures, and technologies with great aplomb. Ethnic diasporas of Alkenstar humans, as well as trade enclaves of Nexian and

BLACK POWDER CONTRABAND

Unlicensed firearms don't officially exist in Alkenstar and Dongun Hold, but that's hard to enforce in a city full of pragmatic inventors and opportunistic merchants. Criminals, the poor, and others without access to licensed firearms often reverse-engineer and improvise with street-scrap to craft innovative firearms, including the unusual triggerbrand, for brawling in Alkenstar's muck-stained alleys. Political opponents likewise accuse Goldhand Lodge members of smuggling and selling unauthorized firearms, though such misconduct likely occurs far less often than suggested.

KEEPER OF THE SKYFLAME

PURIFYING FLAME

Living up to its moniker, Dongun Hold is a realm constantly filled with fire, both for pragmatic purposes in the forge and for ritualistic purposes elsewhere. Incense-filled braziers are lit to symbolically ward off curses, disease, and the undead. Many dwarves also carry objects that can quickly produce a spark, such as miniature censers, embers, or tindertwigs hidden in their clothes, hair, or beards.

Gebbite merchants, now form on Donguni peripheries. For the first time in thousands of years, Dongun Hold has again become formally part of an international community, a prospect which proves as anathematic and terrifying to some as it is reaffirming and invigorating for others.

While this inter-generational conflict worries the Hold's leaders, they also recognize that the world outside has changed drastically from their existing records. Donguni diplomats and commanders despair at the paucity of their outdated archives and maps, relying greatly on the assistance proffered by the intrepid explorer-merchants of the Goldhand Lodge and the city's Alkenstar compatriots to fill the gaps in their knowledge and calculations. Dongun Hold's leaders also court teachers and experts from the outside world to share their skills and knowledge with Donguni scholars and craftspersons to equalize the knowledge gap on a more lasting, fundamental level. While these exchanges have proven lucrative and beneficial for the city's defense efforts, as exports of Donguni minerals and ores mined from the rich veins of the Shattered Range and the Darklands pay for the construction of more fortifications and armaments to protect the city, more cautious and established Donguni disdain foreign goods and markets and encourage an isolationist stance to reject what they see as corrosive influences.

These attitudes might be due in part to their chagrin at the upward social mobility experienced by the gangue—clanless, disgraced, or otherwise outcast dwarves, so named for the commercially worthless parts of ore—with the opening of markets and borders. By public reckoning, gangue are the descendants of dwarves who shamed themselves with dishonorable conduct, particularly during the Quest for Sky and the retreat from the surface. Just as many of Dongun Hold's moneyed nobles predicate the moral right of their wealth and privilege upon great deeds of imagined ancestors, so does the poverty and destitution of Dongun Hold's lowborn rest upon the supposed cowardice and wretchedness of their forerunners. Central to Donguni social philosophy is the concept of the skystain, a feeling of shame that envelops the whole society for being descendants of the dwarves who abandoned Taargick's first outpost to the surface world. The momentous trauma of this event, which affected all these dwarves equally, led to the idea of the skystain as a means to distinguish and explain valor from timidity, glory from obloquy, and the righteous from the villainous. The gangue are scapegoated as most responsible for the skystain, for their ancestors' failure to act in pro-social ways led to the necessity of withdrawal from Dongun Hold; while everyone retreated, this failure is the fault of only the gangue, whose inadequacies necessitated the retreat.

The much-vaunted stability of Dongun Hold, in many ways, rests upon the traditional ill treatment of the gangue by the wealthy and powerful. For countless years, this division of 'normal' society and gangue buttressed Donguni ways. Until recently, gangue were press-ganged into corvee labor to build palaces and public works or sent to serve on missions with little to no chance of survival. Their children inherited their gangue status, perpetuating a systemic continuation of this stigma and its affordances for Donguni society. In fact, until recently, gangue weren't even recorded within the city's population census or register of citizens. Gangue are almost non-persons, treated as barely better than the hated duergar. Many of the brightest and most capable gangue find employment within the more egalitarian Goldhand Lodge's trade caravans or Sparkforge Collective's gunsmith colleges; even so, they often face discrimination unless they hide, denounce, or reject their gangue origins and identities, thus maintaining the status quo that denies opportunities to the gangue.

With Dongun Hold's absorption into Alkenstar, new prospects arose for many gangue, who eagerly embrace lives where they don't have to hold their heads down in shame or obeisance. Gangue make up the

dwarven sharpshooters and demolitionists who support Alkenstar patrols, and they're toasted as dwarves of honor by the grateful surface dwellers. They make up the dwarven alchemists and inventors who enrich the Brass Guild and Lithos Clan with their cutting-edge research. Some even become adventurers seeking lost legacies in the Mana Wastes, hoping to make peace with their names. While attitudes in the practicality-minded Goldhand Lodge and Sparkforge Collective have shifted to grudgingly acknowledge gangue identities (though these two groups still pay gangue less and work them harder than other members), the Keepers of the Skyflame often engage in creating trumped-up charges to justify their seizure of gangue property and wealth. More conniving Keepers play a longer game, targeting dispossessed and frustrated gangue for indoctrination and offering them chances to "reclaim" their honor.

CULTURE

Art and expression play a central role in Donguni life. Pursuits of artistic creation and appreciation made the long millennia of isolation and exile more endurable. Even before their flight from the surface, Dongun Hold enjoyed a reputation among their kin for both their aesthetic sensitivity in observing the beauty of natural phenomena and their practical wisdom for working with the materials found in the natural world. These dwarves remember the lands which constitute today's Mana Wastes as the Alabaster Lands, both for the region's widespread availability of the snow-white stone as well as the smoothness of working with the land's materials. Ancient Donguni crafted and traded ceramics and statues with their Osirian allies; Donguni handicrafts were so highly prized they often became grave goods for Osirian nobles. Donguni painters, used to life both above and below the ground, observed how their darkvision perceived the lights and shadows differently in their dual environments, and they drew inspiration from their experiences to create strikingly lifelike chiaroscuro paintings.

The war of wizards heralded the dissolution of those halcyon days; alone in their remote fastness, Donguni artists transformed in their perspectives and inspirations. Formerly, Donguni art celebrated the subtle joys of peace after the arduous Quest for Sky. As Donguni society in the Darklands looked inward, styles shifted to emphasize the societal solipsistic turn. Portraiture and sculpture conveyed a widespread, almost decadent lethargy and stillness. While material traditions embraced themes of lassitude and stagnation, the performing arts conversely became livelier, with dramatists creating comedies and tragedies drawn from long-gone glory days and musicians inventing new instruments to take advantage of underground acoustics. In recent years, the Donguni alliance and absorption into Alkenstar have provided invigorating new impulses, challenges, and techniques. The most recent fad are Donguni threnody-musicals, where troupes of young dwarves act out and sing stories of their ancestors' loss and suffering due to the petty wars of wizards. These productions are popular not just in Dongun Hold and Alkenstar, but also among rebellious youths from both Geb and Nex (where these shows are invariably banned, sold out, or both).

The use of prosthetic limbs has become more common in Dongun Hold, a situation rising from the confluence of two factors: the magic-dead city's absence of divine healing and the widespread presence of clockwork technology brought in by the Alkenstar alliance. Anti-firearm lobbyists, often funded by the reactionary Keepers of the Skyflame, jeer at a third reason: that view that guns are prone to mishaps which harm the wielder and their allies more easily than their enemies. This last position is strongly debated by the Sparkforge Collective's ironmongers, who design and produce not only most of the city's guns, but also most of its clockwork prosthetics.

CRITICAL TRAINING

No matter how far a Donguni dwarf expects to be removed from black powder and firearms in their daily life, everyone receives basic training in how these items work. Even the lowest of Donguni society, the gangue, are given this education since an explosive accident doesn't limit its harm to the person who caused it. As a result, many gangue have the skills to easily transfer to Alkenstar's watch, where they're viewed more favorably.

MOTHER OF MEDICINE

The Rahadoumi healer Kassi Aziril (*Legends* 70) has caught the eye of many across the Inner Sea due to her major advances in mundane medicine. It's open news that High King Anong Arunak has sent several letters attempting to court Kassi's favor and possibly even convince the traveling doctor to visit Dongun Hold and share her methods. This act has invoked the predicted backlash from dwarven traditionalists, many who object strongly to Kassi's outspoken atheism. Others worry such a meeting will result in yet another massive shift in Donguni society, as it was with Ancil Alkenstar. While concerns of war grow, however, and Donguni ponder if they'll have to retreat to their magic-less cavern once more, the appeal of healing without the intervention of the gods becomes stronger. It seems possible this political decision is one that even the most staunchly traditional dwarves will allow to pass with only a token protest.

While debates rage on, most Donguni show no sign of ceasing their use of prosthetic limbs; the city's low population, dangerous enemies, and hazardous environments lead to a widespread pragmatism in appraising injuries. Every wounded soldier or craftsperson embraces means to work for as long as they can because there might simply not be enough people to assume their duties. Many Keepers sneer at this development, warning of Donguni souls being corrupted by clockwork technology, and argue that if Donguni simply turned away from the profane firearms, there would be less need to integrate godless machinery into the perfection of the dwarven form. Some go so far as to insinuate the users of prosthetics possess some moral fault that caused them to deserve their injuries in the first place. The Sparkforge Collective's artisans simply shrug and refine their craft in reply. The increasing reliability of clockwork technology makes prosthetics more acceptable to many younger Donguni, and there's even a burgeoning market in bespoke customizations, where fashionable Donguni transform their new limbs into beautiful, yet practical, objects of art.

Corruption is a concept of great significance to Donguni perspectives. To a people who witnessed their fellows mutated by magical surges or animated by necromantic plagues and who live in shattered lands of despoiled beauty, the fear of being transformed into something considered inferior or unnatural (such as mutants or undead) creates huge strain on many Donguni. The regressive, reclusive turn in Donguni culture of the last few thousand years also leads to a hankering for nostalgia, where past achievements are idolized and future developments are disdained.

This situation is compounded by the gods' silence within their magic-dead home. With hope being in such short supply, it's small wonder why many older Donguni assume things change for the worse and tend to respond with overwhelming force when faced with uncertainty and ambiguity. While individual dwarves experience this inclination toward caution in different ways, a suspicious, often xenophobic slant often marks Donguni attitudes. For example a sharpshooter squadron recently threw Donguni society into an uproar by reporting their encounter with a community of peaceful dwarven mutants in the Mana Wastes. As these mutants followed Donguni traditions and recognized the High King's authority, they clearly originated from Dongun Hold. These mutant dwarves professed desires to serve the Hold as guides in the Mana Wastes, a vocation they were uniquely suited for given their physiology's magic-resistant qualities and their knowledge of the Wastes. Many Donguni, upon hearing this news, insisted it was a mutant trick and demanded the pitiless extermination of these pretenders; others protested such a slaughter and advocated equanimity in communication. The resulting compromise led to an unauthorized expedition which destroyed the mutants' camp, left them alive, and liberated them of Donguni artifacts. While some praised this course as decisive action, a number of Donguni left the Citadel in shamed contrition, hoping to make peace with those who might be their lost and wronged kinfolk.

Due to the food instability of their environment, Donguni cuisine emphasizes rugged resourcefulness and practicality, as well as dazzling use of spices and seasonings, to fashion meals of surprising subtlety and intense flavor. Hunting and foraging supplements farming and animal husbandry, which creates a rich range of ingredients for Donguni chefs and households to work with. Cave boars, snakeheads, and catfish are available perennially in Dongun Hold's markets, while rare occasions might see princely offerings of chuul belly, cloaker fillets, and mimic ligaments being served up for sale. Tubers such as cassava, yam, and sweet potato are staples year-round, and grains like barley, wheat, and rice are consumed when seasonally available.

Meats are often grilled or cooked in stews or, most commonly, tossed in warm salads, dressed with cilantro, tomatoes, onions, and bird's eye chilies. Organ meats are consumed as often as tissue flesh; butchers make expert use of all cuts of the carcasses they receive. To further stretch these resources, Donguni cuisine makes use of many preservation techniques, whereby they ferment, pickle, and smoke their foodstuffs. Fermented sausages of pork and blood are particularly popular, as are smoked sweetbreads and dried fish which can be thrown into pots for quick one-dish meals.

Alkenstar exports of Gebbite tea have proven popular, giving rise to the trend of consuming fermenting tea leaves among younger Donguni, who chew them as snacks for energy and taste. Older Donguni enjoy sweet-sour cake-like pastes of fermented cassava and other starchy foods, which are often made as by-products of alcohol production. Donguni of all ages enjoy drinking deceptively clear liquors distilled from rice and aniseed, which produce an aromatic fragrance and powerful kick, and during special festivals, they down lagers and ales brewed from heirloom grains and hops cultivated since the Quest for Sky.

GOVERNMENT

Dongun Hold is nominally a holding of Alkenstar, yet it predates the Clockwork City and literally laid the foundation for Alkenstar's inception. In recognition of this history, the Grand Duchy makes few attempts to commandeer the Hold and leaves the majority of its affairs and administration to Donguni dwarves.

The Sky Citadel of Dongun Hold was built millennia ago as an outpost for the revered Taargick (*Legends* 102), First High King of the Dwarves and the King of Sky, to support his vision of a growing network of Sky Citadels across the surface to house, support, and connect emerging dwarven communities. Taargick entrusted this new Sky Citadel's command and defense to his dependable lieutenant Arnhild Arunak, a doyen of tactical planning and even-handed perspicacity who became Dongun Hold's first High King.

This position is hereditary; from the perspective of the meticulous craftsmasters who founded the pillars of dwarven society, monarchy allows for the refinement and perfection of enlightened warrior-kings through generations of education and training. To this day, the High Kings of Dongun Hold share Arnhild's bloodline. Despite its unbroken lineage, this fact is less impressive than it sounds, for the title of High King hasn't been politically significant for thousands of years. During the long exile into the Darklands, the position of High King gradually lost its notability among the disconsolate Donguni dwarves. While they didn't totally abandon the institution of monarchy, the High King's importance in state affairs receded with many Arunak scions becoming feudal figureheads rather than absolutist autocrats.

The offset of this power loss was the flourishing and consolidation of authority and wealth by the Angles of Repose, the advisory councils established during the Sky Citadel's founding, which traditionally assisted the High King on cultural and commercial matters. The two factions comprising the Angles of Repose are the orthodoxy-minded philosophers and demagogues Keepers of the Skyflame, who zealously serve as the city's moral guardians and ambassadors to other dwarven communities, and the venturous traders and forgelords of the Goldhand Lodge, whose wits and gumption conjure coins and gems from the barest scree and shale. During their long years of liminal exile in their Darklands vault, doubt and self-loathing gnawed away at the Donguni's spirits; they were neither able to progress to the surface for fear of its raging wizard-wars nor able to return to the

SALTPETER PRESERVATION

Gunpowder rules more than just combat in Donguni life. The Hold's dwarves used saltpeter, a critical ingredient of black powder, to preserve food when they lived deep in the Darklands and were bereft of magical means of ensuring their meat stayed edible. Though their return to the surface offers fresher fare, the practice is so entrenched that most Donguni insist their food doesn't taste right without the saltpeter.

Darklands due to Torag's edict of the Quest for Sky. The Angles tided many dwarves through these dark times by providing a sense of purpose, be it the Keepers' constant exhortations to honor and emulate traditional dwarven ideals and aesthetics or the Lodge's unceasing industries that kept hands and minds busy with creating tools and merchandise. Thus, membership and support for the Angles accreted over time, allowing them to reach their present place of honor and glory. In theory, both groups' influence is limited to the provision of policy recommendations for the High King's consideration, thus serving as guides to improve the administration's long-term stability. In practice, their advice amounts to barely-veiled coercive statements promising dire repercussions for political stability and national security if their concerns and desires aren't addressed and met.

The present High King **Anong Arunak** (LG female dwarf aristocrat) has broken with tradition by disregarding their advice with incredible frequency. More impressively, her regime and person have both remained intact, if not increased in stature. Possessed of immense composure and far-sighted sagacity, Arunak has reinvigorated the monarchy. Schooled in sciences, stratagems, and the humanities from a young age, she understood that closed systems, no matter how smoothly they might seem to run, are often unable to survive the challenges of chaotic environments and entropic stasis. Arunak perceived the Angles as having transformed beyond their original purpose of bringing stability to Dongun Hold; they were now bureaucracies accumulating power for the sole purpose of growing and enriching their organizations.

Thus, in the interest of long-term survival for her people, Arunak sought to change her society to meet the outside world's challenges, rather than pursue a path of decay playing at homeostasis. She played both Angles against each other, lulled everyone into a false sense of disdain for her iconoclastic ways, and finally confounded those who thought her a fatuous fool by doing the unthinkable—invoking the ancient, half-forgotten powers of the High King as supreme warmaster. She allied with human refugees and surface exiles who sought to make their homes in the Sky Citadel's ruins and launched a successful campaign to reclaim Dongun Hold from their monstrous foes. The High King is a title forged in the war fires of the Quest for Sky, and Arunak used this new war to return her people's pride, regain their ancestral homes, and restore her dynasty's power from the schemes of courtiers and counsels.

This war also saw the burgeoning prestige of another political faction, the Sparkforge Collective, formerly an oft-overlooked collection of misfit gunsmiths and eccentric weaponeers. Arunak authorized the Collective to share and develop their black powder technology in partnership with the humans; in particular, the efforts and insights of one Ancil Alkenstar proved particularly

efficacious to the refinement and rollout of new munitions. While the traditionalist Keepers of the Skyflame railed against this dissemination of dwarven secrets, Arunak classified these weapons manufacturing exercises as industrial collaborations and gave the Goldhand Lodge open rein to administer its trades, taxes, and tariffs, thus using one Angle to counter another while fostering the creation of a third faction friendly to her interests. The Sparkforge Collective is now the unofficial third Angle of Repose, in charge of meliorating the ballistic arts, and have risen to become a prominent guild of gunslingers and inventors celebrated for their guts and artistry.

Today, High King Arunak rules uneasily. Outwardly, she remains an uncontested monarch and war hero as the Redeemer King who returned a Sky Citadel to a lost people; within her court, however, she's kept in lockstep by smiles and sneers from a people caught between abeyance and ambition. Assassinations (both political and conventional), sabotage, and graft haunt the halls of power, even as resentment against the Hold's absorption into Alkenstar —and Anong Arunak, who shepherded this transition—fester and grow.

LOCATIONS

The following are a sample of some of the most prominent locations found in Dongun Hold.

Taargick's Promise

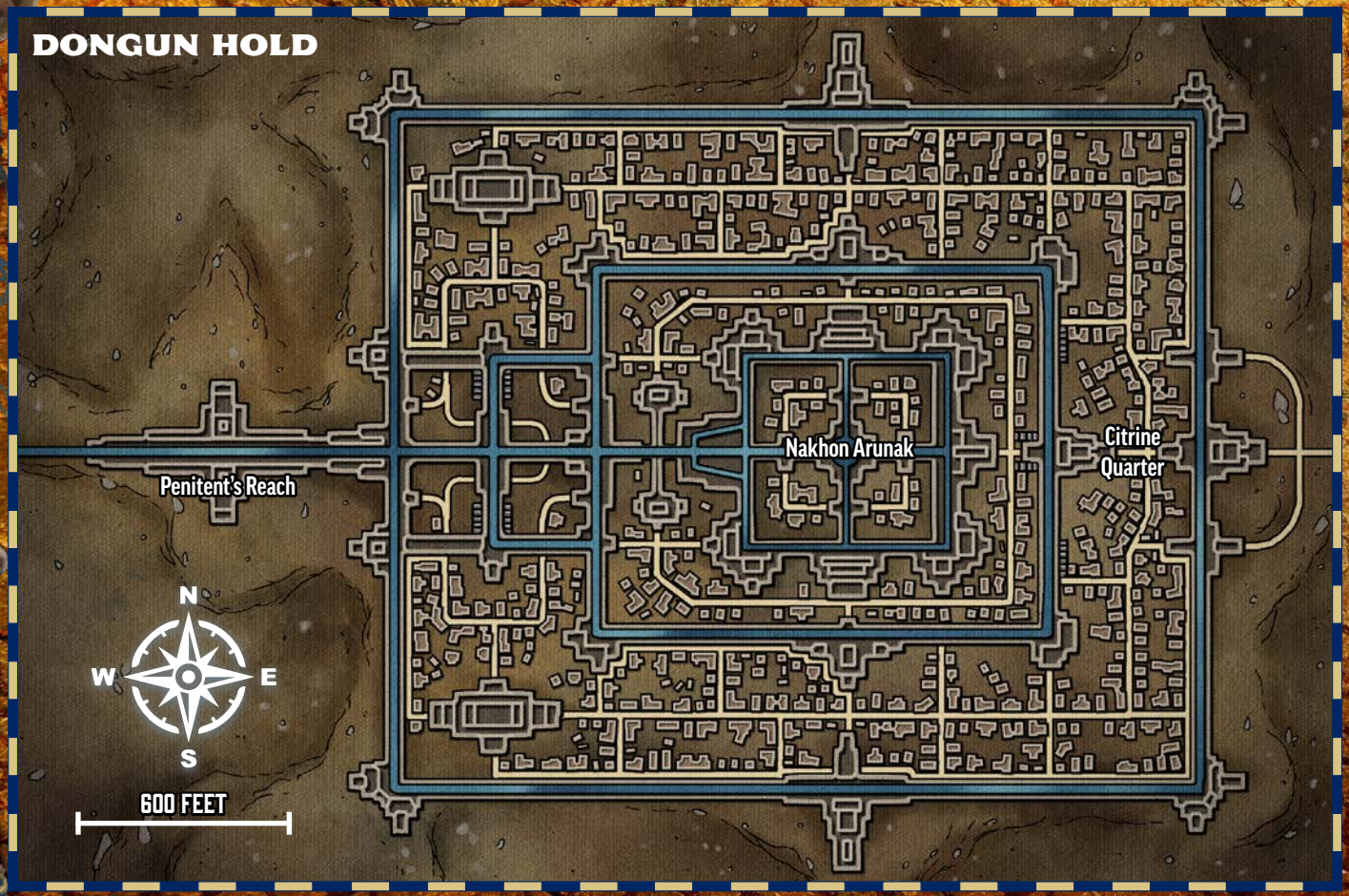
Two major passages connect Dongun Hold to Alkenstar City. The most famous is the overland bridge of Taargick's Promise, which Alkenstari refer to as The Bridge of the Gods. Less prominently, the sprawling subterranean aqueducts of Penitent's Reach link the Ustradi River with Dongun Hold. While Donguni history coheres with Alkenstar accounts of the Bridge as a nationalist monument commemorating the rebuffing of foreign interventions, Taargick's Promise holds different resonances for the dwarves. This bridge's construction began under the watch and care of the earliest Donguni, those who came even before Geb's and Nex's existences, in an effort to manifest Taargick's wish to connect all dwarves. The massive logistics and expenses of such an ambitious structure, however, set construction schedules back. When the Geb-Nex wars arose, the widespread damage caused by unabated war spells halted the project entirely, destroying most of the bridge and leaving behind only broken pylons and sunken foundations. When Donguni reemerged to retake their Sky Citadel, they abandoned Taargick's Promise, not wishing such close links with Geb or Nex.

When Vijeri Ghazi's clerical alliance later "discovered" the remnants of the bridge, the priests saw these ornate, durable structures as evidence of divine miracles' viability in the Mana Wastes—such wonders must be the works of the gods, for who else could've built such works in this forbidding land? Surely not the lost tribes and exiles of the Wastes, it must be divine intervention! Breathlessly, the clerics named these edifices a "Bridge of the Gods."

Meanwhile, Toragdan priests in Vijeri Ghazi's alliance recognized Donguni workmanship, and they were quietly elated to find traces of their long-lost kin. They discreetly sought and contacted Dongun Hold to inform them of Vijeri Ghazi's plans. The rest is history, as this advance intelligence was a primary reason for Alkenstar readiness to contest Vijeri Ghazi's aggressions. Now, the bridge simply serves as a trade link for merchants from Nex and Katapesh seeking Donguni quartz and ores for export to distant Vudra, but Donguni patrols take no chances and unfailingly march its lengths.

UNCARING SUBJECTS

Alkenstar and Dongun Hold are technically claimed as territories by the nation of Nex. Neither Alkenstar nor the citizens of Dongun Hold pay this political claim any heed, and so far, the Arclords of Nex have been wise enough not to push their luck by forcing the matter. In exchange for this prudent understanding, Nex and Dongun Hold currently conduct a brisk trade with one another, with Dongun Hold sending quartz and other gemstones north for Quantium's mages.



Citrine Quarter

Visitors to Dongun Hold are usually restricted to residence within the Citrine Quarter, the Sky Citadel's trade district named for the immense quantities of quartz sold within its confines. Under the Goldhand Lodge's steady guidance, Dongun Hold has become the region's premier trading hub for business in the Shattered Range's wealth of minerals and ores; both raw commodities as well as refined goods of the highest quality are available for wholesalers and peddlers alike.

Two distinct levels comprise the Citrine Quarter. The serene surface level of brokerage offices, conference chambers, and travelers' amenities connects directly to Taargick's Promise, allowing inbound visitors convenient meetings, swift dealings, and comfortable rests. To the chagrin of many Keepers of the Skyflame, the Goldhand Lodge's chain of Homesong Hearth traveler's inns in the Citrine Quarter prove incredibly popular with visitors for their good locations, live entertainment, affordable "traditional" food and drink (of passable quality), and, most importantly, their gaudily colorful decorations that market dwarven culture in a tawdry, almost exploitative manner.

The anarchic underground level, staffed by armies of dwarven craftspeople, logisticians, and managers, is one few visitors deign to visit, and that's just how the harried Donguni like it. This lower level also houses elegant, well-appointed service apartments for those rare ambassadors and envoys whom Donguni trust and hold in high esteem.

Nakhon Arunak

The heart of Dongun Hold is the towering stupa-fortress of Nakhon Arunak, which overlooks the Citrine Quarter and Taargick's Promise. Carved from marble and quartz, and illuminated in dwarven runes of shining gold leaf, this structure is the ancestral palace of the Arunak dynasty, who has reigned over Dongun Hold since the settlement's genesis. High King Anong Arunak resides here in the constant company of her predecessor' relics; every Arunak king's remains are consecrated in rites sacred to Torag and Angradd and stored within Nakhon Arunak's golden sepulchral walls, in the belief their presence grants wisdom and gravitas to the current ruler.

High King Arunak spends most of her days holding court here, granting audiences and negotiating treaties with spokespersons from the city's various factions and interest groups. Whatever spare time she has, she spends poring over documents and artifacts from her ancestors' collections or studying technical proposals from her city's preeminent scholars. A woman of diamond clarity and adamantine resolve, the Redeemer King Arunak is well-loved for her determination and skill in steering the city to a path of safety, warmth, and fulfillment.

The last decade has seen her rise in good spirits due to the ascension of keen-eyed Grand Duchess Trietta Ricia; Ricia's spirited wit reminds Arunak of her dearly departed friend, the idiosyncratic, prescient Ancil Alkenstar. Recently, Arunak's cheer has evaporated, replaced by grim certitude, upon her discovery of controversial documents in libraries unearthed from the unsealed Darklands tunnels. For now, the Redeemer King bides her time and watches her step.

Penitent's Reach

The name of Penitent's Reach reflects the Donguni reluctance to leave their Sky Citadel. The channels and tunnels of Penitent's Reach were built in the Donguni's retreat from the surface to facilitate the flow of water from the Ustradi River into underground reservoirs for use in their Darklands strongholds. The innovative dwarves constructed these qanats from hardy mortar; they are resistant to heat, mold, and moisture damage and are able to store and chill water for long-term use. Consecrated sifters filter the water of dirt and arcane residue while windcatcher towers, fashioned from the broken buttresses of abandoned surface buildings, divert and trap cool air into these passages, providing ventilation, air-conditioning, and refrigeration to the dwarves.

Today, Penitent's Reach also connects to Alkenstar's mazy sewer systems. The border zone between Dongun Hold and Alkenstar City is a legal gray area policed and administered by both cities with minimal success. Dwarf squadrons watch the Reach for fugitives and intruders as well as monstrous entities rumored to lurk beneath Alkenstar's Tinwound Hydroplant, while their shieldmarshal counterparts return the favor from the other side. Somewhere in this no-man's-land, there's a nomadic settlement of exiles known only as the Undercity, where the outcasts and mutants of both Donguni and Alkenstar provenance eke out a humble existence as best as they can.

Vermarine Vaults

The Vermarine Vaults are the site of the Donguni's Darklands strongholds, where they retreated from the Geb-Nex wars' upheavals. When ancient Donguni invoked the dwarven gods' powerful blessings to ward their withdrawal into the Darklands, the divine magic interacted with the arcane chaos unleashed by Geb and Nex in unexpected, but not unbeneficial, ways. Dwarf prayers mixed with the spell storms, solidifying together into smoky-green vermarine. The mages' killing words and destructive bursts coalesced from air into stone, their deadly force boiling away into a jade-like quartz. This vermarine coated the Darklands where Donguni sought refuge, seemingly inhibiting magical effects within a wide radius, from the subterranean vaults and tunnels to Dongun Hold and Alkenstar's Smokeside on the surface. Countless communities and resources were isolated behind the layers of this emerald stone; to this day, Donguni excavator teams continue to unearth new discoveries of kinfolk settlements and lost treasures. As Geb-Nex tensions begin to rise again, the Sparkforge Collective's researchers experiment with the vermarine deposits, hoping to discover any unusual qualities they can use to protect the Hold, while the wariest, oldest Donguni counsel the High King to order a retreat once more into the Vaults to wait out any coming conflicts.

Fortune of Honor

Time, war, and conflict overtook the Mana Wastes and ended the culture of the statue builders that first ceded the territory on which Dongun Hold was built. Yet, being dwarves, the people of Dongun Hold have scrupulously put aside their agreed upon coffer of silver every year for the last 7,000 years, such that now the Nomarch's Bequest is one of the great fortunes of Garund—though being sensible, the dwarves have also used it as a budgetary reserve in times of crisis, refilling it when the trouble has passed. Should anyone in the modern era convincingly claim to be Pethraseth's heir, they stand to gain access to a truly vast treasure trove and inherit some equally vast responsibilities.

NAKHON ARUNAK

SUCCESSION TROUBLES

Despite her many political issues and tensions, even the most quarrelsome of Anong Arunak's subjects admits she's an exceptionally skilled king. Navigating the return of Dongun Hold to the surface and the massive cultural shift that followed was a legendary feat on its own, and she has maintained order with the many squabbling factions of her Sky Citadel ever since. As a result, the High King's age has become an increasing worry for many, who recognize a leader of Anong's quality is rare, and that her death will likely cause a strain that risks cracking the foundations of current dwarven society. Small groups of dwarves can be found gathering from time to time to discuss solutions, ranging from somehow convincing the king to purchase Sun Orchid Elixir, to ensuring a specific candidate for the next king is appointed, to taking drastic measures against Dongun Hold's most disruptive elements before the king passes on.

IMPORTANT FACES

Quietly observant **Gravgaic Quartzmane** (LG male dwarf healer) is barely into his 40th year but has seen and experienced more than most Donguni. Gravgaic struggles to integrate his foreign knowledge of medical science with his traditional upbringing; he hails from the Quartzmanes, a clan of healer-priests famed during the Geb-Nex wars for their Torag-granted restorative skills. The Quartzmanes' glory has faded today, as their healing prayers are stymied by the Sky Citadel's magic-dead environs. Gravgaic, wishing to rehabilitate his clan's honor, answered High King Arunak's call for healers to study non-magical healing arts from **Kassi Aziril** (NG female human alchemist; *Legends* 70) in distant Rahadoum.

Despite royal scholarships, few wished to visit atheist Rahadoum, notorious for its militant godlessness. Gravgaic is the only Donguni student thus far who accepted, persevered, and graduated from these studies. Taking his university fellows' disdain of his religious background in stride, he learned what he could from the Mother of Medicine's revolutionary methods of vaccine production, polytrauma mitigation, and medical research. The pious Gravgaic has recently returned to Dongun Hold, faith tempered from this pilgrimage, and seeks to teach what he knows. Aware of life's cruel ironies, patient Gravgaic steels himself for his society's accusations of heresy while he struggles to serve his nation with every ounce of his being.

The piebald **Chanthou** (NG female silvanshee) makes her home in grand Ingot Square, trading hub of the Sky Citadel, though the black-silver cat agathion has also been seen napping on the roofs of Nakhon Arunak, mewing for travelers' attention and food on the Bridge of the Gods, and staring inquisitively at work teams excavating paths to the collapsed Vermarine Vaults. Chanthou is adored by nearly everyone in Dongun Hold. Despite urban myths of her supposed longevity, nobody suspects the beloved feline as anything more than a pampered and well-groomed alley cat.

Chanthou settled in Dongun Hold before the dwarves' retreat, serving as Nirvana's watcher of the dwarves' tribulations. Her heart was moved by the efforts of a nameless dwarf clan who spent their fortune doing all they could to shelter the city's animals, even as the city descended into chaotic desolation. Chanthou swore their good work would neither go forgotten nor unrewarded. To this day, the inquisitive celestial protects the city's animals from cruelty and abuse and brings warnings to the descendants of that kind-hearted clan—who have no idea of her true nature but consider her presence an unmistakable sign of good luck.

CHANTHOU

Firekeeper **Sovanna Lightpath** (LN female dwarf grandmaster) is one of the most respected Keepers of the Skyflame. Staunchly conservative in her adherence to dwarven traditions, Sovanna preserves ancient Donguni martial arts developed during the Geb-Nex wars through practicing and teaching them to fellow Keepers. A famous denouncer of firearms, Sovanna's martial perfection allows her to pluck gunshots from the air, strike with explosive force that eclipses cannon fire, and carve tunnels in stone with her earth-shattering kicks. The Keepers praise Sovanna's techniques as an example of how true dwarven power can emerge without the devilry and weakening influence of black powder.

Sovanna's other techniques, honed to fight the Geb-Nex wars' eldritch horrors and undying corpses, are also valuable to contemporary Donguni as similar menaces in the Mana Wastes surface anew. Over the past generation, with tensions between Geb and Nex flaring and monstrous foes becoming more common, Sovanna faces aspirant after aspirant seeking training in her traditional arts. By all accounts, Sovanna should be pleased with this resurgence in popularity for her techniques, but the modest grandmaster is instead vexed by how the Keepers portray her as an invincible warrior-saint and her beloved arts as unbeatable techniques. A sense of self-doubt

also gnaws at her, for despite her art's resurging popularity, few of her new students last through the austerities of her training, and fewer still attain any meaningful progress to martial mastery. However, the old dwarf assiduously teaches on, for such is her craft and purpose.

If Sovanna knew what her fellows planned for her students, it would surely break her graying heart. Her superior, Flamespeaker **Borey Ironchime** (NE male dwarf demagogue), is the city's most influential Keeper, responsible for the recent promotion of Sovanna's art. Borey tirelessly recruits new Keepers from the gangue population and accepts them into the junior ranks of the organization. With an easy smile that never quite reaches his eyes, charismatic Borey effortlessly sweeps his lowborn juniors into his confidence, claiming solidarity and sympathy with their hardships as well as esteem for their true value. Meanwhile, Borey poisons their minds to resent those he depicts as their oppressors, which invariably includes the bloodline of the modernizer-king Anong Arunak. Such performative transgressions confer upon Borey the appearance of a daring, ultra-reactionary truth speaker and strengthen the facade of enlightened inclusivity he portrays upon his gangue followers.

The duplicitous Borey has been carefully indoctrinating gangue to become his disposable weapons against the High King and her supporters in the Sparkforge Collective and Alkenstar. In 4690 AR, Borey's proudest achievement yet was the clandestine sabotage of Alkenstar's Gunworks, whereby his saboteurs facilitated the successful theft of Alkenstar's large-bore bombards by the forces of Ruthazek the Gorilla King. Now Borey frequently sends Sovanna-trained gangue Keepers to raid Alkenstar facilities and assassinate dwarf patrols on assignment in Alkenstar. Their anti-firearm techniques prove invaluable for fighting these personnel and capturing their weapons that Borey then releases to the Mana Wastes' mutant giants. When these mutant giants attack, more dwarven lives are taken by firearms, which Borey hopes will discredit both these weapons and the Donguni-Alkenstar alliance. Despite the Keepers' historical contribution in oppressing the gangue, Borey's patsies, denied status and affection, are tragically loyal to the Flamespeaker who lavishes gifts and praise upon them; rather than risk capture, many zealots would rather carry their secrets to their deaths. If Sovanna knew her students were using traditional Donguni techniques to take Donguni lives, the resultant anguish might drive the old master to follow them into the grave.

The grizzled **Pavis** (CG male human renegade) serves as High King Arunak's special attache in matters too sensitive to entrust to dwarven agents. Some time back, patrols found Pavis in tunnels outside Dongun Hold, half-dead from blood loss; apparently, the luckless (or lucky) human had survived being gunned down and thrown off Alkenstar's towers and crawled into the city's sewers to evade his assailants. Stabilized and brought before High King Arunak, he was offered sanctuary in Dongun Hold in return for serving as her special investigator. To sweeten the deal, Arunak also promised to assist Pavis in exacting vengeance upon his would-be murderers.

Pavis is the alias of Armand Meneley, former High Shieldmarshal of Alkenstar, victim of treachery from his former friend, Aredil Sultur. Sultur's illicit influence on the shieldmarshals had been overlooked by Meneley, whose sentimentality blinded him to the roots of both his associates' and organization's misfeasance. When Sultur's most transgressive schemes were exposed, Sultur slickly shifted blame onto Meneley, scapegoating and then assassinating him and his family through the aid of corrupt shieldmarshals. While Meneley survived, his name and spirit haven't. Alkenstar remembers him as the shieldmarshals' greatest shame, and impatience-tinged fury clouds Meneley's heart. Arunak has reluctantly promised to consider his accounts settled when he completes his latest mission—the covert delivery of a coded missive to Overlord Ardax the White-Hair of Urgir. After this one last job, the betrayed lawman hopes to return to the Clockwork City and set things right in a blaze of glory.

GRAVGAIC QUARTZMANE

SOVANNA LIGHTPATH

BOREY IRONCHIME

PAVIS

ADVENTURING IN ALKENSTAR

Alkenstar's rare and innovative technology is, by far, the element that makes the biggest impact on foreign psyches. Just a mention of the nation conjures images of mysterious wanderers armed with explosive sidearms, impossibly thin armor, and clockwork inventions that seem almost magic. Characters from Alkenstar have access to the uncommon options in this section.

ALKENSTAR EQUIPMENT

Although Alkenstar's guns are effective at capturing the imagination of locals and visitors alike, they're harder to obtain than novellas would have one believe. Travelers and tourists often flock to markets to pick up less-dangerous souvenirs from their stay.

ALKENSTAR ICE WINE ITEM 5+

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE DRUG INGESTED POISON POSITIVE

Price 25 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

This bottle of delicately sweet ice wine has the properties of alcohol (*Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide* 120). Made exclusively from grapes frozen in the Mana Wastes' erratic surge storms, Alkenstar ice wine finds a ready market among Geb, though undead are still immune to the drug's listed effects.

The listed price is for a mediocre vintage, but finer vintages are higher level and commensurately more expensive.

PLATED DUSTER ITEM 0

UNCOMMON ARMOR

Price 2 gp

Bulk 1

These loose-fitting long coats of canvas or leather are lined with metal plates, offering wearers respite from Alkenstar's dust storms and smog stains as well as modest protection against bullets and knives. While these dusters can't turn away gunfire entirely, their utility, affordability, and comfort ensure their popularity, especially among the city's shieldmarshals, who have adopted them as a sort of unofficial uniform. A plated duster can be donned with 2 Interact actions or as part of donning light armor. When worn with light armor from the cloth, leather, or chain groups, a plated duster increases the armor's item bonus to AC by 1, worsens the armor's check penalty by 1, reduces the armor's Dex cap by 1, increases the Strength score required to ignore the armor check penalty and Speed penalty by 2, adds the noisy trait, and changes the armor's group to composite. This also makes the armor one step heavier (from light to medium), and you use the proficiency bonus appropriate to this adjusted armor type. You can't use a plated duster alongside an armored skirt (*Pathfinder Lost Omens: Character Guide* 91) or any other item that adjusts an armor's statistics.

POCKET WATCH ITEM 2

UNCOMMON

Bulk L **Usage** held in 1 hand **Price** 25 gp

This timepiece is a marvel of clockwork and miniaturization; its gears, arbor, and mainspring are immaculately crafted and tuned to maximize precision and reduce time loss. This pocket watch has the properties of a clockwork dial (*Pathfinder Lost Omens: Pathfinder Society Guide* 114), except it has a maximum duration of 24 hours and is available to characters from Alkenstar.

WRENCHGEAR ITEM 3

UNCOMMON

Price 50 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

The ubiquity of clockwork constructs in Alkenstar spurred the development of the wrenchgear (a shortened "wrench in the gears") by innovative criminals ("wrenchers") to create security exploits and larcenous opportunities. You gain a +2 item bonus to Disable a Device checks made against clockwork creatures (typically to wind them down).

TABLE 1: TRIGGERBRAND WEAPONS

Uncommon Martial Weapons	Price	Damage	Range	Reload	Bulk	Hands	Group	Weapon Traits
Triggerbrand	10 gp	1d4 P	30 ft.	1	1	1	Firearm	Combination, concussive, fatal d8
Melee usage		1d6 P		1	1		Sword	Critical fusion, finesse, versatile S
10 rounds	1 sp				L			

NEW ANIMAL COMPANION

Though they originate in the Mwangi Expanse, reptiles known as water wraiths migrated to the Impossible Lands in ages past. Driven to local extinction in the Nex-Geb war, they recently returned to lurk in the mighty Ustradi river. Alkenstar reconnaissance teams venturing into the inhospitable Mana Wastes value water wraiths both for their sharp instincts in finding water sources as well as their color-changing abilities that can transmit visual signals clearly over long distances—a valuable tactical asset for Alkenstar's military intelligence efforts.

WATER WRAITH

UNCOMMON

Your companion is a water wraith, an amphibious and expressive lizard capable of changing the color of its scales as it pleases. While your companion hasn't yet matured into its full strength and intelligence, it still serves you with admirable tenacity and loyalty, not to mention its lamprey-like mouth of lacerating teeth and eight clawed, slashing feet.

Size Small

Skill Survival

Str +3, **Dex** +2, **Con** +2, **Int** –4, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +0

HP 6

Speed 20 feet, swim 25 feet

Melee ❖ jaws, **Damage** 1d8 piercing

Melee ❖ claw (agile), **Damage** 1d6 slashing

Special The water wraith can hold its breath for about 2 hours.

Support Benefit Your water wraith hisses and changes colors swiftly in an iridescent clash, overwhelming your foes in an avalanche of shades and hues. Until the start of your next turn, each time you hit a creature within your water wraith's reach, the creature is dazzled for 1 round.

Advanced Maneuver Gulp Blood

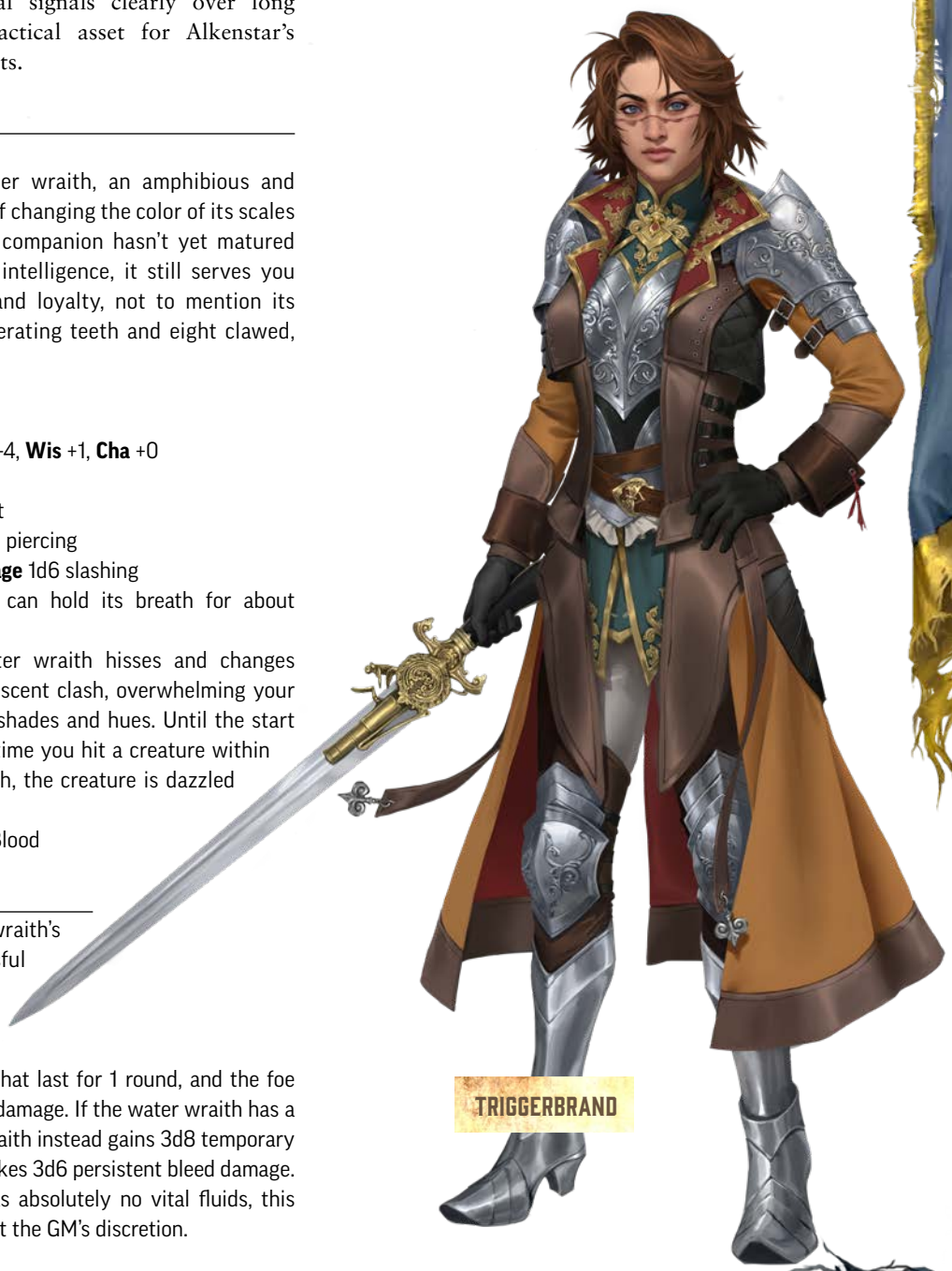
GULP BLOOD ❖

Requirements The water wraith's last action was a successful jaws attack against a foe.

The water wraith gains 2d8 temporary Hit Points that last for 1 round, and the foe takes 2d6 persistent bleed damage. If the water wraith has a specialization, the water wraith instead gains 3d8 temporary Hit Points, and the target takes 3d6 persistent bleed damage. If the targeted creature has absolutely no vital fluids, this ability might not function, at the GM's discretion.

WAY OF THE TRIGGERBRAND

You prefer firearms that work well as weapons in both melee and ranged combat, particularly those that allow you to exercise a bit of style and flair. You might be a survivor who cobbled your weapon together from the City of Smog's street scrap or a noble wielder of a master smith's bespoke commission for duels among



Alkenstar's elite. In addition to the combination weapons presented on pages 158–159 in *Pathfinder Guns & Gears*, you gain access to the triggerbrand combination weapon presented below.

Slinger's Reload Touch and Go

Deeds *Initial* Spring the Trap; *Advanced* Wind Them Up; *Greater* Drive Them Down

Way Skill Thievery

TRIGGERBRAND

UNCOMMON COMBINATION

Bulk 1 **Usage** held in one hand **Price** 10 gp

This unusual combination weapon integrates features of a flintlock pistol and a shortsword. Like other combination weapons, a wielder can transform it between ranged and melee modes as an Interact action.

Slinger's Reload

TOUCH AND GO ◆

GUNSLINGER

Requirements You're wielding a combination weapon.

Your body's shadows mask your hands' steel. You can Step toward an enemy, you can Interact to change your weapon between melee or ranged modes, and you then Interact to reload.

Initial Deed

SPRING THE TRAP ◇

GUNSLINGER

Trigger You roll initiative.

You can Interact to draw a combination weapon and set it to melee or ranged mode. On your first turn, your movement and ranged attacks don't trigger reactions that are normally triggered by movement or a ranged attack (such as Attack of Opportunity).

Advanced Deed 9th

WIND THEM UP ◆◆

GUNSLINGER

Should foes parry your blade or dodge your bullets? Neither—they should be watching their purse. Make a melee Strike with your combination weapon, and then attempt a Thievery check with a –5 penalty to Steal from your target; you can't Steal closely guarded objects or objects that would take a long time to pilfer. You don't need a free hand to attempt to Steal something in this manner. If your Thievery check succeeds, the target is flat-footed against your ranged attacks until the start of your next turn, and you don't trigger reactions that are normally triggered by movement or a ranged attack. These effects occur even if your target has no objects to Steal.

Greater Deed 15th

BREAK THEM DOWN ◆◆

GUNSLINGER

Your foes are but dross from which you carve and shoot your legend. Make a melee Strike and then a ranged Strike with a combination weapon, both against the same enemy; you don't need to change modes to do so. If the melee Strike hits, you gain a +1 circumstance bonus to the attack roll with the ranged Strike. Each attack counts toward your multiple attack penalty, but your multiple attack penalty doesn't increase until you've made both attacks. If both Strikes hit, you deal an additional 2d6 persistent bleed damage to the enemy, and they're dazzled until this persistent bleed damage ends.

GUNSLINGER FEATS

The following two gunslinger feats are available only to gunslingers who follow the way of the triggerbrand.

TRIGGERBRAND SALVO ◆ FEAT 6

FLOURISH GUNSLINGER

Prerequisites way of the triggerbrand

Requirements You're wielding a combination weapon.

You slice, stab, or batter your opponent with the melee portion of your combination weapon before pulling the trigger at point-blank range. Make a melee Strike with your combination weapon. If the Strike is successful, you can immediately make a ranged Strike against the same target with that combination weapon, and you get a +2 circumstance bonus to the attack roll. This counts as two attacks toward your multiple attack penalty, but you don't apply the multiple attack penalty until after making both attacks.

TRIGGERBRAND BLITZ ◆◆◆ FEAT 14

GUNSLINGER

Prerequisites way of the triggerbrand

Frequency once per minute

Requirements You're wielding a combination weapon.

You dance through your foes, stabbing and shooting. You Stride, making up to three Strikes with your combination weapon at any point during your movement, each against a different target. You can make any combination of melee and ranged attacks without needing to change modes to do so, though typically you can't make more than one ranged attack because of the need to reload. This counts as three attacks toward your multiple attack penalty, but you don't apply the multiple attack penalty until after making all three attacks.

After using Triggerbrand Blitz, you become fatigued for 1 minute.

SHIELDMARSHAL (ARCHETYPE)

Rarity: Uncommon

Gunplay isn't enough to uphold Alkenstar's laws; when firearms are readily available to criminals and the corrupt, relying solely on firepower isn't always the best approach to law enforcement. To stay ahead in their never-ending war against crime and espionage, Alkenstar's elite shieldmarshals instead refine their skills of marksmanship and situational awareness into a potent blend of operational acumen and special tactics. Shieldmarshals study forensics, engineering, law, and etiquette to navigate the city's volatile conditions and politics; advanced lessons include specialized training to deal with criminals using

technology as well as tactical analysis for maneuvering in congested urban environments.

You've undergone specialized training to help you keep the peace in Alkenstar's sprawling streets. Urban operations are dreadfully complex endeavors; closed doors and high walls conceal suspects and belligerents, while every alley and corridor could be a fatal funnel. As a shieldmarshal, you overcome these complexities by reducing and adapting to uncertain elements. You methodically observe your surroundings, make swift decisions, and actualize best practices to pacify hostiles, rescue hostages, and otherwise meet overall mission objectives.

Shieldmarshal Archetype Feats

SHIELDMARSHAL DEDICATION — FEAT 2

ARCHETYPE DEDICATION

Your elite shieldmarshal training makes you equally at home in the squalor of Smokeside and the splendor of Skyside. You're intimately familiar with the city's labyrinthine streets and statutes. You become trained in Society; if you were already trained, you become an expert in Society instead. In urban environments, you can attempt Society checks to Sense Direction. You also gain the Courtly Graces and Streetwise skill feats.

CONSOLIDATED OVERLAY PANOPTICON ❖ — FEAT 4

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Shieldmarshal Dedication

Frequency once per hour

You volunteered for a controversial experimental procedure to install clockwork prosthetic eyes. These eyes relay what you see to shieldmarshal headquarters, which consolidates and analyzes environmental data—Bronzetime/Surgetime probabilities, pressure, temperature, wind, and so on—and feeds them back to you. The Ironmaster periodically reviews the information archives in their ongoing efforts to root out police corruption. When you use your Consolidated Overlay Panopticon, you supercharge the prosthetic eyes; for the next minute, you gain darkvision and low-light vision, and you gain a +1 status bonus to visual Perception checks. Even when the prosthetic eyes aren't supercharged, you retain your normal vision.

EQUITABLE DEFENSE ↷ — FEAT 8

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Shieldmarshal Dedication

Frequency once per 10 minutes

Trigger You take damage from a critical hit.

Gritting your teeth through the pain, you position yourself to counterattack. You gain resistance to the damage from the critical hit equal to half your level. As long as you're still conscious after the attack, you can Interact to reload a weapon you currently wield or Stand. You gain a +1 circumstance bonus on the next Strike you make against the creature who critically hit you, provided you make it before the end of your next turn.

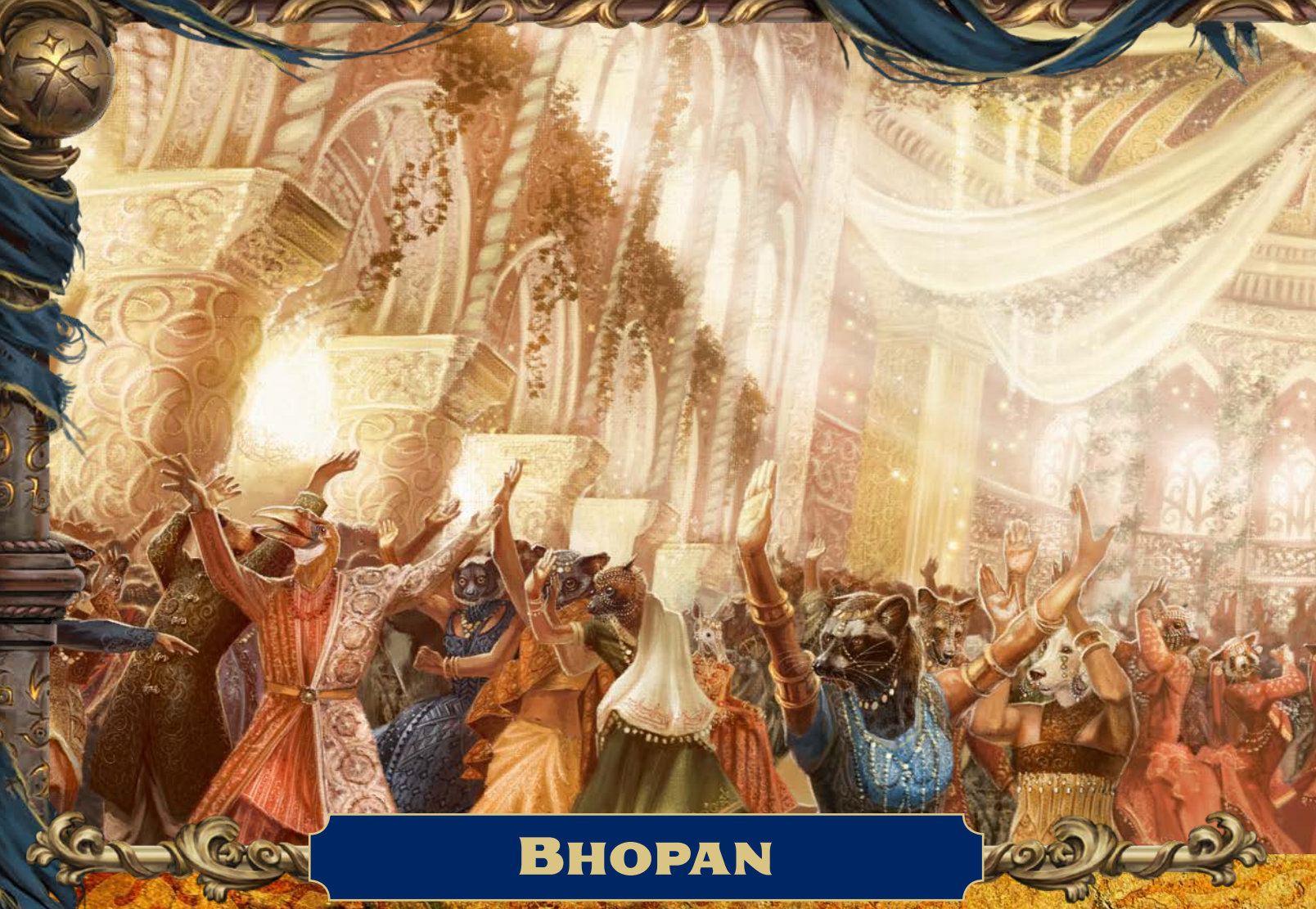
COUNTERCLOCKWORK FOCUS ❖ — FEAT 10

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Shieldmarshal Dedication

Frequency once per round

You understand the need for law enforcement doctrine to adapt to the ever-changing innovations in technology and arcana. Your training in special weapons and tactics give you access to unusual techniques to respond to clockwork- and magic-related crimes. You apply special additives to a loaded firearm. On your next Strike with that firearm before the end of your turn, you deal an additional 2d6 damage if the target is a construct, and you can treat the ammunition as your choice of cold iron or adamantine. At 18th level, this additional damage increases to 3d6, and you can choose to instead treat the ammunition as orichalcum.



Bhopan

Nations

BHOPAN [N]
Hereditary Monarchy
Capital: Hoba Dukuza (1,017)

Peoples

Beastkin
Fey
Fey-Touched Humans

Languages

Bhopanese
Kelesh
Mwangi

Factions

Green Faith

Religions

Desna

Eidolon Worship

Shamanism

Resources

Fruit/ Vegetables

Lumber

Luxury Goods and Art

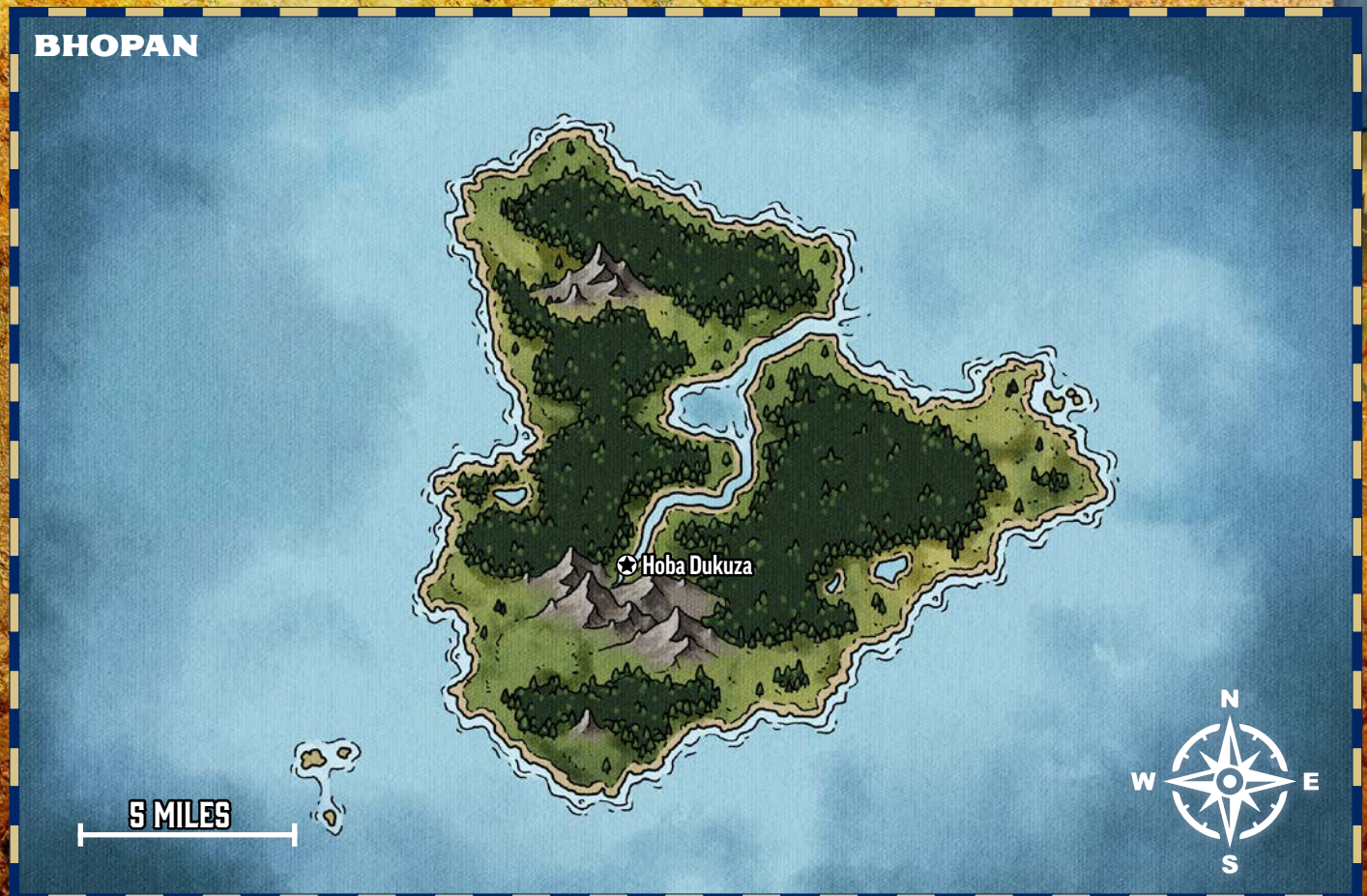
Magic Items

Seafood

Spices/Salt

Textiles

BHOPAN



For most of Golarion, Bhopan is at best a myth, a wild and unverified claim scrawled in the journals of explorers with questionable reputations. Though the Pathfinder Society recently began publishing modern accounts of Bhopan and its people, the Bhopanese are insular and reclusive with no outside trading partners. They maintain strict social paradigms that discourage their small population from traveling beyond the island nation's confines.

Long ago, a First World creature known as Qxal the Thorned Monarch established a demiplane of fey magic, making it their stronghold from which to terrorize the surrounding lands. They focused their wrath on the ancient empire of Bhopan, nearly destroying its civilization entirely, before being bested by a group of Bhopanese heroes who managed to wrest away the artifact Qxal had created to focus the power of their demiplane: the *Perennial Crown*. Without the crown, the Thorned Monarch lost the ability to control much of their own power, leaving it bound within the realm beyond the Door of Seasons. What remained of the Bhopanese people retreated to isolation on the last and furthest island they had occupied, where they locked the crown away.

For years, the rest of the world believed Bhopan to be nothing more than one of many ancient empires lost to time and disaster, if they knew enough of Bhopan to believe anything at all. Then one day, in the depths of the Mwangi Expanse near the original capital of Bhopan, four of the founding members of the Pathfinder Society came upon a mysterious gateway covered in locks and surrounded by keys: the Door of Seasons. As the Pathfinders tried each of the keys without success, Qxal's mocking voice told them any of the keys could open the door if the right conditions were met; namely, since the four discoverers found the gate at the same time, it wouldn't open for any of the four until only one of them remained alive.

The Pathfinders resisted Qxal's attempts to manipulate them into killing each other. Instead, they swore a pact to ignore the door, leaving it to whichever of them happened to live the longest. This came to be known as the Open Road Pact—the foundation for the strong ethos of cooperation that has served as one of the Pathfinder Society's guiding principles. If those Pathfinders had been equally strong-willed, Bhopan might still be hidden away from the rest of the world to this day, but such was not the case.

Selmius Foster (N human male Pathfinder) couldn't shake the belief that whatever lay behind the Door of Seasons must be a treasure of immeasurable worth, and he continued to research the history of Bhopan alongside his student and steward, **Adolphus** (N human male Pathfinder). They scoured ancient ruins across the Mwangi Expanse, eventually collecting enough clues to realize Bhopan wasn't completely destroyed and that its people still lived, hidden on an isle in the Obari Ocean.

Selmius and Adolphus gathered an expedition and found Bhopan once more. The Bhopanese people didn't

particularly welcome their discovery, however, as the islanders feared any contact with the outside world would reveal their location to the Thorned Monarch and bring ruin upon them once more. While Selmius and Adolphus found an ally in the revolutionary Bhopanese princess Ganjay, their expedition ultimately ended badly. Selmius was executed for high crimes against the Bhopanese people, while Adolphus and Ganjay fled the island just steps ahead of their own execution orders.

Adolphus and Ganjay settled down in the Garundi nation of Nex, where they eventually founded their own Pathfinder lodge, Nexus House. For generations, the secret of Bhopan was forgotten yet again, until a new generation of Pathfinders found Adolphus and Ganjay's lost records and mounted a new expedition to Bhopan. Sadly, the Pathfinders brought forth the very evil the people of Bhopan had always feared when the Bhopanese vizier manipulated them into claiming the *Perennial Crown* for themselves.

Though the Pathfinder Society ultimately defeated Qxal, the people of Bhopan knew they could no longer remain hidden. Bhopan's current ruler, **King Webhekiz** (LN male fey-touched human aristocrat) is quietly building ships and training soldiers, sailors, and diplomats tasked with helping Bhopan find its place in a world that has largely forgotten its existence.

GEOGRAPHY

Bhopan is a tiny island lying amid pockets of doldrums between two major currents of the Obari Ocean. As such, it's almost impossible to arrive at Bhopan accidentally. A ship needs a captain who knows how to navigate the unstable seas and a navigator who knows where to go, lest they end up stranded in still, windless waters or hurled against an unseen reef. These deterrents are exactly why the Bhopanese chose it as the final bastion for their people.

Bhopan's coastline is constantly shrouded in oceanic mists that also conceal many jagged stone reefs. Thin, gravelly beaches give way almost immediately to rich, red earth and towering, primeval jungle trees. There's very little driftwood on Bhopan's gravel beaches; the trees are powerful, stubborn, and release their branches only rarely. Moreover, the island's inaccessible position between ocean currents means the chances of driftwood floating to the island from anywhere else are virtually nonexistent, which might seem inconsequential, but it's one of Bhopan's more deadly characteristics. No driftwood means no firewood or scrap wood for temporary shelters, forcing stranded sailors and Bhopanese scouts separated from their squads to either spend the night on the barren coastline or risk the deadly shadows beneath the forest boughs at night. Both options generally prove fatal, though many Bhopanese scouts have a small bit of fey magic at their command (either through a sorcerer bloodline or the Fey Influence line of feats on page 126) to help them claim a slightly better chance at survival.

Fed by First World magic and ancient blood rites, the Bhopanese jungles are forbidding by any standard, featuring deadly types of plant life not found anywhere else. Stretching from coast to coast except for pathways carved by Bhopan's scouts—known as Greenwatchers—and a safe zone around the capital city, these jungles are a more reliable defense for the Bhopanese people than many nations' militaries, though no citizen of Bhopan would be so foolish as to brave their perils alone.

Outer Jungle

Bhopan's outer jungle, the region of particularly dense forest that hides the

HOBA DUKUZA SETTLEMENT 12

N CITY-STATE

Government monarchy

Population 1,017 (50% fey-touched humans, 47% beastkin, 3% other)

Languages Bhopanese, Kelesh, Mwangi

Religions Agnosticism, Desna, Green Faith, Shamanism

Threats ancient curses, fey, natural hazards

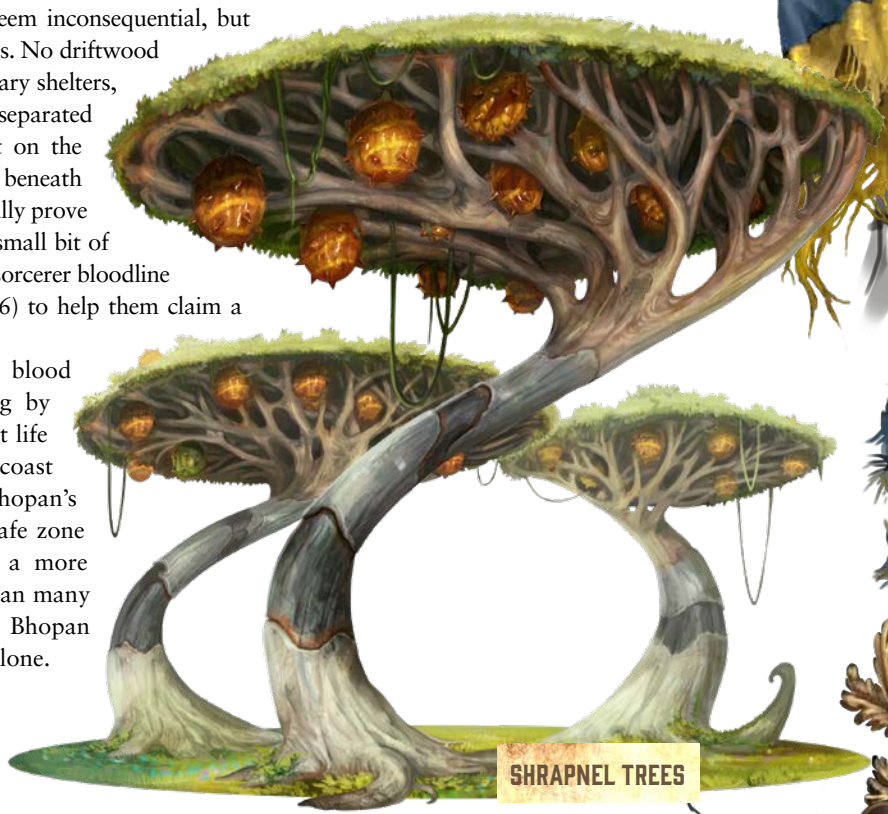
Favorite Food Bhopan's capital and only city, Hoba Dukuza, is home to one of the oldest and longest operating bakeries on Golarion. While any kind of baked good can be purchased there, local favorites are delicious layer cakes made with vanilla extract and jungle fruit.

Dalila Bhotphtha (NG female fey-touched beastkin human baker 6) proprietor of Bhotphtha Bakery

King Webhekiz (LN male fey-touched human aristocrat 6) king of Bhopan

Tannik Vey (LG female fey-touched human scout 10) leader of the Greenwatch

Vizier Lelzeshin (LE male fey-touched human ghost 7) recently deceased vizier of Bhopan (position currently open)



SHRAPNEL TREES

ANCIENT AND STORIED

Surrounded by water and hidden from view by mangrove and palm trees, Hoba Dukuza is Bhopan's capital and only city, although barely a city by the standards of the great nations of the Inner Sea. Hoba Dukuza's people and culture are nonetheless steeped in traditions of aristocracy influenced by fey customs and magic. Hoba Dukuza sits atop a massive freshwater spring that feeds a large lake before flowing from the island's heart to the ocean. This reservoir is likely the reason the Bhopanese settled on the island in the first place. Some hidden magic linking it to the First World—or perhaps the Plane of Water—prevents it from ever running dry.

pathways to the capital city of Bhopan proper, is home to a wide variety of malicious fey. These fey include all manner of gremlins (*Bestiary* 192), bilokos (*Pathfinder Lost Omens: The Mwangi Expanse* 294), and dryads (*Bestiary* 246). Some of these creatures are allied with the Bhopanese people. Others are stranded servants of Qxal, eager to prey on anyone who encroaches on territory they've claimed.

A staggering array of natural and fey-made hazards appear in the outer jungle, from simple pitfalls designed to hold living prey for fey who prefer their meals and victims relatively fresh, to deadly giant flytrap plants that devour their victims nearly as efficiently as the gelatinous oozes that also lurk beneath the jungle canopy. The number of ways for the unwary to die in Bhopan is remarkable due to the unlikelihood of so many threats existing in balance in such a small area.

Shrapnel Tree Groves

Shrapnel tree groves are one of Bhopan's deadliest natural features, particularly for interlopers without a Bhopanese guide. Shrapnel trees are a variety of palm tree bearing a dense, pumpkin-like fruit. When fully ripe, these fruits fall from the tree, exploding when they hit the ground and sending shards of woody shrapnel and razor-edged thorns flying in all directions.

Each thorn carries a shrapnel tree seed. These seeds require a significant amount of protein, calcium, and a variety of other fluids and minerals to sprout, most of which can be found in the bodies of flesh-and-blood creatures. As a result, virtually every shrapnel tree also serves as a grave marker for an unfortunate creature slain by a shrapnel tree thorn.

A DAY IN BHOPAN

The people of Bhopan have cultural roots both from the ancient empires of Garund and the fey courts of the First World, a fact that's apparent in both their appearances and daily activities. Though primarily human, Bhopan's people almost all bear some amount of fey blood or magic. These fey influences often provide particular gifts to the Bhopanese citizens, helping to determine their place in society and their role in the community.

Bhopanese who bear dryad influences are often gardeners or herbalists, while those with gremlin influences hold favorable positions as scouts or barristers. These are generalities, however. While certain families, bloodlines, and influences might predispose a Bhopanese person to a particular societal role, most Bhopanese outside the royal family are free to spend their days as they please, as long as they don't take more from the community than they receive.

Sunrises in Bhopan are typically greeted by a quiet city, filled with the smell of baking bread and fried plantains. Bhopan's people aren't strictly vegetarians, but meat is rarely consumed within the city, and domesticated animals aren't kept for food. That fact, along with the generally deadly nature of the surrounding jungle, means not even a rooster's crow is likely to break the quiet reverie of early morning. Bhopanese bakers ready their shops and stalls for the bustle of the coming day, while weary scouts and guards retire from their nightly duties, entrusting the next shift to continue keeping Bhopan's citizens safe.

Morning in Bhopan truly begins when the sun crests above the mangrove trees, lighting every corner of the city. Farriers care for the city's steeds and mounts, which run the gamut from a small handful of royal horses whose bloodlines stretch to Ancient Osirion to enormous millipedes whose carapaces are carved to accommodate saddles or palanquins. Children leave their homes to play with their friends until the storytellers and historians who serve as the city's teachers settle into favored spots and gather the children for lessons.

By the time the sun is high in the sky, the people's routines are well underway. Having expended their energy chasing each other through the city streets, or using palm fronds to tickle millipedes loaded with supplies for the castle, children settle down with snacks to listen to the scholars. Some children have a favorite historian or storyteller to whom they flock each day, while others make a point of listening to a different scholar at each opportunity.

The afternoon is also the appointed time for a royal procession through the city. Bhopanese culture holds that a good ruler must be known on sight to each citizen, so a member of the royal family takes a daily palanquin trip around the city, passing out favors and listening to the concerns and desires of the people.

As the sun sets below the mangroves, the city returns to the peaceful calm of the night. Scouts from the Greenwatch return from their shifts that began with the dawn, and guards on the day shift return to their families while their peers on the night shift—typically Bhopanese whose fey magic allows them to see in the dark or create magical light—resume their duties. The historians and storytellers, voices hoarse from exercising their craft, are replaced by bards whose soothing sonnets sing the sun to sleep and welcome the night. Bonfires are lit around the city's perimeter, keeping the antagonistic fey who make their homes in the jungle at bay and ensuring the ever-growing jungle doesn't claim any of the cleared territory around the city's border.

As the last notes of the bard's songs shimmer into nothingness along with the sun's light, a heavy pall settles over the city. The people of Bhopan know that to be rowdy when the sun is gone is to invite the attention of dangerous fey creatures whose magic or skill is too much for the Greenwatch to counter. The peaceful lives they live are won through wisdom and discipline, firmly enforced by centuries-old tradition.

A YEAR IN BHOPAN

The people of Bhopan have an intense reverence of the natural cycle, particularly as embodied by the passing of seasons. Despite its position so close to Golarion's equator, Bhopan has an unusually regular and evenly divided seasonal cycle through spring, summer, autumn, and winter. Pathfinders who have visited the island speculate this might have something to do with the fey or First World influences on the island. The Bhopanese think little of it; the island of Bhopan has been their home for so long that they know its quirks and rhythms intimately, with little need to wonder about why, when the what and where are clearly understood. Bhopan's people reflect each of its seasons in their attitudes, traditions, and clothing. They flow from one fashion to the next with the same easy fluidity as the seasonal procession itself.

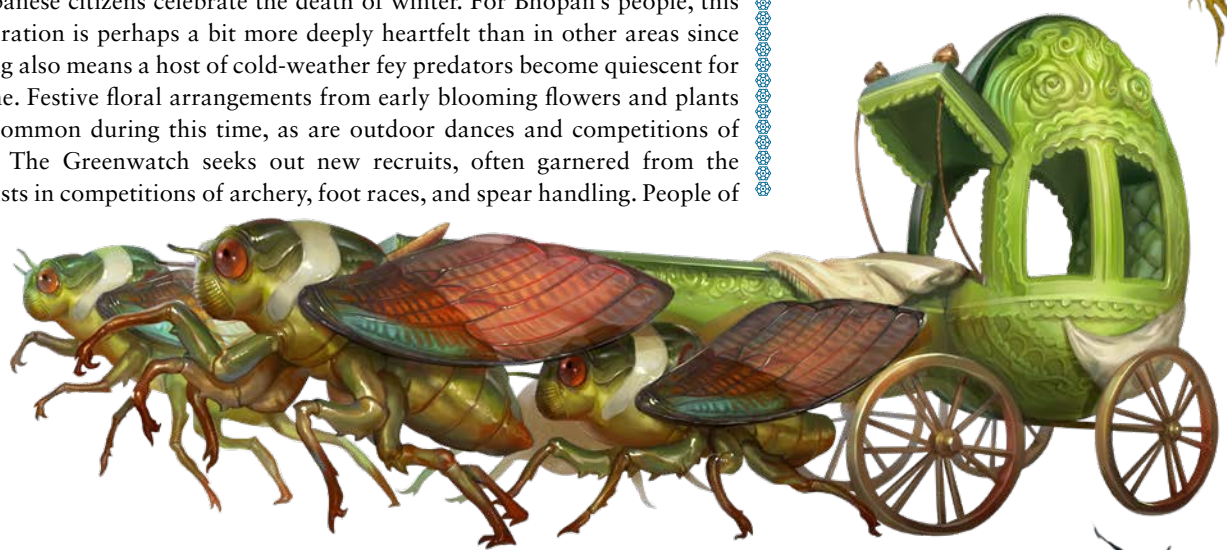
Spring in Bhopan, as in many places, is a time of joy and renewal as the Bhopanese citizens celebrate the death of winter. For Bhopan's people, this celebration is perhaps a bit more deeply heartfelt than in other areas since spring also means a host of cold-weather fey predators become quiescent for a time. Festive floral arrangements from early blooming flowers and plants are common during this time, as are outdoor dances and competitions of skill. The Greenwatch seeks out new recruits, often garnered from the finalists in competitions of archery, foot races, and spear handling. People of

BEBINCA (LAYERED DESSERT)

This rich cake is considered luxurious not just for the taste but the skill and effort required to make it. Bakers outside of Bhopan's famous Bhotphtha family often wind up with a lopsided mess instead of a dessert.

2 cups coconut milk
1 cup coconut cream
1 1/2 cup sugar
24 large egg yolks
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 1/2 cups ghee, or clarified butter
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 tablespoons nutmeg powder

Mix the coconut milk, coconut cream, flour, sugar, nutmeg, vanilla extract, and the egg yolks and make a batter. Grease an oven proof dish with a spoonful of melted butter. Take the pan out of the oven and pour in enough of the prepared batter to form a 1/4-inch-thick layer. Put the pan back in the oven and cook until the top is golden or golden brown, watching carefully. Immediately spread another spoonful of butter and pour another 1/4-inch-thick layer of batter over the first layer and spread evenly. Bake and repeat this until all the batter is used up, making sure to save butter for the top layer. Turn out the bebinca onto a wire rack. Garnish with sliced almonds if desired. Cool and cut into slices before serving.



FEY INFLUENCE

The people of Bhopan almost universally have some degree of fey magic passed down through family bloodlines. Some of this magic is represented by the Fey Influence feats presented on page 126. While the people of Bhopan are almost all descended from the humans who fled Garund centuries ago, many of them are no longer recognizably human, at least not to people outside Bhopan.

all genders in Bhopan dress in bright colors and favor styles in soft, flowing cuts. Due to occasional brief, but intense, tropical storms, waterproof footwear that covers the ankle and calf is typically preferred. Practicality rarely trumps style for Bhopanese citizens, though, and boots are generally dyed in spring colors that match or complement the rest of their attire.

Bhopanese summers are times of industry and production. Longer days and shorter nights mean even those on the night watch get at least a few daylit hours with friends and family. The summer fey who haunt the outer forest, while no less dangerous than their winter kin, tend to be less directly aggressive. Occasionally, dryad queens and other fey who fancy themselves aristocrats send trade delegations to the city, offering rare seeds and gifts of living wood in exchange for the services of Bhopanese bakers and tailors. Royal processions are curtailed during this time to ensure the royal family is available to greet visiting dignitaries, though such occasions don't mean the royal family has less contact with citizens. Contact instead largely comes via elaborate balls and court dances held in the royal palace. Invitations to such balls are structured to ensure all adult citizens can attend at least one a month, though balls held as receptions for visiting dignitaries are typically limited to the royal family, their courtiers and aides, and a few prominent citizens.

Autumn in Bhopan isn't unlike the spring, though the greens, purples, and blues of spring plants and flowers are replaced by shades of red and gold. Bhopanese fashions reflect the colors of the flowers and trees, not just in the color schemes but also in the patterns of clothing. Scouts and guards recruited during the spring often begin their first duty shifts around this time, accompanied by their more experienced peers and superiors. While this period is generally a time of joy and celebration as young adults take their place in the community, it can also be a time of sadness. Every summer, at least one young scout whose skill, training, or experience was insufficient to the trials before them passes, slain by one of the many dangers lurking in the outer forest.

Winter is a time of quiet contemplation for Bhopan's residents. With the falling of the first snows, the dangers of the surrounding forest are enhanced: pit traps and the like become harder to detect, and many dangerous fey monsters who slumber through the warm months awaken with a fierce hunger. During this time, the only music allowed outdoors are sonorous dirges invoking deities and ideals that First World creatures find uncomfortable or annoying; joyful sounds that might attract a sadistic boogeyman or snow monster are banned for the safety of all involved.

PEOPLE OF BHOPAN

Bhopan's people emigrated to the isle of Bhopan from the Mwangi Expanse many centuries ago. In the time since, they've developed their unique clothing styles, specialized armors, and other industries as well as evolved into entirely new ancestral heritages. The fey influence on their bloodlines that caused these evolutions extends back to before the Bhopanese exodus from Garund, though it has grown significantly in the generations since. Bhopan is home to a variety of humans, beastkin (*Ancestry Guide* 78), and a handful of friendly fey.

Bhopan's people have average human lifespans, though they generally tend to have children at a much slower and more irregular rate than humans in other areas, with some specific beastkin families existing as notable exceptions. Whether a quirk of biology or the influence of the magic that suffuses the entire island, the population of Hoba Dukuza never seems to grow too large for the city to shelter or shrink so much that it becomes a hardship.

Bhopanese clothing primarily uses silks and plant-based textiles as a base. Greenwatchers harvest silk from spiders occupying the outer forest; occasionally, leaders of fey clans trade silk for other goods. Additional textiles are woven varieties of local plant life, with each tailor having their own particular weaves and blends. Bhopan also features an array of highly skilled dye mixers who have learned how to best use the natural resources of the island to create a dizzying array of bright colors. Bhopanese dyes are made from rare jungle flowers and heavily favor reds and blues. Purple dyes are highly prized though typically reserved for the wealthiest or most esteemed Bhopanese. Purple dye can be made only in small quantities using an extract harvested from a type of sea snail that can be found occasionally in tidal pools along Bhopan's coast.

Bhopanese styles are somewhat eclectic, fusing ancient Garundi styles filtered through scores of generations of tailors. Other influences include the basic necessities of living on a tropical island that still experiences winters more appropriate for northern climes and the preferred styles of Bhopan's fey neighbors. Robes, wraps, capes, and other versatile items of clothing are extremely popular, as are colorful dyes and fringes. The leaf-weave armor made by Bhopanese tailors is some of the finest on Golarion, made so by a combination of time and necessity. Members of the Hoba Dukuza guard and the Greenwatch require protection strong enough to resist the blades, claws, and fangs of the hostile fey and natural creatures that surround them, but armor must still be light enough that it encumber them while they sneak through the woods or make a hasty retreat. Earning a commission to craft leaf-weave armor for the Greenwatch is considered one of the highest honors a tailor can achieve in Hoba Dukuza, second only to being selected as personal tailor for the royal family.

Bhopan's industries are largely localized, with the majority of its extremely limited trade occurring with the fey who share their island. Forest and water fey trade baskets of sweet sap, rare plants and fungi, and underwater salvage to the bakers and tailors in Hoba Dukuza for baked bread, luxurious pastries, and elegant garments. Even Bhopan's gremlins and bilokos sometimes venture into the city to buy and sell, holding a red flower as a signal of their peaceful intentions. Few Bhopanese enjoy working with such unsavory customers, which means the vicious fey rarely visit without something of extreme interest, something that can attract even the most recalcitrant buyers.

Recently renewed contact with the Pathfinder Society injected a small but significant source of outside goods into Bhopan's market. So far, most Bhopanese purchase such things due to curiosity rather than need, but the slow simmer of a new cultural movement can be felt throughout Hoba Dukuza. With King Webhekiz's plans to extend Bhopan's reach via a new royal navy, foreign navigational instruments are in vogue among ambitious young Bhopanese. Despite a history of animosity with the Pathfinder Society that was only recently assuaged, Bhopanese high society has become somewhat obsessed with *wayfinders*. Though the Pathfinder Society doesn't offer these unique compasses to non-members, counterfeit *wayfinders* have sprung up in some local shops, and a few extremely wealthy Bhopanese have managed to obtain genuine articles from fey contacts.

Most of the people of Bhopan are agnostic, recognizing the existence of gods but holding no particular attachment to them. The heavy presence of fey has left many Bhopanese more interested in concrete actions that produce immediate results, rather than ephemeral mysteries

BHOPANESE LINEAGES

The influences of First World magic and powerful fey entities, combined with a number of specific pacts and rituals inserted into Bhopanese society by Qxal, resulted in many Bhopanese families evolving into distinctly recognizable varieties of beastkin. While certain beastkin variants appear across multiple generations, it isn't uncommon for entirely new types of beastkin to arise in a Bhopanese family. Such births are generally seen as heralds of good luck for the family, though certain animalistic characteristics, particularly reptilian features that might be reminiscent of adversarial bilokos who inhabit the island's outer forest, might be viewed with less enthusiasm.

Most notable among beastkin families are the tenric beastkin who form the Bhotphtha family and their immediate cousins as well as several families of dhole beastkin who were among the first beastkin to develop on the island. Today, Bhopan is home to beastkin resembling almost every type of animal on the island and even a few animals uncommon to the entire region.

HONORARY TITLES

Some fey officially join Bhopanese society or interact with it often enough for them to gain tacit membership. These individuals are granted the honorific of "Kajati" before their given names.

of most mainline churches. The tyranny of Qxal left deep scars, and no Bhopanese would willingly call on or even mention the Eldest of the fey. Many are willing to take on a dryad as a house god of sorts, however, performing small tasks to please their patron and receiving minor gifts in return. A handful of families maintain their worship of Desna, believing the goddess of travelers watched over the Bhopanese people as they fled Garund. Druids and rangers serving in the Greenwatch occasionally worship the Green Faith.

Shamanism is widely practiced by many Bhopanese families, though each family tends toward its own practices and rituals. Bhopanese families who practice shamanic traditions often have a patron spirit on whom they rely for guidance and protection. Some of these spirits are entities who existed on the island before the Bhopanese exodus, while others were brought from Garund. The nature of these spirits varies extremely, from minor household spirits whose presence can be truly confirmed only by a shaman attuned to their presence, to powerful eidolons who serve as minor deities protecting an allied family and bonding to a new summoner generation after generation. Bhopanese historians and storytellers occasionally teach, "If a person speaks to what is not there and moves what they do not touch, they are a shaman. If they walk in the shadow of a god that all can see, bow politely and find somewhere else to be." Despite this belief, worship of said eidolons is common, and any summoner who commands one of these impressive creatures can expect a cult of sorts to quickly spring up around them.

Ancient Bhopanese tradition states any member of the royal family who displays the aptitude to become a summoner and bonds with an eidolon must forswear all rights to the throne of Bhopan. The commonly accepted reason for this tradition is that a summoner is bound to the interests of their eidolon, while the ruler of Bhopan must be someone who can place the people's interests above all others. This particular tradition isn't one that was brought to the island from Garund; in all likelihood, the tradition's roots are tied to concerns about the influence of Qxal and other powerful fey who have sought to conquer, subvert, or destroy Bhopan.

CULTURE

Bhopan has a rich culture shaped by the history of its ancient empire, the influences of fey allies and enemies, and the unique environment of its island home. Bhopan's cultural hallmarks include lavish theater productions and robust storytelling traditions. Martial traditions are largely focused around the Greenwatch scouts who patrol the outer forest.

Since time immemorial, Bhopan's royal family has maintained a wing of the castle dedicated to housing artists, historians, and storytellers whose only responsibilities are to pursue their work and share their creations with the rest of Bhopan. Bhopanese artists who create physical goods, such as sculptors, painters, and potters, prefer to work in mediums that are either practical or biodegradable. Temporary art or art that performs a vital function is valued highly, while wasteful permanent fixtures like statues made of precious metal are generally seen as gauche or even obscene.

Bhopan's buildings are the one exception. Every permanent structure is considered a work of art, whether a simple family home or a lavish theater. Hoba Dukuza features several beautiful theaters that each offer their own kind of experience, such as balcony seating made from living trees or glass-bottomed boats that circle the Lake of Tears throughout the performance.

Perhaps the most revered art form in Hoba Dukuza is the art of storytelling. On any given day, storytellers ply their trade on street corners or in public gathering places like amphitheaters and taverns, recounting stories old and new. These storytellers serve as one arm of the informal Bhopanese education system, sharing the people's morals and culture, while historians trained in the royal home serve as the other arm, teaching children and adults alike the history of Bhopan, stretching back to the ancient empire. Historians and storytellers share common areas, and while their roles and duties are distinct, it isn't uncommon for an individual to tell a fable one day and present a true, historical event the next. Likely attributable to their many fey connections, Bhopan's people are less concerned with whether a story or event actually happened as they are with whether that story is told well and in a way that conveys something of moral value.

Over the centuries, several distinct storytelling traditions have gained prominence in the city, though three are particularly notable and widely practiced.

The gon-ra plays involve a single storyteller acting out several distinct parts in a one-person performance, under highly restricted conditions where props and non-acting-related gimmicks are generally frowned upon. These performances are the preferred method for relaying religious or moral allegories.

Rhythm speeches are extended monologues preconstructed, or occasionally improvised, to tell a specific story, usually historical in nature. While not songs in the traditional sense, these speeches use a combination of measured sentence lengths and rhyming syllables to draw listeners into the story and keep them engaged. These performances are the preferred method for teaching Bhopan's history.

The third practice is fireside storytelling. These stories typically don't have any props, similar to gon-ra plays, but give the storyteller significant leeway in how they use their voice, body posture, and personal expressions to relay their tale. Beloved by children but seen as a somewhat unreliable narrative device by adults, fireside storytelling is largely reserved for fictional tales of heroes and monsters.

Greenwatch

Bhopan's elite scouting unit is called the Greenwatch. Members of the Greenwatch, or Greenwatchers, are handpicked by veteran members of the organization, though enlistment is entirely voluntary. Experienced Greenwatchers know the dangers of the outer forest require scouts with the skills and temperament to remain focused and reliable regardless of the circumstances. As such, forced conscription is almost anathema to Greenwatchers, most of whom would be terrified to learn the person watching their back was there against their will.

Greenwatchers have the highest mortality rate of any profession in Bhopan, which gives them a position of respect bordering on reverence within Hoba Dukuza. Every Greenwatcher knows their first day on the job and any day thereafter could be their last. Greenwatchers who survive long enough to become too old to fulfill their duties are given positions as honored courtiers if they wish to continue their service or are provided with lavish pensions if they choose to retire. In many cases, the pensions are mostly symbolic; it's standing custom among all the shopkeepers of Hoba Dukuza to never charge active-duty or veteran Greenwatchers for services rendered. Many of the richest and most powerful families in Hoba Dukuza are those with long family histories of service in the Greenwatch.

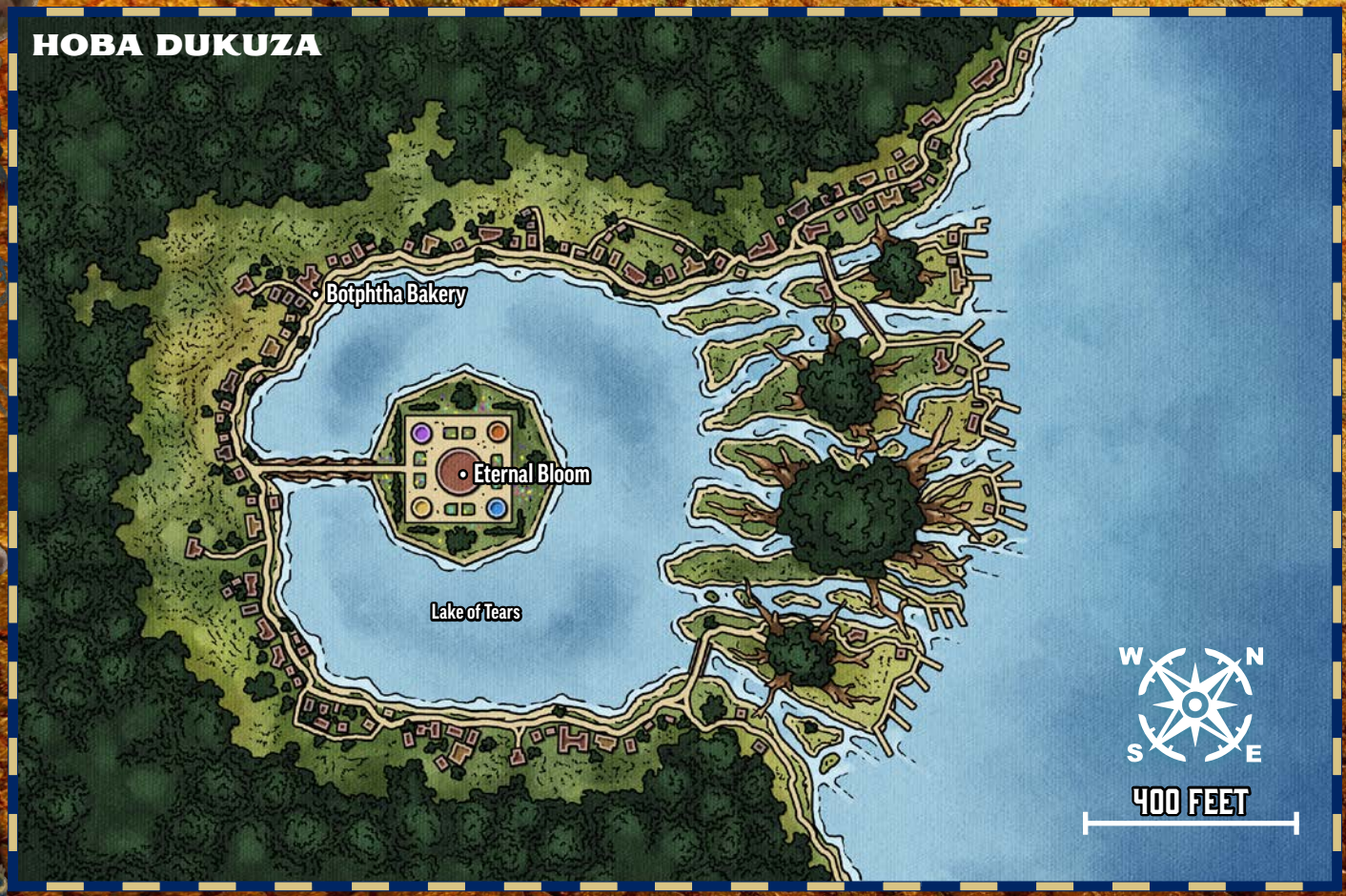
City Locations

Hoba Dukuza, meaning "safe refuge" in the Bhopanese language, is the capital and only city of Bhopan. All Bhopanese history and culture is contained within this single small city of about a thousand people.

First Watch

A Greenwatch recruit's first solo mission marks their full initiation into the Greenwatch, and it's a somber affair, as the scout might not return. Before they depart, the recruit kneels and is given a cloak and a ceremonial crown of flowers by the captain of the Greenwatch. Should the scout return, they once again kneel and are granted an accolade with a ceremonial weapon that has been quenched in purified lake water and polished with precious oils.

GREENWATCHER



Bhotphtha Bakery

The largest and oldest of Hoba Dukuza's bakeries, Bhotphtha Bakery offers almost every baked good imaginable, from unleavened bread to opulent, seven-tiered wedding cakes. The main entrance for Bhotphtha Bakery is a pair of paneled doors tall enough to easily accommodate an ogre, opening into a spacious round reception area. Glass display cases filled with countless examples of available baked goods cover the walls of the reception area. An enormous wooden counter, at which a half-dozen clerks take customers' orders and retrieve goods from the kitchen, blocks access to the ovens and kitchen areas in the back.

The proprietor of Bhotphtha's Bakery is Dalila Bhotphtha (page 123), whose family has owned and operated the bakery for all of Hoba Dukuza's recorded history. Dalila is approaching 80 years old but is too in love with her work to retire and allow one of her many children to take over. She proudly tells anyone who cares to listen that she personally baked and decorated the wedding cakes of every married couple in Bhopan, including three dryad queens from the outer forest. Dalila is far too beloved by her customers for anyone to question her claim.

Eternal Bloom

The palace at the heart of Hoba Dukuza, Eternal Bloom is an immediate testament to the Bhopanese people's attunement to nature and the fey influences that mark their culture. A square, vine-covered structure made of stone and living wood, Eternal Bloom has a tall tower at each corner, marking the cardinal directions. Each tower is topped with an enormous, living rosebud, each a different color.

The south tower is topped by a yellow rosebud, representing spring, hope, and the dawning sun. The east tower is topped by a purple bud, representing summer, royalty, and power. The tower marking the northern corner of Eternal Bloom is burgundy, representing autumn, the blood of the Bhopanese people spilled during their exodus from Garund, and defiance of the coming winter. The final tower on the western corner is blue, representing winter and death but also the continuity of life.

During important political events, elaborate ballroom dances are held within Eternal Bloom, with the complex and strictly codified steps of each dance taking the dancers from tower to tower in an elegant display intended to mirror the transitions from one season to the next.

Lake of Tears

Eternal Bloom sits in the center of a crystalline lake fed by a freshwater spring. The source of the spring lies somewhere beneath the island's surface, bubbling up to

fill the lake before cascading to the ocean in a gentle river. The waters of the Lake of Tears are sweet, refreshing, and so clear that on a sunny day, someone sitting still in a boat can see all the way to the sandy lake bed.

The Lake of Tears takes its name from a speech given by the last empress of Bhopan shortly after she and the last survivors of the Bhopanese empire retreated to the island. She ended her final address to the people with the statement, "And though we make our final safe refuge here, upon this lake of tears, let none of us forget what was, or what can be again. Like springtime or a perennial flower, we do not come here to die, but rather to sleep and be reborn when the hard winter has passed."

Ancient records state several years later, the empress drowned in the lake, though her body was never recovered. Bard songs and prophecies propose a different story, stating the empress swam down to the lake bed and beyond, eventually reaching the heart of the freshwater spring. According to these legends, the queen laid her scepter and robe there before passing through the spring to a new realm beyond. Supposedly one day, a new empress will be born "bearing the heart of Bhopan." When she swims to the spring's heart and reclaims the robe and scepter, the ancient empire of Bhopan will be made anew in a world safe from the monsters that brought the empire to the brink of extinction so long ago.

GOVERNMENT

Bhopan is a hereditary monarchy, though its laws allow for transitions in rulership to people outside the royal bloodline under certain conditions. Any Bhopanese citizen can theoretically obtain a position as a courtier working to help administer the country's logistics and politics; in practice, these positions tend to be held by a small number of families and retired Greenwatchers.

Bhopan's royal family traces its lineage to long before the ancient Bhopanese empire crumbled, with extensive documentation of patents of nobility and detailed recordings of the entire family tree that occupy an entire room in Eternal Bloom. Each monarch of Bhopan had details of their rule cataloged in extensive histories that fill multiple rooms and dozens of bookcases. For the most part, these tomes are incredibly dry, boring affairs bearing remarkable similarities to each other. The most valuable tomes date before the exodus from Garund and are kept in sealed glass cases. These tomes are handled only with express permission from the royal family and the assistance of a royal archivist.

Bhopan's royal family seems to be influenced by the same magic as the rest of the island—or at least some particular magic. Twins are never born to a sitting ruler, and no Bhopanese ruler has ever died without an heir. When Selmius Foster landed on Bhopan's shores over four centuries ago, the heir-apparent Princess Ganjay fled the island with her lover, Adolphus. Within a month of her leaving, her mother and father discovered they were expecting a child, despite being well past childbearing years. Ganjay's sister was born hale and hearty, and the line of succession continued undeterred.

Over the years, the position of king or queen of Bhopan became something of a ceremonial position. Leadership of the Greenwatch is decided by contests of skill or a standing vote by its members if a competition fails to provide a clear champion. The city guard is staffed by volunteers, and by tradition, its leader is selected by and answerable to the ruler's chosen vizier. With little change and no

BHOTPHTHA OFFERINGS

Bhopan's unique cakes and confectioneries are one of the items most attractive to foreigners—a minor conundrum for King Webhekiz, as the sweets hardly ship well and thus make poor trade goods! The following are some of the most popular Bhotphtha bakery items.

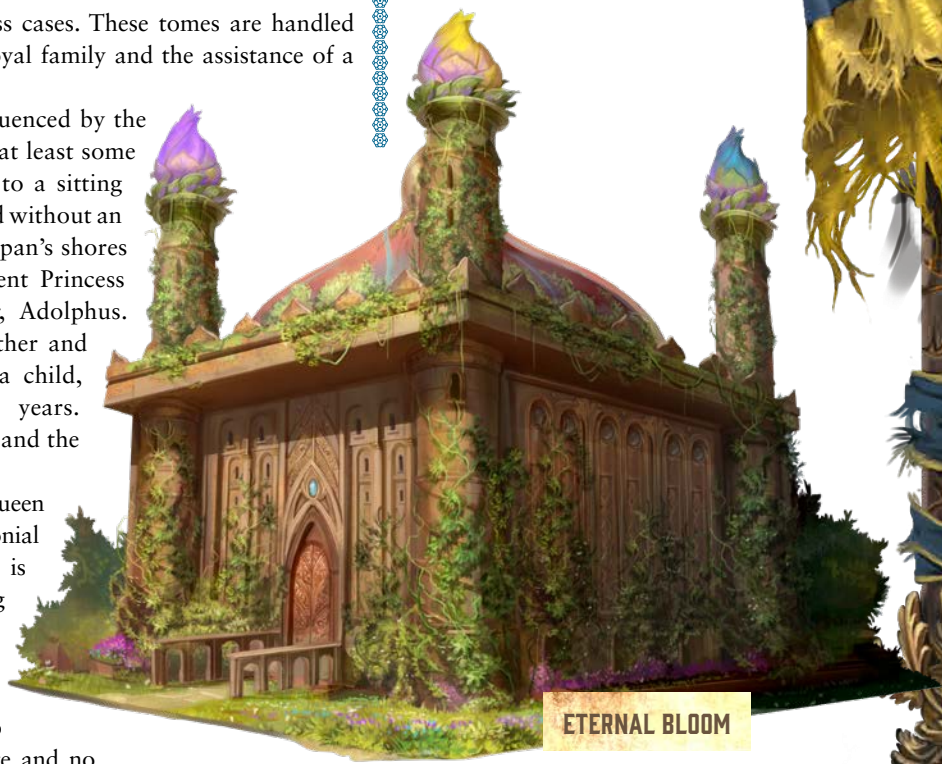
Bebinca, a multi-layered cake baked in a clay oven with a fire fueled by coconut husks. Made with coconut milk, eggs, and ghee, this dessert is sometimes called the Queen of Cakes.

Bhotphtha Nut Cake, a heavy cake made with lots of egg yolks, a splash of rum, and a healthy smattering of cashews, walnuts, and almonds.

Baath Cake, made with semolina, fresh coconut, and rose essence, and then baked in a clay oven to perfection.

Honey Cake, an eggless confectionery iced with jam and sprinkled with flakes of dessicated coconut.

Black Plum Cake, a rich fruit cake made with slightly burnt caramel to give it a distinctive taste and color.



ETERNAL BLOOM

reason to look far beyond its borders, Bhopan has been a land locked in time, demanding little of its rulers save that they keep the people happy and make regular appearances so that all their subjects know them on sight.

The current king, Webhekiz, was somewhat indolent and ineffectual for most of his rule, reveling in parties and doing little real work, secure in the competence of his clever vizier and keen-eyed captain of the Greenwatch. Recent disasters have shaken him from his lifelong fugue, and now Webhekiz seeks to redefine his role. While he has been neither particularly competent nor particularly savvy in his dealings to date, Webhekiz seeks to find the strength to lift his people onto the world stage once more. He hopes his rule will mark a new age of prosperity and growth for the Bhopanese that will result in new trade relations with neighboring countries and organizations like the Pathfinder Society. He fears that if he proves insufficient to the task, he might very well be the last monarch of Bhopan.

The tradition of appointing a royal vizier stretches to the days of Bhopan's empire in Garund and has been observed to one extent or another by every generation of Bhopanese royalty since. The exact responsibilities of a vizier vary depending on the ruler. During periods of especially strong and competent leadership from the royal family, the position of vizier is typically an administrative one, serving as the ruler's right hand and ensuring their will is executed according to their desires.

A strange fey magic comes with being appointed vizier of Bhopan. It's said Bhopan's viziers can see the future through mirrors and reflective surfaces, gaining visions of what is and what might be. Some of the oldest writings and histories of Bhopan speak of mighty viziers who could step into a mirror in Bhopan and step through another mirror on the other side of the world or even pull their own reflections from a mirror to fight alongside them. Though not specifically recorded in any physical document, there are many allusions to the idea that viziers from Bhopan's early days might have also served as assassins for their rulers.

Theoretically, the same oath that grants a vizier their power and authority also makes it impossible for them to bring direct harm to a member of the royal family. In practice, it's entirely possible for a clever vizier to work around their oaths as long as they don't directly raise a hand against the royal family or use their powers to knowingly cause harm to Bhopan. Over the centuries, some viziers have protected Bhopan quietly from the shadows, serving their monarchs to the best of their abilities in whatever manner they see fit. Remarkably few viziers have ever plotted against the royal family, though some have intentionally flouted their ruler's orders in pursuit of what they believed to be Bhopan's best interests.

The last vizier to serve in Bhopan was Webhekiz's chosen friend, Lelzeshin. Lelzeshin became corrupted

by his ambition and the mental manipulations of the Thorned Monarch, dying in a disaster brought about by his own actions. Strangely, no candidate for vizier since has been able to claim the mantle of power that accompanies the role. Their oaths fail to bind, mirrors are only mirrors, and inevitably, they find themselves chased from Eternal Bloom by Lelzeshin's ghost. It might be that Bhopan waits for a worthy vizier to arise and claim the position, or perhaps Lelzeshin has somehow retained the mantle even in death, bound in service to a country and monarch he betrayed until such time as he finds his final rest.

While the Greenwatch is responsible for all martial activities outside Hoba Dukuza, the guards are responsible for defending the city from within, mediating disputes between citizens, or arranging to escalate disputes that can't otherwise be resolved to the vizier. While the guards lack some of the prestige granted to the Greenwatchers, they nonetheless receive the same pay and pension.

The Dance Unending

Position in the Bhopanese court is determined by two factors: the favor of the royal family and an individual's performance in the seasonal ballroom dances held in Eternal Bloom. These dances are incredibly elaborate and strictly regimented affairs where perfectly memorizing the steps of each seasonal dance is the bare minimum expected of the dancers. A common Bhopanese saying is, "A mouth can lie, but the dance is always true." The saying reflects a communal belief in the power of the Bhopanese dances to strip away falsehoods and reveal a person's true nature and intentions. This belief might be part of the reason court dances are always an integral part of diplomatic events, in which the visiting party is expected to participate. Refusing an invitation to a Bhopanese ballroom dance is akin to admitting to depravity and dishonesty in the eyes of Bhopan's people.

The act of performing the seasonal dances is a variation of a magical ritual, in which each dance participant acts as one of the ritual's casters. The better the dancing, the more powerful the conjured magic. The most skilled, and thus highest ranking, Bhopanese dancers are masters of the ritual dance, fluidly weaving its magic into their movements as they dance on air, leap on lightning, and fall from the sky with the gentle grace of a rose petal.

Avian beastkin are often intentionally courted by factions interested in improving their position in court. Not only are such beastkin seen as having some natural advantages in grace and lightness, but certain dyes are known to enhance living feathers in ways that can create shimmering waves of living color when exposed to the magic of the dance.

Important Faces

Dalila Bhotphtha (NG female fey-touched beastkin human baker) is a fixture of Hoba Dukuza, as immediately recognizable as King Webhekiz himself. As the owner of Bhotphtha Bakery, Dalila feeds nearly 300 customers a day, working alongside her numerous children and grandchildren. While Dalila often likes to credit her bakery skill to "all the extra taste buds" as she flicks her long tongue in a light snap, the truth is she's the recipient of literal centuries of baking experience, which she has, in turn, spent a lifetime passing on to her offspring. Catching sight of one of the fairly distinctive members of Dalila's family (even by the unique and colorful standards of Bhopan) as they trundle through the streets of Hoba Dukuza pushing a pastry cart often leads to cheers and lines of neighborhood children eagerly following the courier to see what lucky person is receiving the delivery. These processions, noisy and rowdy

Dancing Mishaps

Flubbing a dance usually only results in the performer looking foolish, but the magic at a Bhopanese dance of the seasons can turn a gaffe into an even more humiliating farce. Missteps have resulted in dancers sprouting a donkey's head, or having their limbs turned into chicken wings or pig trotters. Fortunately, these embarrassing effects fade within a few weeks' time.

KING WEBHEKIZ

FAMILIAR FACES

Players might have encountered Qxal, King Webhekiz, and the traitorous Vizier Lelzeshin during the Pathfinder Society organized play campaign, with players from around the world deciding the ultimate fate of Bhopan's encounter with the Pathfinders. This book assumes that the players managed to spare an enchanted King Webhekiz, killed Vizier Lelzeshin after the latter revealed his true colors, and slew the fey tyrant Qxal (though none can be sure if the fey creature will return again, as so many powerful fey often do). To experience the events listed above for yourself, visit *pathfindersociety.club* and join the community!

affairs affectionately referred to as "chattering pies" by the citizenry, are always joyous and happen with great regularity.

King Webhekiz (LN male fey-touched human aristocrat) didn't expect his rule to be notable, or even particularly exciting. As the hereditary monarch of a land hidden from the world and largely frozen in time, Webhekiz had every reason to believe his rule, like his mother's before him and her father before that, would proceed as every other monarch's rule had for over 400 years. It wasn't to be. When agents from the Pathfinder Society arrived on Bhopan's shores, Webhekiz became embroiled in a whirlwind of political intrigue and ancient magic for which he was woefully unprepared. The prophecies about the sealed vault beneath Eternal Bloom and the ancient monster that destroyed the old Bhopanese empire all came true at once, with explorers from the Pathfinder Society heralding misfortune for the second time in Bhopan's history.

Fortunately—if any of the circumstances thrust upon Webhekiz can be characterized as "fortunate"—the Pathfinders with whom he was required to deal were notably more considerate and conscientious of their position as outsiders than the expedition led by Selmius Foster. Unfortunately, Webhekiz had a dissenter in his court: his vizier and most trusted confidant, Lelzeshin. The vizier believed Webhekiz to be incompetent and undeserving of his throne, so Lelzeshin manipulated the visiting Pathfinders into removing a powerful artifact from its safety in the palace vaults, drawing the attention of the Thorned Monarch.

Having survived the turmoil of a betrayal, a giant monster attack, and the first diplomatic encounter with people from the outside world in several centuries, Webhekiz was forced to reevaluate his own comportment and his plans for the future of Bhopan. No longer able to simply watch the seasons pass in stately order while hosting dances and mediating minor disputes, Webhekiz recognizes he needs to take on a stronger role as a leader and begin making critical plans for Bhopan's future. To that end, Webhekiz organized several critical projects, including building ships and training sailors as the first steps to forming a Bhopanese navy. Webhekiz realizes that for the safety of his people, Bhopan can no longer hide from the world but must instead find a way to become a part of it once more, on the terms and initiative of the Bhopanese people.

QXAL

Tannik Vey (LG female fey-touched human scout) is widely considered the most competent person in Bhopan, particularly since the passing of the former vizier. Though nearly 70 years old, Tannik is still the best shot with a crossbow of the entire Greenwatch, a fact she continues to prove every year during Hoba Dukuza's spring competitions. Tannik's legend began when she joined the Greenwatch at the age of 15, one of the youngest members ever accepted by the organization. Tannik attempted to enlist following an invasion by a local biloko clan but was refused by the then-captain of the Greenwatchers. Undeterred, Tannik immediately challenged the captain to a marksmanship contest. The terms were simple: if Tannik won the contest, the captain would serve as her lieutenant until such time as Tannik no longer had need of his services; if Tannik lost, she would donate her crossbow to the Greenwatch and forswear ever joining the organization. The captain assumed Tannik's inevitable failure would be a harsh lesson for the young people considering joining the Greenwatch, but his plan backfired.

During the competition, Tannik placed a bolt in the exact center of the target with every single shot. The captain, though

exceptionally skilled with a shortbow and capable of firing arrows with incredible speed, couldn't compete with the young woman's uncanny accuracy. After they each fired 10 shots, the outcome was clear: Tannik was the superior archer. Tannik was awarded the grand prize for the competition, a purse of 50 silver pieces, which she immediately donated to the Greenwatch before taking her place as captain. Over the next few years, the former captain came to accept all had played out for the betterment of Bhopan. Tannik was one of the finest leaders the Greenwatch had ever had, and the captain-turned-lieutenant retired early with a full pension, content in the knowledge Bhopan was as safe as the Greenwatch could possibly make it.

Tannik's hands are as steady as ever and her eyes still as keen. With King Webhekiz creating a new royal navy, Tannik realized age didn't quiet her ambitions. She requested the opportunity to lead the new naval force, spending her free time learning to sail and steer a ship along with the other prospective naval officers. Tannik knows being the best shooter in Bhopan isn't the same as being the best shooter, and she hopes to spend her remaining years seeing what challenges and opportunities the world beyond the outer forest might hold for her.

The current guard captain, **Toffith** (LN male fey-touched beastkin warrior) was appointed by King Webhekiz after Lelzeshin's betrayal. Toffith is well-respected by both the guards serving under him and the people of Bhopan. Earnest, kind, and perhaps overly serious, Toffith is generally quite competent, though he has a tendency toward bumbling in the presence of his Greenwatch counterpart, Tannik Vey (page 124). Tannik is the kind of legendary hero Toffith hopes to become, and the young man can't help but feel starstruck in the presence of his role model. For her part, Tannik does what she can to mentor Toffith and treat him as an equal, relying on her iron will and incomparable poker face to ensure that Toffith's confidence isn't destroyed by an ill-timed smile the guard captain might take as mockery.

Vizier Lelzeshin (LE male fey-touched human advisor) was always more competent and intelligent than the king he served, which irked Lelzeshin terribly. Why should he, a man gifted with unusual magic and skill, serve at the whims of an unambitious king whose greatest accomplishment was being born into the right family? Eventually, Lelzeshin's ambition left him vulnerable to the psychic corruptions of **Qxal the Thorned Monarch** (CE ancient fey tyrant), who used Lelzeshin to manipulate both King Webhekiz and an expeditionary team sent to Bhopan by the Pathfinder Society. While Webhekiz survived the chaotic events and the Pathfinders ultimately put an end to the Thorned Monarch, Lelzeshin was slain while trying to claim the artifact known as the *Perennial Crown* for himself. Lelzeshin's unfulfilled ambitions, fueled by the Thorned Monarch's manipulations, wouldn't allow him to rest easy, even in death. Now a ghost wandering the hallways of Eternal Bloom, and occasionally spotted by children lurking in the shadows of Hoba Dukuza's gardens and amphitheaters, Lelzeshin lingers, forever determined to claim the throne of Bhopan for himself and eternally unable to do so.

Even as a ghost, Lelzeshin still keeps secrets that might ultimately prove dangerous to Bhopan. In life, Lelzeshin was corrupted by the psychic whispers of the Thorned Monarch. In death, Lelzeshin hears those whispers more clearly than ever. They speak to him of opportunities yet to come, of a life that might be his once more, and of sweet revenge that will assuredly be claimed if only he lingers, if only he waits, if only he opens the door when Qxal knocks once more. Whenever the vizier's ghost passes a mirror, he sees within its depths not a reflection of his surroundings, but rather a burning portal to a place of darkness and unending torment, where a giant creature rests in a cocoon of thorns and hellfire, pulsing with a dark life yet to be reborn.

DALILA BHOTPHTHA

LELZESHIN

TANNIK VEY

TOFFITH

The isolated nature and fey influence of Bhopan makes it stand out among even the storied lands of Golarion.

BHOPANESE DANCE FEATS

The following feats represent techniques used in the complex ballroom dances of Bhopan. Characters can gain access to these feats by successfully participating in a Grand Dance at Hoba Dukuza or by being trained in the dance by an expert from Bhopan's royal court. These feats are available to bards, rogues, and swashbucklers. Once you select one of these feats, it loses the traits from the other classes.

MASQUERADE OF SEASONS STANCE ❖ FEAT 4

RARE BARD ROGUE STANCE SWASHBUCKLER

Prerequisites trained in Performance

You have mastered the opening steps to the Masquerade of Seasons, a dance that channels the power of spring, summer, winter, and autumn. Choose one of the following traits: water, fire, negative, or cold. You gain resistance 5 to damage dealt by effects with the chosen trait. You can use an action to reenter this stance at any time, changing the granted resistance to another of the available options. If you are at least 12th level, the granted resistance increases to be equal to half your level.

PIROUETTE ↻ FEAT 6

RARE BARD ROGUE SWASHBUCKLER

Prerequisites Masquerade of Seasons Stance

Requirements You're in Masquerade of Seasons Stance.

Trigger An enemy targets you with a Strike.

You twirl gracefully, spinning on one foot to evade your opponent's attack. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus to AC against the triggering attack. If the attack misses you, you can immediately Step. If the attack hits you anyway, reduce the damage it deals by an amount equal to half your level; this reduction in damage is applied after calculating immunities, resistances, and weakness.

GRAND DANCE ❖❖ FEAT 8

RARE BARD ROGUE SWASHBUCKLER

Prerequisites Masquerade of Seasons Stance

Requirements You're in Masquerade of Seasons Stance.

You can summon the full magic of Bhopan's grand dance. Stride up to your Speed; during this Stride, you can walk on air as if it were solid ground. You can ascend and descend in this way at a maximum of a 45-degree angle. You must end your Stride on a surface that can support you or you fall.

FEY INFLUENCE

The following feats are ancestry feats available to any ancestry, though they're typically taken only by people from Bhopan or who have spent extensive time there. These feats represent exposure to fey magic and possibly a fey ancestor at a distant point in the character's family tree.

FEY INFLUENCE FEAT 5

RARE

You have been exposed to powerful fey magic. You become trained in primal DCs and spell attack rolls. You gain the fey trait and one of the following features that grants an innate primal spell that can be used once per day.

- **Anteater** You can launch your tongue forward as a deadly attack, gaining *grim tendrils*.
- **Cat Sith** You have catlike features and can appear as a mundane cat with *pest form* (cat only).
- **Cursed Bluebird** You have blue feathers or wings. It's terrible luck to harm a bluebird, and you can manifest that power as *ill omen* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 221).
- **Dryad** Your body is covered in elegant vines, granting you *summon plant or fungus*.
- **Faun** Your legs and feet are swift and possibly hooved, granting you *fleet step*.
- **Gremlin** You have long, bat-like ears and gain *bane*.
- **Monarch** You have vestigial, insectile features and gain *spider sting*.

- **Unicorn** You have a magical horn or a prominent symbol of one on your forehead, which you can use to cast *heal*.

Special This feat gains the trait appropriate for your ancestry (human for human, goblin for goblin, etc.).

DRAIN EMOTION ◆◆ FEAT 9

RARE ENCHANTMENT MENTAL

Prerequisites Fey Influence

Frequency once per day

You touch an adjacent creature and attempt to draw out its excess emotion. Attempt a counteract check against a single emotion or fear effect affecting the touched creature. If you succeed, you gain temporary Hit Points equal to your level for a number of rounds equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1 round).

Special This feat gains the trait appropriate for your ancestry (human for human, goblin for goblin, etc.).

FEY ASCENSION FEAT 9

RARE

Prerequisites Fey Influence

The fey influence on your form and features grows even more powerful and notable. You gain one of the following features and abilities; this must be the same animal or fey type as you chose for Fey Influence.

- **Anteater** You become an expert in primal DCs and spell attack rolls. You can cast *slow* as an innate primal spell once per day.
- **Cat Sith** You laugh off the outraged curses of those you have tricked or wronged. Whenever a creature targets you with a misfortune effect, make a DC 13 flat check. On a success, you are unaffected.
- **Cursed Bluebird** You have enough control over your curse to turn a bane into a minor blessing. Once per day, you can temporarily transform yourself or an ally into a blue bird, as a 4th-level *pest form* (bird only) targeting one willing creature.
- **Dryad** Your hair becomes intermixed with delicate but razor-edged leaves that move as you command. You gain a leaves ranged unarmed attack that deals 1d6 slashing damage. Your leaves are in the dart weapon group and have the magical and unarmed traits.
- **Faun** You can cast *charm*, *sleep*, and *triple time* as innate primal spells once per day each. Whenever you cast one of these spells, you can Step or Stride as part of the activity.
- **Gremlin** You become an expert in primal DCs and spell attack rolls. You can cast *mad monkeys* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 222) as an innate primal spell once per day.
- **Monarch** Once per day, you gain the ability to manifest a pair of exquisite butterfly wings. These wings remain for 10 minutes. You gain a fly Speed equal to your Speed while you've manifested your wings.
- **Unicorn** You become trained in Medicine, or an expert if you were already trained. You gain a +2 status bonus to saves against poison and charm effects.

Special This feat gains the trait appropriate for your ancestry (human for human, goblin for goblin, etc.).

CANNIBALIZE MAGIC ◆◆ FEAT 13

RARE

Prerequisites Fey Influence

BHOPANESE MAIDA CAKE

1 & 1/2 cups maida
3 tablespoons assassin vine pollen (or corn flour)
3/4 cup sugar
1 teaspoon powdered bone mixed with lemon juice (or baking powder)
1/2 teaspoon mineral spring powder (or baking soda)
1/2 cup rendered fat (or other baking oil)
1 cup fermented curd
2 teaspoons crushed vanilla beans

Sieve maida with assassin vine pollen twice to ensure even mixing. Mix fermented curd and sugar in a bowl well. Add powdered bone and lemon juice together in mixing bowl, then add to mineral spring powder and let it rest for 2–3 minutes. Add rendered fat and crushed vanilla and mix well, then mix in the pollen one tablespoon at a time. Pour the mixture in a baking pan, greased with rendered fat and dusted with a teaspoon of pollen. Bake for 35–40 minutes. Let it rest in the pan for 5 minutes and invert carefully onto a rack for cooling. Top with chocolate frosting.

SEASONAL GREETINGS

Bhopanese see the seasons as part of the eternal cycle and have formalized greetings that reflect that notion. An appropriate statement about a season as a greeting warrants a response that uses the opposite season in a similar manner. Some typical Bhopanese greetings include the following.

- Spring brings new beginnings.
- Summer brings prosperity.
- Autumn brings wisdom.
- Winter brings peace.

Bhopanese military and nobility will also sometimes prick their fingers and allow a drop of blood to fall on the ground as a greeting. This is used as a sign of utmost respect.

Frequency once per day

The fey magic inside of you is a vital part of your body, and you can steal other sources of magic to replenish yours. You can draw power from your magical equipment to replenish your health. You drain one of your invested items, in the process regaining Hit Points equal to double the item's level.

In addition, you can attempt a counteract check with a total bonus equal to 10 + the drained item's level against one effect that gave you the drained, doomed, enfeebled, fatigued, or slowed condition. If you succeed, you reduce the chosen condition's value by 1.

An item drained by this action becomes non-magical until the next time you make your daily preparations.

Special This feat gains the trait appropriate for your ancestry (human for human, goblin for goblin, etc.).

GLAMOUR — FEAT 13

RARE

Prerequisites Fey Influence

You unlock a new level of fey power and can manipulate the perceptions of others using a font of First World magic. You gain the *fey glamour* focus spell (*Pathfinder Core Rulebook* 404) as a primal spell that doesn't have the sorcerer trait. If you don't already have a focus pool, you gain a focus pool of 1 Focus Point.

Special This feat gains the trait appropriate for your ancestry (human for human, goblin for goblin, etc.).

ELDRITCH CALM — FEAT 13

RARE

Prerequisites Fey Influence

Your fey heritage has altered your mindset to more resemble the uncanny perspective of the fey. While you are not emotionless, and indeed might be prone to fits of odd moods and tempers, many perceive you as having an aura of unshakable tranquility. When you roll a critical failure against an emotion or fear effect, you get a failure instead. Once per day in place of attempting a saving throw against an emotion or fear effect, you can automatically treat your result as though you had rolled a 20; this is a fortune effect.

However, your extraordinary emotional detachment makes it difficult to encourage you. You reduce any bonus you gain from an emotion effect by 1.

Special This feat gains the trait appropriate for your ancestry (human for human, goblin for goblin, etc.).

FEY TRANSCENDENCE — FEAT 17

RARE

Prerequisites Fey Influence

You become a powerful fey creature, gaining strengths tied to the First World but also some of the weakness against which all fey must contend. You gain a +2 status bonus to saves against illusion, emotion, and enchantment effects, and you can use Diplomacy to Make an Impression on and to make very simple Requests of animals and plants. You regain twice the number of Hit Points when resting in a natural wooded area, such as a forest or jungle. You have weakness to cold iron equal to half your level.

Special This feat gains the trait appropriate for your ancestry (human for human, goblin for goblin, etc.).

GREENWATCH FEATS

The following feats represent techniques developed and practiced by Bhopan's elite scouting unit, the Greenwatch. Characters can gain access to these feats by either joining the Greenwatch or, more likely, by learning them from a veteran

Greenwatcher after earning the scout's trust. These feats are available to gunslingers, investigators, and rangers. Once you select one of these feats, it loses the traits from the other classes.

GREENWATCH INITIATE — FEAT 4

RARE GUNSLINGER INVESTIGATOR RANGER

Prerequisites trained in Survival

You've received the basic training developed for all Greenwatch recruits. You become an expert in Survival and gain the Experienced Tracker and Survey Wildlife skill feats.

DEFY FEY — FEAT 6

RARE GUNSLINGER INVESTIGATOR RANGER

Prerequisites Greenwatch Initiate

You are keen to the wiles of the fey and can usually shake off their magic. Whenever you fail, but don't critically fail, a save against a spell with a duration of at least 1 round cast by a fey creature, you can attempt a second save against the original DC at the start of your next turn to end any lingering effects the spell might have. This can end persistent damage caused by a spell but can't reverse any effects that have been resolved already (such as damage dealt when the spell was cast).

FEY TRACKER — FEAT 6

RARE GUNSLINGER INVESTIGATOR RANGER

Prerequisites Greenwatch Initiate

You are exceptionally skilled at noticing the subtle techniques fey use to avoid notice. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus to Survival checks to Track fey creatures, to Perception checks to Seek for hidden fey, and to your Perception DC to resist a fey creature's attempt to Create a Diversion.

GREENWATCH VETERAN ◈ — FEAT 8

RARE GUNSLINGER INVESTIGATOR RANGER

Trigger Your turn starts, and you're in combat against a creature you spent at least 10 minutes Tracking.

Your time spent tracking your target allows you to quickly identify its weaknesses and relay them to your allies. Attempt a Recall Knowledge check against the creature you were Tracking. On a success, you always know the creature's greatest weakness and highest resistance or immunity, in addition to any other information the check would typically provide. You immediately use a quick series of hand gestures to signal this information to any allies who can see you.

UNSEEN PASSAGE — FEAT 8

RARE GUNSLINGER INVESTIGATOR RANGER

Frequency once per day

You have mastered a magical technique for moving through dangerous woodlands unseen. You can cast *pass without trace* as an innate primal spell heightened to a spell level equal to half your level rounded up.

GREENWATCHER — FEAT 10

RARE GUNSLINGER INVESTIGATOR RANGER

Prerequisites Defy Fey

Your experience fighting against and alongside fey creatures is nearly unrivaled. Any weapon you wield or unarmed attack you make against a fey creature is treated as cold iron. Whenever you critically fail a save against a spell cast by a fey creature, it's instead treated as a normal failure. Whenever you critically succeed on a Strike against a fey creature, the target is immediately subject to the effects of a *faerie fire* spell. For the purposes of counteracting this effect, it's an innate 2nd-level primal spell.

DOMESTICATED ODDITIES

Bhopan has a highly sophisticated understanding of the magical cultivation of organisms. One of the more notable examples—and the one that surprises and alarms foreigners the most—is a fungal digestive mat that resembles green fur. This "fur" moves in soft waves over anything in contact with it, removing mud, blood, and sweat, and even adding a fresh mango scent to the cleaned object or person. The fungal pelt is highly popular for Bhopanese upholstery.

Geb

Nations

Geb (LE)
Undead Dictatorship
Capital: Mechitar (42,000)

Peoples

Dhampirs
Fetchlings
Half-Orcs
Humans
Tieflings
Undead

Languages

Kelesh
Osiriani
Necril

Factions

Blood Lords of Geb

Quick-Dead Coalition

Twilight Sages

Religions

Arazni

Urgathoa

Mahathallah

Zon-Kuthon

Nethys

Resources

Alcohol/ Drugs

Books/ Lore

Grain/Fruit/ Vegetables

Magic Items

Mercenaries

Spices/Salt

Textiles

GEB
Geb's Rest
Fort Scourbone
Pagked
Yled
Ydrion River
Tilxar
Shattered Range
Graydirge
Corpselight
GEB
Axan Wood
Sallowshore
Axanir River
Hollow Flesh
Crabfield Island
Fields of Jaadja
Mechitar
Jaadja River
OBARI OCEAN
Field of Maidens
100 MILES
N
W
E
S

Geb is a land renowned for its undead population and its part in the Nex-Geb war in the Age of Destiny that decimated communities and wreaked havoc throughout the region. Named after its immortal necromancer-conqueror, Geb, this nation has survived multiple magical conflicts and calamities, as well as a mostly absent leader, to become a unique trade and cultural hub of undead society.

The history of Geb, as told within the nation, is thus: the nations of Nex and Geb clashed many millennia ago in a series of centuries-long arcane battles over access to trade routes. The rivalry came to head when Nex, having cut all land routes to the Golden Road markets, goaded Geb into breaking the blockade. The necromancer blighted the plains of Nex with a horrific and lingering curse, bringing the Nexians to the brink of utter defeat. Nex retaliated by releasing waves of magical cataclysms that wiped out tens of thousands of Geb's citizens. Devastated by the loss, Geb raised his slain citizens as a massive undead army which besieged Nex until the final assault on Quantium. There, the mighty Geb covered Nex's capital city in a lethal fog that killed thousands of its occupants but rolled harmlessly off his own undead legions. In the chaos, Nex fled to his personal demiplane, never to be seen again.

With one of the two great wizards gone, the war eventually fizzled out into a weary stalemate. However, Geb was convinced Nex would return. Denied his chance to vanquish his centuries-long rival after the battle at Quantium, Geb descended into despair and paranoia, then took his own life. His stubbornness and sheer force of will, as well as his strong connection to necromancy, allowed Geb to return as a ghost whose sole undead purpose is to see Nex again and put an end to him. Many of Geb's loyal subjects chose to follow him in undeath, killing themselves to tie their souls in service to their sovereign as a final oath of fealty. Now ruled by an immortal ghost and small councils of intelligent undead, Geb is an undead nation that makes most of its neighbors uneasy.

While the creation of the Dead Laws gave equal rights to the nation's living (referred to as the quick) and undead citizens, very few rights are afforded to those the undead deem as food. In addition, those who perish on Geb's soil forfeit their right to bodily autonomy, having their corpses animated as a mindless undead to join the country's worker force. This has led to interesting migration patterns and new types of contracts with the dead to circumvent such fates.

As a ghost, Geb believed the day-to-day tedium of ruling his namesake nation beneath him. In retribution for an assault by Lastwall paladins, he reanimated seven of them as graveknights and sent them to abduct the corpse of Arazni, a former herald of Aroden. He transformed Arazni into a lich queen to rule in his stead, with the remaining graveknights serving as her guard.

Arazni's contempt of her constituents, along with the mostly absent Geb and his ruling council of Blood Lords, led to the nation settling into an uneasy truce of trade and diplomacy with its neighbors.

Under Arazni's rule, Geb found a lucrative opportunity within the continent. Most of its lands south of the Mana Wastes are fertile ground for crops, and the nation has a ready population of mindless undead workers who need not eat or rest. Geb trades an immense surplus of food and cash crops, such as cotton, with other nations of the Inner Sea region and has become a vital, if unsavory, trade parter to many nations. In an ironic twist of fate, Geb now trades its bounty for Nex's luxury goods and rare material components. They also have an advantageous deal with Alkenstar in return for the young nation's famous ice wine, a treat among Geb's wealthier denizens. Another unique trade of note—though frowned upon and disavowed by most governments, including Geb—involves the controversial war memorabilia and macabre art antiquities from the Field of Maidens in southern Geb.

A more recent development in international relations is the tentative alliance with Camilia Drannoch of **Galt**. In return for intelligence on Nex and its Spire, Camilia seeks the necromantic expertise of Geb to release the stored souls of Galtan citizens trapped in the magical guillotines known as the *final blades*. The deal is mutually beneficial: souls released in Geb can have a thriving unlife within its borders or pass on from the Material Plane. For the ghost king, having much-needed information on his obsession is incredibly enticing. With the ghost king's despondent nature subject to fickle whims, however, the success of this alliance has yet to unfold. Even more troubling, some intelligence reports suggest that Geb might instead reforge these soul-laden blades into horrific weapons for his graveknights.

In recent years, especially after Arazni's escape from the nation and the rumblings of active fleshforges in Nex, Geb has taken a more active role in governance. His return to this world as a ghost came with a curious curse: he can't leave Mechitar. All manner of rewards have been offered to anyone who can help free him from whatever keeps him trapped there. For promising scholars less interested in his generous reward, Geb offers a cell in his dungeon until a solution is found. Ever concerned with the imminent return of his old nemesis Nex, he prepares a nation that's now less than willing for the conflict that he calls his grand destiny. Geb has appointed a new circle of graveknights, his Warmaster Council, to prepare his nation for the resumption of this war.

GEOGRAPHY

Located in the central-eastern reaches of Garund, Geb is a unique mix of war-torn desolation and fertile fields capable of feeding a large population. The western borders end at the mountainous terrain of the Mwangi Expanse's Shattered Range, and its eastern lands reach the blue shores of the Obari Ocean. In the north, the nation is bordered by the Mana Wastes, a land blighted by the great battle between Nex and Geb.

STYLE IN GEB

Geb's styles reflect the nation's mix of living and undead residents. Death motifs dominate in architecture and decor; enormous skulls carved into building facades and black tapestries like hanging funeral shrouds are common. Clothing and personal fashion, however, tends to mimic the living, often to an outrageous degree. Fashion-forward undead drape themselves in living flowers, brightly colored cloth, or illusion magic to evoke an appearance of life. Many wear heavy perfumes to mask the stink of rot and compliment each other on their vibrant appearances.

CAMILIA DRANNOCH

BUILDERS LEAGUE

Many factions operate across Geb, but five Great Factions control the most power and wealth. The Builders League is the oldest and most traditionalist of the Great Factions. As the league is responsible for civic improvements, architecture, and public works, its members are always at work on new projects or renovations. Most of Geb's roads, aqueducts, courthouses, temples, and much more were constructed by the Builders League. Although reimbursed handsomely for engineering projects that take centuries to complete and last for millennia (a necessity in a nation where most of the population doesn't age), the Builders League's true wealth is in occult lore. Certain projects hide secret passages to libraries, reliquaries, or ritual rooms that only league members know. Nothing is as valuable to the Builders League as knowledge, and best of all is knowledge that they alone possess.

Finally, the Field of Maidens, a reminder of the necromancer-king's enormous power, complete the southern expanse of Geb. This geography provides an interesting microclimate where warm winds from the Obari Ocean create fertile ground on which food crops prosper, serving as Geb's biggest export.

On the southeastern coast lies the capital city of Mechitar, the kingdom's hub of trade and culture. Below Mechitar and spanning the whole southern border of Geb is the Field of Maidens. Toward the northeastern coast along the border of the Mana Wastes is the city of Yled, a fortified metropolis housing the nation's undead armies and important colleges of necromancy. Further west of Yled, in the foothills of the Shattered Range, lies the small city of Graydirge. Two days' travel east of Graydirge lies the small farming village of Corpselight and Geb's only major woodland, Axan Wood.

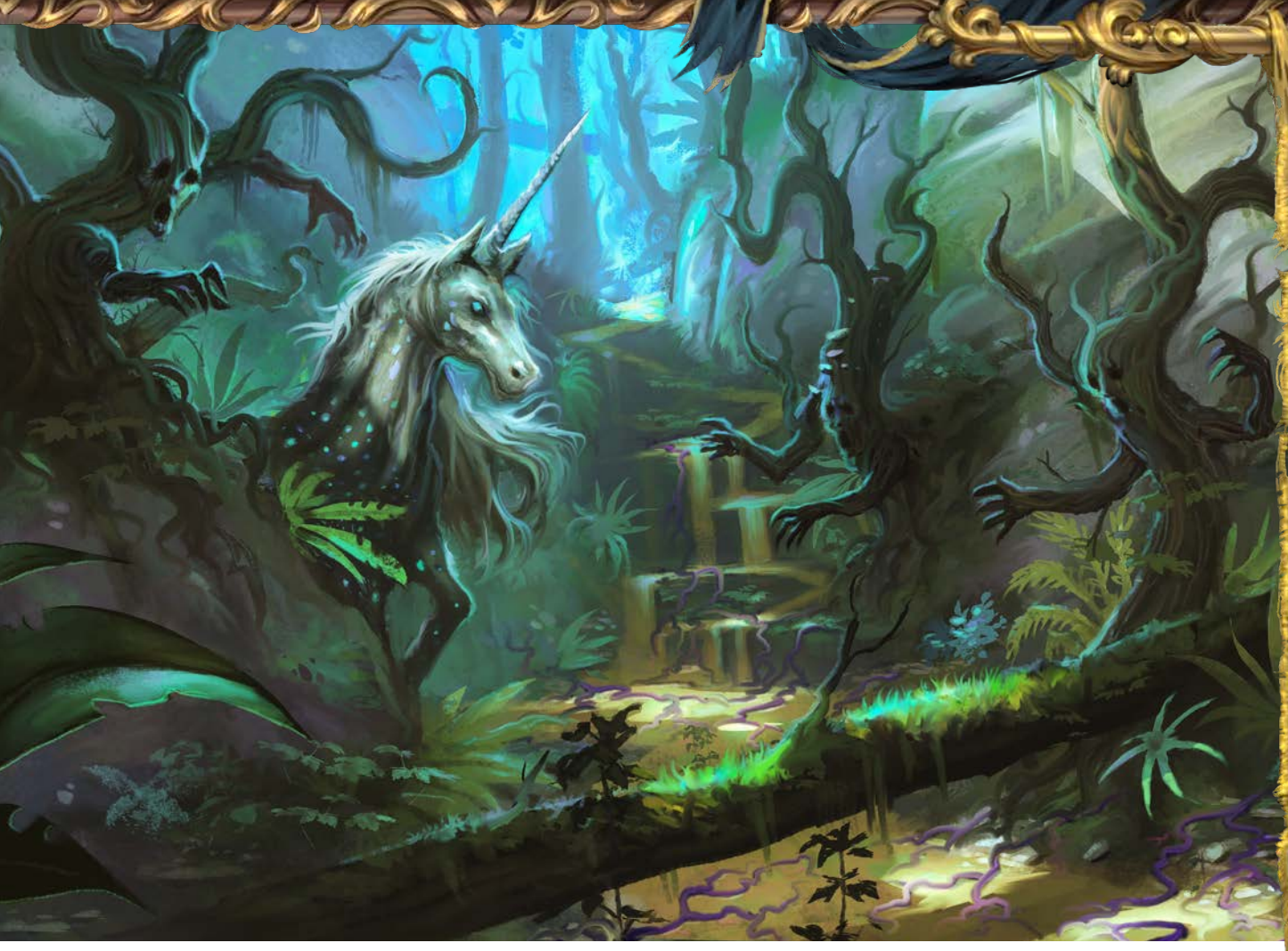
Graydirge

This city-sized ossuary is built both on and out of the bones of Gebbites who defy custom and refused to be reanimated after their demise. While some might see Graydirge's macabre construction as a cruel warning to those who defy the Dead Laws, others see the city as a respectful memorial to agency in death. The city's high governor is the obsequious and ineffective **Taf-Gekhta Seven Stomachs** (LE male ghast aristocrat), but the true power in Graydirge is a disarmingly peppy Blood Lord named **Berline Haldoli** (LE female halfling necromancer). Berline has close connections to the Reanimators faction, and the many bountiful farms and ranches that sprawl around Graydirge are under her authority. One of Geb's largest temples to Zon-Kuthon, an imposing edifice called the Empty Threshold, is situated within Graydirge. The church shields its quick congregants from abuse by the city's undead majority and is thus well-attended.

Scattered at various peaks within the foothills close to Graydirge are the Towers of Cleansing: simple, circular structures where the recently deceased are placed to feed scavengers while their bones dry and bleach in the sun. When enough bones have amassed, they're collected to be used in the upkeep of the city. Even though these rituals openly defy the custom of reanimating the deceased in Geb, the government tolerates it because the practice allows undead scavengers some nourishment. In addition, the city's architecture is similar to Yled's Bonewall, and the dead could always make use of a fortified outpost when the time comes.

Corpselight

Situated just north of Axan Wood, Corpselight doesn't grow food—it keeps cattle and intelligent humanoids as sustenance for Geb's undead populace. While previous practices included containing this macabre stock in pens, demands from patrons for higher quality, "free-range" meals have resulted in an improvement in living conditions. The physical pens have been abandoned for cages of the mind. Supplements made from local hallucinogenic fungi and herbs, as well as comfortable amenities within the pastures, have not only kept the current population docile and distracted, but have even attracted other quick who seek to escape the grim realities of Geb. The settlement has expanded to over four times their usual stock of about 1,000 humanoids. Loyal undead patrons note that not only have their meals felt "elevated," but they can taste the vivid memories of these humanoids.



Axan Wood

Running through most of central Geb just north of the Axanir River, this forest is still ravaged from the ancient magical war between Nex and Geb. Many trees within Axan Wood are dead or twisted into shapes that resemble people who failed to escape some great cataclysm. That ghastly sight isn't far from the truth: when once dryads populated these woods, the sudden destruction of their trees turned these benign beings into ghostly shells of who they were. They now wander aimlessly, begging anyone they encounter to help them find their beloved oaks. The forest also houses predators such as wolves who prowl the area, seeking to devour any traveler they find, dead or otherwise. Malevolent fey play pranks on anyone who ventures within reach of their mean-spirited "games," and the forest is rumored to contain some extremely rare twilight unicorns.

Field of Maidens

This large barren badland gets its name from the multitude of statues, all of warrior women, scattered across its expanse. These lifelike representations aren't the work of master sculptors, but the result of the necromancer Geb's powerful magic. When the pirate queen Mastrien Slash arrived on the southern plains with her army from the southern nation of Holomog, intent to take the area and make a home for themselves, Geb responded to the invasion by turning her entire army to stone. Since then, ambitious opportunists have transported individual statues off the Fields to sell as war memorabilia all over Golarion. Occasionally, the spirit of a fallen warrior will find its way to its stony body, turning into a stone sister, an undead creature who stalks the Fields. If this possession occurs with a statue that's been sold elsewhere, she'll do whatever it takes to return to the Fields.

Rumors also circulate of a Lonely Maiden who wanders among the statues in the Field of Maidens. Adventurers who have lived to tell the tale describe her as a beautiful lady with writhing, living hair that can stop a person in their tracks.

Sallowshore

Sallowshore is a sad coastal community north of Mechitar that's slowly sliding into the ocean. Originally an iruxi trading post, the town was settled by humans long ago, and the descendants of these two original groups, both quick and dead, still live in town. The flooded half of Sallowshore is populated mostly by iruxi and aquatic ghouls who inhabit half-submerged buildings, while the dry half of the town is ruled by a reclusive vampire named **Tobias Highridge** (LE male vampire aristocrat) who mourns the loss of his beloved wife. The cultural heart of Sallowshore is the sodden Rola's Fish Market, right on the border between the town's two halves. It's a popular stop for ships sailing the coast.

CELEBRANTS

Factions rise and wane with influence across the centuries. The Celebrants are both the newest Great Faction and the one most evidently on the rise. Ostentatious attention-seekers, the Celebrants have embraced the ghost king's return to open administration of his nation. They serve as Geb's public relations experts, making them masters of propaganda and disinformation. They arrange parades, festivals, and holidays across the nation to celebrate Geb's many victories, whether genuine or merely invented to boost nationalistic pride. The Celebrants have a close relationship with the church of Urgathoa, whose abhorrent, opulent feasts are always cause for celebration, and many members also proselytize for the Pallid Princess.

KULENETT DWARVES

Underneath the mountainous terrain of Geb resides a community of Grondaksen—or underground—dwarves known as Kulenetts. Kulenett dwarves are mostly known for maintaining a labyrinthine network of tunnels and highways, known as the Laara, that stretch across the nation and then some on the western side of the Shattered Range. This geography puts them at an advantageous position as fast and discreet couriers or smugglers, depending on who's asking.

The Kulenett dwarves are on average shorter than their mountain (Holtaksen) or surface (Ergaksen) cousins, enabling them to easily navigate the many cramped tunnels within the Laara. They generally have deep, tawny skin tones, with reddish-orange eyes reminiscent of the warm fires of the forge framed by dark sable hair that grows straight and thick. Kulenetts maintain their hair, both head and facial, in short, simple, practical styles held in modest clasps made of locally mined metals. To most outsiders, Kulenett hair adornments are taken as visual signifiers of social status and their role in their community—and Kulenetts fail to correct this perception. These decorative and unassuming hair clasps belie their true purpose: a discreet way of communicating among Kulenett dwarves. The clasps and beads are painted with various colors, symbols and runes that are visible when exposed to a unique fluorescent fungus, forming living map fragments of the many secret pathways and hazards in the Laara. In addition, the manner in which their hair is styled, such as how many plaits a dwarf might have, is used in conveying quick, covert information while traveling in mixed company. Some of the younger, more adventurous dwarves who have traveled west into the Mwangi Expanse have picked a few tricks from the Taralu in hair dying and are experimenting with applications that discreetly glow under certain conditions.

A typical Kulenett wardrobe consists of light armor and traveler's vestments, with a pair of tinted goggles to protect against sand and extreme light when traveling above ground. These vestments consist of two layers of loose robes that extend to below the knees, paired with baggy drawstring pants for extra protection against the elements. The lighter inner robe is made of a breathable fabric that also protects the outer robes from things like sweat stains. The sturdier robe worn over it is made from a blend of mohair (goat fibers) and cotton; it's treated with a special coating to make it resistant to damp weather and stray sparks from embers. The over robe also has deep, reinforced pockets on the sides that usually feature false openings to hide important items. Intricate, colorful embroideries of underground flora and fauna adorn the neck and wrists of these robes, adding a pop of contrast and individuality to the neutral tones of these practical garments.

Kulenetts organize themselves by their dozen settlements within Geb, with each dwarven clan claiming home to a natural oasis or spring underneath Gebbite soil. A settlement of particular note is Ferdoz, an under-mountain spring oasis with waters that supposedly have strong regenerative properties. Due to the nation's Dead Laws banning the use of

positive energy, Ferdoz's location, and its springs, is a highly guarded secret. Adventurers who wish to visit Ferdoz or gain access to its waters will need to do a great act of service for Ferdoz first.

Within each settlement, Kulenetts are led by a small council of elders, venerable dwarves whose experience and wisdom guide their community. These elders tend to be master craftspeople, spiritual leaders, veteran trackers, or those who have done a great service to the clan. While most Kulenetts are taught some form of self-defense to survive in the wild, warriors are rare here. A Kulenett warrior would expose themselves to mortal danger by nature, which could lead them to being reanimated on death or otherwise put in a situation where they might reveal clan secrets to an ambitious necromancer. Some of the more wary clans have created safeguards for their veteran trackers who venture above ground, like a magical dead-man's switch that creates an intense burn and leaves nothing but ash behind.

Other clans have dealt with this concern by allowing select members to train as necromancers so that the clan has some control in undeath if one of their own dies above ground. While they oppose necromancy in most of its forms, Kulenetts maintain relations with Geb out of necessity. To protect their communities one step further, Kulenett necromancers are publicly disavowed by their clans as traitors. However, these brave dwarves now serve as the eyes and ears of the Kulenett community as a whole, gathering useful intelligence on the dead as well as protecting the bodily autonomy of their recently deceased. One can usually find at least one dwarf at smaller settlements like Corpselight and Graydirge. There's also a thriving network of dwarven mages in major cities, like Mechitar and Yled, and many alumni from prestigious necromancy colleges, such as the Mortuarium and Ebon Mausoleum.

The Kulenett belief system is largely derived from their reverence and preservation of the earth and water as well as a closer adherence to more traditional dwarven beliefs. Along with the veneration of Torag, shrines to Grundinnar and Folgrit are common, along with respectful homages to local river and mountain deities. Kulenetts believe mortals were made in the gods' images. When a Kulenett carves a statue or paints a mural of a dwarven god, they do so with the community's sensibilities. One depiction of Torag can be seen wearing Kulenett robes, with his hair braided and adorned with Kulenett clasps as he strikes his hammer at a forge dotted with fluorescent fungi.

Despite the secretive and insular nature this community has within Gebbite society, Kulenetts are warm and welcoming to any living stranger in need of aid or refuge. They maintain a few temporary dwellings close to the surface, usually in caves and caverns that function as their public place of operations and relief camp. These locations are situated far enough from their clan's settlement to keep their location secret, but close enough that they can arrive within a day's travel via special tunnels.

Kulenetts have complex relationships with the dwarves of Dongun Hold. Traditionally, the two groups have close ties, and such things aren't easily discarded in Kulenett culture. Yet, a generational resentment exists among older Kulenetts toward Dongun Hold—a feeling of rejection that the dwarves there chose to cut themselves off from their magic and gods

EXPORT GUILD

The Export Guild handles all of Geb's foreign trade. This includes not only the nation's bountiful exports of crops, lore, and military goods but (despite their name) imports of all kinds as well. Tight control over trade has made the Export Guild extraordinarily influential and wealthy. Members of the Export Guild tend to be fervent nationalists who put Geb's interests first, but they're also realists who refuse to let tradition or ceremony obstruct their business deals. The Export Guild tends to foreground quick members when dealing with other nations, as they understand negotiations with a ghoul or wraith can be off-putting to many foreign trade representatives.

REANIMATORS

The Reanimators are responsible for raising the dead who work Geb's many farms. This focused scope might seem insufficient to warrant inclusion among the Great Factions, but the Reanimators influence much of Gebbite society: they enforce disposition of the dead, staff nearly all farms and ranches, and maintain allies in the nation's many influential necromantic academies. Members of this faction tend to be skilled organizers and managers rather than necromancers. After all, they say, you're only raised as undead once, but you can work for the Reanimators forever.

by delving deep into the Darklands rather than asking the hospitality of their Kulenett kin. In addition, more traditional Kulenetts find Dongun Hold's development of technology without magic or spirituality alarming: how can one advance without any regards to their surroundings? Whether this perception is accurate, the rift with the Hold's denizens tends to widen whenever skirmishes occur between Alkenstar and Geb. Gebbites often paint all dwarves they see with the same brush and raid nearby Kulenett camps in retaliation; as far as some Kulenetts are concerned, Dongun Hold is responsible for the damage brought down on them, even if it wasn't intentional.

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

Eons ago, most Gebbites were living humans of Osiriani descent. With an untold number of citizens killed and reanimated during the Nex-Geb war, followed by their ruler turning into a ghost, Geb became known as an undead nation. Many of the living willingly become undead for fealty, power, or knowledge. Geb now has a greater undead population than its living residents, and its lands also house the most comprehensive collection of necromantic lore on Golarion, making it the center of study for those who wish to pursue necromancy.

To those new to Geb, its society is generally divided into three strata: the living (known as the quick), the intelligent undead (known simply as the dead), and living thralls and mindless undead forced to work as laborers. To protect the large undead population from being smote by good-aligned divine spellcasters, and to protect the living from being randomly preyed upon, a set of rules and regulations between the two were created, known as the Dead Laws. These laws also regulate certain aspects of necromancy and outline the prohibition of positive energy within Geb. There are always a few who think they're exempt from these laws, however, and mortal visitors are cautioned while traveling within the nation's borders. Within Geb, the Dead Laws are absolute.

While the rights of the quick and the dead are mostly protected, those forced to work in the fields have none. Anyone who dies on Gebbite soil forfeits their bodily autonomy, and their corpses are reanimated as a mindless undead to serve the nation as it sees fit. The quick with sufficient means can circumvent this end by willingly transforming into one of the dead. While these loopholes aren't just tolerated but encouraged by the dead, it does create a large population of intelligent undead who lack any true power beyond creating more of themselves but are cognizant enough to see themselves as superior to the mindless workers. These undead refuse to partake in any of mindless tasks, as they consider such work beneath them. Mortal necromancers aren't bothered with any of those concerns, as they have the privilege of magic and the knowledge to stay one step ahead of Geb's predatory elite. The most ambitious among them often eventually join the ranks of Geb's Blood Lords.

A further stratification within the societal hierarchy exists among the dead. The necromancer Geb, currently a ghost tied to his seat of power in Mechitar, rules over the nation. Not wishing to be bothered by affairs of state, he rarely manifested before his people, raised Arazni into a lich queen, and had her rule for centuries in his stead. After she freed herself and because of his concern with the imminent arrival of Nex, Geb has recently taken a more active role in running the nation. The Celebrants faction has risen to greater influence by tying themselves to Geb's rise in the public eye.

The country's day-to-day governance is managed by the Blood Lords of Geb, an elite peerage of approximately 60 powerful necromancers (both dead and quick), as well as some of the strongest liches, mohrgs, mummies, vampires, and wraiths across Geb. Many Blood Lords

began as government officials that Geb himself tasked with dealing with the city's daily affairs. The vampire **Kemnebi** (LE male vetalarana vampire necromancer) has been the chief Blood Lord since the group's inception and also holds the chancellor's office, making him second only to Geb in power.

The Blood Lords' seat of power in Mechitar is the Cinerarium, although they frequently operate elsewhere in the nation, particularly when they have political offices or faction allegiances that require their attention elsewhere. The Blood Lords' reputation is so sinister that the mere threat of them taking action often keeps the Gebbite citizenry in line.

With all Blood Lords vying for power under the mostly absent Geb, longstanding feuds, blatant betrayals, and violent assassinations were the norm in their day-to-day affairs. With Arazni liberated and Geb becoming more hands-on, the internal struggle has grown bolder and more public. Many Blood Lords now go to extreme lengths to prove loyalty to the ghost king, or maneuver their rivals into tenuous or even dangerous positions. Many Blood Lords are skilled at manipulating the nation's Great Factions, which are always at each other's throats, into their power games.

Beneath the Blood Lords lies a lesser nobility of undead beings, such as wights, ghouls, and shadows. While they put on airs and graces, they have no true power beyond their ability to create intelligent progeny and are mocked in private by the Blood Lords.

The undead ruling class doesn't age. They're entrenched, untiring, and unyielding. They have the time and patience to play the long game, weaving political plans that can last centuries and are as intricate and complex as Alkenstar's technology. Some of the more ambitious plots can dive deeply into the politics of the Inner Sea and Golarion at large—and are more far-reaching than anyone realizes.

There has been a recent movement among the newly reanimated and younger necromancers for an updating of the Dead Laws. This group, known loosely as the Quick-Dead Coalition, seeks to remove some of the morally questionable and archaic sections of the codex, bringing it to modern sensibilities. They're striving for stronger regulations on the creation of mindless undead as well as better conditions for laborers in the field. Given that many of the living today enter into temporary contracts of service with the undead in return for money, knowledge, or favors, they argue that a similar program of corpse donation after death should be implemented. No longer should it be assumed that any death on Geb soil offers consent—they need to opt-in to this donation program before they die for it to be valid. Otherwise, their remains must be put to rest as per the individual's wishes.

Other demands from the Quick-Dead Coalition include stronger regulations on contracts created between the living and the undead. They say that under current laws, especially due to the decrees on death on Geb soil, there's an imbalance of power that's heavily weighted in the dead's favor, creating undue exploitation. They've also asked for the complete ban on channeling positive energy within the nation to be changed to a heavily restricted allowance for use of healing for the living. The response to these demands has been a mixed success. While the entire coalition was initially laughed off as a prank, the increasing number of supporters in Mechitar and the surrounding areas have made some of the upper echelons of the Blood Lords reconsider the coalition's value, if only as political pawns. The allowance of positive energy casting, however, has been met with universal opposition among the ruling class. Even those dead who share some sympathies with the coalition usually suggest a higher import of alchemical healing agents than risk their sense of safety.

TAX COLLECTORS UNION

Prominent aristocrats and bankers make up the leaders of the Tax Collectors Union, the Great Faction responsible for finance and investment interests across Geb. Some members of this faction have been amassing wealth for millennia and possess staggering funds to bribe their way into or out of any situation they choose. Members tend to be staunch traditionalists and are resistant to change. The ghost king permits their hoarding because they work hard (and spend heavily) to keep the nation stable and its financial system working.

Mechitar

Cenotaph of a Nation

Mechitar, the capital of Geb, is the desiccated but very active beating heart of an undead nation. For all the intelligence in their eyes, there's little to disguise the weathered leather of the dead, the frayed, withered limbs raised in prayer, or skeletal hands bargaining in a market for ancient talismans.

Approaching the coastline of Geb, Mechitar might look like a colossal festival, with enormous flags resplendent and flapping in the sea wind. The impossibly long banners and curtains hang suspended from the highest points of the city, running from building to building, crossing over and under each other, and holding back the sun like layered bandages wrapped around the metropolis. Ships dock in Ossum Harbor and bring in necromancers, devotees of Urgathoa, diplomats, traders, and any number of the dangerously curious and the suicidally desperate. Sailors walk the thronged docks, gathering ghoulish cargo while their captains negotiate passage for living and undead passengers. The looming, gargantuan gate called Admonition gives passage to caravans bringing their goods from the north.

One must walk Mechitar's street to know the truth. Throngs of mindless corpses dressed in impenetrable heraldry march down ancient boulevards, holding antediluvian horrors aloft on sun-guarded palanquins. Acolytes of Urgathoa walk in long processions, dragging lines of captives and heretics in their wake; they leave a trail of gore along their tortuous path while they chant liturgies to the goddess of undeath. Battalions of the Bellator Mortus guards parade around the Cinerarium, and in pyramids filled with wealth and magic, necromancers, vampires, liches, mummies, and wraiths reign as Blood Lords and plot against one another.

A river of rot circumscribes the towering black pyramid at the center of Mechitar, an artery of such fetid pollution that its fumes hang along the banks like a green miasma thick enough to nauseate the quick. The shadows hang darkest in a small, cramped region walled in on all sides where buildings seem to jostle for space. Thousands of the quick make their homes there beneath the tattered flags, among overlapping shadows so dense the streets remain dim at all hours.

Groaning living animals march along in chains, cattle raised beyond the city to be slaughtered in the meat markets. Parades of corpses are raised and forced to walk as mindless husks, sold off to the school of necromancy. Living and undead bidders alike compete for flesh and bone molded and given an unholy necromantic resurrection. Teams of skeletons and zombies drag huge wagons of exquisite produce grown alongside the cattle, their bones sun-bleached and worn beyond measure, shoulder blades indented beneath the weight of their yokes from decades of service. In the upper reaches of the city, above the banners and in the wash of moonlight, the noble dead and their favored live in a pantomime of luxury while surrounded by horror.

Beneath all of these ostentatious displays of undead power, the ghostfire, towering pyramids and palaces, the colleges and cathedrals, is the very soil of Mechitar—the dirt that its founder first touched 5,000 years ago to make his home. It's this soil that drank his blood when he died by ritual suicide, and the same that returned him as a ghost, containing him within its boundary. They say Geb broods in the Cinerarium, delegating when he should be leading. And yet, in bazaars, in squares, in every tomb and temple, every palace and hovel, the undead walk on

MECHITAR SETTLEMENT 20

LE METROPOLIS

Government dictatorship

Population 42,006 (67% undead, 19% humans, 3% tieflings, 2% half-orcs, 9% other)

Languages Kelish, Necril, Osiriani

Religions Arazni (in secret), Nethys, Urgathoa, Zon-Kuthon

Threats curses, disease, necromantic miasma, poison, religious fanatics, rogue necromancers, undead

Favorite Food In Geb's undead capital, living beings who don't have the protection of the powerful Blood Lords are held in low regard and at risk of simply being devoured. Undead NPCs begin with an attitude one step worse than usual toward such characters. While hostile citizens in other nations might simply wish you ill, in Mechitar, they're reasonably likely to try to eat you.

Geb (LE male ghost necromancer 23) undead ruler of Geb

Chancellor Kemnebi (LE male vetalarana vampire necromancer 20) joint head of the Ebon Mausoleum

Rinnella Brenon (NE female Child of Urgathoa 18) leader of the church of Urgathoa

Varnetta Xenopha (LE female mohrg harbormaster 20) overseer of the docks

the very soil that's Geb's true home more than the Cinerarium could ever be. Mechitar stands on unholy ground, desecrated by Geb's blood. Mechitar's will, as strong as its ruler's determination, is to outlast all of creation if necessary. Mechitar is the capital of the Ghost King, the centerpiece of his power, the heart of his strength.

A DAY IN MECHITAR

Time moves at a different pace in Mechitar. The city never quite stands still so much as it pivots between day and night, diurnal and nocturnal cycles, picking up where the other leaves off. Morning still hangs for a moment before early throngs flood the streets. The sunlight gleams off the golden embellishments of pyramid tops while the countless acres of fabric cast long, protective shadows over the city.

The ranchers deliver their cattle and walking corpses to the Meat Market, haggling over the worth of their weight for food or labor as the pitiful creatures are pushed into slaughter pens and holding corrals. Bidders arrive early, both living and undead, buying specimens for use as labor, raw material for experiments, or simple consumption. Few of the quick with any sense of morality can withstand the horrific banality of this place. More palatable are the docks where captains urge their crews to hurry with their cargo, dealing under the indifferent eyes of undead dockworkers. Foreigners use the early hours to conduct their business and depart the undead city as quickly as possible, and most leave Mechitar before the afternoon.

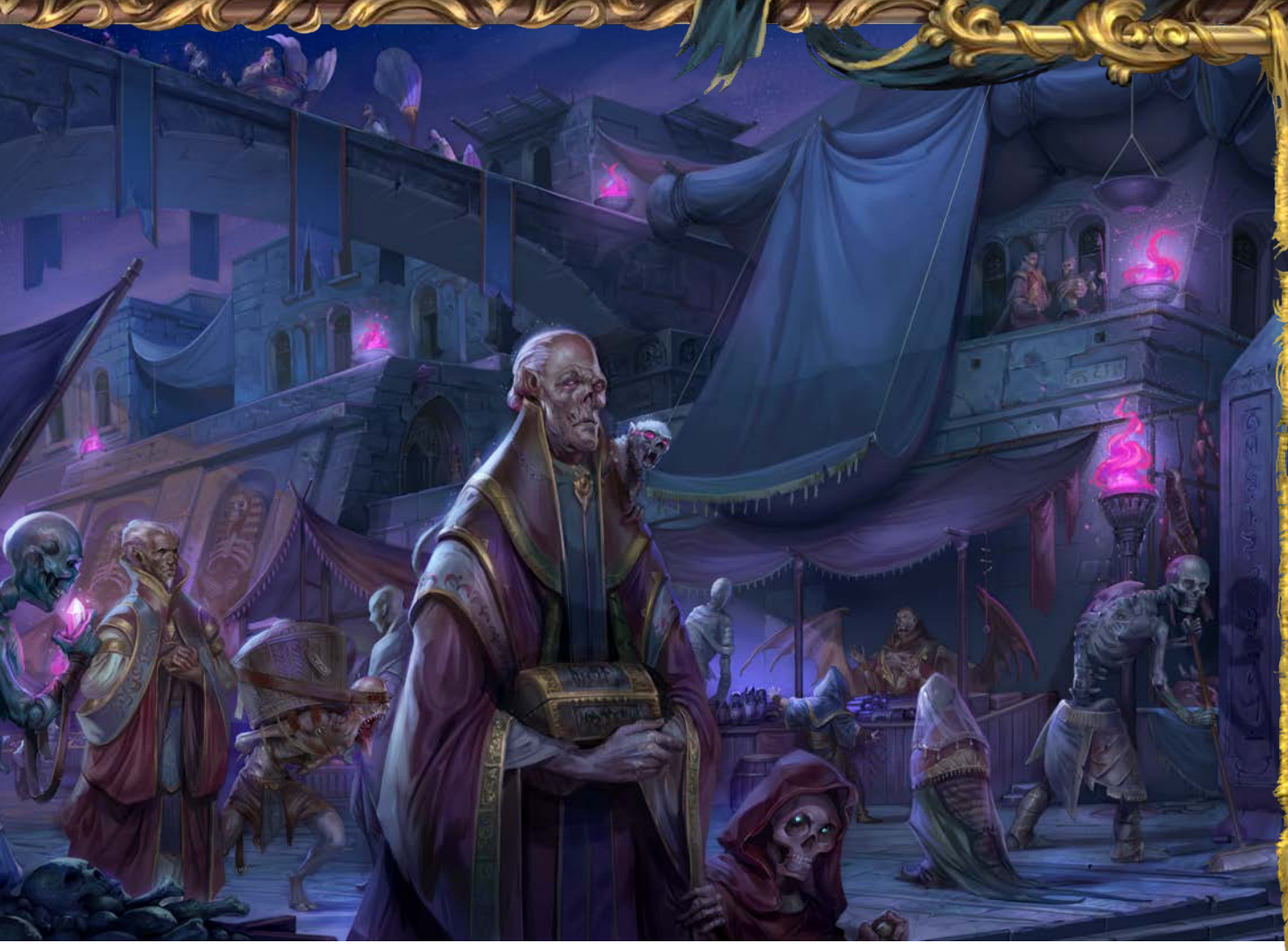
The Cathedral of Epiphenomena and the Ebon Mausoleum hum with activity in the day and throng with students at night. Even by day, the buildings are illuminated by ghostfire and kept out of direct sunlight thanks to copious shade. Shadows lengthen and the gloom deepens around both institutions. Both structures and the thoroughfares between them crowd with pilgrims and students. Prophets shout dark prayers and apocalyptic pronouncements; undead scholars offer their ancient knowledge and immortal experience for a pittance of coin.

About midday, newly arrived pilgrims and local petitioners alike gather at the Cathedral of Epiphenomena, attending the rituals that keep the towering statue of Urgathoa awash with blood. Sacrifices are dragged before the Pallid Princess for the bloodletting, and it isn't uncommon for truly devoted acolytes to exsanguinate themselves in ritual suicide.

Bazaars open fully as the afternoon stretches, where merchants hawk their goods and sell so many Osirian antiquities and Garundi talismans that the market must have beggared both regions of all their possessions. In Mechitar's market, items that are taboo and forbidden in most countries are sold openly, and the vendors negotiate with centuries of bartering experience. The truly shrewd might even descend into the underbelly of the city and find markets where coins carry little value, and souls and lives are traded instead.

Unlike most bazaars, there's no food in the huge market. A large part of the population has moved beyond the need for consumption, leaving the quick with few places to find a meal other than taverns and inns at the docks that serve food at all hours, catering to sailors and foreigners. Gebbite produce is among the best found anywhere, and the local cooks take full advantage of it, making diverse and richly flavored vegetarian meals. Avoiding meat keeps quick customers from wondering about the origin of their food and dissuades any undead patrons, who'd find nothing to interest their appetite.

As the sun sinks behind the Cinerarium, its shadow looms over venues throughout the city as bards and theatrical companies gather to ready their performances. Barely sentient undead constructs are led into the Deathless Arena for those with a more visceral taste in entertainment. With twilight in the air, the city can almost be mistaken for any other—the bazaars light up with ghostfire lamps, the sounds of barkers rings out to gather audiences, and the crowds' cheers echo from the Deathless Arena.



The dead might have moved past the need for food, but alcohol and narcotics remain popular with quick and dead alike. Vampires, acolytes of Urgathoa, cultists of Zon-Kuthon, dhampirs, and even certain mummies and ghouls find sedation an attractive and distracting way to while away time. Various establishments in the upper regions of the city open their lofty and luxurious parlors at dusk. These salons are shockingly genteel, as the undead patrons pantomime a sort of living atmosphere. The illusion is easily dispelled since most of the help and entertainment are embellished or purpose-crafted undead. Those who find the concept of inebriation too base turn instead to performance arts, with music and plays gaining the most attention.

Those seeking more dangerous samples of high culture might find a hand-written invitation to certain masked balls and gatherings. Hosts clad in animal masks see to the comfort of the quick and attend to their every need at these affairs before the vampires join the gatherings, taking their picks for consumption. Sometimes, a vampire with wealth finds a particular mortal's blood especially tempting, and lucrative contracts can be negotiated under the Dead Laws.

No night in Mechitar is complete without attending the various fetes thrown by Urgathoa's faithful—these events can range from meals rich with the best wine, tender meats drowned in sauces, and sweet cheeses swimming in honey and syrup, to horrific cannibalistic gorging. Stories circulate of Zon-Kuthon cultists performing sacred rituals combining pleasure and pain that certain undead, inured to normal sensations, find the only way to remain connected with the physical realm. These same fetes attract certain quick looking to experience sensations past the ken of most mortals, should they survive the legendary applications of torture and pleasure.

All nights end, even in the city of the undead, and the various meals, night-long balls, rituals, and politicking close. An hour or two of quiet might settle over the city; zombies and skeletons drag their brooms and rakes along endlessly swept streets to keep the city looking as still and dead as it had been the day before, until the sun crests to start the cycle all over again.

A YEAR IN MECHITAR

Mechitar's year turns like a churning wheel, predictably grinding through the daily functions of the city over and over, pushed by the steady hands of immortal administrators and countless souls put to their purpose. Some say that even the seasons don't touch Mechitar in quite the same way as other parts of Garund. The arid geography and proximity to the equator leads to a reasonably warm and dry climate most of the year, punctuated by a brief cold season and a month of near constant rainstorms to announce autumn.

For most of the year, business is conducted without pause. Harvest moves into the city—vegetables and fruits

for export, and cattle and walking corpses for Mechitar's citizens. The Pallid Princess observes no formal holidays, so the lines of pilgrims don't ebb or swell, and the lines of students attend the Ebon Mausoleum at their own glacial pace.

However aloof the city might appear, the passage of time leaves its impression on everything—even that which has withstood the grindstone of ages. As a sonorous drone announces the turning of every hour in Mechitar night and day, so do the changing seasons, rites, celebrations, and anniversaries change how Mechitar functions. If even for a single day, the ageless pay heed to the gears turning within the grand clockwork.

The Blood Lords, for the most part, see even annual events as a distraction to keep the quick complacent and instead focus on quinquennial or decennial occurrences as a reasonable stretch of time in which to check in on projects and the evolution of plots set in motion—a schedule that befits their sense of time. Dead necromancers watch astronomical conjunctions and the passage of celestial bodies with close attention to gain any shred of power through rituals that reach beyond Golarion and into the spaces beyond, ever hungry for untapped resources. Even the changes in Mechitar's architecture and the glacial but relentless stretch of its boundaries over the centuries inspire tales of a 5,000-year-old plot, a conspiracy that might take another 5,000 years to come to fruition, as Mechitar's walls grow to encompass the whole of Geb.

It was on an abnormally cold and lonely night one 12th of Kuthona that the Grand Abnegation occurred, and Geb renounced life itself and embraced undeath. The truth of the event is far more prosaic, but Geb's suicide was spun into a tale of altruistic devotion. The Blood Lords arrange grand feasts on the anniversary, each trying to outdo the other. Wealthy foreign travelers attend the spectacular displays of pageantry, parades of military and magical might, and performances of ancient music and forgotten tales. Before the hour of the Ghost King's death, Gebbites turn toward the Cinerarium and bow down in thanks for his sacrifice and suicide. The quick planning to join the dead often arrange for their turning to occur alongside the Grand Abnegation. Geb himself is said to loathe the event.

The Night of Reunions falls in the month of Pharast, whenever the Rebirth Moon is at its brightest. A tradition founded by the vampiric Blood Lord Nukati, it lured wealthy foreigners by offering them a chance to reunite with long-departed lovers. The gathering was a secretive cabal, but as news spread, Nukati proposed her idea to Geb, who delighted in the subtle perversion of spring's life. The Night of Reunions now invites those who wish to meet their lost lovers to Mechitar by paying exorbitant fees. Most travelers are heartsick mourners desperate for one last conversation or encounter with their departed partner, but there are those who come bearing exhumed corpses for more sinister reasons. The goddess of romantic suicide, Naderi, is often venerated on this night throughout the city.

Mechitar's diurnal cycle doesn't change in length significantly over the year, but the symbolic nature of the summer solstice isn't lost in Geb. Victims awaiting execution are offered a chance to partake in the rite of Drowned Sun. Every whim is fulfilled as they're clothed in silk, crowned in gold, and carried along the streets and celebrated, only to find themselves in the Deathless Arena as the day ends. Various rites are performed, and items of power are stripped from those who have taken on the symbolic role of the Sun—jewels, scepter, weapon, robes, crown—until they're left bare, drenched in a clinging honey-like alchemical solution, and then set alight; these victims' screams echo throughout the city before they're left to burn alive. While the subject is said to be a volunteering criminal, it's an open secret that the Sun is most often a priest of Sarenrae captured and magically controlled by priests of Urgathoa.

During the month of Rova, Geb's coast experiences frequent and torrential rains as water-laden clouds pass over Mechitar into the Shattered Range. These rains plunge the city into a gloomy state, and in the midst of the downpour, the Gates of Eternity are energized. Necromancers, priests, cosmologists, and occultists alike gather to desecrate the gate, cast spells, and finally open them to draw a flood of water said to come from the river Styx itself. The citizens of Mechitar stand ready to gather as much water as they can in various vessels, presuming it to possess potent qualities, and vials of the water, called Styx elixir, are sold at exorbitant prices throughout the year.

THE GATES OF ETERNITY

Towering 50 feet tall, the gates are more like two pillars linked with chains, friezes of the Four Horsemen of Abbadon carved on each side of the pillar. The priests of Geb say, with enough devotion, the horseman Charon will one day row his ghastly boat into the River of Rot.

PEOPLE OF MECHITAR

Any city arranges its citizens in a hierarchy: by age, wealth, power, or influence. Mechitar cuts through these complexities and bisects its citizens into two groups: the quick and the dead. From this fundamental sorting, all other things follow.

Immortal and unchanging, the dead make up the majority of Mechitar's citizens. With their numbers only diminishing through accidental death or premeditated murder, the city has faced the issue of simply running out of space over time as undead have arrived to swell the city's numbers over the centuries. The issue is more than simply a matter of population; the dead have as wide and disparate a range of requirements for sustenance as any other creature—from vampires who need blood, ghouls craving fresh corpses, wights who feed off negative energy, and specters needing to drain living souls to keep their identity intact. Mechitar could've easily fallen into a dangerous loop of starvation with its population growing and collapsing in waves. Instead, the Blood Lords have sunk considerable resources to feed their voracious citizens by establishing a series of ranches around Mechitar specifically to produce a constant supply of meat, gathering bodies from around Geb and even writing treaties with surrounding nations and communities to exchange their corpses and prisoners for food and resources. Some households employ living humanoids in luxury, in exchange for their bodies after death. This practice established a steady source of food and eliminated the need for any sort of competition among the citizens, ensuring civility and law could rule.

With security and sustenance covered, many dead citizens find they can pursue agendas and goals that languished behind more urgent needs. From prosaic ambitions, the pursuit of learning and self-improvement, to artistic and romantic expressions, the dead find themselves capable of more than they ever imagined. In Mechitar, they have the means and resources to be who they wish to be, some carving new destinies for themselves and others finally able to fulfill projects left undone in life. This urgency also provides something vital for the dead to continue to pursue—without these small jolts of energy, many find ennui to be a greater foe than any champion

A PAINTED SMILE

Geb is the only nation in Golarion where the dead enjoy more rights and privileges than the living. In Mechitar, this balance is righted somewhat. As the capital of Geb and a center of trade and diplomacy, it's in the city's interest to make the quick feel relatively welcome. The ships collecting exports on the harbor, the students coming to study at the Ebon Mausoleum, and the traders purchasing goods in the bazaars need to be sure of their own security for Mechitar to function, after all.

or cleric. It isn't uncommon in Mechitar to find wraiths conducting theater, zombie lords perfecting their mastery of the lute, and banshees using their voices to elevate arias to new heights.

Native-born and breathing citizens of Mechitar see little to convince them that their situation is abnormal. Growing up under the long shadow of the Cinerarium has built a culture in which those with the means reach for immortality. Those who lack the means seek it with ravenous hunger, resorting to whatever methods they deem necessary. Unlike other cities with strictly hierarchical structures, the living citizens of Mechitar know that their station is fluid, leaving the ambitious to reach for higher rank through acts of espionage, betrayal, or sacrifice.

Few outsiders would willingly settle in Mechitar, but those that do find the city quite receptive so long as they can find an alliance with one of the factions. For the most part, these citizens are fleeing some sort of persecution in their own country or escaping a crime of such severity that life in Avistan and elsewhere in Garund has become too difficult. Certain communities marginalized in other parts of the world also find Mechitar a suitable place to settle since their status as the quick overrides any other factors of their identity.

New arrivals find it easiest to purchase the patronage of the Blood Lords or the Ebon Mausoleum, but given the constant attempts by foreign powers to infiltrate Mechitar, outsiders are given just enough rope to hang themselves. Patronage comes easily with invitations to stay, offers of protection, and even promises of immortality, but demands for apostasy and betraying living notions quickly separate the truly desperate from the merely curious. The church of Urgathoa is also a viable option for newcomers, but it takes a uniquely strong will and desire to join their number. Few can sustain the shows of devotion necessary without genuine faith in the Pallid Princess.

Success for the quick in Mechitar requires a combination of stubbornness, determination, flexible morality, and an iron stomach. Given that foreigners seldom outstay their immediate needs, those who choose to settle are unique people. Whatever their background, almost everyone living in the Vassal Alley wants one thing—to get out. Booking passage from Mechitar is no easy feat, as few captains will willingly take anyone (living or dead) without a hefty fee. Paranoia about disease and curses is rampant on top of the simple fear of the undead, no matter how much someone might protest their status as a member of the quick.

Working up from the bottom in Mechitar presents no easy task, and the process can take several decades, requiring a level of dedication few mortals can sustain. A much easier path is to sign a contract under the Dead Laws, binding oneself as a source of sustenance, service, or by performing some other tasks for an undead patron over some period. With supply saturating demand, those who do gain contracts generally do so with steeply compromising terms.

Achieving higher station only provides a brief sense of satisfaction because there's always something better to aspire to. No matter how high they climb, the quick will forever be second-class citizens in Mechitar. Aside from a binding contract of service with a powerful Blood Lord, service in the Bellator Mortus, gaining ranks in the cult of Urgathoa, and offering prominent research in the Ebon Mausoleum remain common paths to power. With so many competing hands all clawing for limited spots, it isn't uncommon for aspirants to turn on each other to secure their place.

The dead leave most of their allegiances behind once they're turned, though some cultural links remain. Survivalism has a way of removing that which is unnecessary for existence, and loyalties to faith and nation tend to slip away quickly as the years pass. As such, most of the dead who have survived for more than a couple of centuries seldom recall their mortal life as anything but a remote and distant dream that has no bearing on their

current existence. Heritage, ancestry, nation of origin—these things have become irrelevant.

However, the living can't afford to discard such central tenets of their identities. Certain ancestries and heritages find settling in Mechitar a viable option when life becomes difficult in other nations. Others are simply attracted to the particularities of Mechitar's scale and find its conditions and environs more to their liking. Fetchlings, half-orcs, dhampirs, and tieflings find the lack of concern over their ancestry freeing, and some emigrate to Mechitar, tolerating a second-class citizenship as the quick because it lets them stand on an even level with all the other living citizens of the city. On the other hand, aasimar and duskwalkers take great pains to keep from Geb entirely since they're very likely to vanish on sight without much fuss being made about it. Geniekin avoid Mechitar whenever possible; despite their large numbers in the Impossible Lands, paranoia reigns high against necromancy's tendency to bind souls.

Mechitar's dead are arranged in a relatively flat hierarchy, with Geb alone at the head and all others below him. The Blood Lords and some independently powerful vampires, mummies, and liches remain elevated from the masses based on their power alone. All others join a swirling mass of mohrgs, wights, ghouls, newly turned vampires, and wraiths who all pursue their own ambitions, having little interest in getting involved with the Blood Lords or their politics, and who prefer to carve out their own agendas instead.

This hierarchy leaves the quick to force their way into whatever gaps they can find in Mechitar's social structure. Living necromancers, foreign diplomats, and influential merchants stand highest in the ranking of the quick, along with the living high priests of the cult of Urgathoa, due to Rinnella Brenon's growing influence. What little mortal Geb nobility that lingers, senior members of the Bellator Mortus, influential ranchers, and wealthy traders scramble for any scrap of station that remains, and those without the wealth and means to settle in the harbor district find themselves with little choice but to live in the cramped and dangerous Vassal Alley.

The living citizens of Mechitar still resemble their Osiriani ancestors—tall, lean, and generally removing all of their body hair. Male citizens predominantly have shaved heads, eyebrows, and faces, which gives the quick a lean and gaunt appearance. Others wear their hair long but often arrange it in simple braids or in a wide twist at the base of the neck, with the hair flat on top to accommodate various styles of head coverings.

Contemporary male attire centers around loose robes in white, pink, or other pastel colors with long sleeves and loose trousers that give relief from the constant heat of the city. Recently, long vests bearing embroidery in arcane designs worn over the robes have become popular. Richer versions feature gold leaf and silver thread

NEMRET NOKTORIA

A city of ghouls hidden underground in the Darklands, Nemret Noktoria is the heart of ghoul civilization in the Inner Sea region. Though it's a fair distance from Geb, lying beneath the border of Osirion and Thuvia, the two nations send emissaries and trade delegates to one another constantly. As a show of friendship, the Blood Lords of Geb send a yearly gift of their finest stock to Nemret Noktoria's priest king, Kortash Khain.

adornments, while most pedestrian vests are plain or marked with white clay or chalk. Women's clothing typically covers the torso and legs while leaving the arms bare. Instead of robes, these garments (most commonly cotton) are single pieces pleated and wrapped around the body, over both shoulders and then fastened at the back. Most wear colorful shawls or scarves—various shades of crimson being most popular—to cover up the arms, although elbow or shoulder-length gloves aren't uncommon. All citizens favor flat, leather sandals as the most common footwear, except for the rare equestrians who wear short-heeled ankle shoes.

Kohl is common among all genders to darken the eye socket, and for social functions, embellishing the face's highlights with white paint to achieve a gaunt look has become fashionable once again. Jewelry is kept to a minimum, with unique pieces chosen to showcase the individual's wealth—gemmed rings, jeweled amulets, and golden bracelets being the most common accessories. Recently, mourning jewelry has become popular, and hair or bones taken from old tombs and then encased within amulets and bracelets of gold enamel are displayed prominently. These items become centerpieces of social interaction, particularly when the hair or bones came from a family member, someone famous, or, more amusingly, from the dead themselves.

Travel by palanquin is favored whenever possible among those who can afford to hire a team, while the wealthy and powerful have dedicated carriers for their magically enhanced litters that block out sunlight—whether for safety or comfort.

NEIGHBORING RELATIONS

Most know Geb for its vicious, centuries-long war with Nex, even if the actual events are millennia old. While much of the country remains a hostile land, Mechitar is the one place its rulers have tried to mend that reputation through diplomacy, softening its application of the Dead Laws and accommodating the quick to a reasonable extent. With Nex to the north posing an ever-present danger, the city chooses to let other parts of the country prepare for war while it continues to build bridges where possible. It's vital for Mechitar's overlords to maintain their appearance as a welcoming and nonthreatening entity. As far as Mechitar is concerned, it continues to hone and project its image as a center of culture, a living necropolis that can host the quick and the dead side by side.

Among the Impossible Lands, Geb is also a vital supplier of food, particularly fresh produce, which is difficult to grow in the mountainous regions surrounding Alkenstar; even the island nation of Jalmeray is limited in how far it can stretch its farms. The ruined landscape of Nex limits how much food it can produce for its massive urban population, and Geb—with little need for traditional food for its own citizens—has stepped in to become a major player in food security.

Given how many undead in the region use Mechitar to escape prosecution, it was vital for its own diplomatic relations that the country maintain treaties that allow for foreign agents and security forces to continue

to pursue their targets in Geb. However, it's easy for a single undead creature to vanish in Mechitar, and foreign agents might find the locals are polite but produce frustratingly few leads. Those that do play out often lead to complete dead ends after extensive groundwork—or worse, subtle warnings to let bygones lie.

Other Gebbites and foreign undead can hold a somewhat sneering opinion of Mechitar, considering its citizens to be decadent and soft, drowning in culture, self-indulgent debauchery, and high-minded abstractions and studies. The people of Mechitar are called soft, bourgeois, and corrupt. The citizens themselves might counter that their city is a metropolis, where artists from around the world come to perform and trade is conducted throughout the Impossible Lands; they point to its central pyramid, the Cinerarium, and its occupant as evidence of their unique place in Geb—the city that their immortal god-king holds dearest to his cold heart.

CULTURE

The center of Geb's culture, the fountainhead of its changes in art and philosophy, the source of its innovations—more has been created, celebrated, lost, and then forgotten upon Mechitar's stones than most cities will see in their whole existence. When the same people who might have created or pushed these movements still reside in the city, then it's a place caught between the needs of those trying to mold the present and those who cling to tattered remnants of a past only they remember. There are times when change is necessary, essential even, to change the conversation entirely across the city. Most recently, even the most conservative Blood Lords agreed that in the wake of Arazni's abdication of her duties, it was imperative to erase any hint of culture she'd established so that they can plaster over her influence entirely. Few know better than the dead that, with enough time, all things—even gods—can be erased.

The architecture of Mechitar will forever be indebted to Osirion, its predecessor to the north that imposes its will across millennia, as pyramids and obelisks continue to crowd Mechitar's skyline. Reliefs and pictographic elements have been carefully plucked out of Mechitar, giving its structures a bare and stark outline, especially those that have been covered with rare metals or stones and then embellished with horizontal bands of gold and crimson banners to declare their allegiance or achievements. The most ancient buildings, some of which remained from the original Osirian construction of the city, were recently destroyed and sunk into their sub-basements by massive work crews of skeletons and zombies, most of whom lie buried beneath the rubble after getting caught in the ancient structures' sudden collapse. These fields lie unworked while the Blood Lords argue about what to construct there and who's to lead these efforts. So far, the once-human Blood Lord **Agori** (LE female Chelaxian graveknight) has gathered the most traction as she lobbies to build a fort outside the city walls. While the Blood Lords argue, opportunistic adventurers, treasure hunters, and looters venture into the ruined depths in search of valuables before they're sealed forever.

Simple elements give a city its unique identity. For some, it's the way certain flowers line their streets in the spring or how barkers might announce the day's news in particularly entertaining ways. Mechitar's uniquely identifying element might be the sonorous tone that rings out to mark every hour, its sound filling the city with an eerie, droning note. A towering statue of Urgathoa stands before the Cathedral of Epiphenomena, and the blood of sacrifices constantly keep its feet wet. Priests of the lowest order are responsible for the devotions and prayers for the

GEBBITE THREATS

Geb's lush and fertile plains are a false promise of hospitable pastures unsullied by the wild magic of the region. Mindless undead work the fields, and without the proper protections offered by their more intelligent masters, a vagrant wandering into a field is more likely to be devoured by necrotic maws than questioned. The Blood Lords of Geb are fickle, and those who catch their gaze with ill intent might find themselves stripped of what little protection the Dead Laws provide, for such laws apply to citizens foremost and then all others upon the basis of personal whim and discretion. To be accused of a crime in Geb could lead to endless prison labor, either in this life or the next.

POINTLESS PRAISE

Whether Geb notices his generals building lavish tombs in his honor or assassinating each other is uncertain. He might not even hear the eerie street marches or banshee melodies, instead attuned only to the clashing of spells and the screams of his coming war.

small crowds that inevitably gather to witness the bloodletting. A bass-like, single-note tone plays through the tusk of an ancient, colossal beast as the sacrifice is hung upside down above a cistern that slowly drains the blood. Most often, the sacrifices are animals, but when a prisoner or volunteer is brought before the goddess, the simple ritual becomes a feverish, bloody rite. In Mechitar, arguments often conclude with one party snapping at the other to go "wash the princess's feet."

Over the centuries, the masters of the Ebon Mausoleum have grown ever more abstract in their applications of necromancy, treating it as a fundamentally spiritual school with esoteric applications—a notion rejected by the Mortuarium of Yled in a long-brewing disagreement about the fundamental nature of necromancy itself. However, this notion of necromancy as a spiritual school has been picked up by certain personalities in Mechitar, and some citizens claim to follow the school without any training in magic, as a philosophical ideal. Its tenets seem to change from group to group, but the movement's popularity worries certain Blood Lords. The leaders of the Ebon Mausoleum have no interest in a philosophy competing with loyalty to Geb and Urgathoa and have washed their hands of it. Some lower ranking Blood Lords have formed societies and cults around this abstract notion of necromancy, and joining with them—or at least claiming to—is an easy way to open doors and make connections even among the quick.

At twilight, the Deathless Arena draws large crowds on most days as fleshcrafting necromancers gather to show off their latest works. Hulking monstrosities are paraded along the city streets to drum up support and to begin gathering wagers. Though the masters of necromancy might sneer at the notion of their art being used for base entertainment and gambling, some do participate in the games through proxies. These masters invest privately into some teams and even get involved in the construction of the behemoths fighting over titles and trophies (that they dismiss as meaningless in public). The most well-funded teams make shows of leading their creations on leashes or riding the stomach-churning hybrids into the arena. Sometimes these attempts to display a necromancer's complete command over their creation backfires—much to the delight of the audience—leading to a preview of the violence to come. More experienced and well-established teams depend on mindless undead and hired guards to corral rabid creations and transport them bound in chains. Either way, encountering these parades in the streets of Mechitar isn't uncommon at twilight, and it's generally wise to stay out of their way.

The undead mind's need for distraction and amusement has drawn countless bards and storytellers to Mechitar, and the most famous and successful among them find patronage in the many music halls and amphitheaters, performing ancient plays and reframing tales dredged from the minds of souls long dead. It's a way to keep ancient Gebbite art and culture alive under the strict gaze of antediluvian dramaturges. In other venues, necromancers perform with ephemeral energy, displaying their control over various forms of negative energy by molding it into ghostfire, light, and protoplasm to create phantasmagoric displays. There are always demands for new experiences to make the stretch of eternity bearable, and any artist willing to endure a season in Mechitar is welcomed with promises of safety and fortune. Few take up the lure, but those who do find nearly instant celebrity and patronage, often receiving what's afforded to visiting diplomats and nobles. Lately, a number of Ustalavic opera companies have moved to Mechitar, and their performances have lit up the city with lavish productions, pushing aside many traditional stagings.

GOVERNMENT

A nation where the dead overwhelmingly outnumbered the living needed a new set of laws that could mediate between the two groups. The Dead Laws were documented thousands

of years ago and continue to be implemented with few changes to their original clauses. However, the implementation of these laws and how strictly they're applied varies throughout the country. Applying the Dead Laws as written couldn't possibly work in Mechitar while allowing visiting dignitaries, diplomats, traders, students, sailors, and visitors any sense of security that they need for the city to flourish. Leniency was afforded for the quick to have some protection from the dead. Citizens are off-limits for consumption through overt means, as are students, traders, and dignitaries. Those who press too deeply into Mechitar's affairs find that the city's leniency has a sharp boundary, however, and it only takes a stray step too far in any direction to summon the Bellator Mortus and be brought before a judge.

Geb has been the nominal head of the government, but for many centuries, he was completely absent, assigning the running of the country to Arazni. Now that the imprisoned queen has escaped, Geb is forced to take the reins of his nation once more. The mechanism of undead government laden with inertia and ages-thick bureaucracy is slow to turn, and Mechitar seems to groan as its most powerful guiding force awakens, sloughing off ennui to guide his nation personally for the first time.

Before Arazni's departure, her favorite Blood Lords divided Mechitar into minuscule fiefdoms, leaving Arazni to rule on the most important matters from the Cinerarium. These loyalists have since been killed or fled the city. Now the Blood Lords are maneuvering quickly to take advantage of vacancies, and Geb is willing to let his subordinates fight amongst themselves to cull the weak. In their jostling, the city has been left to its administrators to manage and to those few Blood Lords who choose to stay out of the politicking. Two such Blood Lords are the vampire Gehera, whose origins are shrouded in mystery, and the lich Agathe, originally from Taldor. They've ensured a smooth transition forward without any demands for recognition, and this apparent self-sacrifice on their part is suspected and scrutinized closely.

Mechitar's trade policy is composed of a fairly straightforward set of rules. Tariffs and taxes are collected, and the harbormaster, **Varnetta Xenopha** (LE female mohrg harbormaster), sees to the orderly arrival and departure of ships in addition to keeping the city safe from any naval attack. Varnetta is well learned in naval warfare and readily takes to battle herself at the helm of her personal dreadnought that stands ready to plow into the waters at a moment's notice. Her crew of skeletons will row tirelessly in pursuit of running pirates and limping naval ships that attempt a blockade. Those who have seen her taking apart other ships speak of unbelievable acts of violence as she satiates her bloodlust in the carnage, often single-handedly clearing decks of soldiers.

With both the government and the church being overwhelmingly run by undead leadership, it was important that the visitors and traders who keep much of the

PROFANE PUNISHMENTS

Government-inflicted curses can range from constant hunger and thirst, the inability to stomach anything except carrion, and becoming a host for insects, to life-altering punishments like an aversion to sunlight. Only those who commit the most severe crimes (betraying Geb, channeling positive energy, foreign agents working to overthrow the Blood Lords) find themselves facing the Eternal Vigil—their souls bound in statues along the city walls to keep watch over what they sought to betray.

MARDEN GILPHER

commerce flowing through Mechitar see a living member of the ruling council. It was easiest to assign **Marden Gilpher** (CE male human cavalier)—a living human knight with a particularly loose sense of morality but a hardliner when it comes to implementing the Dead Laws—the task of ruling the city's guard, called the Bellator Mortus. While the guard is primarily made up of undead soldiers, there are key positions filled by the living who remain loyal to Marden since none of the quick truly trust their lot in the organization. Marden ensures their loyalty by promising them immortality in exchange for fealty. Technically subservient to Blood Lord Torbin, Marden finds himself with a free hand these days as Torbin competes with other high-ranking members to sit at Geb's right hand.

When it comes to matters of conflict, courts apply their interpretations of the laws on arbitrary grounds with little apparent rhyme or reason for sentences. At least a dozen different courthouses are set up under the control of various Blood Lords, and picking the right judge is vital to ensure certain rulings. The same events might get thrown out of one court but lead to imprisonment or death in another. The most vicious punishments are the numerous curses available to the judges, as execution can be an easy out, allowing a soul to escape while only the body remains to be put to use.

The Church

Mechitar is said to have two sets of rules: the Dead Laws as implemented by the authorities and the dictates of Urgathoa. **Rinnella Brenon** (NE female Child of Urgathoa; *Pathfinder Book of the Dead* 79) is a commanding personality in Mechitar. Her fanatical cultists cling to her every utterance as if it had come from the lips of Urgathoa herself. She towers over Mechitar figuratively and physically, nearly as tall as the ivory statue of her goddess. With her right arm petrified into a 7-foot-long scythe-like claw, she appears laden in robes of delicate black lace, a being of cold and pale beauty down to her torso, and then a blood-soaked skeletal horror the rest of the way down.

Her rare personal sermons at the Cathedral of Epiphenomena draw thousands of devotees, fanatical creatures clamoring for a drop of the blood that flickers from her left hand—blood from a wound that won't heal. The Blood Lords pay her all the attention and respect due to her, as it's far better to have the favor of a cult of thousands. Falling afoul of the church is exceedingly dangerous, as there's very little flexibility in how it handles disobedience or disrespect to the Pallid Princess. Indeed, though any display of positive energy is a capital crime, even under the Dead Laws, violators are seldom taken by the Bellator Mortus. Worshippers of Pharasma are particularly reviled, and suspected Pharasmins are often murdered, sacrificed, or mutilated beyond recovery before the guards can do anything to stop the Urgathoans.

After Geb, Rinnella Brenon is the most powerful and feared creature in Mechitar, but she seldom puts that power to overuse, allowing displays of her control over the city to speak for themselves. The Blood Lords have left her and the hundreds of ghula (upper ranked members of her cult) alone to conduct their business in nearly an ungoverned manner, forming a sort of theocratic circle outside of Mechitar's government.

LOCATIONS

The following are a sample of some of the most prominent locations found in Mechitar.

City Walls

Mechitar's ancient crenelated walls circumscribe the city in a 5-mile-long sinuous line with regular battlements to break

the flow. Other walls within the city divide out subdistricts and gate off access to the harbor. Except for a sprawling shanty town between the northeastern walls of the city and the Axinir river, there are no settlements outside the walls. Somehow, over the centuries, the walls themselves seem to expand, just enough to contain all that needs to be inside Mechitar. Two massive gatehouses once stood in the northern and southern walls, called Admonition and Service respectively, though only the battlements remain, given that no army has threatened Mechitar by land in generations.

The bulk of the city rests within the main, western district, containing the Cinerarium, the Cathedral of Epiphenomena, the Blood Lord's palaces, and the Ebon Mausoleum. The Grand Surkay Bazaar and the Meat Markets are also found in the main district under the protection of the Bellator Mortus. The Ossum Harbor is a small district all its own, featuring many warehouses as well as the Deathless Arena. The district is far enough away from the River of Rot to make life tolerable for most of the quick citizens with the means to afford a dwelling along the oceanfront. Lastly, north of the River of Rot lies the Vassal Alley—Mechitar's thronged and overstuffed city-within-a-city, walled in to keep the most destitute and miserable of its citizens in one place with only a few, choked-off points from which to gain access.

Cinerarium

The tallest pyramid in Mechitar, the silent obsidian heart of the city—its top is adorned with a cap of solid gold stretching 20 feet, held to the stone with wide bands of mithral that proclaim the deeds of Geb in divine terms, plainly visible from the ground. Known the world over, this structure is the Cinerarium, thrumming with necromantic energy. Tombs, chapels, morgues, and charnel houses within its walls power the countless wards, diseases, traps, and curses that crisscross like a frenetic spider's web. The ashen remains of tens of thousands of souls mixed into the mortar holding the stones together ensure Geb alone commands the pyramid—perhaps the most discounted weapon in his arsenal. Most know it only as Geb's cage, but a bounty of necromantic lore, deathly artifacts, forbidden tomes, funerary treasures, and curse-inflicting weapons rest alongside him, growing dusty, Geb has no use for crutches when facing anyone foolish enough to challenge him.

The Cinerarium is too enormous for one soul alone, even one with a godlike will like Geb. The city guard Bellator Mortus uses the lower levels as their barracks and armory, where the human captain Marden Gilpher musters the guards and metes out capital punishments to maintain discipline. Above them, certain ancient liches, zombies, and ghouls toil constantly, maintaining the city's records and administrative work. These creatures have conducted such tasks for so long that some have fallen to dust and continued on as ghosts. Geb's quarters are on the pinnacle of the pyramid, sealed off to all since Arazni's escape. When communication is necessary, he simply appears wherever he wishes throughout the pyramid. In his deepest melancholy, Geb sinks deep below the pyramid, into the ancient Osirian catacombs to walk among the drowned mummies of kings and wizards only he remembers. These mummies still serve Geb, guarding the Cinerarium from any intruder who might think to tunnel through the flooded chambers and natural caves that stretch hundreds of feet deep below the pyramid.

Ebon Mausoleum

The sprawling campus of the Ebon Mausoleum houses the foremost authority on necromancy and commands attention with every pronouncement, congress, and edict. It's made entirely of glass designed to nullify the effect of sunlight and thousands of enchanted metal rods and stone pillars. Behind the glass structures, the main campus sprawls in the shadow of floating sunshades in long, single-story stone halls connected through a network of catacombs where masters and students live, study, and conduct experiments.

Ghostfire

A side effect of necromancers experimenting at the Ebon Mausoleum, ghostfire turned out to be a dull source of light in a blueish-white tone that uses negative energy for fuel. While it doesn't provide any tangible benefit, the glow it produces is entirely unlike sunlight, being dull and matte without producing any bright highlights. Perhaps more importantly, being near it seems to bring a feeling of comfort to the dead as a bonfire might to the quick. Conversely, the quick generally find ghostfire to be unnerving, and proximity produces a sense of unease. Ghostfire is entirely harmless to the dead, but living creatures coming in contact find it to be a cold and somewhat numbing phenomenon. Should contact be maintained long enough, their health will slowly deplete over several hours, eventually killing them. Ghostfire that has freshly killed someone supposedly makes the flame even more comforting to the dead, and those with the means to squander lives have been known to force prisoners into ghostfire pits simply to produce a more comfortable experience.

The few living students brilliant enough to be offered admission sneer at the rich and powerful who buy their way in. Thanks to the meat markets, captives, condemned prisoners, victims of the Deathless Arena, and the meat trade, there's never any shortage of corpses or subjects to experiment on. The main glass building buzzes with petitioners, questioners, and customers who have come to buy or coax knowledge or to commission an application of necromancy from the masters.

In centuries past, the Mausoleum was responsible for marvelous and horrific innovations in death magic. Now Chancellor **Kemnebi** (LE male vetalarana vampire necromancer), who leads the college alongside the lich **Vikroti Stroh** (LE female lich necromancer), seeks to dismiss the idea of necromancy as merely a means to animate the dead. Kemnebi and Stroh have pushed their most brilliant instructors and students to elevate necromancy to new heights. Stroh, in particular, wishes to transform necromancy into its own tradition of magic, making it as distinct as arcane, divine, occult, or primal magic. The campus buzzes with excitement as young, living necromancers debate ancient liches, ghosts, and vampires over the very nature of their study. Most other colleges outside Mechitar find this new direction to be a massive distraction from what the Mausoleum should be focused on—the use of necromancy as a weapon in Geb's arsenal.

Cathedral of Epiphenomena

This cathedral is the largest temple dedicated to Urgathoa in all of Golarion. The blackstone ziggurat, forming the main body of the temple, rises up a hundred feet, a wide set of stairs climbing up the five steps of the pyramid on its eastern face. At the base of the stairs, an enormous space for public ritual has opened up where a pyramid once stood. A wide, dusty field sprawls around the iconic statue of Urgathoa on top of descending circles of stones. A colossal tusk taken from a primordial beast, carved into a horn, hangs on the dais, to sound the turning of every hour.

When Rinnella Brenon speaks from the dais, she looms large even at the feet of her goddess' towering statue. Her sharp, rising sermons are terrifying calls to duty, demanding the quick give themselves over to disease and famine to join the ranks of the undead. She calls on them to spread the gospel of undeath and to bring souls (willingly or not) into the shadow of the Pallid Princess. Massive numbers of ghouls and sentient zombies called the Bleached Guard attend these ceremonies. They've taken over security for the Cathedral, their numbers matching the city guard, armed with scythes, curved short swords, or clubs made of hardened, shaped bone. Geb has made no move to corral the Child of Urgathoa in her grasp for power, dismissing it as irrelevant even as Brenon's apocalyptic sermons continue to draw

enormous crowds; with each gathering, she recruits more members that crowd the ziggurat's steps and flood the chambers within, which contain dozens of convents and monasteries dedicated to sub-cults of the faith.

Grand Surkay Bazaar

Camped between the Ebon Mausoleum and the Cathedral of Epiphenomena, the Grand Surkay Bazaar is an ancient marketplace with structures from the original founding of the city still serving the same function even after changing hands countless times. Everything from antiquities, weapons, and trade goods are for sale on the surface, where the Bazaar resembles any city's center of commerce. Beneath the Bazaar, however, one truly finds the reason behind Surkay's claim to grandness. Hawkers lure customers with offers of a break from the heat and shelter from the odors. They're drawn into dark chambers lit by the odd ghostfire lantern, filled with incense smoke, and surrounded by strange and rare objects offered up by skeletal hands emerging from gold-hemmed sleeves. Other shops might be galleries of Garundi artifacts attended by a spectral merchant while mindless corpses stand ready to deal with the physical exchanges of the sale. Prospective patrons can find hundreds of stores filled with ancient Osirian relics, stuffed with shriveled body parts, and overflowing with Azlanti tablets; their wares further range from stones with ancient rites, secret rituals excavated from forgotten tombs or traded from the Darklands, to stomach turning spell components and any manner of dangerous magic. Items deemed too dangerous and profane in other parts of the world can be found much more easily and openly in Mechitar, though ensuring an item's authenticity can prove more complicated.

Vassal Alley

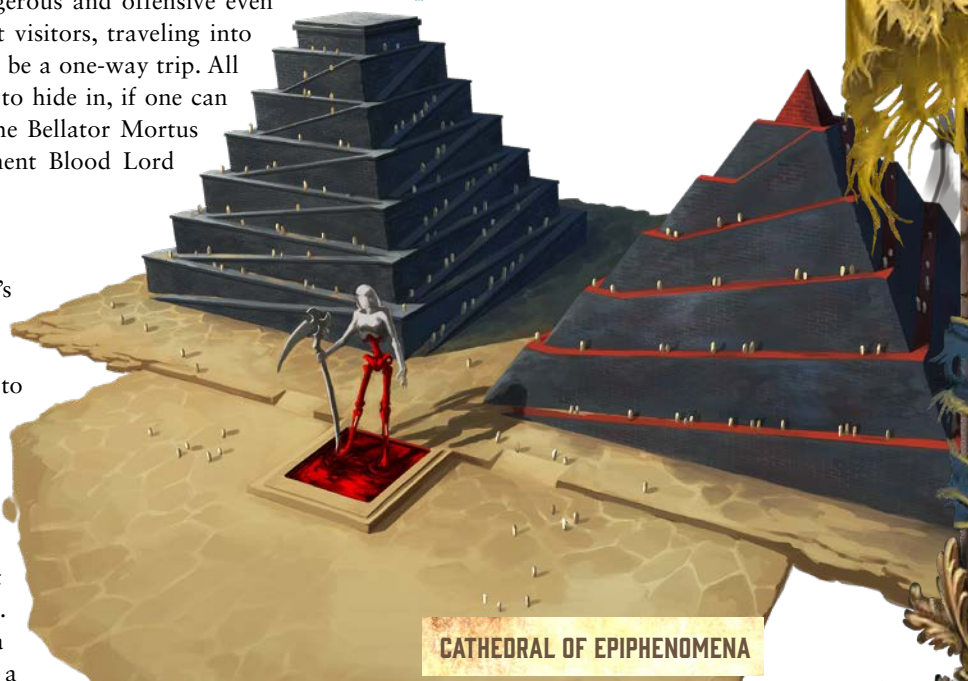
This warren of crime reeks of danger and sickness, swarming with criminals, cannibal cults, delirious undead, and the cursed. Wraiths prowl the shadows of the district, feeding capriciously and bound to an unknown schedule. This neighborhood is alone among all the various sections of Mechitar in having no architectural oversight, letting buildings glom onto and consume each other. Little sunlight reaches the streets due to leaning walls, slanted roofs, wooden slabs, and huge canopies of cloth and leather strung up between roofs to keep the region as dim as possible. Whatever business needs to be conducted here tends to be too dangerous and offensive even to the citizens of Mechitar. For most visitors, traveling into the Vassal Alley by night is certain to be a one-way trip. All these dangers make it an ideal place to hide in, if one can keep the threats at bay, since even the Bellator Mortus avoids Vassal Alley unless a prominent Blood Lord commands them to go in.

Important Faces

The destruction caused by Tar-Baphon's escape created countless refugees, but few willingly made their way from the demesne of one undead tyrant to another. **Ambercroft Gilford III, Esq.** (LN male gnome barrister) saw the events unfolding from the Ustalavic city of Lepidstadt in the country's north and decided to travel to the one place where he could learn about how to live alongside the dead—Geb. Dressed in a barristerial suit with a short cap, clean shaven, and with a precisely waxed handlebar mustache, it's

River of Rot

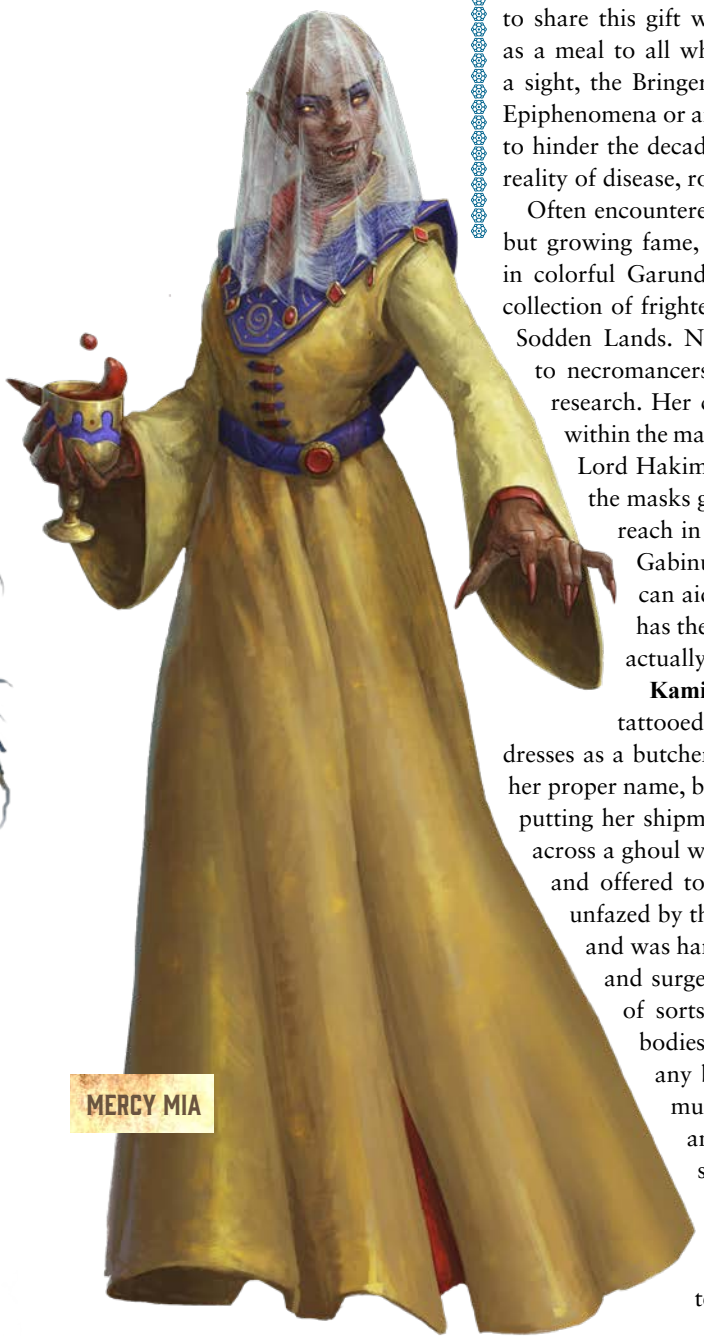
In the height of their paranoia, the Blood Lords accidentally poisoned this waterway during the war between Nex and Geb. Instead of killing the city's undercover enemies, the poison seeped into the water supply, sending most living residents into the afterlife—or into undeath. Once they sealed off the poisoned canal, the Blood Lords decided to leave the diseased water as a particularly potent way to protect the Cinerarium from the living. The city's potable water supply now comes from underground springs far below Mechitar's sands.



CATHEDRAL OF EPIPHENOMENA

WHISPERS OF TREASON

Unsurprisingly, Geb is a massive bastion for followers of the Whispering Way, an ancient and evil organization that glorifies undeath. However, agents of the Way have been intentionally sabotaging international relations as part of a far-reaching plot to destabilize the region known as the Impossible Lands. Once they've incited chaos, they plan to take command of Geb's undead forces and Nex's arcane automatons in the name of Tar-Baphon.



MERCY MIA

hard not to take the dignified gnome seriously. With rooms in the city's docks, the only place he can reliably find food, Ambercroft has engaged the city administrators, dockmasters, guards, and anyone else willing to talk to him about the Dead Laws. His curiosity and persistence forced his name to rise through the chatter, far enough that Ambercroft has had visits with Vice Chancellor Vikroti and is an infrequent guest at Captain Gilpher's cards table. Few have taken the small sign offering his services as a barrister seriously, but Ambercroft is determined to become the best lawyer for the quick in Mechitar, sooner or later.

If the **Bringer of Carrion** (NE agender zombie lord priest of Urgathoa) had a name or identity beyond its current task, such a label is long forgotten and gone. It finds the pomp and pageantry at the Cathedral of Epiphenomena to be far too fussy and detached from the visceral reality of what the Pallid Princess stands for. Officially defrocked after making accusations of decadence against the priestly hierarchy, the Bringer of Carrion gathered a cult of mostly undead and a rare few quick fanatics with unwavering devotion. Possessed of an odd quality that causes any damaged organ to grow back, it has chosen to share this gift with all followers of the goddess, offering its own body as a meal to all who would have it. If one can endure the horror of such a sight, the Bringer of Carrion is a valuable ally against the Cathedral of Epiphenomena or any priest in the hierarchy, gleefully sharing anything it can to hinder the decadent so it might return Urgathoa's faithful to the visceral reality of disease, rot, and gluttony.

Often encountered at fetes and performances as a person of small stature but growing fame, **Gabinuka** (LE female human explorer) presents herself in colorful Garundi robes and golden jewels, always wearing one of her collection of frightening Goz masks gathered from her expeditions into the Sodden Lands. Not exactly a merchant, Gabinuka rents out her masks to necromancers who need some help overcoming roadblocks in their research. Her claims about Yamasa priests cultivating negative energy within the masks were widely mocked until one proved helpful in Blood Lord Hakim's quest to finally bind his ancestor's ghost. Demand for the masks grew and elevated Gabinuka to heights few quick citizens reach in Mechitar. Despite her newly found wealth and celebrity, Gabinuka remains driven. She wants to possess more masks that can aid in the casting of other schools of magic, and she finally has the resources to hire agents and hunt for them—should they actually exist.

Kami "Gutstitch" Nallur (N female orc surgeon)—an orc with tattooed, muscular arms and thick, wild hair who most often dresses as a butcher in a leather smock—would rather everyone call her by her proper name, but she has accepted the title of Gutstitch since her days of putting her shipmates back together. During a stop in Mechitar, she came across a ghoul with a rupture in his side that had been badly put together and offered to fix it for him. With an ironclad stomach that seemed unfazed by the stench or sight of the ghoul, she stitched him up neatly and was handsomely rewarded, far more than her pay as a ship cook and surgeon. Since then, she has remained in Mechitar in a clinic of sorts, seeing to the careful reconstruction of long-deceased bodies. She frequently consults at the Ebon Mausoleum, reads any book on anatomy she can find, and has recently hired a mummy named Tutam to learn mummification, embalming, and Osirian methods of funeral preparation. In addition, she's the most reliable help for any of the quick who get injured in the city.

There's little love lost between the Gray Lady and the Pallid Princess, and their respective priests similarly tear at each other given any opportunity. **Masaki** (N male

human cleric) is an Osirian priest of Pharasma who has swallowed his revulsion toward the undead and has lived in Mechitar for years to study the enemy as closely as possible and to remain as a mole in case Pharasma or her priesthood has need of him in enemy territory. Tall, slight, and shorn of any hair on his head, Masaki wears light-colored practical clothes and spends his days as a historian, gathering tales throughout the city and, when called on, performing simple rituals for those quick who aren't devotees of Urgathoa. While a servant of Pharasma, he claims to be a priest who venerates the Golarion pantheon as a whole, which isn't far from the truth—he has simply chosen to champion one of them. Masaki's decision to spend his days in Mechitar guided him from the beginning, and he chose to channel negative energy when he became a priest to stay on the right side of the law in the city.

If they had their way, **Mercy Mia** (CE nonbinary elf vampire hedonist) would've never left Absalom. As centuries-long tabs came due, and with no one willing to lend them credit, they had little choice except to run. Mechitar is just a fraction the size of Absalom, but at least Mercy is beyond the reach of their creditors—and if one waits long enough, everything dies, even banks, moneylenders, and crime lords. Tall with lean muscles, angular androgynous features, and a penchant for the most contemporary fashion, Mercy has been living in Mechitar for nearly a century and, after deciding the city was lacking in amusement, has done their best to elevate the nightlife. As such, they frequently look for ways to get involved with those in need of a good time. Mercenaries, adventurers, and travelers make up most of their clients, and Mercy's hedonism can be an invaluable asset or a dangerous liability depending on the client's goals. Pure survivalism has forced Mercy to act more staidly than they'd been in Absalom, but when someone wants to have a memorable night out, Mercy will certainly provide a unique experience.

At first sight, **Ramaka** (NE male human shade failed lich) might seem like a somewhat distracted and threadbare student of the Ebon Mausoleum, going about his days and nights with a tendency to wander around the city while mulling over problems. In truth, Ramaka was a necromancer whose quest for lichdom failed. He survived and found himself no longer alive, but not quite a lich either. While most creatures who endure such a mistake invariably fall to ruin, Ramaka became profoundly interested in his own state and has studied his particular failure in extensive detail. The Ebon Mausoleum considers him an aberration and pays little heed to his theorems and proofs, but a small group of quick necromancers have gathered around him to take his studies in other directions. He isn't innately hateful toward mortal spellcasters and enthusiastically guides others in their quest for immortality. Due to his myopic focus, he's loose-lipped about the goings-on in the mausoleum, provided the conversation proves engaging enough.

Deep in the Grand Surkay Bazaar's underbelly, the merchant known only as **Tatter** (N agender shadow librarian) calls a lightless abode lined with books their home. The shadow appears as a barely visible silhouette of a floating cloak with an even darker and unseen presence beneath the cowl. The presence of any light—including ghostfire—immediately earns Tatter's ire, forcing those without darkvision to improvise some other way to travel through the inky black. For millennia, Tatter has documented the history of Mechitar, Geb, and even certain lands beyond. How they gather this information is a closely guarded secret, but unlike most shadows, Tatter shares their knowledge readily. These answers come with little embellishment or context, sometimes leading to more confusion than illumination. Fluent in nearly all languages, Tatter easily converses in the native language of their visitors, never speaking above a whisper. While Tatter has few needs, there are certain secrets they're sworn to keep for the sake of Geb's security. If one truly wishes to crack into Tatter's trove of state secrets, one might trade a secret of equal value in exchange, particularly secrets that shadows can't normally reach.

BRINGER OF CARRION

KAMI NALLUR

MASAKI

RAMAKA

Yled

Graveyard of Legions

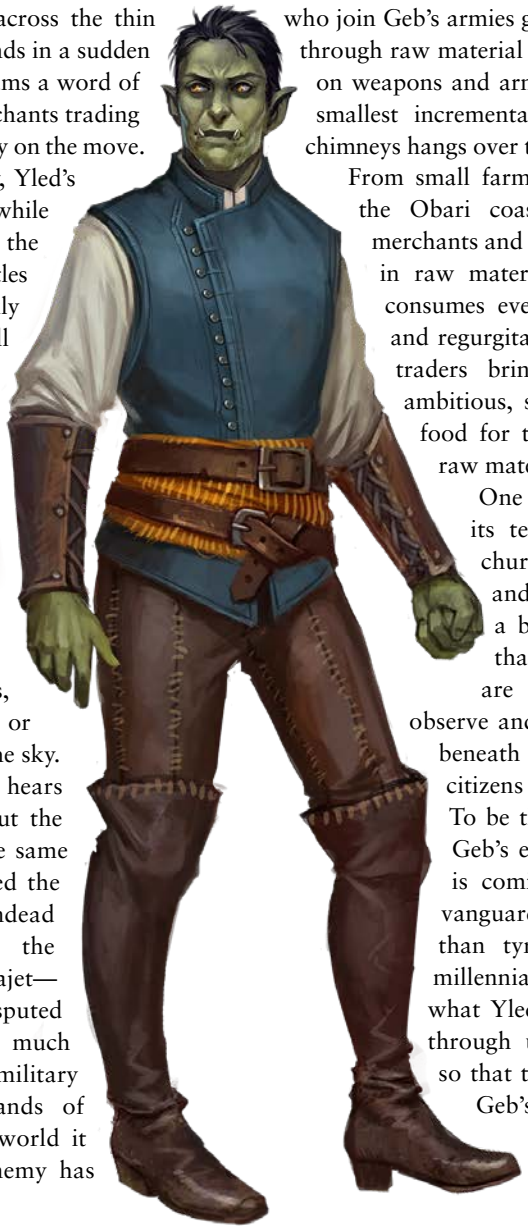
Geb's biggest city harbors the largest undead population in the world. Behind its semi-animate wall of bone, Yled is on a perpetual war-time footing. Deathless generals train soldiers, while universities full of necromancers teach the vile magic that supplies the city's armies. Yled is a testament to the martial might of undeath.

The city of Yled rises from the surrounding badlands like an infection, with the barbs of whatever weapon inflicted the wound still stuck in its flesh. The ruins of a thousand armies lie scattered around it for miles, forces that broke themselves against the unyielding wall of bone that surrounds the city, a wall rumored to crush those who threaten its wards. Remnants of trebuchets, catapults, chariots, siege towers, spears, swords, and lances all lie broken and rusting in the dirt, a bed of shrapnel caltrops as far as the eye can see.

Dust billows in white clouds across the thin roads that cut through the deadlands in a sudden windstorm, as if nature itself screams a word of warning. Undead legions and merchants trading in implements of war are constantly on the move.

With each step toward the city, Yled's towers seem to grow higher while sunlight grows fainter beneath the ever-present smog. The city bristles with jagged points like the prickly skin of a poisonous fruit, all directed outward as if warning all comers to stay back. Anemic sunlight glistens off its ivory bone wall, a ribbed corset wrapped around the torso of the city that towers above the broken remains of its enemies. The city's infamous towers rise from behind the bone wall, their obsidian foundations brooding beneath osseous embellishments, frowning lines arcing jaggedly, or bristling spears stabbing toward the sky.

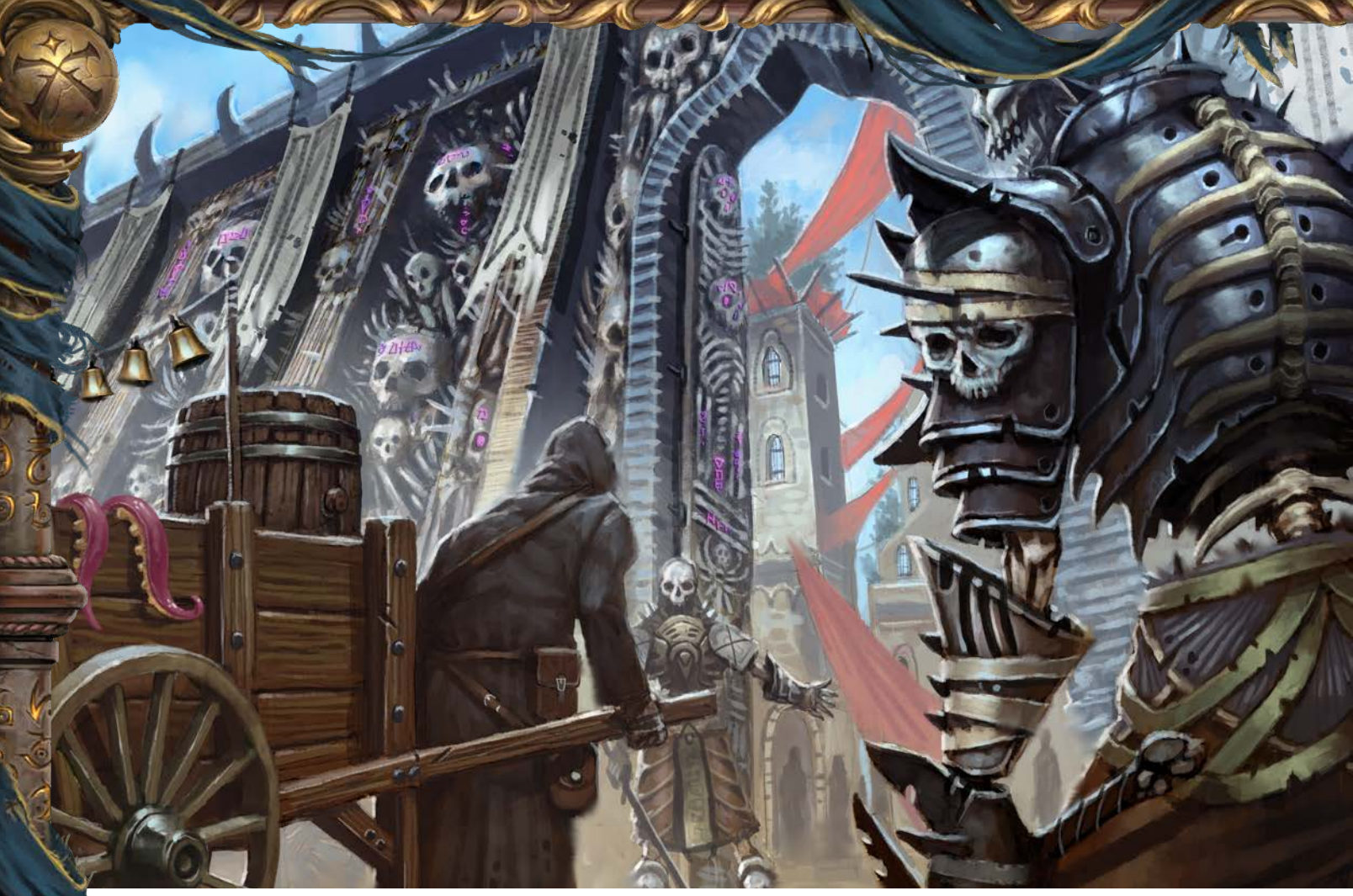
Such is the impression one hears about the largest city in Geb, but the truth is even grimmer and, at the same time, more prosaic. Yled is indeed the single largest gathering of undead creatures in Golarion. Under the stern gaze of Blood Lord Haeqajet—its immortal architect and undisputed authority—the city hasn't so much prospered as endured countless military attacks while launching thousands of its own sorties into the hostile world it occupies. In all this time, no enemy has breached its notorious **Bonewall.**



Behind that gore-soaked barrier, streets twist into a labyrinth, thick with dead ends and blind turns. In the center of the city, dwarfing all other structures, is the **Panopticon.** Haeqajet's tower, like a limbless tree with ivory plates and glass panes for bark, reaches for the sky to become an all-seeing spire. Four universities dedicated to necromancy thrive here, each specializing in its own application of the dread art, and each sporting its own tower, unique in its architectural expression. The Academy of Arms trains the elite warriors of the nation who join Geb's armies garrisoned here. Factories churn through raw material ravenously, constantly iterating on weapons and armor designs to extract even the smallest incremental gain. The smog from their chimneys hangs over the city like a sooty black cloud.

From small farms and villages to towns along the Obari coast and even **Mechitar** itself, merchants and traders form long lines bringing in raw materials. Yled, like a black maw, consumes everything that Geb can provide and regurgitates armies and weapons. These traders bring recruits both foolish and ambitious, supplies for the necromancers, food for the quick and the dead—more raw material, more corpses, more labor.

One can easily look at Yled and see its technocratic overlord, endlessly churning workshops, vast armies, and vile academies, and see only a banal clockwork. But it's more than the sum of its parts. There are pieces within the city that observe and record, a culture that thrives beneath the surface that reminds its citizens of what they fight to protect. To be the wall that stands in front of Geb's enemies is to know that a fight is coming. For a city that's more a vanguard than a shield, it takes more than tyranny to hold together over millennia. It takes inspiration, and that's what Yled does best. It inspires loyalty through unwavering devotion to duty, so that the city stands ready to answer Geb's call to march into the living world. Even if the walls must one day carry the city itself to lead that conquest.



A Day in Yled

Industry and production—these are the metrics that a citizen of Yled must live by. The accounting of a day tallies the hours devoted in service, the products designed or objects produced, the value brought to Geb, and the steps taken to drag Yled closer to its ultimate glory. Given such rigor, is it any wonder that in Yled, a day is far too abstract a period with no explicitly defined boundary?

Yled works in circles: three circles of eight hours to divide day in clearly delineated terms so that all might know the current cycle and its purpose. The cycles don't change to the whims of seasons nor the effects of weather or circumstances. It's said that even when the city is under attack, the cycles must nevertheless turn and those without wartime duties must attend to their cycles without deviation.

The First Cycle

In a city of the dead, the first cycle could begin only at midnight. This hour marks the end of lessons. In the crowded heart of the city, students flood their neighborhoods. Necromancers in training throng food merchants who offer up smoking hot meals wrapped in waxy parchment and peppers filled with herbs and grains. These thousands of students—accounting for the vast majority of the quick in Yled—gather at many of the open-air kaffs to debate what they just learned.

After refreshing themselves, most students wander off into the surrounding neighborhoods. Some continue to argue the finer points of their studies while others go in search of underground taverns with better entertainment, hidden fetes where Jalmeri poets duel in verse and secretive enclaves where the latest narcotics from Mechitar can be had. The cycle even draws out dead citizens who wish to interact away from the probing eyes of the city's administration. In certain districts and neighborhoods that are quiet in these hours, military students roam in gangs, seeking out fights or dueling in order to climb the rungs of their brutal social ladder. The more prominent challengers draw spectators to witness their duels in streets and across rooftops.

During these hours, the city takes on an urgent and lawless energy, as Yled's dark, winding roads could lead one to an underground den of iniquity or a street duel as easily as to a kaff full of eager students or a gathering of dead attending a somber rite. There's almost no actual trade to be had in these hours, as if this time of intermingling between the citizens has some ineffable value that only Yled's ruling council—the Iron Crown—can tally. For a city with a reputation for severity, the first cycle provides a broad and chaotic nightlife.

The Second Cycle

The second cycle begins once the sun reaches past the eastern hills, at eight in the morning. A long, sharp tone

from trumpets pronounces the fanfare of the Vanguard's Glory, and the black-clad elite platoon of soldiers begin their march following the spine of the Bonewall. Unless the city is actively repelling an invader, the nine gates open, each attended by a small army of bureaucrats along with necromancers, arcanists, and soldiers. The process is slow, but veteran traders have agreed upon procedures that allow them to pass through quickly and get about their business. Markets remain closed at this point as the shopkeepers meet with traders and bid for supplies. While it might be tempting to deal with the traders directly, those without a license face steep penalties.

The great factories stir to life and cough out enormous black clouds to add to the constant smog. The academies of necromancy lie quiet and slumbering while the Detan—the wide, dusty field of the Academy of Arms—fills with soldiers. Only those cripplingly averse to sunlight are allowed to practice in underground chambers; all others must train with the sun upon their backs. Outsiders are permitted to observe the drills and duels—potent propaganda of Geb's martial prowess which the Celebrants faction is quick to disseminate. Those wishing to join Geb's armies can engage in the war games to prove their worth, though safety isn't guaranteed.

While much of the city slumbers, huge crowds gather at the base of the Panopticon. Scattered around the central tower are a series of tall, thin buildings, each given over to a singular bureaucratic task to expedite the passage of paperwork. Since the processes have been optimized and refined so many times, the fastest way through is frustratingly obtuse without the aid of dead clerks.

The Third Cycle

The third cycle begins at four in the afternoon, just before the sun dips into the Shattered Range mountains. Though unlucky traders might be trapped outside the closing gates, most merchants have finished their journey into the city, and the markets are open. Students flood from their dormitories into the academic halls while servants, purchasers, food vendors, and academy clerks descend into the markets to gather what they need. Supplies are always limited, and building relationships over centuries has served many of the seasoned buyers well—but sometimes, a Blood Lord wants what they want, and there's no denying their immortal hunger. Shortages are common, and even with quotas implemented by civic administrators, scalpers maintain a healthy post-market economy.

Workshop crews switch from production to packaging as a second round of staff enters to prepare products for shipping—whether to other cities and towns, to units deep in the Mana Wastes, or beyond the mountains of the Shattered Range. Food stalls smoke their meats, and kaffs brew their drinks. Politicians, bureaucrats, and even certain influential citizens of Yled gather at the Echoing Pillars to debate their opinions and haggle over changes necessary to the system.

Yled natives think of the third cycle as their time to conduct discreet business before the city streets are given over to the riotous first cycle. Well-established institutions tend to close shop before the end of this cycle to avoid the uncouth—not to mention destitute—students. With the tolling of midnight, the last cycle ends and Yled enters a new day's first cycle.

A Year in Yled

Yled's location allows it to enjoy a steady day and night cycle that doesn't fluctuate much through the year. However, unlike central and southern Geb, the weather around Yled tends to be much more volatile. The summers remain as long, hot, and dry as anywhere in the kingdom, but the wet season in the second half of the year is protracted and tends to be punctuated with days of rolling fog, wildly fluctuating temperatures, and thunderous storms that roll in from the Mana Wastes. Winter is an odd season, as dry as the

Yled — Settlement 18

LE Metropolis

Government dictatorship

Population 119,200 (81% undead, 11% humans, 2% half-elves, 2% half-orcs, 1% fetchlings, 3% other)

Languages Kelish, Necril, Osiriani

Religions Nethys, Urgathoa, Zon-Kuthon

Threats amoral researchers, erratic elemental storms, military brutality, necromantic mishaps, undead

Mortal Morsel While the capital of Mechitar at least presents a veneer of civility to the living, the few living beings in Yled who aren't twilight sages, aristocrats, or minions of a powerful undead soon find a quick end. Undead NPCs begin with an attitude two steps worse than usual toward such characters, and while hostile citizens might simply wish you ill in other nations, in Yled, they're very likely to try to eat you.

Blood Lord Haeqajet (LE male mummy administrator 18) overgovernor of Yled

Necrolord Grihana (LE male dullahan pike-master 16) leader of Geb's armies

Pesabnet Zoheri (NE male ghast cleric 14) head of the Temple of Urgathoa

Vorwynd Iceblood (LE male graveknight general 16) commander of the Warmaster Council

summer but accompanied with a brittle, harsh chill that's very uncomfortable for the quick. If spring deigns to make a visit, its touch is so light that it might go entirely unnoticed, and the shift from winter to summer is abrupt like a set change between a curtain's fall and rise.

The dead pay little attention to the weather as it has minimal effect on them, but the long supply lines must by necessity pay heed to these patterns. During the very height of summer, the caravans slow to a crawl since only those with entirely undead teams can make the long journeys without needing to stop for rest along the way. Similarly, the rainy season can wash out roads and cause whole sections of desert to turn into flowing slabs of mud. Certain storms rolling in from the Mana Wastes release frenzied elementals that destroy whatever they can find while the storm rages. Winter is ironically a time of plenty in Yled, when the easy flow of supplies is a relief to most—particularly the quick, who can finally get their hands on fresh supplies of food. By midsummer, shopkeepers and the quick alike begin to ration their stores to get through the lean months ahead of them.

Geb has few, if any, national holidays, with most settlements celebrating events of local concern. In Yled, such dates are mostly associated with recent military victories, but they change every few hundred years as the more recent triumphs are celebrated and older ones forgotten. However, Yled does observe a few holidays unique to the city alone.

As the autumn rains diminish, the city prepares for the Exodus, an annual event that marks the largest expedition of the year. Nearly 5,000 soldiers make the sojourn, mostly made up of recruits from the prior year and half as many mindless undead under the control of apprentice necromancers. A few veteran officers are assigned to keep the company under control. With graveknights to lead the platoons along with any quick commanders who survive their training, the departing expedition travels through the northern gates after a night of parades, celebrations, and speeches. Blood Lord Haeqajet gives one of his rare appearances at the event, bidding farewell to Geb's newest and best soldiers and weapons as they march into the Mana Wastes. Both the quick and the dead spend the prior night in revelry but somehow always manage to form their exact and orderly lines before dawn breaks, every skeleton, zombie, ghoul, and behemoth in position waiting for the somber drums to begin their march. For a year, the expedition crawls through the Mana Wastes to eliminate any threats and to set themselves and their weapons against any enemies they can find. Partly, it keeps the northern border secure and gives the military a sense of constant war and a need for readiness. Mostly, it serves to gather data for the workshops and academies to improve their methods of warmongering.

On a clear day in high summer, the head of the Academy of Arms takes to the Detan in full battle armor

and remains there until the end of the day without rest, facing every aspirant to the title of Necrolord. This is the day of the Challenge. Geb's military is built on nothing if not the notion of the strongest leading, and this occasion gives the military a chance to prove its leader to be the absolute pinnacle of undead strength. Some legendary Necrolords were never challenged and were only removed from office after their death or destruction in the field of battle. More often, old grudges, frustrations, and resentments boil over, and senior staff members tired of waiting for decades or even centuries for their chance to lead take to the field against their commander. These duels tend to be brief, abrupt, and brutal. Thousands come to Yled on the day of the Challenge, and most of the city packs into the Detan, vast fortunes changing hands in wagers that start at dawn and end at sunset, or when the commander falls. The current leader of Geb's armies, **Necrolord Grihana** (LE male dullahan pike-master), has held his seat against challengers for nearly a century, but the last few years have seen some close calls for him, and his days seem to be numbered.

Winter in Yled is a harsh and brittle time. With few accommodations made for the comfort of the living, they suffer inordinately. The Visitation comes not on a settled and exact date but most often in the third or fourth week of Kuthona, when the year is at its coldest. It never snows in Yled, or in most of Geb's lowlands, but during the Visitation, an overnight freeze grips the city. Ice forms on streets and walls, frost gathers over glass, and every year, some citizens—both the quick and the dead—are discovered frozen to death. On this night, the quick and the dead alike stay indoors and avoid the streets, gathering in huge numbers to turn the night festive, sharing meals, and exchanging tales of prior Visitations.

In truth, the Visitation is a gathering of shadows, velstracs, and shadow giants along with small groups of fetchling loyalists who come to treat with the darvakkas bound beneath Yled and the tomb giants who imprison them. What they discuss and why they come in such large numbers is a mystery no one has been able to solve, and anyone attempting to spy on their alien conversations tends to vanish, whether taken by the Unseen or the giants themselves. The quick and the dead find common ground during the Visitation, for darvakkas represent a cessation of everything, and that's bleak enough to chill even the dead.

PEOPLE OF YLED

With a population over a hundred thousand, Yled is an enormous city, even if almost a third of that number are entirely mindless creatures. Most of this population is undead and involved in the business of war. From the huge lines of recruits that enter the Academy of Arms every year to necromancers arriving from all over the world to study at the various colleges, from the dead staff placed in every position of any real authority to the surging, hungry, and mindless dead kept in pens and cages as starved weapons, death fills every crevice of the city and its hierarchy. Yled is a city of grim, ascetic necromancers and dour soldiers with little on their mind but war. People with no humor or joy in their day, honing themselves to machine-like perfection in pursuit of power, turn on one another as readily as they might against an enemy just to climb another rung of the ladders of authority. Beneath smog that stains the city walls, this city of industry is run by mindless undead creatures who slave away in automated tasks. It's a city obsessed with the bitter, hot brew called kaff that even most Gebbites can't stand to drink.

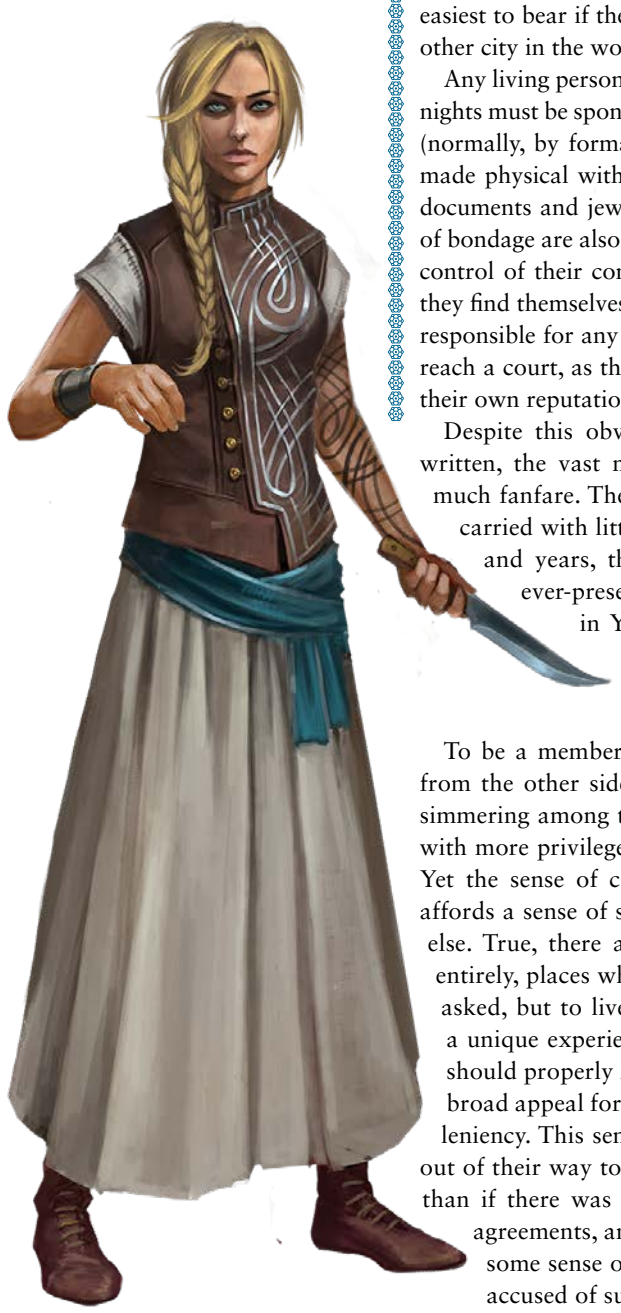
THE CHALLENGE

Many large cities have gladiatorial arenas where swaggering toughs can prove their might. The Challenge at the Detan is not this boisterous kind of affair. Grim, focused precision is the norm. All participants must already be members of Geb's military or have received dispensation in advance to fight as "sparring meat"—outsiders presumed to lack the discipline and fortitude to provide more than a quick win to a military-trained participant.

NECROLORD GRIHANA

FOUR UNIVERSITIES

Yled is known for its four necromantic academies. The **Mortuarium** is the largest and best known; its twilight sages study the line between life and death. The **Synostosis** studies bone, making it the most utilitarian school. The **Shadow Academy** studies planar theory, especially connections to the Boneyard, the Shadow Plane, and the Negative Energy Plane. The **Twilight Castrum** is the smallest and has fallen far from its once lofty reputation, but it nevertheless produces plenty of necromantic scholars.



All of that might be true, but anyone who lives in Yled long enough comes to realize that these facts alone don't make up the city or define it. To see Yled this way is to describe a fish as a scaly creature with ineffective, thin wings and watery eyes, incapable of breathing air—a superficially accurate description that fails to describe the creature in its native environment. Life in Yled is neither simple nor easy, but once acclimated, one might find no other place like it—so long as one accepts the purpose the city serves.

In all aspects, Yled caters to the dead above the living, more so than any other city in Geb. The quick know they're relegated to second-class citizenship, every visitor and citizen bound in some way to one of the dead citizens, factions, or institutions of the city. Trust doesn't extend to the quick; they can't display loyalty to the city's satisfaction without one final act of service—to accept undeath themselves. Yet, the living come in numbers every year to study necromancy, to partake of the city's unique nightlife, to learn the techniques of war from immortal war wasters, to learn the art of weapon forging. The friction between the quick and the dead is constant, but the Dead Laws are clear, and the quick learn to adapt, finding that the friction is easiest to bear if they consider the difficulty faced by the dead in almost any other city in the world.

Any living person choosing to settle in Yled or even stay for more than two nights must be sponsored by a dead citizen in good standing, or else be bound (normally, by formal employment) to a dead institution. This agreement is made physical with tokens serving as minor necromantic brands. Contract documents and jewelry are the most common tokens, but more overt signs of bondage are also seen occasionally. The quick are, quite literally, under the control of their contract holders, beholden to them for good behavior lest they find themselves without protection. The contract holders are technically responsible for any crimes committed by their wards, but such cases seldom reach a court, as the dead quite efficiently dispose of offenders to safeguard their own reputations.

Despite this obvious yoke placed upon them, once the contracts are written, the vast majority of the quick assimilate into the city without much fanfare. The tokens of sponsorship become a part of everyday life, carried with little thought, and life—as it were—goes on. Over months and years, the notion of being a secondhand citizen takes on an ever-present but dim awareness, and many quick who remain in Yled after completing their initial purpose find undead partners, lovers, or friends who are willing to sponsor them, even if they have difficulty finding an employer to sponsor them.

To be a member of the privileged undead in Yled is to experience life from the other side of the mirror. There might be some mild resentment simmering among the undead in the city about the fact that the quick live with more privilege in Yled than the dead would receive in any living city. Yet the sense of control over every living creature due to sponsorships affords a sense of security that's impossible for the dead to find anywhere else. True, there are towns and small cities in Geb bereft of the quick entirely, places where living creatures vanish overnight with no questions asked, but to live alongside the quick and have the roles be reversed is a unique experience. There's some debate about how a city of the dead should properly rule over the living, but in general, Yled's firm laws have broad appeal for prioritizing the dead, especially compared to Mechitar's leniency. This sense of security, and even superiority, allows the dead go out of their way to treat with the living in a genial manner, better perhaps than if there was doubt about their loyalty. The contracts are two-way agreements, and either party can end it voluntarily, allowing the quick some sense of independence and allowing the dead deniability when accused of subjugating their city's living citizens.

The dead of Yled are some of the most ancient and weathered creatures in all of Geb. Yled was originally settled by people of Osiriani descent, with a fair number of Garundi settlers joining them. The small living population has created an incentive for various ancestries to intermarry more so than usual, simply due to limited choices. Yled's living citizens often come from mixed ancestries, with half-orcs, half-elves, and others making up a significant number of the city's quick. Due to the Shadow Academy's research into interdimensional travel and its search for energy sources beyond Golarion, several extraplanar creatures have also been drawn to Yled, and some linger long enough to take partners, leaving plane-touched children in their wake—though most such beings abandon Yled at their earliest convenience to avoid becoming experimental subjects. These populations have blended together more closely than in most other places, as the living have more in common with each other, regardless of ancestry, than they do with any dead citizen.

While it's true that the undead hold all levers of power in Yled, that isn't to say that the living don't have any control whatsoever. When a quick necromancer exhibits talents unseen in generations, when a foreigner appears with knowledge of warcraft beyond what exists in the city, when quick students commit blasphemy and treason to be accepted into the colleges—there are positions of rank and power that can be earned. The fastest path to power lies along the avenues of death, and Yled has dozens of ways to die and rise again. The worst ways involve being infected with an undead plague—ghoul fever, for instance—but such brutal means of turning are reserved for punishments. Ritual suicide is the most common for willing participants. Not only does it display allegiance to Geb by following in his footsteps, but it also allows the participant to arrange for their death in the least distressing way. Poison under sedation is the most common method, though some militant individuals choose to die during a preplanned duel or commit suicide through a self-inflicted wound. The living who choose undeath in such manners are highly respected and find their stock elevated quickly, having proved loyalty to Geb and Yled with their actions.

Among the living, hierarchies are more easily defined. For the most part, everyone without sponsorship is lumped together into the lowest level of society. Those on a path to undeath are given a lease on greater freedom so long as the wait is not stretched too long. Finally, there are the rare diplomats, traders, necromancers, and weapon champions who reach the highest level among the living. Above them are only the rare living Blood Lords, who are treated with great deference throughout Yled.

Over the centuries, baked by the heat of Geb's summers and stretched by age, most of the walking dead resemble dried husks held together by ancient sinew. The living still born in Yled resemble a paler version of the typical Geb populace, shorter of stature in general and suffering from a chronic anemia that has defied the arts of most healers. Some consider this a curse from Urgathoa for the city's agnostic stance, but the truth is likely more prosaic in nature, having to do with limited food choice and a brutally rigid city schedule that favors the dead.

In fashion, Yled can't really be said to have a central authority on style. Most of the city takes cues from the military or the colleges for attire, both focusing on practicality over beauty. Men and women wear hard-soled leather boots with little to no heel and clothing that tends to be tight on the limbs. Leather jerkins are the most common accessory, usually woven with armor plating or leather padding. Civilian attire tends to incorporate these elements with embroidery or collage-like patchwork of small metal plates, etched with delicate designs. Hats and cloaks are seldom seen in Yled, with the exposed head being a sign of the city's fearlessness when it comes to the most traditional enemy of the undead: sunlight.

YLED APHORISMS

People of Yled use phrases originating from the city's military focus.

Ahead of the Shamblers: Officers lead zombie hordes from behind, as mindless undead sometimes confuse friend and foe. Someone "ahead of the shamblers" is trying to keep control from a precarious position.

Last Knife: Some undead stitch (or, for bony undead, simply tie) a dagger in their chest cavity. A "last knife" is a desperate contingency.

Pike Keeper: A "pike keeper" is someone of little consequence on the receiving end of a bad situation.

Yled would be a remote border city with little attention paid to it if not for its size and its institutions. Necromancers around the world know it as the foremost center of their art, however much Mechitar might try to claim that title. Martial artists with a lax sense of morality know there are few better places in the world to hone their skills, especially when it comes to heavy arms and armor, with the Hellknights being the sole exception. Unlike them, Yled requires no long-term commitment to train outsiders, so long as enough gold is handed over. Even the city of Alkenstar occasionally stresses over Yled's manufacturing ability, though it has had little to fear, given Yled's obsession with its own security and armament. The city has little desire to export its manufacturing, as it can barely produce enough to keep its massive armies armed and armored.

With only the Mana Wastes separating Yled from its sworn enemy, it has long borne the brunt of Nex's fury. The nation of Nex has always had a grudge against Yled, and so long as Yled stands, peace between Geb and Nex is highly implausible. Thousands of years after the cessation of active hostilities, the city still trains for the day when Nex's forges begin to churn out abominations once again. With no room for diplomats or foreign offices, and a policy of sponsorship that keeps most foreign powers from even sending officials to the city to conduct any business, Yled is likely one of the most distrusted and aloof cities in political terms. Its hard-nosed stance against any sense of diplomacy whatsoever makes it a difficult place to like, and the people of Yled are fine with that. They make no attempt to disguise their purpose. The city was made for war, and it waits for the day when Geb calls them to battle once again. Relations with others can only complicate that task.

Twilight Sages

There are many colleges in Yled, but there's only one Mortuarium. The largest and most famous of Geb's centers of necromantic study, its mastery of the art is so profound that an entire discipline has emerged as a sub-school of necromancy. These necromancers are called twilight sages, and they study the boundary between life and death to see exactly when and how death occurs and whether the arcane and divine arts are truly so different. Using arcane magic in forced resurrection would be considered blasphemous anywhere else in the world, without even considering the experimentation and repeated forced death and resuscitation of sentient beings. Such is the cost of knowledge, and denizens of the Mortuarium will pay any price to increase their understanding. The masters keep strict control over who learns their secrets, and a certain amount of loyalty must be proven to advance into learning the deepest mysteries of the art. Those who finish their studies and are named twilight sages find it easiest to remain in Geb where their research breaks no laws. Given the profane nature of

their studies, few places in the world see them for who they are—masters on the frontier of research plumbing the mystery of life and death itself. In Yled, the sages are local heroes among the academic circles, and most who earn the title find themselves elevated above most quick citizens as minor celebrities.

CULTURE

Yled was built along Geb's northern border to defend against Nex's attacks during the early years of the war. Given its position, Yled faced the absolute worst Nex could send its way, even before the Mana Wastes existed. The fact that Yled survived unbroken and unyielding has molded the city in the centuries since. Yled contains students, merchants, workshops, and laboratories—a city that could be an industrial and economic center, sitting so close to Alkenstar. The universities of Yled gain the most attention beyond Geb's borders, but alongside them is the academy of war where immortal masters teach the art of battle. These masters observed the ancient clashes between Osirion and its neighbors, witnessed the Shining Crusades, and still remember the campaigns of Taldor's glory days. The memory of war is sustained in the form of plays, stories, and songs, along with industry and education; all things in Yled lead back to war.

Soldiers in the city are never dormant. They constantly set out on expeditions to prove their mettle, the greatest of which is the Exodus. Every month, small groups of trainees marked by their shaved heads and green and black outfits march out, disposable and unimportant. Students of necromancy who wish to remain in the city must devote some time each year to serving within the army, attached as support staff or—for those with the political clout or power—as non-commissioned officers. Visiting merchants all contribute a portion of their goods to the city as a tithe for war funds and supplies. War is always around the corner as far as Yled is concerned.

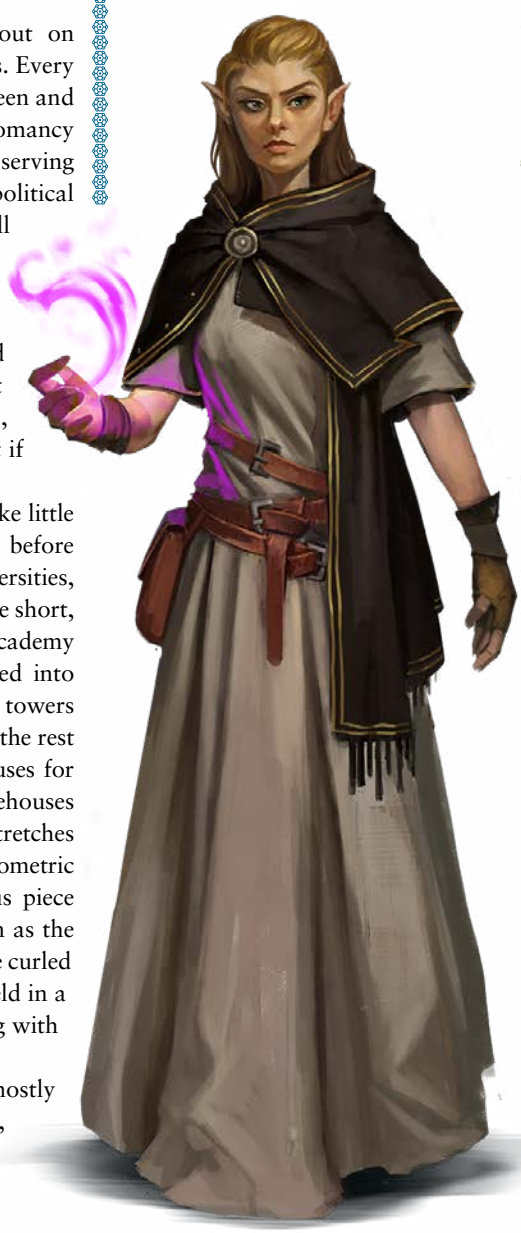
Even after centuries of relative quiet and infrequent attacks, Yled still remembers why it exists. Its purpose is to defend Geb, and that singular fact drives everything. Students, soldiers, merchants, goods, and supplies all come and go, but those who stay in Yled know that if they're within the Bonewall, they're soldiers in defense of a nation.

Yled is a complicated city for newcomers to navigate. Its streets make little sense, and without a guide, most visitors can wander lost for hours before regaining their bearings. Important buildings—watchtowers, gates, universities, administrative offices, Blood Lord residences—all tend to rise above the short, squat buildings that lie packed together. Some, like the towers of the Academy of Arms, bristle with extrusions like a porcupine. Others are shaped into something symbolic, like the Mortuarium twisted into a claw. These towers are the most reliable landmarks to navigate the twisting streets. As for the rest of the city, architectural detail is given a minimal attention. Warehouses for goods are built as brutalist, square structures, entirely practical. Warehouses hosting weapons, corpses, and senseless dead are similarly featureless stretches of gray. Only the kaffs and markets show distinction with bright geometric patterns on their walls and colorful sunshades. The most wondrous piece of architecture in Yled is hidden beneath the grand Panopticon. Even as the tower rises higher than any other in defiance of gravity, its iron roots lie curled around the Agorron, a liminal space between dimensions delicately held in a trap of exquisite design whose makers have long since vanished, along with the knowledge of how it was created.

Given the strict culture of rules and regulations imposed within mostly military leaderships trying to rule over a largely civilian population, the bureaucracy of Yled is a nightmare. All around the Panopticon, dozens of buildings hold countless offices concerned with ephemeral rules that affect the daily lives of all in Yled. Hundreds of people gather here for tasks ranging from an exchange of property to annulling a

LEGAL EXEMPTION

A succinct prohibition in Geb's Dead Laws bans the use of positive energy. Positive energy is so dangerous to the undead citizenry that its use is a serious crime. Narrow exceptions exist, and one of these is granted to the twilight sages who are in pursuit of their dangerous studies. This is no gift to the quick: twilight sages who use healing magic aren't ever likely to do so as a kindness, but only to prolong suffering or to force a victim to dangle in that borderland between life and death for as long as possible.



A USEFUL NECROMANCER

Necromancy is a wide field of study, but for Yled's purposes, a necromancer useful for war preparations knows most or all of these spells: *animate dead* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 214), *bind undead*, *harm*, and *necromancer's generosity* (*Secrets of Magic* 117). Even more useful is necromancer who is proficient with the *create undead* ritual; aspiring necromancers work hard to both collect variants of this ritual for different types of undead creatures and the necessary black onyx gems to fuel it.

thousand-year-old marriage contract. The typical applicant is a living soul without a sponsor, seeking a temporary leave or signing a new contract with another dead citizen.

Similarly, the central authority of the Iron Crown sends lists of weapons and supplies to be completed every day, and the workshops hammer through the orders. Even in situations where the quotas are impossible, there's no hesitation, as unavailable resources are allocated and the process is pantomimed in absurd shows of productivity. Such hollow effort is likely only possible due to the mindless nature of many workers who are set to automatically follow their rod-bearing instructors and supervisors. Whenever this groaning structure of rules threatens to collapse, the bureaucrats thrust dozens of new laws into place, scaffolding the system for a few more centuries.

With a centuries-long record of buttressing the military in Yled, the masters of the Mortuarium consider their application of necromancy a practical art to be in direct contention with the masters of the Ebon Mausoleum. Only their collective devotion and loyalty to Geb has kept the two universities from going to war with one another, though students frequently clash when tempers get the best of them. Still, the academic conflict has little impact on the constant stream of necromancers needed to attend to tasks across the city. The military needs necromancers to keep the huge armies of mindless dead under control as well as to provide support by channeling negative energy into the dead. A small battalion of necromancer-engineers is required to see to the well-being of not just the Bonewall but all the structures of the city that use bone as a vital component. Lastly, there are the workshops. In short, if upon finishing their training a student wishes to remain in Yled, there's no shortage of practical, real, and useful work for them that furthers the interest of Geb and adds to the defense of their nation. Thus, necromancy is a tool in the hands of the city, one it uses without reservation toward its ends.

Most of the dead citizens of Yled get by without food or drink, save certain creatures, such as vampires and ghouls. They're largely left on their own to arrange for sustenance, even if that sustenance is sentient life. Vampires, on the other hand, can arrange any number of wards through employment contracts and subsist on a brood of sentient creatures. Beyond these needs, the dead of the military and universities alike have turned their back on all sustenance. This leaves the city's cooks to prepare exclusively for the living, and the produce and meat that travels to Yled comes at a high price. The quick can always find an affordable meal in neighborhoods surrounding the universities, and most food vendors sell a cheap gruel of bone broth and grain porridge. The bitter liquid kaff served in stores of the same name is also a constantly available source of nutrition. With a little coin to spend, some truly rich meals can be had in Yled—meats transported to the city are often dehydrated and cooked over oil and smoked with aromatics. Leaves from certain edible plants in Garund are used both as a container and a source of texture for food served in street stalls, stuffed with grains and a mash of chopped vegetables. For the truly wealthy, certain merchants provide elaborate, multi-course meals shipped from Mechitar under the protection of spells to maintain the food's integrity until it's served at the fete. To be invited to one of these meals, something only within the purview of Blood Lords or inordinately wealthy merchants, is to reach the pinnacle of society in Yled.

Without support from the Iron Crown and few established patrons pushing for the city to develop an art culture, there's little draw for entertainers to visit Yled. Instead, Yled's music has grown from legends of ancient battles that have become military chants and calls to arms, liturgical pronouncements of necromantic dictums, and the rallying cries of the citizens who cheer their sides on during war games. Centuries-old chants have come to represent camaraderie among friends, loyalty to a cause, or even bravery in the face of unbearable challenges. Conversations of commanders in the battlefield

are presented in highly formal recitations as a call-and-response between the commander, played by a talented orator, and the enemy's army as a chorus. Despite the militaristic and nationalistic themes, these stories and songs are a part of Yled's culture, something that students in particular take with them beyond the city.

Even aristocrats in Yled enjoy the decadence of life that their peers in other cities enjoy, and soldiers throughout the hierarchy like to blow off steam from time to time. Pastimes in Yled are therefore either elaborate affairs in which only society's highest members can participate, such as the exclusive plays at Twined Stories, or they're rough and often bawdy, as the bars or parlors where patrons shout along to military anthems.

GOVERNMENT

Despite being the biggest city in Geb, Yled follows a governmental structure akin to how a military unit might be arranged rather than a civilian settlement. This fundamental organization guides all decisions when it comes to governance. Just as the quick and the dead are treated separately under the Dead Laws, their implementation in Yled is far more severe than in other parts of the country.

The Dread Commanders sit at the head of the city, a group of seven who report directly to Blood Lord Haeqajet (all seven Dread Commanders and Haeqajet himself are called, collectively, the Iron Crown). Each Dread Commander represents a different group from the city with four military generals and a delegate each from civic administration, trade ministry, and the universities. This structure allows the military to always have a controlling share of votes at the table, leaving only Haeqajet to veto their decisions. Given his own fanatical desire to hold Yled in a constant state of readiness for war, he rarely countermands his generals.

Weekly meetings keep the city's agenda on the forefront, and the Dread Commanders have been known to set their egos aside for the prosperity and security of Yled, a point of pride given the cutthroat barbarism and power-hungry scramble among the nation's Blood Lords. This isn't to say that there's no turnover; on the contrary, the Dread Commanders have a set term of a hundred years, specifically to prevent malaise and complacency. While no rule prevents the quick from occupying a seat, one has never ascended to the septet.

The most recent addition to the Dread Commanders, **Vorwyn Iceblood** (LE male graveknight general), is the head of the newly-minted Warmaster Council. Geb commanded Blood Lord Haeqajet to establish the council to oversee the war preparations in light of credible rumors of Nex's incipient return. Haeqajet appointed his capable friend Vorwyn, who has served as a general in Yled's military for more than seven centuries, to lead the Warmaster Council. Other than muscling himself into a position as one of the Dread Commanders, Vorwyn has done little to upset the delicate balance of power in the city's upper echelons. He's instead building his Warmaster Council as a parallel military organization, quietly poaching the city's best officers and spies to prepare for the hot war he's been tasked to anticipate—and to win.

Yled doesn't have much of a civil guard due to the prominent military presence, and since most of the city's population is made up of enlisted soldiers and officers, any discipline or enforcement comes from within the military hierarchy anyway. Still, the Iron Crown needs to keep an eye on the city. The Unseen are everyday civilians, picked from both the quick and the dead, tasked with keeping a worm's-eye view on the city. The mightiest vessels can be sunk by a minor flaw in a single plank; following this dictate, ground-level agents called Eyes are scattered under handlers called Oversights, who report back anything they deem to be of importance to their own superiors, whether it be a dead citizen breaking from centuries of routine or a new

FALSE SUCCOR

The necromancers of Geb see potential in the mutated peoples of the Spellscar Desert and occasionally entreat them to leave their blasted home and relocate to the heart of Geb by promising a life of comfort and acceptance. In actuality, such mutants are taken to the infamous Mortuarium, where Geb's cruelest wizards perform unholy experiments and turn them into undead abominations to serve in Geb's lurching army.

arrival asking too many questions. Only the Oversights know who their Eyes are, and they take great pains to keep them invisible to each other, sometimes even setting one Eye to watch another. The cycle of paranoia exists in upper circles as well, as some high-ranking members of the order use Oversights to maintain vigilance over other networks with tenuous loyalty. Most citizens of Yled are keenly aware of the Unseen and accept that they have no real privacy. With enemies all around, countless armies broken on their walls, and the threat of spies, foreign agents, and enemies within the city, the idea of a domestic spy agency seems almost inevitable.

Life in Yled for the quick depends very much on their sponsorship, a piece of paper that denotes their status in the city through their relationship to the dead, though the quick are first to deny that the sponsorships denote any level of bondage. In theory, so long as the quick have filled out the necessary paperwork, they're free to enter the city without a sponsor, but the reality of walking Yled's streets is another matter entirely. Quick visitors without a patron lack any form of protection, and while the Dead Laws do protect them from being treated as cattle or used as raw material, there's little enforcement of the clause. People often disappear in the night, and the Iron Crown isn't inclined to pursue justice in such cases.

One way to gain sponsorship is to be bound to a dead citizen through duty or relationship. Quick with such contracts carry a token with a mild necromantic touch that the dead can easily recognize. Most often, these tokens take the form of a coin, but long-term residents can have custom jewelry or other tokens made in a similar manner. This loophole has created an entire industry specifically to allow the quick ways to enter Yled under the city's protection. As far away as Mechitar, undead beaus and necromancers stand ready to offer temporary companionship, and vampires are prepared to hire someone as a source of nourishment. The contracts are limited only by the imaginations of the people involved. Some have gone so far as to enter polygamous marriage contracts of a dozen living creatures wed to a single dead citizen who serves as their guardian, while others bind themselves into service contracts as clerks or agents of the dead. Once a contract and token are awarded, there's little to prevent the dead from trading the quick like any other asset, and it isn't uncommon for particularly valued citizens to find their contracts traded among the dead, though they see none of the revenue generated from such trades.

It's important to recognize that these contracts require both sides to enter the agreement consensually, and any hint of coercion—magical or otherwise—leads to annulment and even swift imprisonment of the contract holder. The Iron Crown strives to remain above reproach when it comes to implementing the Dead Laws and its unique system of sponsorship, punishing both the quick and the dead equally for breaches.

LOCATIONS

The following are a sample of some of Yled's most prominent locations.

Outer Ring

Some might say that Yled wasn't planned so much as stuffed with whatever could fit within its walls—buildings were gathered without any rhyme or reason, colleges and the academy strung around the Panopticon, workshops thrown to one side of the city like a dark, fungal growth, and forts and barracks pressed against the northern section of the wall—leaving barely any open grounds or space for markets, squares, and other practicalities of any living city. Roads cut at odd angles to each other, making turns difficult, and the labyrinthine neighborhoods are opaque to anyone who hasn't lived in the city for decades, if not centuries.

Strangely enough, this chaos is exactly what the designers intended. They wanted any invader to feel utterly lost with no clear path to any of the major landmarks, forcing the enemy to split into smaller groups to trace down several routes at once instead of consolidating along one main artery. Similarly, the university buildings and warehouses are clustered together, but each cluster is kept away from one another so that only a single group can face an overwhelming attack at once, leaving the others to reinforce their positions and prepare their own defenses (or to launch a flanking counterattack) while the enemy presses against a single target. Whether this design is practical hasn't ever been put to the test since Yled's Bonewall remains unbroken.

As much as the buildings, towers, and labyrinthine streets draw the focus, some of Yled's practical space remains out of view. Underground buildings linked through interconnected tunnels form a subterranean network so convoluted that almost no one truly knows the extent of how wide the undercity stretches. Citizens with means often maintain bolt-holes and bunkers should the city be invaded. The army also has mindless dead and undead constructs beneath the city that could be activated for defense if necessary. An entire underground facility exists to support the city's administrative branches should they need to retreat from the surface entirely.

Panopticon

The central tower of Yled rises from the ground like a tree of intertwined bone and metal. Its surface bristles with bony spikes and sheds iron flakes as jagged new metal grows beneath the bone to replace the old. A marvel of engineering and design, the Panopticon allows its master city-wide sight and even a form of psychometry to trace anyone, dead or living, within the Bonewall.

The Iron Crown meets in the Panopticon, and the Unseen's controlling Oversight committee occupies several floors to gather detailed records on persons of interest. At the very top, Blood Lord Haeqajet's quarters bristle with weapons and wards, as the ancient lord of Yled slowly sacrifices bits of his memories and sanity to cleave to his task as leader of the city.

Agorron

The roots of the Panopticon stretch deep under Yled to a dried aquifer, where the iron foundations twist into a vast construct surrounded by a warren of tunnels. Embellished with precious metal plates, bone lacing, and shadow plane matter carved into effigies, the Agorron is a massive, hollow pyramid meant to house extraplanar entities,

Fort Halg

The fortress of **Seldeg Bhedlis** (CE human graveknight), Geb's spymaster and former crusader of the Knights of Ozem, is located on a small rise overlooking a tax house on a major road near Yled. He chose this site so that his spies could come and go unnoticed among the numerous caravans traveling the roadway. The soldiers garrisoned at the fortress are a mix of the quick and the dead.

creating a liminal space between the Negative Energy Plane, the Plane of Shadow, and the material plane. Only the most learned and powerful necromancers can enter the Agorron without burning away to cinders under the massive weight of negative energy. More than any other place in Geb, the Agorron is a wellspring of power that the city's masters draw upon to fuel the Bonewall's magic, and they can draw yet more deeply in emergencies. A triumvirate of darvakkas led by an enigmatic creature called the Bound One occupy the Agorron, overseen by a cabal of enigmatic tomb giants.

Twined Stories

The playhouse called Twined Stories is the pinnacle of Yled's fairly anemic arts scene, and its rare shows are popular with the city's aristocrats. The playhouse is famous for performances that span between the Material Plane and the Ethereal Plane, telling dramatic plays that shift between both worlds. Special magical opera glasses even allow attendees to watch the simultaneous stories unfold at once.

The Mortuarium

The largest university of necromancy in Geb, if not the world, the Mortuarium surpasses even the Ebon Mausoleum in Mechitar. Contained within a huge, claw-like tower that rises above the surrounding buildings, it holds thousands of students within its dormitories, though it provides minimal comfort to residents. Cold, dark cells and constant exposure to the negative energy coursing through the tower cull the weak, providing a small but valuable source of bodies for dissection and experimentation. Ruled by **Blood Lord Khira** (NE female lich necromancer), the Mortuarium places importance on the practical needs of Geb's armies above all other things. The most elite students pursue their own theories, and one of the fields of study gaining some renown is that of the twilight sages.

Synostosis (The Arch of Bones)

The second most important college of necromancy in Yled, the Synostosis—sometimes called the Arch of Bones—was originally formed as a workshop to undertake the task of creating the Bonewall. This monumental effort took hundreds of years and the scouring of countless battlefields, graveyards, and even the destruction of entire armies of undead soldiers to have enough bones to produce the fortification. Entirely new and innovative theorems of necromancy were developed during the process, and the council of necromancers formed to maintain the completed wall grew into a college that focused on the use and study of bones in magic. Led by the ancient **Blood Lord Sittak** (NE female hobgoblin mohrg), the college is perhaps

the most practical of Geb's academies, as its students have constant work in seeing to the maintenance and well-being of their city's primary and greatest defense. All the structures of the Synostosis are molded or created from bone, and some say the college's ultimate pursuit is creating a method to make dead bone grow so that a whole being might be recreated from a mere bone shard.

Echoing Pillars

In the western district built around the Synostosis, the Echoing Pillars are a marketplace of ideas. Scholars from around Yled gather to debate their latest findings and discuss contemporary philosophical ideas spreading through the city. The quick are rarely seen lecturing, but technically anyone can speak at the Echoing Pillars provided they can find a vacant tower to occupy. Attracting an audience requires a synthesis of wit and charisma, as the presentation of ideas often carries far more weight than the ideas themselves. Many times, the architects and writers of the theorems don't present their findings directly but hire bards and scholars to make their cases for them.

Pallid Pinnacle

The bone-white spire of the Pallid Pinnacle is the primary temple to Urgathoa in Yled. Although less impressive than the similarly-styled Panopticon and less influential than the Cathedral of Epiphenomena in Mechitar, the temple nevertheless holds an important position as Yled's largest house of worship.

Smokestacks

A large gathering of warehouses and workshops stretch along southeastern Yled, billowing dark smoke at all hours. The sprawling cluster of buildings bristle with soot-covered chimneys, their smoke sometimes returning in the form of ashen rain. Most of the innovations produced by the workshops are turned into practical reality by the surrounding factories, as weapons, siege vehicles, spell components, and armor are churned out every day to keep up with the rotating cycles of platoons that return with broken arms and armor or with requests for weapons to tear down new threats in the Mana Wastes. Few people willingly live among the Smokestacks, but those who chose to make their home here are the most fanatically devoted machinists and mechanics in Yled.

Twilight Castrum

The smallest of Yled's academies of necromancy sits in the Three Gates neighborhood of the city, a residential area primarily inhabited by students, professors, and inns catering to quick and dead alike. The Twilight Castrum's influence has waned in recent years, forcing a reliance on visiting lecturers and increasingly desperate research programs to stay relevant. The area is now better known as a good place to purchase old lore plundered from the school or simply enjoy a kaff in peace.

Important Faces

Blood Lord Haeqajet (LE male mummy administrator) has his task fixed quite clearly in his mind. His city is the aegis for his country, and he must be iron to fulfill his duty. For thousands of years without pause, he has held the line for Geb while maintaining complete control over his mental facilities through sheer force of will. Likely the oldest and one of the most powerful Blood Lords, he has little patience for his politicking brethren in Mechitar and nothing but disdain for those who pander to Geb

Three Gates

The Three Gates neighborhood just within the Bonewall on Yled's southern edge is perhaps the most hospitable place for living visitors. Its central plaza is filled with kaffs and shops wedged between three large cemeteries converted into residential neighborhoods. The Twilight Castrum, stationed in a crumbling fortress that borders the central plaza, is so desperate for relevance that it gives out contracts to the quick more freely than the other necromantic universities, and the neighborhood's few guards often don't bother to check for tokens of formal sponsorship anyway. Of the inns in the area, The Queen's Loft is the most exclusive, Holstali Hostel has the most amenities, and Harrowhouse is the most lively.

PANOPTICON

PROFANE SCIENCE

Pesnabet Zoheri performs tireless experimentations in order to improve Geb's stock of undead labor. He fully believes the entire world will eventually become dead, and so he directs his efforts toward securing his position at the top of the hierarchy. While Pesnabet began his experiments on undead servants, he soon learned that implanting *aeon stones* in living flesh, then sacrificing that creature to his goddess, creates a superior product.

BLOOD LORD HAEQAJET

for his attention. Yet, after all this time, the Blood Lord's mind has started to fail. Over the last few centuries, he has become aware that his memory is fading away—first years, then entire centuries. Like worms eating through cheesecloth, these tattered ages flap like white flags in his mind, warning him to surrender, to give in to rest or risk losing all of himself to the eternal vigil. But Haeqajet is nothing if not practical, and he has devised a way to choose where to guide the memory-rot crawling through his mind. He sacrifices useless centuries of quiet to hold onto vital moments of battle. Entire ages, faces, names, and experiences of administration and diplomacy are burned away to remember a particular maneuver or strategy. All of this because of his word to his king. He'll remain here until he falls; he'll die before any harm comes to Geb. The one memory—the oldest memory in his mind—that he can't sacrifice is of his love for Geb, an impossible adoration that was never acknowledged nor returned, but something he held onto anyway. After 5,000 years of duty, such dedication must have meant something.

General Nirkas (LE male fire giant revenant) was a leader among his people until his death during a skirmish with a small band of fire giants in the Shattered Range. A curious necromancer attempted to raise the giant, but Nirkas awoke as a dread revenant instead, laying waste to the patrol that had killed him. Rejected by his people for what he had become, he tracked the necromancer back to Yled and demanded a place among the armies of the dead. Since then, his adherence to military discipline and the raw power he brings to the battlefield has led to rapid promotions until the Iron Crown formed a battalion of undead trolls and smaller undead giants for Nirkas to lead. His mane of fire, a defining feature of fire giants, was snuffed out when Nirkas died and never reappeared. Now he covers his bald head with a horned helmet to pay homage to his god Zursvaater and to hide his shame. Loyal and devoted, he still craves the company of giants more than anything, and though he has achieved much in death, Nirkas throws himself into the thickest fighting, hoping to put an end to his condition and return to his rightful place in Hell.

After spending decades arranging marriage among the Chelaxian elite, **Vela Rosilon** (NE female human vampire matchmaker) is an expert at navigating delicate networks of feuds, loyalties, and bloodlines. When age began to catch up to her, in a moment of existential dread, Vela fled to Geb in search of a solution, however drastic. Her wealth secured an audience with an Export Guild vampire who turned her, but she was left nearly destitute at the end of the transaction. After failing to establish a matchmaking practice in Mechitar, she learned of Yled's arrangements between the quick and the dead to build sponsorships. It was an occupation ideally suited to her. Now she arranges matches for the quick with dead sponsors through temporary marriages, adoption proceedings, university enrollments, and employment contracts to produce tokens of sponsorship and thus protection under the law. If one needs to ensure their safety in Yled, Vela can provide the necessary paperwork.

Marta Sindh (N female human inventor) is an artificer from Jalmeray, bound by marriage contract to **Blood Lord Skylar** (NE female half-elf

ghost necromancer). Unlike most such contracts in Yled, Marta and Skylar are truly partners who adore each other. The fact that Skylar is a ghostly necromancer seems to have had little effect on Marta, who simply asks her wife not to bring work home. Remarkably candid about her arrangement, Marta is often met with suspicion by both the quick and dead communities, as the living resent her and the dead mistrust her motives. She spends the majority of her time in her workshop, engineering various projects to improve the massive weapons of war designed in the city's armories. Marta has grown slowly discontent with her life in Yled; while free to roam the city under her wife's protection, she has few friends and little to distract her but her work. Only her affection for Skylar keeps her rooted to the city. There are few people who know Yled's armories and mechanical capabilities better than Marta, a fact that has made her a person of interest for the Unseen.

For a ghoul, **Julfur the Impractical** (CN female ghoul aspiring entomancer) is a remarkably amiable woman. Always clothed in black robes, with her gaunt features embellished by paint and jewelry, Julfur resembles a slightly horrifying example of the dead trying to pass themselves off as a living creature. In life, Julfur was an apiarist who adored her many hives and cared for her queen bees with great ardor. She has been experimenting with beekeeping once again—only with the goal of somehow making them undead like her. Other scholars in Yled don't consider this project a worthy objective, and she has been drummed out of all academies in Yled for pursuing impractical goals. Julfur continues to assemble her supplies undeterred and is an excellent source of information on all the universities in Yled, provided someone is willing to assist her in gathering enough queen bees to restart her hives. The bigger and more dangerous the queen, the greater her gratitude!

The high priest of the Pallid Pinnacle, **Pesnabet Zoheri** (NE male ghast priest), is devotee of Urgathoa and a high-ranking member of the Whispering Way. Pesnabet is sufficiently canny to make all the right obeisances to the Iron Crown, and he takes particular pride in keeping his temple and its congregants out of the intrigues that sometimes shake the city. This distance is as much for his own good, since Pesnabet is, on top of his many other duties, head of a moderately successful smuggling ring and a studious scholar on how *aeon stones* can be infused into undead flesh.

Gyn Coldhammer (LE female dwarf graveknight), originally called Dolwyn, hails from a noble clan of dwarves from the sky citadel of Janderhoff. At an early age, she left Torag's worship and, seeking a personal connection with an ancestor, discovered a ghost bound to a pitted pauldron deep in the clan's archives. Under its guidance, she reforged the armor from a mere scrap, and after donning it, she welcomed the union between their souls. The new entity wasn't entirely the ghost nor Dolwyn, but Gyn—a new name for what was now a graveknight. Driven from her homeland, she wandered through Ustalav and Nidal before settling in Geb. It didn't take her long to make her mark in Yled, and now she's ranked among the greatest warriors in the nation's military. Many observers see her as the most likely successor to the rank of Necrolord, but she has demurred from challenging her master thus far. Her pragmatic solutions often seem brutal, but Gyn is never overtly sadistic. She seeks the most direct end to any conflict, whatever the means. If Gyn has a weakness, it's her isolation. She joined the army to bond with her allies, but her skill sets her at odds among her equals, and her subordinates are too intimidated to make true friends. Some disagreement with Vorwyn Iceblood has resulted in the Warmaster Council shunning her, so she doesn't even have the company of the council's graveknights. When not on duty, Gyn can be found in workshops improving her armor, and on certain nights, in sparsely populated kaffs, sitting at an empty table as if waiting for a companion who never arrives.

GENERAL NIRKAS

VELA ROSILON

MARTA SINDH

JULFUR THE IMPRACTICAL

ADVENTURING IN GEB

The mere act of existing in Geb can be an adventure for both the living and the undead, as residents have ample time to plot convoluted schemes and hone powerful necromantic magics. Those who are careless quickly find there are many things far worse than oblivion. Characters from Geb have access to the uncommon items in this section since the markets of the undead dictatorship sell them far more openly than anywhere else.

CURSES

In Geb, all beings are governed by a unique system known as the Dead Laws. These laws cover not only typical crimes and punishments, but also go into great detail about life, death, and the ownership of bodies and souls. While most violations of the Dead Laws can be paid for with the exchange of servants and property, more serious crimes are punished with harsh curses that follow the victim until the aggrieved parties agree that proper restitution has been paid. The following are a few examples of such curses.

CURSE OF PETULANT WHISPERS — CURSE 2

AUDITORY CURSE ILLUSION MAGICAL

A cruel, ghostly voice follows you, whispering your transgressions to anyone you encounter.

Saving Throw DC 16 Will; **Effect** Whenever you try to speak to another creature who doesn't know you well, they hear whispers in a language they understand that reveal hints and phrases related to the things about which you feel most guilty. You have a –2 circumstance bonus to Diplomacy checks to Make an Impression against those creatures, and if you roll a failure on your check, you get a critical failure instead.

CURSE OF BITING SWARMS — CURSE 5

CURSE MAGICAL TRANSMUTATION

You emit a deathlike stench that attracts swarms of carrion-eating insects.

Saving Throw DC 20 Fortitude; **Effect** You smell like a charnel house, making it easy for creatures with scent to notice you; they gain a +2 circumstance bonus to their Perception against you. Additionally, the first time you're exposed to sunlight each day, biting insects attack you, scattering once they've taken damage. You then become sickened 1 and drained 1 until the next time you take a full night's rest. These conditions can't be reduced below 1 by other means.

CURSE OF THE ROTTING HEART — CURSE 9

CURSE MAGICAL NECROMANCY

A shriveled, spectral heart appears inside your body, beating alongside your own.

Saving Throw DC 25 Will; **Effect** You're harmed by positive energy as if you were undead, harmed by negative energy as if you were living, and can't be healed by either one. All other forms of magical healing, such as the *soothe* spell, restore only half the normal amount of Hit Points. Alchemical healing, healing with the Medicine skill, and other non-magical methods continue to heal you normally.

BOATMAN'S TOLL — CURSE 20

CURSE DEATH MAGICAL NECROMANCY

Your soul is treated as collateral for the crimes you've committed. This punishment is reserved for those who have committed truly heinous acts, such as using holy magic against an important undead citizen or conspiring with enemies of the state.

Saving Throw DC 43 Will; **Effect** A tattoo of a skull with coins on its eyes etches itself into your skin, dealing 6d10 cold damage and 6d10 negative damage and causing you to become drained 4. If the tattoo is ever removed or destroyed by any means, it reappears after 24 hours and deals its damage again unless this curse is removed first. If you're reduced to 0 Hit Points while the tattoo is on your body, you die immediately, and your soul is banished to Abaddon. You can't be revived, reincarnated, raised as an undead, or otherwise come back to life unless the boatman Charon relinquishes your soul.

Div Curses

There are many among the Gebbite nobility who use curses to spite their enemies and punish those who cross them. They take a great deal of inspiration from the sadistic divs who call the Impossible Lands home. These curses are generally meant to humiliate rather than cause any serious harm, although pain is considered a welcome side effect.

LORD'S ARROGANCE — CURSE 7

CURSE ENCHANTMENT MAGICAL MENTAL

You're filled with the unearned confidence of a young noble and carry yourself as if you can do no wrong.

Saving Throw DC 23 Will; **Effect** Whenever you make a Recall Knowledge check or a Perception check that would give you information (such as to Sense Motive), you always receive at least one piece of false information that you believe with absolute confidence, even on a success or better. If you attempt to act on this false information, you receive a –1 circumstance penalty on any skill checks you attempt.

CONSUMMATE LIAR — CURSE 14

CURSE ENCHANTMENT MAGICAL MENTAL

It becomes your first instinct to answer every question with an obvious and blatant lie, no matter how trivial.

Saving Throw DC 31 Will; **Effect** Whenever you're asked a question directly, you must attempt a DC 32 Will save. On a failure, you spout an obvious lie with an automatic failure at your Deception check. If you succeed, you can choose your words carefully and answer however you wish, but if you

VULTURE'S WING

GRAVE TOKEN

UNSULLIED BLOOD

choose to answer truthfully, the agony of telling the truth causes you to take 3d8 mental damage.

SPELL CATALYSTS

Spell catalysts are material components that can be used while Casting a Spell to add additional effects to that spell. Unsurprisingly, the lands of Geb are rife with items that augment necromancy. More information on spell catalysts can be found on page 168 in *Pathfinder Secrets of Magic*.

BOTTLED SCREAMS ITEM 10

UNCOMMON CATALYST CONSUMABLE MAGICAL

Price 200 gp
Usage held in one hand; **Bulk** L
Activate ❖ envision

The vengeful wails of a revenant, barely contained in this rattling jar, infuse your magic with all of their spite and malice. If a target fails its saving throw against your *seal fate* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 224) spell after you've added this catalyst, it takes 1d6 persistent damage of the type chosen for the spell (2d6 if it critically fails).

DEFILED COSTA ITEM 14

RARE CATALYST CONSUMABLE MAGICAL

Price 900 gp
Usage held in one hand; **Bulk** L
Activate ❖ envision

This still-bloody rib was taken from a priest of Urgathoa at the moment they passed into undeath and has a constant stench of decay. The first time any creature critically fails its saving throw against a *mask of terror* spell cast using this catalyst, it also takes 6d10 mental damage, with a basic Fortitude save against the spell's DC, as it lives through the memory of having its rib torn from its body. Once any creature takes this damage, the *defiled costa*'s effect ends, and no other creatures take the damage, even if they critically fail.

Type *greater*; **Level** 17; **Price** 2,500 gp

A creature who critically fails against this save is killed instantly. This effect has the incapacitation trait.

GRAVE TOKEN ITEM 4

UNCOMMON CATALYST CONSUMABLE MAGICAL

Price 18 gp
Usage held in one hand; **Bulk** L
Activate ❖ envision

This simple charm is made from compacted grave dirt infused with bone dust. A *harm* spell that's empowered by this catalyst can reach faraway targets. If the *harm* spell is cast with 1 action, its range is 30 feet; if it's cast with 2 actions, its range is 60 feet. This has no effect on the three-action area version of *harm*, though in most cases, you don't have enough actions to Activate the *token* and cast a three-action *harm* anyway.

UNSULLIED BLOOD ITEM 5+

UNCOMMON CATALYST CONSUMABLE MAGICAL

Usage held in one hand; **Bulk** L
Activate ❖ envision

Blood offered from a willing donor was taken directly from the vein and stored in an ornate vial that keeps it as pure and red as the day it was extracted. When this catalyst is added to a *vampiric touch* spell of up to 4th level, instead of gaining temporary Hit Points based on the damage dealt, you recover half of the damage dealt as Hit Points.

Type *lesser*; **Level** 5; **Price** 30 gp

Type *moderate*; **Level** 8; **Price** 85 gp

You can add the catalyst to a *vampiric touch* spell up to 5th level. In addition to the effects of *lesser unsullied blood*, if the amount of Hit Points that would be restored by the spell exceeds your Hit Point maximum, you gain the excess as temporary Hit Points.

Type *greater*; **Level** 10; **Price** 200 gp

As moderate, except you can add the catalyst to a *vampiric touch* or *vampiric maiden* spell of up to 6th level.

Type *major*; **Level** 14; **Price** 900 gp

As moderate, except you can add the catalyst to a *vampiric touch, vampiric maiden*, or *vampiric exsanguination* spell of any level.

VULTURE'S WING ITEM 10

UNCOMMON CATALYST CONSUMABLE MAGICAL

Price 200 gp

Usage held in one hand; **Bulk** L

Activate ◆ Cast a Spell

This fan of vulture feathers scatters on an unnatural gust of wind. If this catalyst is used to cast a *ray of enfeeblement* spell that has been heightened to at least 5th level, instead of targeting a single creature, you cast the spell in a 30-foot-area cone. You don't make a spell attack roll, instead affecting all creatures within the area with the effect the spell would normally have on a hit. This means creatures within the area must attempt a Fortitude save to determine whether they're enfeebled.

MAGIC ITEMS

Necromancy is an encouraged fact of life within Geb, and many magical items can be found that have no counterparts among nations that prioritize the living. Indeed, being found with one of these items outside of Geb is likely to lead to a swift arrest at best, and a harsher justice at worst in many rural locales.

CARRION CASK ITEM 8

UNCOMMON MAGICAL NECROMANCY

Price 500 gp

Bulk L

This stylized, palm-sized box contains a black, ooze-like substance that can easily devour a corpse in moments, breaking the body down into a necromantic sludge.

Activate Interact **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You feed a corpse of a Small-sized or larger creature to the cask, little by little. The activation requires a three-action activity for a Small or Medium creature, a 1-minute activity for a Larger creature, and a 10-minute activity for a Huge creature. A Gargantuan creature is too large for the cask to devour.

Activate ◆◆ command, envision; **Frequency** once per day; **Requirements** The *carrion cask* has consumed a corpse since the last time it was activated; **Effect** You release the sludge from the *carrion cask*'s last meal in a pulse of necromantic energy. Creatures in a 30-foot cone take 6d6 negative damage, with a DC 24 basic Fortitude save.

DOCTRINE OF BLISSFUL ETERNITY ITEM 7

UNCOMMON GRIMOIRE MAGICAL NECROMANCY

Price 340 gp

Bulk L

The bones of small animals decorate the cover of this tome, creating a pattern that resembles a gross perversion of Pharasma's holy symbol.

Activate ↷ command; **Frequency** once per day; **Trigger** An undead minion you summoned or created using a spell prepared from this grimoire takes damage that would bring it to 0 Hit Points; **Effect** You call out and demand the undead to remain, reaching out with tendrils of negative energy that preserves your minion so it might continue to serve you. Expend a spell slot in which you've prepared a *harm* spell to restore 1d8 Hit Points to your undead minion per level of the expended spell slot, before applying the damage. If this prevents the minion from being reduced to 0 Hit Points, it isn't destroyed.

PALANQUIN OF NIGHT ITEM 10

UNCOMMON CONJURATION MAGICAL

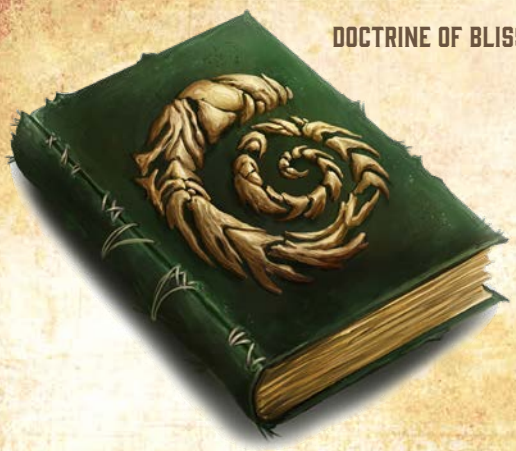
Price 825 gp

Bulk L (when not activated)

This small square of dark blue fabric appears to be painted with a depiction of the night sky, shifting each day to match the sky above Geb the previous night.

Activate ◆◆◆ Interact; **Effect** The fabric unfolds into a dark palanquin large enough to comfortably hold two Medium creatures. Four spectral bearers appear at the corners of the palanquin, capable of carrying it effortlessly over most types of terrain as long as the terrain is relatively flat and devoid of hazards. Spectral bearers have the statistics of an *unseen servant*, except they're strong enough to carry the palanquin and its occupants. They move generally along a basic set of directions you indicate upon activation, which can include turns onto various streets, but they don't take other creatures' feelings into account and can be inconsiderate to passersby in an inhabited area as they relentlessly move you forward. The bearers move slowly but steadily along their simple directions. While the palanquin is perfectly suitable for overland travel, the bearers' imprecise movements and the requirement to reactivate the palanquin to change destinations make it unsuited for a combat encounter or other situation where seconds and precise movements count.

The palanquin's interior ceiling is painted with the same night sky pattern as the cloth, and dark curtains hang over the windows. The palanquin protects its occupants from sunlight and severe heat and cold (though not extreme or incredible heat or cold) as well as blocks most non-damaging forms of weather. The palanquin is only



DOCTRINE OF BLISSFUL ETERNITY

SUNFLOWER CENSER

CARRION CASK

as sturdy as a standard wooden carriage—if it would be destroyed, it instantly reverts to a square of fabric and can't be Activated again for 1 month.

You can return the palanquin to its original shape by using an Interact action to command the spectral bearers to collapse it. They disappear the moment it returns to its fabric form.

SUNFLOWER CENSER ITEM 8

RARE ILLUSION MAGICAL

Price 480 gp

Usage worn or held in one hand; **Bulk** L

This gold-and-ivory incense burner always emits a pleasant, floral-scented smoke without any need to be refilled. It has a chain that can be easily affixed to a belt or bag, allowing it to be worn without a free hand. As long as the censer is burning, the bearer benefits from the *undetectable alignment* spell. They also don't appear undead to divination spells or abilities, or to senses such as lifesense, unless those abilities successfully counteract the censer. The censer can be lit or extinguished with an Interact action.

Activate ❖❖ interact **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** Smoke bellows from the censer with the effects of an *obscuring mist* centered on you.

TYRANT'S WRITS ITEM 8

UNCOMMON GRIMOIRE MAGICAL NECROMANCY

Price 500 gp

Bulk L

A spirited debate persists among scholars on whether the eponymous tyrant of this grimoire actually refers to Tar-Baphon, the necromancer Geb, or even the goddess Urgathoa herself. This grimoire appears at first to be a series of writs that makes arrogant demands of the reader, those around them, and the universe. Anyone who gives these writings more than a cursory look realizes the writs hold spells much like any other grimoire, with the *animate dead* spell being particularly prominent. *Tyrant's writs* grants you the ability to demand more from the undead you animate.

Activate ❖ envision (metamagic); **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** If your next action is to Cast a Spell to cast an *animate dead* spell prepared with *tyrant's writs*, you can choose one of the following additional benefits to grant the summoned undead.

- **Bloody** The undead gains fast healing equal to its level.
- **Explosive** When it reaches 0 Hit Points, the undead explodes, dealing 4d6 fire damage to adjacent creatures, with a basic Reflex save using the *animate dead* spell's DC. As normal, since the *final sacrifice* spell doesn't reduce the target to 0 Hit Points, it doesn't cause this explosion.
- **Necrotic Speed** The undead gains a +10-foot status bonus to all its Speeds.
- **Rotten** Any living creature who starts its turn adjacent to the undead who isn't at full Hit Points takes 1d6 poison damage.

Jalmeray

Nations

JALMERAY (CN)
Colonial Princely State
Capital: Niswan (10,300)

Peoples

Catfolk
Garudas
Genies
Iruxi
Kashrishi
Locathah
Naga
Nagaji
Ratajin
Ratfolk
Vanara
Viskanya
Vudrani

Languages

Aklo
Aquan
Auran
Ignan
Terran
Vudrani
Nagaji

Factions

Houses of Perfection

Palagapi Gang

Soulguard

Religions

Arundhat

Irori

Ragdya

Chamidu

Likha

Ravithra

Diomazul

Nethys

Vineshvakhi

Resources

Armor/ Weapons

Books/ Lore

Jewelry/ Gems

Lumber

Luxury Goods and Art

Magic Items

Seafood

Ships

Spices/Salt

Textiles

IMPOSSIBLE LANDS

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PEOPLE

ALKENSTAR

BHOPAN

GEB

JALMERAY

MANA WASTES

NEX

RELIGION

BESTIARY

GLOSSARY & INDEX

Jalmeray

Half of everything the people of Avistan know of Jalmeray is an exaggeration, and the other half undersells the sheer magnitude of its grandeur. It's a place of sprawling landscapes, flowing with elemental power, where the earth itself changes under peculiar rules applied by genie caretakers. New gods are born and forgotten, their arrival barely eliciting a shrug. Vudrani flora and fauna compete with the isle's native ecosystem for space. Ancient guardians and magical constructs stand vigil, ready to defend the isle. Mortals with elemental lineage walk its cities alongside people from Garund, Avistan, and Vudra. The island's harbors throng with dozens of ships as world-renowned tournaments attract spectators and aspirants alike, all while captains and merchants trade for goods with blinding speed under bewildering terms. The most famous of Jalmeray's wonders are the legendary Houses of Perfection, which draw students from around the world to attempt their impossible challenges. Beneath it all, threats imprisoned by a long gone emperor still pine for freedom, and animal-headed rakshasas plot to bring it all under their cruel command.

Four thousand years ago, the ancient Vudrani Maharajah Khiben-Sald and the archmage Nex came to an agreement about Jalmeray. In Nex, they say the archmage gave Khiben-Sald the island to be rid of him. In Jalmeray, all know that the Maharajah outmaneuvered the ancient wizard. His magi called on the power of their genies to mold Jalmeray to their needs, taming the land and raising architectural wonders. When Khiben-Sald left Jalmeray with his courtiers, he left behind a small empty nation of mysterious constructions nestled amidst breathtaking natural beauty.

The island went undisturbed for centuries until Arclords exiled from Nex during that nation's civil strife decided to use it as a refuge. In so doing, they committed the worst atrocity in Jalmeri history. When the Vudrani colonized Jalmeray, they transplanted its native Sunghari population to a smaller island called Kaina Katakha. The cruel Arclords wouldn't tolerate any other settlement and annihilated the entire island with magic, leaving it a blasted ruin of rock and turbulent waters that's stained to this day with the horror of genocide. Of Jalmeray's many wonders, the Arclords had little understanding or use; they sealed what they could and ignored what couldn't be driven out of sight.

When Vudrani ships returned centuries later to resettle Jalmeray, the Arclords were reluctant to vacate despite all the evidence the rajas produced outlining their descent from their ancestor Khiben-Sald. When diplomacy failed, the Vudrani summoned an army of genies, blotting out the sky and battering the island with storms. All but one of the Arclords' ships sank, prompting their swift exodus. The Vudrani stayed, and their culture became something uniquely Jalmeri.

A constant flow of trade brings an endless stream of gold to Jalmeray, and a wealth-oriented philosophy has served

the island well. As the island grew into a trade port, its wealth drew envious foreign observers. Of those, Qadira alone has launched a military effort to capture the island, which failed so completely that they've never tried since. This river of gold keeps Jalmeray alive, sustaining it while it's surrounded by nations who could easily turn hostile. Jalmeray has purchased a peace envied by many, but it has acquired more than just peace—the care for the land and elements themselves, the drive of its people to forge a new culture without forgetting their origins, the training of mind and body, and the pleasure of senses. It's a land reaching for an impossible perfection but driven to do so regardless.

GEOGRAPHY

For 2,000 years, the thakurs and thakuranis have looked to the cultivation of Jalmeray, expanding but aware of how easily they might overburden the island's resources. This pace of growth has left much of the island undeveloped, but Jalmeri don't see it that way. Part of the implied mandate of rule is to keep Jalmeray the way the Maharajah left. However, the needs of the island and its people do drive the nation forward, and so the region has changed.

Where once the banks of the River Sald ran wild, vast rice fields occupy the northern shore. Temples line the river as well, devoted to gods both local and distant. Inspired by the Houses of Perfection, those who couldn't match their strict requirements have developed something more prosaic and immediate, practicing ancient Vudrani combat arts across duty fields south of the Sald. Even the jungles have changed to reflect both Vudrani influence and its original, untamed state. Beyond the major island, the smaller islands continue to exert their influence, providing examples of high culture, the ravages of time, or sorrows new and old.

The central lowlands of the island are gently rolling meadows occasionally dotted with dense forest growth isolated to the southwest and northeast coasts. These lowlands are relatively free of large predators, though the island does have a healthy native population of venomous snakes and mid-sized hunting cats. A huge number of avians, both mundane and fantastical, circle the skies as well.

One of Jalmeray's constants has been the weather—the genies have commanded the storms to spare Jalmeray the worst of their rage. Even now, most storms seem to divert around the island rather than crashing into it headlong, though the occasional hurricane has wreaked havoc and tragedy. The island is often surrounded by dramatic mountains of dark clouds as storms gather and pass in the distance, leaving Jalmeray a sunlit oasis. This stark, skyward contrast sticks in the mind, and stormy skies above sunlit fields are a common feature in paintings from Jalmeray.

Ghasi Jungle

The Ghasi Jungle along Jalmeray's northwestern coast is a tangled moor that rejects cultivation. It extends to the ocean, with dense mangroves leading to closed-off lakes in which enormous sea creatures occasionally rest. The rest of the jungle is just as treacherous, filled with deep water holes, quicksand, venomous snakes, hungry crocodiles, and disease-bearing insects. Thug cultists, too dangerous to live alongside other brigands and pirates, often haunt the moor between raids, and Red Mantis Assassins stalk the trees. A few rakshasas who can't abide living alongside the Jalmeri—considering those who do to be pagala, or "traitors"—often choose to dwell this jungle instead.

The Pure Temple of the Maharajah

A line of rolling hills stretches along most of the eastern shore of Jalmeray, rising to their highest point toward the middle of the island, where the Pure Temple of the Maharajah crowns the headwaters of the River Sald. Built of

TALES AND RUMORS

Alongside tales of wonder, many lies have been spun into stories of Jalmeray—that the country is a forward post for the ambitions of Vudra's countless rajas, or that the priests of Irori are responsible for the death of Aroden. Also worth mentioning are the perennial rumors of slave trade, forced labor, nagas, asuras, cults worshipping rakshasas, and a thousand other conspiracies woven out of gossamer. The truth and fiction of Jalmeray are so thoroughly entangled that correcting even the most ridiculous story seems hardly worth the trouble.

THAKUR KHARSWAN

soaring white stone pillars and graceful onion-shaped domes, the temple is adorned with reliefs, statues, and frescoes, all plated with gold. Numerous altars spiral in a twisting pattern to create ideal astronomical alignments, but the central chamber is devoted to Irori, whose demand for perfection seems to manifest in the temple and its upkeep. Every four years, the citizens of Jalmeray make a pilgrimage, traveling inland on the River Sald in lines of boats festooned with colorful flags and banners, chanting sacred hymns in memory of the Maharajah.

Rajni Fields

In the open fields south of the River Sald, a grand pavilion overlooks a dirt bowl full of scrub brush, built to entertain a visiting rani and her court. Ever since, the fields, named Rajni in her honor, have grown into ranches that breed and train the best horses in Jalmeray for trade throughout the Impossible Lands. The most prized mounts, however, are the trained elephants and their riders who form Jalmeray's legendary Thunder Cavalry. The Thakur has forbidden the sale of these animals to anyone outside of Jalmeray, and the island's perfect record of protecting its herd is a challenge to many pirates who want to make their mark.

River Sald

The River Sald springs from the hills on Jalmeray's eastern coast where Khiben-Sald established his temple. After a tumultuous descent, the river takes a direct path to Bagia Bay, its current steady and calm. Though the Sald often floods in the rainy season, the dikes along its bank usually hold back the waters. The floods are ideal for rice paddies, and several sprawling farms have risen to take advantage of this. The farmers have recently begun to dream of a youth in a loincloth planting rice along the riverbanks, leading them to worship Sald as a river god who plants wisdom and rice shoots. While he has no priests of his own yet, Sald might be the first god born on Jalmeray's soils, much like how gods are discovered in Vudra.

Segang Jungle

The flora and fauna of Jalmeray originally shared little in common with Vudra—a fact that the Thakurani Thanyuavi amended by replanting the entire southern jungles of Jalmeray with Vudrani foliage and populating it with Vudrani animals. Priests and genies have since cultivated a delicately balanced ecosystem in Segang. Today, dozens of Vudrani bird species live in the jungle. Tigers and panthers hunt for barasingha deer, many species of monkeys live in the canopy, and rhinos sleep in muddy streams. Hunting is allowed, but only for those who can convince the jungle's guardians of their worthiness by paying hefty fees or passing a test of devotion. Poaching is rarely a problem, and rumors credit sapient panthers with hunting down unwanted intruders.

The White Stone Temple

Deep within the Ghasi Jungle, through misleading woods and treacherous waterways, lies a crooked ziggurat of soft, pale stones built atop a putrid swamp. The temple is devoted to the Vudrani deity Zhundajir, the god of deadly venoms and piercing weapons. Recently, a cobra-headed rakshasa named Raja Bhuju arrived there, claiming to be an avatar of Zhundajir. He regularly sends his cultists to capture victims for sacrifice, though some unfortunate souls selected by Bhuju undergo a hideous transformation instead, their innards replaced with snakes that serves as the rakshasa's eyes in Jalmeray.

Surrounding Islands

Though most use the name Jalmeray to refer to the major island that bears the nation's capital, the Thakur also lays claim to a host of smaller islands situated in nearby waters.

Gho Vella

A small island off the northeast coast of Jalmeray, Gho Vella hosts the diseased and cursed of Jalmeray quarantined to this island by a sect of stoics calling themselves the Curse Shepherds. Few find their way back. The Curse Shepherds remain tight-lipped about the island, for it's a strange and ethereal place where certain powerful curses have mutated and merged with others.

Grand Sarret

The westernmost point of the nation of Jalmeray can be found on this island that sits just at the edge of Bagia Bay, located atop the tall, jagged cliffs that surround it. The Maharajah chose Grand Sarret to build a magnificent conservatory and many accompanying buildings, all which have stood for millennia. Maintained in its original state, the conservatory has become a place of learning for bardic arts, courtly graces, culinary skills, and, for the truly worthy, the art of courtly intrigue and subtle manipulation of grand events.

Kaina Katakha

The Arclords of Nex reduced the island of Kaina Katakha to a magic-blasted wasteland, an atrocity that eradicated the native population of Jalmeray. Kaina Katakha has been a land tainted by genocide. Nothing grows. Ancient trees and villages stand petrified in death, and wrinkles of earth stand like stony waves. Vicious spells and horrified souls merge to form spell-wracked ghosts that appear and vanish in frightening displays. Smugglers sometimes use the outer rims of the island to hide their ill-gotten wares, but few dare to walk under the shade of the stone structures.

Veedesha

This island and the ruins of the city of the same name are evidence that time pays no heed to mortal intent. Veedesha was meant to serve as Jalmeray's capital, but when Khiben-Sald's descendants returned and founded Niswan, they found Bagia Bay and its access to the River Sald far more convenient. Veedesha was abandoned and consumed by the jungle. The island has since become an ideal place for criminals to use as a hideout.

Liquid Lifeblood

Many travelers pass through Jalmeray's waterways. The fastest path between Niswan and Prada Hanam is over the Sald, with only the last leg conducted over land. Jalmeray's waterways are usually safe as long as ships stay a reasonable distance from shore, where underwater atolls lurk. Watery predators keep their distance thanks to the vigilance of locathah colonies that have been cultivated by marids over the centuries. These locathahs live symbiotically within the island's vast underwater tunnel networks and cherish their privacy.

Niswan

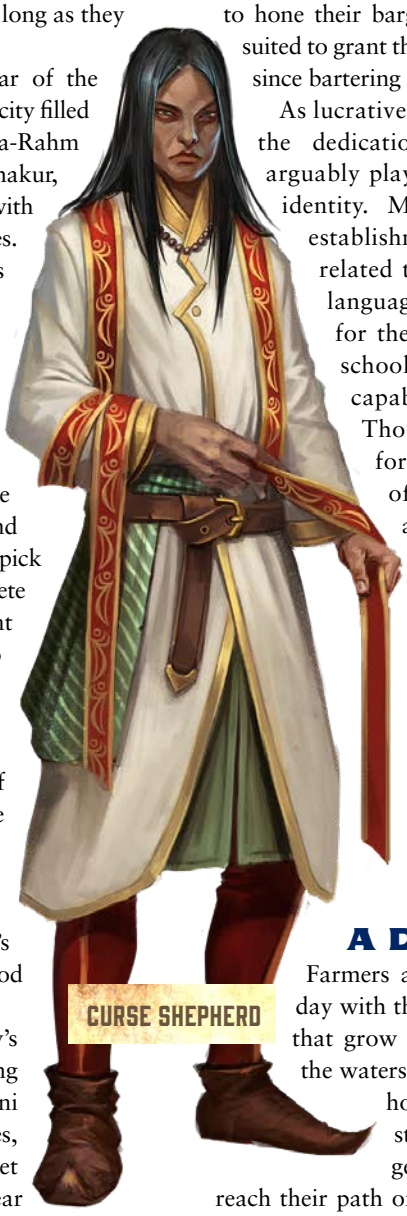
City of Pagodas

As the capital of Jalmeray, Niswan embodies all the marvelous wonders of the island continent, somehow managing to fit it all within the city walls.

Beautifully crafted, many-tiered pagodas share the red stone streets of Niswan with equally enchanting displays of architecture, from the gold-adorned marble majesty of the thakur's palace to the impossibly serene natural gardens found in a number of small city squares that sit just to the sides of the roads. Even the residential dwellings are draped in colorful banners, as if the city itself invites travelers into its heart. Regardless of pursuit, be it spiritual, occult, martial, or trivial, Niswan holds something to entice all walks of life. Even wicked rakshasa and asura can find welcome, so long as they know the right places to visit.

While most working people stay clear of the sloping central roads leading to the upper city filled with homes for members of the Maurya-Rahm advisors and, atop that, the palace of the thakur, the lower streets are constantly bustling with people going about their various businesses. Amid the throng, a strong religious presence seeps through the people of the city, centering at the High-Holy District in the way of countless shrines, temples, and a thousand different statues for a thousand different deities. Residents of Niswan are encouraged to honor whatever faith they claim, so long as there are no disruptions to the functioning and prosperity of the city. It's said one could pick a name of a deity out of a hat in complete chance, and whether the deity be ancient or modern, odds are one would be able to find a shrine somewhere in their honor—though whether anyone would want to visit is another matter entirely. In spite of the potential for enmity to be borne of so many ideologies sharing a space, the people of Niswan can agree that, for the sake of the city and its reputation, the public streets aren't the proper venue in which to air those particular grievances. It's a shared space for shared faiths, for the good of everyone.

Instead, the variety of the city's population lends itself to a unique blending of cultural aspects. Geniekin eat Vudrani cuisine alongside vanaran colleagues, while in a small grassy square a few feet away, a swath of citizens and travelers bear witness to a public demonstration of traditional Vudrani martial arts by a monk hailing from the Mwangi Expanse. Nowhere is this blend of the marvelous more prominent than in the commerce district. Shops and merchant stalls sport colorful silks and tapestries, beneath which merchants trade wares swifter than the eyes can follow. Elephants, tigers, and other exciting creatures are paraded through the masses, carrying goods or traded for any manner of items—books, relics, weapons, scrolls, decor, and more, both magical and mundane. Should one want to hone their bargaining skills, there's no place better suited to grant that wish than these markets of Niswan since bartering is an art form waiting to be perfected.



CURSE SHEPHERD

As lucrative and essential as trade is to Niswan, the dedication to learning and self-mastery arguably plays a more integral part of the city's identity. Massive libraries, bookshops, and establishments of magical learning hold texts related to almost any topic in hundreds of languages, eagerly awaiting a person ready for the pursuit of knowledge. Specialized schools exist to train and educate the capable in any number of topics. Though many come to Niswan to vie for candidacy in the famous Houses of Perfection, a large majority is left adrift to fend for themselves, and for them, there's no shortage of schools or organizations ready to aid in the journey to mastery—for a price, of course. The citizens of Niswan know they have no shortage of tools to help them achieve their vision of their best selves. And should that vision change, well, so too can the tools, for in Niswan, nothing is ever truly impossible.

A DAY IN NISWAN

Farmers and fishermen of the city start their day with the dawn, either out on terraced fields that grow produce or by dragging boats onto the waters of the Obari. Inside the city, twilight hours mark the beginning of a day for students of many monastic orders, getting an early start on the training to reach their path of perfection. The rise of the sun also

starts some of the first public displays of faith throughout the city, as the High-Holy District begins to light up with offerings and prayers at any number of shrines and temples. Songs, bells, and chants float around the district, coming together in a harmonic proclamation of the city's spirit. Groups that have access to some of the public city squares often begin their setup of whatever demonstration or activity they've planned, bringing with them new experiences every day.

In the market streets, the work begins to sell freshly procured produce to businesses and local customers alike, filling the air with the first sounds of friendly bartering. Early street vendors add the delicious aromas of their own wares with the making of hot tea or flatbreads in olive oil topped with combinations of herbs or cheese. Some begin preparations for a day of promoting various night shows, while in the harbor, recently docked ships start the process of unloading their cargo and dealing with the necessary administrative work before they can make their way to profiting at their merchant of choice.

Soon, the day begins for the rest of the city's workforce. Shop owners, craftspeople, students of academic pursuit—all start with their daily rituals of life. Any day of the year can give rise to priests and sages leading rites for sacred holidays or special events. In the higher parts of the city, the Maurya-Rahm begin the days either in exaggerated leisure with breakfast platters or in early meetings with various members of the city, depending on which is called for in that day's agenda by their assistants.

The coming of midday marks the first big rush of customers in the market seeking out smaller meals to get them through the rest of the workday. Restaurants and street vendors sell any number of foods, from traditional Vudrani spiced dishes to meals regularly eaten in Nex. Popular choices include roasted skewers of spiced vegetables or various fruit lassi drinks. Those with an afternoon reservation in the city squares can be found hustling to replace the morning's event with their own in time to catch the day crowds.

For those that work as part of the established shops or stalls in early hours, the coming of late afternoon marks the end of a workday and a delicious hot meal waiting for them—whether it's at home with family, an inn, or from a particular stall. The location doesn't matter nearly as much as the delectable aromas of spices and herbs in beds of rice, the vegetable or potato curries, and the pleasure of good company to sit with. Around this time, members of the Maurya-Rahm can be found meeting in the glamorous restaurants of the Heights, ensuring that plans and machinations for days to come are all carefully laid out.

Following supper, activity in the city becomes a little quieter. Rituals of faith are more subdued and introspective; citizens spend time with their families in

the comfort of their own homes. Come sunset, however, the streets come to life with some of the busiest crowds, to the point that, in contrast to many other major cities, there's a fairly large percentage of merchants that remain closed for much of the day, electing instead to open in full swing for the evening and night crowds. Some meet up to smoke hookah or chew paan over games of carom or cards while people watch or shares stories of their day. Others come together to search for that night's attraction of choice. Exhilarating street performers put on impossibly spectacular shows of magical design, and crowds congregate around the most famous of pop-up food stalls featuring mouthwatering confections—popular choices include sweet, honey covered pastry wraps containing nuts or fruits and savory, deep fried triangle wraps of vegetable and potato medleys. More adventurous foodies look for interesting new takes on popular items, even the sensationally different flavors of kashrishi cuisine. Plays, dances, concerts, living renditions of stories, all manners of exciting entertainment can be found in buildings and public squares of the pagoda city, making every evening ripe with new and exciting experiences.

Yet, for all the excitement and adventure that the ever-lit red roads of Niswan hold, there's an equal measure of danger and the requirement of caution come nighttime, lest you stray too far into the shadows. Criminals, thieves, and charlatans all emerge in droves, frequenting popular locations of gambling houses or rougher taverns. The presence of city appointed guards does little to dissuade them, and those traveling unaware and unprepared in the roads or alleys make for easy picking. The cover of dark is also when some covers of illusions are shed, and the interreligious conflicts that bubble beneath the veneer of pleasantry in the daytime come to the surface in full force. Corrupt officials meet with scheming rakshasa to bring about the destruction of untold people from within while they're hunted by overzealous groups of self-appointed keepers of spiritual peace in the city that aggressively question any poor soul found wandering in the wrong place. Members of the Curse Shepherds conduct secret missions to root out curse-afflicted individuals, ferrying them away for processing and transport to Gho Vella, never to be seen again.

A YEAR IN NISWAN

Although spared of direct contact with heavy storms from the Obari, Niswan nevertheless experiences a great range of weather, due in no small part to the abundance of elemental energies that mix together in and around the city. Winter days bring fogs in the early morning and cold winds that buffet the city—at times, even snow deigns to make an appearance in the form of a light dusting atop the pagodas, seeming to only heighten their appearance of splendor. In spite of the cold, sunlight continues to fall on Niswan and the bustle of life never stops, save perhaps to embrace a warm cup of tea from a chaiwala keeping a large pot brewing throughout the day. Students in training at the many temples embrace the cold as a test of their physical endurance and continue their regimens undeterred. The overwhelming presence of magic means wares of fruits and vegetables that would typically be out of season remain available, albeit at a significant markup.

Colder days do little to dampen festivities of many faiths that continue with any number of celebrations, the largest of which comes on the final day of Calistril in a testament to the goddess Ashukharma. On this day, people end the winter days by attempting to make amends with those in their life they have become adrift from and want to establish an amended relationship with, be it a lover, family member, friend, or work partner; they signify this act by splitting colorful rocks that are then turned into jewelry in a representation of the bond.

Despite the slightly laid-back atmosphere through the winter, with the first new moon of spring, the city bursts to life in breathtaking displays of color

NISWAN SETTLEMENT 16

N CITY

Government council

Population 10,300 (89% human, 11% other)

Languages Aquan, Auran, Ignan, Terran, Vudrani

Religions Arundhat, Chamidu, Diomazul, Irori, Likha, Nethys, Ragdya, Ravithra, Vineshvakhi

Threats asuras, criminals, crocodiles, Curse Shepherds, ocean predators, rakshasas, wandering martial artists

Religious Reverence Niswan reveres champions, clerics, oracles, and monks associated with just about any religion, even most evil religions. Most non-hostile NPCs begin with an attitude one step better than usual toward such characters. For the purpose of determining the availability of divine magic items, divine spellcasting services, and magic items and spellcasting services related to monks, Niswan's settlement level is 20.

Lord Raheem Pandisar (NG male human advisor 7) prominent Maurya-Rahm

Mannan Villauta (LG male human cleric 11) keeper of the temple

Rajni Ayasa (LN female human monk 13) grandmaster of Untwisting Iron

Thakur Kharswan (LN male human noble 14) ruler of Jalmeray

LOCAL WATERS

The city of Niswan sits alongside the mouth of the Sald river and Bagia Bay. The Sald's waters maintain a steady and calm flow, making it an easy river to navigate. In the rainy season, it floods quite easily, which has led to a significant buildup of dikes along its bank. The floods are ideal for rice paddies, and several lush and terraced farms have been established. The sages at the Temple of the Maharajah must approve each farm, and all who take from the river to flood their fields make annual tithe to the local river god.

for the celebration of Yolarati. People flood the streets in a dancing rainbow tide of colors as they throw colored powders on all passersby, celebrating the end of winter, the coming of springtime, and a chance to let happiness flow. Many tourists plan their first day around this event and are welcomed with open arms and bursts of color. Gnomes, ifrit, and sylphs of the city seem to take particular delight on this day, and corresponding high population areas of town show a great rise of activity, including games of dodging bags of color thrown by opposing teams.

With the spring comes an influx of vessels on the harbor, docking for both trade and pleasure. Warmer weather returns as the city is spared from any surges of storm from the Obari. The docks become a blur of activity; fishers begin their hunt for the best of the season's prizes, and visitors go on rides atop the water that promise to show them the river's fascinating depth—and perhaps even a glance at some of the lucky great serpents around the city's outside waters. During this time, many of the genie-tended mini-garden squares truly begin to shine, creating a lovely feast of flowers and foliage to behold with every turn of a street.

Summer brings an influx of trade along with hotter days. Despite this increase in temperature, permanent fixtures within the city, set in place with magic years ago, create a cooling system that runs throughout Niswan, ensuring there's no significant disruption to everyday life. Summer gales mark the perfect time to engage in one of the favorite pastimes of the people—kite flying. The shore of the Obari, countless squares in the city, and even the flat roofs of residential homes are beset by crowds of fliers out to prove the superiority of their creations in kite fighting contests. The day most anticipated by these folks is the Festival of Flights in Erastus, a multi-day event where attendees compete with handcrafted kites to win the favor of temples and top officials in the city. Others participate simply to show off new advances in kite technology, an increasingly competitive field, looking to impress enough for sponsorship to study under the most renowned craftspeople of the city. On the last day, there's a large parade through the city featuring spectacularly made flying displays from a number of churches in celebration of the many paths to self-realization, for as different as the faiths are, they fly with the same wind.

Shifts downward in temperature and ocean currents mark the beginning of autumn. In Lamashan, on the first full moon, comes Admani Upastuti a celebration of the founding of Jalmeray. Citizens enjoy a day of break as they consume stories about the old days, of Khiben-Sald and the creation of various wonders in the city. In recent times, the population of indigenous Sunghari peoples within the city has utilized the celebration as a means to speak about the historical plight of their people, a movement that has been supported in full by the thakur and a fair portion of the Maurya-Rahm. Ancestors of current Sunghari sailed back to Vudra with Khiben-Sald; they celebrate these decisions as paramount to preserving the culture but stress the importance of understanding what came before and that the way to move forward is to do everyone's best to ensure nothing else of value is lost.

In the month of Neth comes the day of Azvadeva Dejal, a celebration of knowledge in honor of Vudrani deity Gruhastha. On this day, the scholarly-inclined hold contests of increasingly esoteric knowledge

and show off any recent breakthroughs of research or invention. Priests of Gruhastha also mark this day to ensure the people are aware of their free offerings of knowledge and host gatherings featuring entertaining storytellers for young and old alike.

PEOPLE OF NISWAN

There are many words a new traveler might use to describe the people they encounter in Niswan. One could say its denizens are rambunctious, as walking in the commerce district would make clear with the heated debates over pricing and the roar of calls from vendors competing for the attention of potential customers. Perhaps determined would be an appropriate descriptor, looking at the legion of guards that ensures safety and harmony in all areas of the city. Visiting the High-Holy District might spring the words spiritual or devoted to mind, as individuals of innumerable faiths offer prayers and worship openly in their respective temples and shrines. If one were to come at the right time of year, vibrant might be another such descriptor since the expression of the people in their faith and celebrations takes on an entirely new cast in Niswan with vivid colors, dancing, and boisterous laughter encapsulating the entire city.

Above all else, however, one thing can be said for certain: that the people of Niswan have a near-infinite well of friendliness to show those who come to their city. While travelers might initially arrive on word of festivities and unique experiences, they often stay for people who warmly welcome them into the fold. Trade is the name of livelihood, but diplomacy is the action that lends itself to the ends—most any meeting, be it mercantile, social, or formal in nature isn't commenced without the invitation of tea and food, and to go without offering any is seen as the peak of rudeness. No matter the time of day, nature of business, or limited amount of time available, refreshments will be offered, even if it's clear acceptance isn't to come.

Among the residents of Niswan, it's clear the concept of family and social ties holds strong weight. A value reminiscent of traditional Vudra, this idea has become more broadly applicable as people move away from a traditional caste society and begin to include people of all kinds within the definition of family. Almost any merchant met in Niswan will have the names of an untold number of experts of seemingly any subject ready to recommend to anyone who asks or at least the name of someone else who would know an expert, creating long networks of individuals to go to should someone ever need help with a matter. Family comes first in many things, and gatherings of large groups that include cousins, second cousins, close family friends lovingly called uncle or aunty, and more are a normal part of life. Important decisions and events, even in matters of business and weddings, are often discussed with extended family before anything is settled.

OBARI CROSSING

A trade route sailed by the east winds of Garund's coast, the Obari Crossing spans Katapesh, Quantium, Alkenstar, Mechitar, and Niswan. The route is highly profitable but can also be dangerous, as pirates from Okeno seek ships to prey upon. Out of respect for Jalmeray's mastery of elemental magic, however, they rarely approach a ship flying the thakur's symbol.

Clothing style tends to lean toward long, loose-fitting cloth of cotton or linen, decorated with beadwork, embroidery, or embellishments and often with the presence of similarly styled scarves. Colorful clothing is a common sight for those in all parts of the city, though people of lesser financial stature often wear muted colors, while those higher up will wear brighter and more ornately adorned garb. A farmer might have variations of simple blues and browns for everyday use, with only one or two elaborately decorated sets in jewel tones of red or deep blue. Among those of greater status, there's a constantly shifting game of fashion, where individuals try to chase the latest voguish Vudrani cuts and styles before any of their competitors while also trying to get their self-made styles popular in the city. This pseudo-competition results in unique combinations of colors and cut ripping through Niswan in rapidly changing fads of fashion.

Jewelry is commonly worn by many people; men tend to stick with straightforward silver and gold rings, stud piercings, and simple necklaces, while women will wear sets of matching jewelry including multiple pieces of styled earrings, nose piercings, necklaces, bangles, and rings. Many people of Niswan, regardless of gender, use makeup to enhance their natural looks, with smoky kohl being used even on children to accentuate the eyes. For special events, people will also apply henna, temporary colorful tattoos, on their hands, arms, and feet, usually in elaborate swirling and floral designs.

Longer hairstyles are fashionable for all genders, often with intricate braiding and styling from the artisan classes, while everyday workers might wear their hair loose or tied up and covered by dupattas or turbans. Farmers, fishers, and other laborers will often choose to have short, cropped hair. Male-presenting merchants might choose to style their hair and facial hair with oil. Thick, robust mustaches are just as common as full beards of varying lengths, though all generally keep their facial hair well-groomed and presentable.

In a step away from the traditions of Vudra, the common people of Niswan put far less stock on ideas of predetermined worthiness than their counterparts from across the sea. Despite certain members of the Maurya-Rahm being determined to instill a sense of nobility in themselves with this thinking, the mingling of peoples in Niswan has become so commonplace it seems silly to be concerned with trivialities like what other folks might say or dictation of old traditions to no apparent benefit. With prayers all the while, people act to create their own definition of happiness and bring in understanding from those with discomforts. There's room in Niswan for a blending of faith and shifts in cultural values, if only the old guard gives it a chance. Some elders embrace these changes wholeheartedly, reminiscing of times when they too might have seemed to stray from the ways of their kin. Still others, a vocal minority, speak to the corruption of values by outside forces, which most consider a ridiculous notion. There's room for every deity in the city to find worship—there should be plenty of room for followers to express their faith in as many ways. This forward-thinking mindset plays a big part in the mentality of Niswan's newly established members of society and interactions with travelers from all lands.

The population of Niswan is a mix of many ancestries, blending together in a land forged more by the buying power of coin than the assumed power of castes. The bulk of humans in the area are Vudrani, though there have been a fair number of others coming from other regions of the Inner Sea, drawn by trade or the many bastions of knowledge that exist inside the city's pagoda libraries.

Humans aren't the only Vudrani presence, however, and a host of communities of people originally found in Vudra make up Niswan's population. Vanara live in all areas of the city, from normal mercantile folks, to adventurers, to a few priests in the High-Holy District.

Vishkanya, though still an uncommon sight in the open, have become more of a public presence, opting to come out of the generally hidden governing bodies and attempting to engage with the city as a whole. They can often be found in the artisan district, though along with the vanara, they tend to avoid the small naga presence in the city. Ratajin travel the paved roads of Niswan in their specialty crafted vehicles and can be found in the Maurya-Rahm district, acting as delegators or emissaries between groups of people. Kashrishi are employed in various occupations, from guards to fishermen, merchants to personal attendants. Among all Vudrani, they're perhaps most well-known for the unique tastes of their cuisine, and they often see a significant number of night visitors to their pop-up stalls.

Perhaps the most surprising presence to outsiders is that of free genies in the city. Once long ago tasked in creating the wonders of Jalmeray, some chose to remain to properly tend to their creations. Others have taken a liking to the city and have chosen to build temporary homes where they practice their crafts and pursue their own definitions of perfection, alongside the rest of Niswan's people. Many have found there to be significant monetary value in offering advice to potential students looking for any advantage, however minute, in trying to gain admission into a House of Perfection. Many of the famous elemental gardens in Niswan's side squares are tended by genies, who happily show off a slice of their home plane to unfortunate souls stuck in this one.

Of course, where multiple ancestries mingle, there comes the inevitability of relations, genies and non-genies being no exception. There are significant populations of geniekin of all kinds in the city. Though sylphs seem to make up a large percentage of the population, there's no shortage of ifrit, oreads, undines, and even suli. Many pursue lines of enlightenment in the House of Perfection most concordant to their elemental natures, though there are just as many who seek to break from the supposed limits of their lineage and instead be most true to their personal choices. Geniekin tend to live in communities of similar heritages but freely and openly interact with others, regardless of parentage.

Niswan also hosts the presence of Sunghari people, the indigenous residents of Jalmeray who have once again found homes in their native land. Previously victims of genocide brought to near extinction by the powers of Nex, their culture survived by virtue of a group that chose to make their way to Vudra on the ships of Khiben-Sald. Having since grown and fostered their culture on Vudrani soil, homesickness and the desire for what was once theirs had driven a group back to Niswan to preach their case with the thakur. Though it's presently impossible to turn over the established isle of Jalmeray, the thakur has listened to their pleas with open ears and acted to facilitate the keeping of the Sunghari people's cultural heritage. Leaders among the community have taken positions of influence in the city as part of the Maurya-Rahm, trade organizations, artisans, and more, in order to have a hand in the city's future. Sunghari-led functions, festivities, and events have become a common sight in Niswan, and resources are provided to ensure the continuation of the culture. The thakur and Sunghari people understand these measures aren't representative of forgiveness nor are they placatory actions intended to provide token victories; they're an important start to begin a long process of healing and moving forward, to both preserve and revitalize a culture and people that have had everything taken from them.

Many of the original people had great success with aquatic ways of life, and so among Sunghari-owned businesses are a fair number of fisheries, food markets, and taverns by the water. Some Sunghari have expressed an interest in working to reclaim the island of Kaina Katakha and turning it into a bastion for the people, were it possible to rid the isle of lingering horrors wrought by past mistakes.

ARROWS OF CHAMIDU

Poaching is rarely a problem in Jalmeray, and not just due to enforcement from local lords. Rumors attribute this protection to a secretive sect of nagaji who live in local jungles and are said to have blessings from the primal world. This sect is said to care for the jungle and the various nascent god-spirits still growing within various secluded and sacred spots.

SUNGHARI

There are, of course, plenty of other, less frequently seen ancestries milling around in the city. Small numbers of ysoki native to Vudra have come across to Niswan, relying on their famous performances and nuanced knowledge in helping them find success. Askedhaki catfolk are also present in the area, some a part of the merchant class, while others joined with various groups operating within the city. Garuda are often used as messengers within Niswan and throughout all of Jalmeray, though they have a tendency to avoid living in the city due to the close proximity to ophidian peoples. Vudrani lizardfolk come to Niswan to mingle with visiting iruxi from the Mwangi, giving them a base to explore the populated forests of Jalmeray. There's even a small group of adhyabhau dhampirs, accompanied by some kashrishi, who seek to establish a foothold to share the study of psychic magic with the world. They've yet to find a proper purchase in the area, but once they do, it won't be long until visitors and scholars come to seek another path to master.

CULTURE

Among the many celebrated values of Niswan is the love of elaborative displays for all occasions. If there's a matter to celebrate, the people will make it clear using decorations, music, or whatever else—and with so many different faiths with their own holy days, no day is ever boring. Even events considered small and personal often have groups of 30 or more singing and dancing, with the exterior of pagodas and homes sporting colored ribbons and elaborate flower displays. It isn't uncommon on any given day to hear the reverberating twang of a long-necked sitar or the booming rhythms of dhol players that make it nearly impossible to not jump in and dance. When it comes time to celebrate an event like a marriage, the sounds of music and the sight of dancing fill entire neighborhoods with good humor and usually even better food. On celebrations that concern the whole populace, multi-colored tapestries hang prominently from the pagodas in all districts while parade processions filled with music, dancing, and hired performers make their way down the main streets, creating an intense display of art for all to enjoy.

Festivities aside, there are plenty of other ways for people to stay entertained. Numerous city squares, shops, and even restaurants have games available for all to play. Among the most popular for all ages is carom; this game is played on a square board with a pocket in each of the four corners, and it involves hitting small disks of wood into the pockets with a larger round disk called a striker. There's a temple that famously employs a life-sized version of the game using sets of increasing weights to train its monks in developing power, control, and precision. Another well-regarded activity, particularly for monks, is the sport of malakhamba, where individuals perform aerial maneuvers and

gymnastics on vertical wooden poles. Several variations of this game exist, including the use of hanging poles, rope, and team malakhamba that involves increasingly complex displays involving multiple people.

A significant difference between Vudra and Jalmeray is the treatment of various people. Rakshasas, for instance, can function a bit more openly in Niswan so long as their activities don't harm the status quo. Mercantile houses use rakshasa foresight to great effect in establishing positions, and noble houses rely on rakshasa watchers of Qadiran politics in case the satrap decides to claim Jalmeray again. Geb's proximity has softened Jalmeray's stance on the undead, and Niswan hosts a small neighborhood called the Necropolis, where necromancers come to debate with other arcane masters. In another sign of changing times, the incumbent Thakur Kharswan released the various elementals and genies still bound by ancient contracts to Jalmeray's ruler. Independent for the first time in millennia, these spirits have largely remained on the island. Many have descendants in the form of geniekin and extended families. Now, they finally have a chance to enjoy the nation they carved from primordial bedrock.

Subcultures

The collision of different people and religions in Niswan gives rise to thousands of different groups that have varying influence within the city. The rise and fall of their fortunes make up a hefty portion of local politics, as the thakur spends much of his time balancing the demands of the powerful.

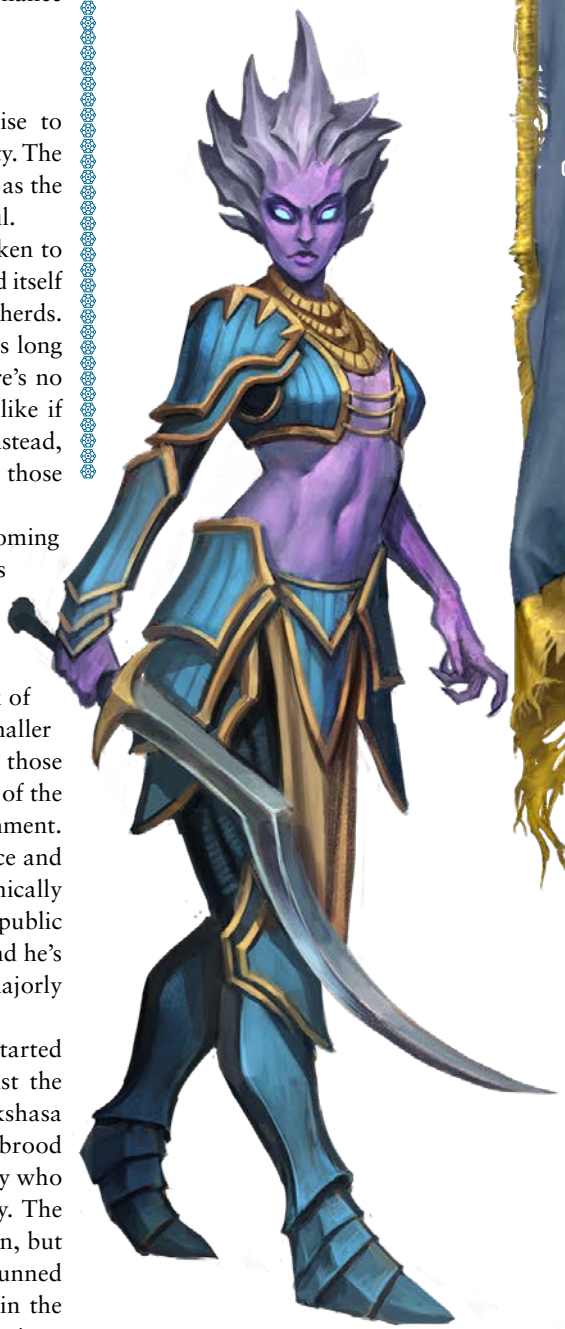
Curse Breakers: Started by a ratajin once falsely sentenced to be taken to Gho Vella but who managed to escape, this newer group has established itself with vehement disagreements against the presence of the Curse Shepherds. The Curse Breakers insist there's no safety for the people of the city as long as the true nature of the Curse Shepherds isn't known. After all, there's no way to say individuals aren't being targeted in a corrupted fashion, like if people in power simply didn't want their enemies around anymore. Instead, the group advocates for transparency and attempts to provide aid for those who might be afflicted by terrible curses or ailments.

Palagapi Gang: What started as a small group of women coming together to enact justice for wronged members of their community has grown into a wider vigilante group. The Palagapi Gang has tasked themselves with picking up where the law leaves off in cases of abuse of power. Though Niswan has shown progress in separating from the strict caste system mentalities of Vudra, there are residents who speak of so-called "traditional" values that still attempt to exert power over smaller communities with fewer resources, which translates to attacks on those with lifestyles and mindsets incongruent with the narrow-mindedness of the past, leaving the victims to suffer and victimizers with no legal punishment. For these instances, the Palagapi Gang enacts their own form of justice and provides aid to any who need it. Though the gang's activities are technically against city laws, the thakur is aware of the prospective, massive public fallout if anything were to happen to the group's beloved members, and he's therefore content to look the other way so long as the gang doesn't majorly interfere with the guard or larger functioning of the city.

Soulguard: A self-appointed group of protectors for the public started by a small number of catfolk, the Soulguard claims to fight against the corruption of people's souls caused by the influence of asura and rakshasa within Jalmeray. The group has a strange relationship with the beastbrood and faultspawn of Niswan—the rakshasa and asura tieflings in the city who have been subject to cruel conditions and grueling work in the city. The Soulguard insists the presence of blood isn't what leads to corruption, but rather the results of choices and action. Therefore, they offer these shunned tieflings a part in their organization, should any be inclined to aid in the eradication of chaos and corruption surely polluting Niswan's population.

Fellowship of Guile's Guise

A collection of fell gnomes seeking to use illusion magic to stave off the Bleaching, the Fellowship's entertainments are notably cruel. After taking the place of an innocent victim, the gnomes see how long they can maintain their impersonation while committing the most outrageous acts, testing how far they can push their boundaries before people realize the truth. Their victims typically return to find their lives in shambles.



AETHER

In addition to air, earth, fire, and water, Vudra and Jalmeray include the concept of aether, formed when elemental physicality mixes with the essence of the Ethereal Plane. Despite aether's relationship to the other elements, no one in Jalmeray is so arrogant as to found a monastery that promises mastery over aether, though some monks ponder if such techniques might be how Irori ascended to godhood.

The Challenge of Sky and Heaven

In addition to training, the Houses organize a grand tournament once a decade. Students from all Houses meet in the Challenge of Sky and Heaven to test their abilities in philosophical rhetoric, weapons training, unarmed combat, arcane and occult abilities, and, most importantly, self-discipline. The Monastery of Untwisting Iron won two recent Challenges consecutively and earned great renown and envy. Yet, a tournament held once a decade isn't ideal for the nation's economy, so other tournaments are held at annual, biennial, quadrennial, and various other intervals to keep tourism, and the gold, flowing.

The most anticipated event in all Jalmeray, the Challenge of Sky and Heaven has the Houses of Perfection meet on the ninth year of every decade to compete in all manner of events, from topics as broad as swordplay and unarmed fighting techniques to esoteric fields of study as specific as the rules that govern the application of different schools of magic. People come from all over the world to witness the epic displays of prowess, bringing especially lucrative business for the city. The Houses of Perfection are the most well-known and influential monasteries in Niswan, though they're technically located outside the city. To gain admission, a student must pass the rigorous and demanding test of a House. Even before that, one must be allowed access to the entry examination, a process which occurs on a cycle of one school accepting newcomers every month—meaning each school has three new sets of possible admissions every year with the number of accepted students left entirely up to the House. Generally, the attendees of these tests first receive training or a writ of recommendation from the leaders of smaller monasteries within the city. Although this step isn't necessary, it speaks to one's dedication.

Even the Houses of Perfection—Jalmeray's most renowned institutions—aren't resistant to change. Three Houses stood for nearly 2,000 years: the Monasteries of Unblinking Flame, Unfolding Wind, and Untwisting Iron. Recently, another school, the Monastery of Unbreaking Waves, has been unearthed, revived, and joined their ranks. Each House focuses on a particular discipline, a singular path derived from Irori's lessons of perfection. Those who finish their training emerge as masters of their discipline, their mental and physical facilities at the peak of mortal perfection.

Monastery of Unblinking Flame: Led by the seemingly ageless Grand Master Anandala, this monastery places a smaller degree of importance on pure martial arts, opting instead to focus on the secrets of the occult. As this task isn't easy, the monastery still demands strength and determination be shown by its students before setting on the journey of understanding occult mysteries and employing them in combat. Admission demands a battle of wits against an efreeti, where the genie must agree to honor a perfectly worded request that skirts around their pedantic proclivities, a challenge the genie finds as amusing as the fulfillment of the wish itself.

Monastery of Unbreaking Waves: Once lost to the depths of the ocean, this ancient House was recently reestablished by a tribe of undine just outside western Niswan and is now led by Grandmaster Remendi, who was a pivotal force in resurrecting the lost school. Although Remendi might have less of a grasp on what it means to be the leader of such a House, the other Grandmasters of Perfection have aided her and the school in their own ways. It helps that Remendi came to an understanding with a marid, who has agreed to take part in the screening process for new members, where applicants must demonstrate their ability to be like flowing water—unyielding in their stance to get past any obstacle yet flexible in their approach. It's unclear what exactly this means for the examination process although rumors have begun circulating that demonstrations of a particular dance might give the applicant an advantage.

Monastery of Unfolding Wind: This House, led by Sadif Hadaranvayu, prides itself on being the closest to the element from which their name is derived. Members of this monastic order focus on achieving self-perfection in the truest sense, relying on their bodies for martial arts, rather than weaponry. Any argument that the use of magic to hone their skills is contradictory to this philosophy is met with a retort about innate magic being part of the body and then promptly ignored. Prospective students must show their speed and physical prowess by racing a djinni while also avoiding any attempts at subterfuge the djinni might take delight in employing.

Monastery of Untwisting Iron: Among all the Houses, this monastery is perhaps the highest regarded due to the consecutive victories claimed in previous events of the Challenge of Sky and Heaven. Rajni Ayasa is the current Grand Master, who focuses on training attendants in various types of weaponry. To gain admittance into the school, candidates must test their physical skills against a shaitan. It's said that should the nature of victory in this endeavor pique the interest of the genie, they might help create a personal weapon for the individual, a favor not to be taken lightly.

GOVERNMENT

The rule of Jalmeray has always been a matter of delicate diplomacy. The maharajah was unquestioningly the ruler of the island during his time, but since the expulsion of the Arclords, a number of rajas and ranis settled on the island simultaneously. Each a sovereign in their own land, none would accept the other as a ruler, and the island was far too small to parcel out into kingdoms the way Vudra had been split. The rulers compromised and chose a single administrator to nominally act as the island's head of government. The title of thakur was appointed to this person, and they were immediately burdened with an impossibly large council of advisors called the Maurya-Rahm appointed by the individual nobles, each lobbying for their house's interest.

Unlike in Vudra, Jalmeray has little in the way of central authority, and many things considered taboo in Vudra are openly tolerated, if not condoned. The thakurs have led with leniency, aware of their nominal role. The powerful make their own rules, as if countless small fiefdoms had settled amiably together to form a patchwork agreement. Every thakur has found their own way to lead Jalmeray, balancing the spiritual needs of the priests and monks, the trade needs of merchant-princes rich enough to outspend nations, and the heads of noble families with generations old pride.

It's in everyone's interest to keep Jalmeray a hospitable, pleasant, and luxurious place so that all might profit from visitors.

While the rule of Jalmeray might prove complicated, the governance of Niswan is a relatively simple affair by comparison since it can be parceled off by the thakur to someone else. Thakur Kharswan has chosen a woman named **Aditya** (N female suli human investigator) to lead the city as its nagrpati, or mayor. Originally a vizier for a merchant-prince and member of the Maurya-Rahm, Aditya has long since bought out her own contract and now acts independently for the interest of Niswan alone.

Niswan's government was established as a hierarchical administration, and Aditya has employed it to its fullest extent. Each member of government knows who their immediate superiors are, and reports and news climb upward, growing denser with each step. Everything is fed to the nagrpati, who can then pass orders down similarly without needing to take any large steps to cause major changes. Aditya remains behind the scenes and mostly invisible while the lowest members of government carry out her writs, insulating her from repercussions. It isn't uncommon for citizens to decry new taxes and changes to the laws of trade and blame bureaucrats and administrators rather than Aditya, sometimes even going so far as to report them directly to her in the hopes of some recompense. For her part,

MONASTERY OF UNBLINKING FLAME

MONASTERY OF UNBREAKING WAVES

MONASTERY OF UNFOLDING WIND

MONASTERY OF UNTWISTING IRON

Aditya is quite adept at handling such complaints by distracting the aggrieved with a mild gesture toward some other concern.

Given the amount of wealth and magic flowing through Niswan, not to mention its reputation as a safe harbor, Aditya depends on two people to keep her city and harbor safe: the admiral **Harita Kaur** (CG female human swashbuckler), called the saraj, and the guard commander **Dul Hina** (LN male orc monk), known as the kolput. The saraj maintains a small but extremely agile and capable fleet of ships that keep Bagia Bay safe from pirates and ensure traders can visit the harbor with little concern. The kolput commands a small force of city guards trained primarily in non-lethal methods and magical imprisonment techniques to maintain the peace without causing bloodshed, which isn't just bad for business, but also the harmony of the city. At least a few of these guards are students of the Houses of Perfection, serving a brief period to repay the island for their training. In addition, there are various independent contractors and agents in the nagrpati's direct employ spying throughout the city, though there's no record of their employment in the official records and no room in the budget for such an extravagance.

Beyond the concerns of security, trade is the lifeblood of Jalmeray. It has made the princes and merchants unimaginably wealthy, thanks in large part to the lax taxation that Niswan can afford its citizens due to the tariffs it collects from trade in the city. Every item of goods unloaded from and onto ships pays a reasonable percentage of its value to the dockmaster and his small army of inspectors, who swarm over each ship and take meticulous note of all incoming cargo. Once the goods land, however, Niswan doesn't restrict the movement of merchandise or wealth nor does it keep record of transactions completed on its docks, allowing merchants to trade in a safe port. The tariffs seem a fair price to afford such anonymity and safety at the same time.

Overseeing these complex transactions for Niswan is the coinmaster of the city, known as the zaiwara. **Brahi Ektar** (LN male rakshasa) is a rakshasa who lives openly in the city, having pledged his loyalty to the thakur himself, and is widely known to be pagala—kin traitor—among other rakshasas. He is among the wealthiest people on the island and enjoys a sumptuous life with his many partners in a palatial home in the city's most expensive district.

The last major influence in Niswan's governance are the priests and sages who lead large congregations and maintain the spiritual balance of a city with hundreds of shrines to various gods. Due to the number of deities in the Vudrani pantheon, any day can host a dozen sacred holidays, parades, sacrifices, and public worship. Other events in the city compete for space and attention against this calendar, which seems fully booked well in advance.

Any public events require strict vetting by the city's administrative offices, and only with the right backing or extremely expensive bribes do they have any hopes of passing muster. There's a hierarchy among the priests called the Circle of Sadhus, formed of the six highest-ranked priests in the city.

All this administration is invisible unless someone has to intervene—and even then, they do so as gently as possible, not just to maintain the status quo, but also the city's peaceful nature. Niswan is the capital of Jalmeray, and the city is the only part of the island most visitors ever see. The government is determined to ensure visitors leave their city wishing only to return and for its citizens to live as comfortably as possible. Peace, harmony, and, above all, stability are the goals of Niswan's government.

LOCATIONS

The following are a sample of some of the most prominent locations found in Niswan.

Thakur's Palace

Much like the tiers of the pagodas that line the walkways, the streets of Niswan are separated by tiered levels connected by sloping red roads and at the top lies the palace of the Thakur Kharswan himself. Consisting of fluted spires of impossible size and grand archways of an almost too delicate nature, the palace is constructed from white marble, seemingly out of a single block. Intricate designs of thin gold ornament the architecture, each one a paragon of visual beauty. The pathway leading up to the palace is decorated with the inspiring sight of statues depicting images of thakurs and the building of the city. Lush vegetation adorns the side of the palace and its surroundings, and many courtyards and gardens house vegetation native to both the Inner Sea and Vudra, in addition to fountains that look just as intricate as the palace itself. Among these serene outdoor scopes, family members of the Maurya-Rahm, as well as honored guests and those with some semblance of power in the city, pass time in idle scheming.

The inside of the palace is even more ornate than the outside—the marble construction continues with columns that line the geometric patterns of the walkway, and the walls showcase murals and friezes of gods interacting with each other and any number of strange scenes. Magical, ever-burning lights keep the palace illuminated for anyone wandering the premises, regardless of the time of day. Amid the many hallways, large golden doors lead to any number of rooms—decorated bathhouses as large as entire homes, a library of extensive proportions that holds some of the most sought after non-magical volumes in the world, and even more elaborately planned gardens, meeting places, and other private rooms. One could get lost in the grandness forever if it weren't for the ever-present servants of the thakur who keep up the grand vision of the palace. If one was so lucky, they might even find an entrance to the thakur's personal favorite garden, where normally only an invite and passage by the thakur's most trusted advisor would grant access. If reports are to be believed, a different site and walkway await every new guest, as the inner sanctum garden's layout seems to constantly shift.

The Heights

Located just below the grand palace, the territory of the Maurya-Rahm, known as the Heights, consist of the major homes of the advisors as well as those of the elite guards for the thakur and the city's wealthiest individuals. Elsewhere in the Inner Sea, each individual home could pass for a royal building with how decorated, bejeweled, and grand they are. However, in deference to the thakur, none sit quite so regally as the palace itself. Still, the mansions are

HIDDEN TROVES

Rumors persist of a secret, subterranean chamber on Jalmeray that once belonged to the Arclords of Nex, or possibly even Nex himself. Most Jalmeray residents show little to no interest in such a possibility, but a steady trickle of outsiders continues to mount expeditions from Niswan, hoping to find a hidden cache of ancient Nexian artifacts.

ADITYA

deep enough to house large extended families of the most important members involved in the city as well as the numerous guests being fed and spoken with at any given time. Personal servants and Niswan's greatest warriors also receive their own homes in the area, and many of lower castes would be beyond ecstatic to set foot among the riches that dwell here—though, hopefully, that step isn't because they're being called for crimes of conspiring against the city or, worse, being a rakshasa.

The High-Holy District

A longer journey down the slope leads to large statues of multi-handed figures and a man with a ponytail that seemingly flows out of the statue work. Such deific depictions mark one of the most diverse and unique experiences in the city: the High-Holy District. Acting as the center of the various religious ideologies in the city, there are no shortage of temples and shrines for any religion. Forgotten deities with single window space shrines litter some alleyways, while more popular religions occupy domed temples with gold work. This district's most distinct landmark is the Rahthanam Shrine, the largest pagoda in the city. Inside, a seemingly infinite number of prayer chambers have dedications to the entire pantheon of traditional Vudrani deities, including scripture and accessories to aid with worship practices. Many clerics often retire to work at the Rahthanam Shrine, ensuring the upkeep of their particular faith and providing guidance to any who seek it out. At any given time, worshippers engage in some display of faith, which might take the form of chants, hymns, silent meditation, or colorful revelry. Each particular place of worship is equipped with magical devices that can create a bubble of silence, making the area well equipped to prevent any interfaith disturbances before they occur.

Grand Chronicler's Circle

A mirror to the religious fervor of the High-Holy District is the Grand Chronicler's Circle, where the largest collection of religious texts, libraries, bookkeepers, and anything else possibly involved with books are located. The city's most esteemed bookbinders stay here, taking lengthy amounts of time to create and bind books that are unique pieces of art that can't be seen anywhere else. Beautiful calligraphy and lettering can be found here unrivaled in the Impossible Lands. Servants of Gruhastha set up in the area with a tuition-free general education school available to all; their curriculum focuses on the fundamentals of literacy, study, and research in order to give students the ability to continue to teach themselves once they've graduated from these humble classes.

Commerce District

If the High-Holy District is the soul of Niswan, then the Commerce District is the lifeblood that sustains the body. The Great Street Bazaar comes alive as merchants selling wares from all over Golarion gather here in magical stalls filled with wonder. The sounds of bartering and friendly dealmaking surround the venue, further enhanced by the scents of tea and delicacies offered by those engaging in lucrative deals. With all this activity in the district, it's possible to find the strangest wares at any time of the day. Other events also happen often in the area, such as open auctions for goods, price wars, merchant entertainments, and more. Most major organizational buildings can be found in pagoda homes here, including the newly established Pathfinder Society lodge.

Harbor District

Ships and trade vessels constantly moor in the city's Harbor District, where one can find many of the fish merchants or those involved with the trading of specialty foreign goods. This district also features the largest area of population housing, where crafters and artisans can enjoy meals with their families when not at work in the Commerce District. Those looking for an experience more akin to other parts of the Inner Sea can walk to the ends of the Harbor District to find the Foreigner's Quarter—a decent place to start for any seeking a permanent livelihood in Niswan. Though there are some clear signs of a lack of upkeep in some areas here, plenty of individuals and families call this district's roads home.

Important Faces

An urban soul through and through, Niswan's nagrpati, **Aditya** (N female suli human investigator), was born in Jalmeray and has known no life other than the city's bustle. Her suli nature still elevates her imagination beyond the material and has pulled her in many directions at once, though she discovered harmony in her disparate sides. After learning the courtly arts in Grand Sarret, Aditya served in the Maurya-Rahm before assuming the role of nagrpati.

A middle-aged woman of short stature, she wears cool blues and pastel colors and prefers silk saris with geometric patterns. Aditya employs a gentle hand in governance, rarely resorting to threats or force—she prefers diplomacy and compromise with all citizens and visitors to Niswan, no matter their background. She can have tea with a Blood Lord from Geb in the morning and tour the hanging gardens of Niswan with a high priest of Pharasma in the afternoon. Her voice is lyrical and intelligent, and those who meet her never doubt her ability or her dedication to Niswan. Her husband, a human Vudrani captain, spends his days raising their three young children.

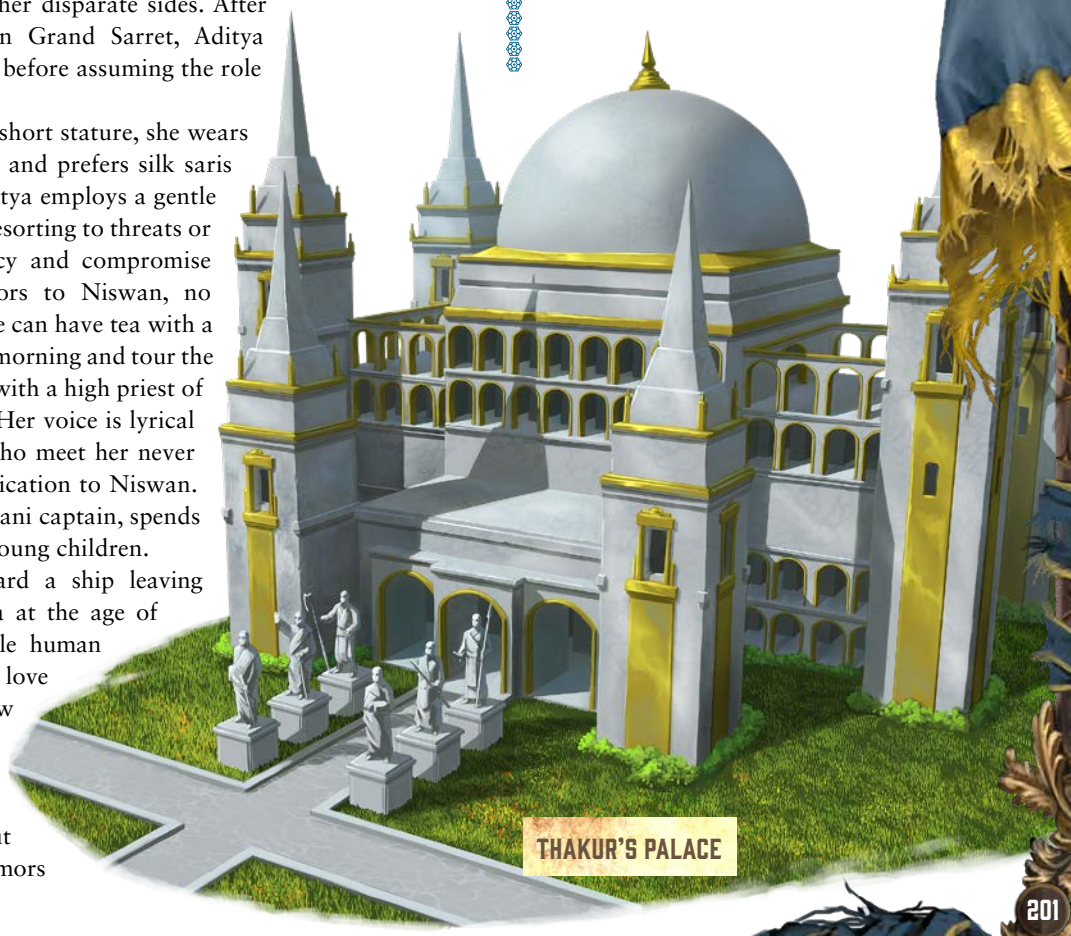
Ever since sneaking aboard a ship leaving the Western Ghats of Vudra at the age of 10, **Harita Kaur** (CG female human swashbuckler) has been in love with the sea. This love grew into a passion over time, and she came to live in Niswan for several years, working the trade routes throughout the Impossible Lands. Rumors

Zafrani Chai (Saffron Tea)

Enjoyed by the wealthy of Niswan, this drink is very rich and sweet.

8pc green cardamom
1 stick of cinnamon (about 2-3 inches long)
2 tbsp edible rose petals
½ teaspoon of saffron
1 tbsp loose black tea leaves (per serving)
½ cup of water (per serving)
½ cup of full-fat milk (per serving)
Sugar to taste

Toast the cardamom and cinnamon until fragrant. Combine toasted spices with rose petals and saffron, then grind to a fine powder to create a spice blend. In a saucepan, add water and tea in the ratio noted above and bring to a boil. Once it's in a rolling boil, add milk and 1 tsp of spice mix per serving. Let boil for a few minutes before straining into cups, adding sugar as desired. Garnish with extra saffron strands for a sweet indulgence.



THAKUR'S PALACE

THE CONSERVATORY

Though believed by most to be a mundane school for social graces, the Conservatory of Grand Sarret also produces Jalmeray's most skilled and accomplished spies. What makes them so effective is a closely guarded secret, but counterintelligence from other spy groups, such as the Lion Blades of Taldor, suspect occult magic to be involved. Using techniques supposedly influenced by the intense stare of local nagaji, it's believed that some of agents within the Conservatory can obliterate the memory of creatures from a subject's mind, thus making detection of their espionage nearly impossible. Jalmeri spies are all too happy to muddy the waters further by implying mental meddling even when entirely mundane methods are used.

claim she even worked with pirates for a time, sailing as far as the Shackles—though few say it to her face. Harita's luck ran out when she found herself in Niswan, broke and indebted to the city for a hefty sum after her ship sank. Nagrpati Aditya offered Harita a way to buy out her debt by serving in Niswan's small but formidable navy—an offer she eagerly took up. She didn't take long to climb the ranks and was named saraj, admiral and commander of the six ships that form Niswan's naval defense force.

Still a young woman, Harita is a tall and imposing figure with deeply tanned skin and a full, thick mane of black hair that flows loose down her back. She wears simple clothes, with a number of jeweled rings and her talvar being the showiest items on her body. Given to carousing with her crew, she's beloved by those who serve with her, and in return, her loyalty to Aditya and Niswan is second only to her sailors.

Fleeing a sordid past in Katapesh, **Dul Hina** (LN male orc monk) trained in the Monastery of Unfolding Wind, perfecting his technique of unarmed combat before looking for a way to remain in Jalmeray rather than returning home. It was unusual enough for an orc to take up the ways of a monk, but Dul Hina proved to be the model student, impressing his peers and teachers alike. After finishing his training, he took up employment as a mercenary and guard for a while, but the work left him unsatisfied until a client recommended him to Aditya. Dul Hina rose through the relatively few ranks of Niswan's guard to take the title of kolput. Tall, broad-shouldered, yet lean, Dul Hina wears simple, monochromatic gray trousers and a tunic, and he regularly shaves his head. Some might even mistake him for a beggar-monk who willingly subsists on charity. For a time, Dul Hina even considered filing his tusks to fit in better, but Aditya convinced him that he got hired because of who he was, not despite it. That conversation might have been what tied Dul Hina to Aditya with ironbound loyalty. The captain of Niswan's guard is a force to be reckoned with despite his humble and monastic lifestyle. He has often lobbied Aditya to have Harita replaced with a more modest and honorable person at the head of the navy, but to no avail. Harita remains a constant distraction for Dul Hina in his meditations, and he refuses to admit his attraction to a woman who seems to be, for all intents, his polar opposite.

Rakshasa are known to live in Jalmeray, but for the most part, they disguise themselves in public to pass unnoticed. That isn't so for the zaiwara—or treasurer—of Niswan. Growing up in the jungles of Vudra, **Brahi Ektar** (LN male pagala rakshasa) fell in love with Niswan since his arrival in Jalmeray. Over the years, he grew nervous about the many plots brewing against the thakur, the nobles, Aditya, even the Houses of Perfection. Having arrived with a hoard of wealth, Brahi Ektar's various financial endeavors had proven more profitable than he could've imagine. With nearly endless wealth in the form of interest from debtors and little to occupy his time, Brahi found himself foiling the plots of his kind and others who meant harm to his city with no one the wiser for it. In this capacity, he came to Aditya's attention and agreed to help manage Niswan's finances; in exchange, he could purchase one of the ancient homes in the city's most exclusive residential section, where only Vudrani nobles kept houses. Aditya agreed, and now Brahi Ektar is the sole rakshasa to live openly among nobles and princes, in a house full of the most decadent treasures and means to please any sense—if only he hadn't tired of all such things already. The only things that distract him anymore are the few remaining plots against Niswan that he casually bats away, all while pining for a truly dangerous and uncanny foe to test his mettle.

Kiran (CG female ratfolk filch) appears to be a humble ratfolk, a street sweeper tending to the temples and shops around Niswan. In truth, after years of youthful indiscretions, Kiran is skilled in pickpocketing, thievery, and running cons.

Most of her illicit earnings are redistributed among the more needy citizens of Niswan, which might have been one reason why the kolputs never went after her. Kiran considers herself retired now but still teaches promising youths how to do "the work," as she calls it. She teaches the trade along with a sense of responsibility, to only take from those who can afford it and to keep only what they need, giving away the rest. Kiran keeps an especially close eye on foreign mercenaries and agents to ensure their extrajudicial actions don't bring harm to the common people of Niswan.

Hamid Karam (NG male human ifrit shopkeep), the self-styled ifrit Master of Tea, has made himself essential in Niswan. His shop, the Sacred Leaf, has become an institution thanks to his meandering stories of tea blending and brewing from Vudra, Tian Xia, and Isfahel, along with his flamboyant way of heating cups to the right temperature in his hands. He started selling tea a decade ago as a small roadside stand. Now, Hamid rules over a sprawling outdoor cafe in the shade of a wide neem tree. Despite the half-dozen waiters whisking trays around the shop and the help of his husband with the accounting books, he still blends the teas himself and uses the same clay cups used by the poorest teashops as a reminder of his origins. His shop's popularity has made it a gossip market, making it the best place to hear news, or start rumors.

Ambassador Matari Lukna (NE female lich diplomat), a lich from Garundi, has lived for centuries in Niswan and represented Geb's interests to seven thakurs in a row while providing a diplomatic outpost for those too timid to travel to Mechitar to deal with Geb's government. Matari Lukna could've become a Blood Lord, but instead of spending centuries bickering with her peers, she chose a life in Jalmeray. Matari works to maintain an interest in socialization and craves the shifting currents of a living, breathing city. Tall and lanky, she hides her withered appearance within voluminous and colorful robes of Garundi design while a deep hood and veil keep her face hidden. Most people find her charming and funny, scarcely realizing her undead nature. Her position makes her almost invisible, leaving her free to gather a vast collection of necromantic artifacts, weapons, and lore beneath her sepulcher unseen.

The product of an illicit affair between a vizier and a devil in the skin of a woman, **Gazia bint Iblis al Wahid** (CG female tiefling human poet) lived hidden by her father in Katheer. With endless time on her hands, she read voraciously and memorized epics, reciting them with grace, her beautiful voice at odds with her coppery skin, red eyes, and demonic fangs. Trading her jewels for a trip to Katapesh, Gazia landed in Jalmeray instead and found her sudden freedom exhilarating. It was easy to win lodging, food, and coins with her memorized recitation of hundreds of stories. Her great ambition is to find new stories, and she actively seeks out adventurers to hear their latest exploits. Dressing in loose trousers and tunics of rich color, she no longer veils herself and hopes to meet a group that will take her along to experience an adventure herself.

After spending thousands of years managing Jalmeray's climate and environment, **Naimulla** (CG male djinni), an ancient and powerful djinni, was free to return to the Astral Plane. Naimulla never got to enjoy the product of his work, so he instead settled in Niswan for a few decades. Deciding to live as a merchant, he explored the surrounding islands, gathering antiquities, oddities, treasures, and whatever else he thought might be of value. After bargaining with a mage, Naimulla took the form of a male sylph with closely trimmed hair, a curly beard, and loose clothing of conflicting Vudrani styles, then opened his shop. His loud, gregarious nature and tendency to find any joke amusing make him a charming merchant, and despite his goods' questionable quality, he has regular customers. When he isn't managing his shop or collecting goods to sell, Naimulla takes to his djinni form to track down his sylph descendants across the Impossible Lands.

HAMID KARAM

DUL HINA

HARITA KAUR

NAIMULLA

Prada Hanam

Ocean's Murmur

In the times before auspicious fortune brought the hamlet into prominence, Prada Hanam was little more than stone-carved docks, wooden homes, and a few crossing streets littered with betel leaves and brushed by the errant ocean breeze. The emergence of the Murmur Dome changed all this.

The city of Prada Hanam was once humble, merely a fishing village at the edge of the Obari Ocean, where local folk made simple work upon the coast. The imposing structure and the four towers that ring around it appeared overnight centuries ago, and the mystery of its appearance saw the humble village change slowly from meager origins into the sprawling city of today. The Murmur Dome (page 214) looms along the periphery of the city and the ocean, a lingering unknown that one either grows accustomed to or is forever haunted by.

Prada Hanam's streets run well away from the coastal harbor now, though all are paved with sandstone quarried from the surrounding hills. Buildings constructed from stone slabs, painted with ocean scenes around the central plazas, provide a memorable sight to those visiting relatives, making harbor, or foolishly seeking to plunder the Murmur Dome. A carved stepwell and a set of tidal ghats run serpentine throughout the city toward the ocean. At all hours of the day, tropical fish of scintillating colors swim their way through the waters while cloth washers and religious sorts attend to the many blessings they've been granted in life. The air carries the scent of betel leaves and the errant ocean breeze but also that of well-spiced fish, of water lilies, of Casmar yogurt treats, and of a yawning change in the eras. The streets always fetter with life, crowded enough that locals know the routes to avoid pickpockets, and busy enough that outsiders seldom have warning of such predation.

With each passing day, new constructions begin. Though Prada Hanam isn't the envy of Jalmeray's architectural marvels, it looks every bit the nostalgic memory of a coastal Vudran city-state. Newer homes are built upon the weary foundation of older homes, a tradition so internalized that a building without such a condition is viewed as unbloodied in the eyes of history—and therefore, like a reckless child who has yet to learn a lesson, inevitably doomed to suffer misfortune.

Temples were prominent in Prada Hanam in centuries past, but none prospered well in the shadow of the Murmur Dome. The people, ever devout, instead began a practice of carving great columns of stone depicting the faces of the divine, and such obelisks mark each street, like how trees might dot the walkways of cities elsewhere across the world. The gods look upon all of Prada Hanam from a thousand different angles, their chiseled faces run smooth from ages of devotional touch and slathered offerings. Some have even sunk into the waters, and this is considered high praise, for the gods have outlived all those who once dwelled there in worship. Now, the divine can gaze upon the bounty they provided their mortals in the reefs of the Obari.

Upon the highest cliff overlooking the ocean, behind walls and barricades, sits the zamindar's grand estate, held now by the Resplendent House of Puloshik and seated by the philosopher nagaji known as Bhaidrun.

Though marriages and alliances between the colonial Vudrani and naga envoys date back to the time of the Naga Empire's death throes, only in recent generations has the city's notable nagaji population been able to place their own into a position of power. The zamindar's estate is as opulent as his ascetic beliefs allow, though tall walls and a military barracks keep it formidable against incursions.

A DAY IN PRADA HANAM

Despite Prada Hanam's growth, its citizens still wake with the rising of the early morning sun. Though not all are fishers, those who ply the sea are honored most by the city's daily motions. Sailors, fishers, stevedores, and general laborers rise early and are fed by street vendors, peddlers, and other servers who rise earlier still to make their wages. Before the dawn's light casts its rays upon the harbor, all of Prada Hanam smells of savory foods, hearty spices, and resplendent coffee brought to a boil in the burning heat of coastal sands. To an outsider who can sleep through such hustle and bustle, the day will already be deeply underway by the time they roll out of bed. To the locals, this bustle is all a manner of routine. Seldom—save for holidays—does any deviation occur.

Right before midday, an hour is given to those who have worked their labors so they might treat with the gods who watch over their places of work. Buskers give praise to Likha, bankers to Vineshvakhi, all learned folk and their desperate apprentices to Irori, and so on. Preachers scatter rice down the ghats and into the water, for the fish and for the delight of the gods who watch over them. As noon closes in, people return to their duties and perform their tasks in momentary silence as they've done since Prada Hanam was a humble fishing village. They remain silent to see if the Murmur Dome will make itself heard in some way, shape, or form; though few are observant to the truth of this matter, it has become a well-practiced custom among most who spend that moment to return to work or enjoy a last minute of respite.

The streets of Prada Hanam are always busy, but such is the nature of a port. Outsiders, foreigners, and those made to quarantine upon the shores for stigma of curses or wickedness wander about at all hours of the day. Buskers, beggars, street preachers, and charlatans ply and plead for attention and coin, but locals keep eyes upon strangers—not out of loyalty to the existing power structures, nor due to a whispering network or secret society, but out of fear. Vudrani in faith, the city's denizens know well the perfidious nature of asuras or rakshasas, possibly seeing them hidden in the guise of visitors. Any ordinary citizen would never have the strength to fight such creatures, but with secret signs and coded marks, one might steel one's heart against such cruel entities.

As the working day ends, the scent of fresh naan and the finer catches of skilled fishers permeate the city. Food is being prepared so that none who return from their labors will go hungry for long. The harbor overflows with tired laborers, and by the shifting of the tides, the docks are emptied by all who have good or proper reason to be there. The city bustles with life for a few hours before the sun begins to set. Audiences settle in for the evening's shows, all manner of shadow puppetry and grandiose opera if the season permits. Shopping is done by those without spouses, children, or servants to perform the task during the day. By the sunset, the bulk of Prada Hanam is well fed, and the ache of a day's labors starts to take its toll upon them. They return to their homes; they pay homage, tribute, and supplication to the plinth shrine in their neighborhood; and they attend then to their nightly duties.

Night in Prada Hanam belongs only to outsiders and the machinations of unsavory sorts. Every child knows that the rakshasas shed their mortal form at night and stalk the streets as crocodiles, bats, and tigers. Every adult knows this to be metaphor, but the wicked influence of the rakshasas has only grown with the ages, and at night, many such entities who dwell within the city are known to congregate. Outsiders, mercenaries, and adventurers can attend to minor pleasures—services most citizens would claim to turn their noses up at, yet these remain in operation until the early morning light, offering drink, hospitality, and no small amount of rumor.

Thieves, smugglers, and unclean spirits in mortal guise move about the city under cover of darkness, tending to their petty politics and moving about their contraband. Violence can occur, but most conflicts come between native rogues and foreigners who encroach upon their territory. Murder is rare, even in a city this large—but people do go missing. Some claim fiends consumed the vanished; others whisper they've been claimed by the Murmur Dome's unknown influence. The truth is likely not so exciting, but it wouldn't stop people from talking. Such talk is almost always of the Murmur Dome, for all locals, criminal or kind, know the structure is the true reason anyone comes to Prada Hanam.

Festival days see the streets crowded and the humble joys of life in Prada Hanam replaced by the gaudy and intrusive sounds of celebration. The winds carry lively music, and brightly garbed citizens joyously make merry upon the ghats and often upon the neighboring beaches as well. Sunsets are cherished on blessed days, with the humble faithful holding votive candles to shine a light upon the glory of Prada Hanam.

A YEAR IN PRADA HANAM

Only in spring does an ill wind blow across the Obari and upon Prada Hanam, bringing with it rough wakes and storm surges that threaten lesser vessels poorly moored in the city's harbor. For the rest of the year, the surrounding waters have a strange stillness to them. The reefs off the coast swirl with an infinite array of colorful fish, and the kelp forests are flush with sharks and eels. Between storms, when the air feels abuzz with power, local pearl divers delve into deep waters for their resplendent prizes. The most beautiful pearls are saved from the market and offered instead to the gods as jewelry to be worn by their masked stand-ins during summer parades or any number of Likha-inspired theatrical events.

Summers are balmy and, at some times, insufferable if one strays too far from the stepwells and waterways of the city. Keen architectural insight has ensured a system of public cooling that requires barrels of saltwater be ladled upon the hot paved roads under the midday sun. The water evaporates quickly and casts a faint mist upon the city streets, clinging and cooling the skins of pedestrians and ensuring a more comfortable temperature for those with open windows.

On the first full moon of Lamashan, the city celebrates Admani Upastuti, when the citizens enjoy a reprieve from their labors and take part in

PRADA HANAM SETTLEMENT 7

N CITY

Government appointed administrator

Population 6,880 (91% human, 5% nagaji, 4% other)

Languages Aklo, Nagaji, Vudrani

Religions Arundhat, Chamidu, Dhalavei, Irori, Likha, Nethys, Ragdya, Ravithra, Vineshvakhi

Threats asuras, criminals, ocean predators, rakshasas, storms, the Murmur Dome

Enter the Murmur Dome The Murmur Dome draws adventurers, rakshasas, and other powerful and unscrupulous individuals to meet their demise in Prada Hanam with regularity beyond what you would expect for the settlement at large, bringing their coin and gear with them. Every month, the city gains 1d8 new random items for sale up to 13th level, and spellcasting services from spellcasters up to 13th level are available from visiting adventurers or rakshasas after 1d4–1 days for double the usual price.

Bhaidrun (LN male nagaji monk 8) zamindar of Prada Hanam

Ishvakunda (N female lunar naga advisor 7) diplomat and advisor

Majumdar (N male marid noble 11) lord of the harbor

historical plays depicting Jalmeray's early founding as a nation. All performances are rife with religious allegory, blatant propaganda, and impeccable costumes that bridge the gap between the symbolic and the truly conceptual. On Admani Upastuti, only a chosen few observe the moment of silence toward the Murmur Dome, for the zamindar's line has long feared that the terrible nature of the structure will reveal itself during a moment of great joy.

Pitiable rites to Dhalavei are held when boats go missing at sea, a rare occurrence but not so uncommon that her bleak name isn't held on the tongues of those who feel her fraying influences upon the city and its people. Her relation to the cycles of the moon, to darkness, and to the dissolution of unity have seen her associated with the cruel uncertainty of lost ships, mutinous strife, and political tension—such that on the new moon or in the event of calamity under her portfolio, locals perform candlelit vigils to stave off her power and guide the lost back to safe harbor.

Threading days are still practiced despite the unkind view granted to them by the zamindar's rule, though many of the upper castes would consider the spite against the upstart ruler to be an additional boon. When a child of the upper castes comes of age, or a foundling is formally adopted into the ranks of those vaunted with wealth and power, they're marked with a sacred thread upon their brow, which is beaded with materials made to honor the patron deity whom the threaded is to treat as their insightful guide on the path to enlightenment. While frowned upon by those who seek to transcend the societal castes of Vudra, the devotional aspect sees that threading is still openly celebrated by the more exalted members of society, often as posturing displays to flaunt one's wealth prior to or during other religious holidays.

Of all the festivals held within Prada Hanam, the Festival of Ten Thousand Flowers is truly a sight to behold despite the distance of the goddess it celebrates. Though Arundhat has only a trifling influence in the city compared to elsewhere in Jalmeray and distant Vudra, her celebration is one that all indulge in with utmost fervor, rivaling even the celebration of Yolarati. Flowers from distant shores and imported markets are brought into Prada Hanam, their petals strewn about the ghats and waterways, flowing out to the sea in a scintillating display of fading colors and delightful scents. The harbor folk claim that vessels awash in this tide of blossoms will serve 10,000 days before scuttling or misfortune takes hold upon their decks. All in Prada Hanam make merry during the festival, indulging in flavor-rich teas, brightly colored garments, and garish frivolity they deny themselves nearly all other days of the year.

With autumn and winter come shifts in the breeze and changes in currents. Storms become less common but greater in intensity when they occur. Visitors come less

frequently during these months, and the waters seemingly yield less bounteous wealth to those who plunder their depths. Staple foods are harvested from the neighboring wilds and cultivated fields or orchards prior to the first signs of a potential cold snap, which might damage the sensitive skins of any fruit with rare but not unknown frosts.

Days of unity where oaths of loyalty are proclaimed to the throne of the Thakur occur with the changing of generations, usually at least once a decade so that neither the people of Prada Hanam or the rulers of Jalmeray dare to forget the nature of the colonial state. Military parades, clearly couched displays of the might that faces any who would dare foment rebellion against the state, stomp through the streets, chanting marching songs and speaking of battles long fought by their ancestors. While Jalmeray sees less open conflict as the years pass, more of the new generation view these occasions as mere ego-stroking exercises for those long past their prime. Regardless, oaths made on these days are primarily administrative. Few outside bureaucrats and ambassadors find themselves asked of anything more than a mere toast to the health of the Thakur and to the longevity of Jalmeray, under the glory of the heavens and upon a path to a more enlightened future.

PEOPLE OF PRADA HANAM

Few would ever accuse the people of Prada Hanam of being proud, though their humility isn't ubiquitous with those willing to let the world pass them by. They place their faith in the gods and in the sea, and through the many blessings and bounties both provide, they find little reason for arrogance. All things are given and received from the good fortune of either; to act boldly and demand further is to risk offending both and being humbled for one's greed. To many in Niswan, such beliefs make the merchants of Prada Hanam seem like fools or hypocrites, but away from the judging eyes of their neighbors, these traders are as shrewd as any mercantilist in the wider world.

The locals dress for the weather and for their labors in Prada Hanam, though the proximity of the sea and many corals and shells with which to make dyes ensure the citizenry are adorned in resplendent colors and nacre beads. Family heads and experts of their craft don phentos of shimmering, gold-threaded cloth that mark them as individuals confident in their role and deserving of respect. Residents of any gender expression wear kurtas and sarongs for everyday garb, comfortable enough to wick away the heat of a day's labor while providing cover from the occasional chilly ocean breeze.

Transcending all ancestral barriers and unifying the local culture of Prada Hanam is a love for rich colors and patterned clothing as a means for self-expression. Color doesn't imply status so much as what one seeks to honor and what one deeply values. Red and pink are worn by the young, the passionate, and the romantic, often adorned with embellishments of divine imagery, floral patterns, and depictions of cultural heroes. Such colored clothing is almost always inherited and handcrafted, allowing love to transcend generations, though block-printed kurta have become popular with younger peoples who seek to court controversy. Deep indigo is worn by miners and brewers who respect the process of the dye's creation, while also being worn by sailors, navigators, or those who view indigo as a patron color of the ocean. Yellow is worn primarily by the jullaha and the karigar, weavers and artists who seek to gain the immediate attention of those passing through the markets of Prada Hanam.

Despite this desire for clothing as a means of expression, jewelry and ostentatious shows of wealth are seldom worn by those who toil honestly; it's a point of hushed gossip if one displays their wealth during the working hours by way of bangles or kangan. Even so, only the wearing of the bajuband is viewed as appropriate, given

USEFUL VOCABULARY

Bajuband: An armlet, often marked with religious or traditional motifs.
Ghat: A flight of steps leading down to a river.
Kabaddi: A contact sport between teams.
Kangan: A type of bangle.
Maangtikka: A piece of jewelry composed of a chain with a hook on one end and a pendant on the other, typically worn on the forehead.
Nath: A piece of jewelry (usually a ring) worn through a piercing in the nose.
Phento: A turban.
Sadhu: A religious ascetic or holy person.

TROUBLING WISDOM

The followers of Irori rarely fight each other over divine philosophy, yet a growing sect of Irorans in Prada Hanam has begun causing concern. Called the Exhaustive Path, this faction claims that in order to truly free the self from all weakness and reach perfection, a follower must first commit and experience every sin possible. The Exhaustive Path has attracted many students who were otherwise put off by Irori's strict tenets, leading to an influx of self-indulgent and otherwise unsuitable acolytes into the church.

its unobtrusive place upon the upper arm. The justices in Prada Hanam festoon themselves with both bajuband and ceremonial maangtikka that display the imagery of their devoted god. The traditional Vudran nath is worn primarily by recent arrivals from Vudra or by the elderly who choose to display a deeper devotion to cultural traditions that their venerable bodies can no longer show by way of toil in the workforce. As such, to many, Prada Hanam looks to be a city of itinerant laborers and mariners of fickle fortune by the way they dress alone, with the depths and subtleties of these traditions lost upon newcomers to the city.

To those first arriving from the Vudran homeland, Prada Hanam is every bit a refreshing balm of familiar cultural aesthetics but mixed with the distant colonial freedoms of those unshackled from ancestral traditions beyond the easy measure of time. Humanoids often speaks the Vudrani tongue with accented loanwords taken from neighboring Geb, Nex, and Niswan. There's an air to the folk here, where their hearts seem unclouded by the deep, thousand-year-old clannish cultures of the Vudran castes—though in truth, such stratification still lingers heavily upon those who wish to posture for station and push down those they deem their lesser. The food is much the same as in the homeland, at least in terms of commonalities in shape, form, and function, though many who have known only luxurious feasts in Vudra have found the local delicacies to have a briny aftertaste that's often unpalatable. The desserts and street fare are often touched with salt as a show of thanks to all that comes from the sea, leaving many tourists to prefer the savory treats of Prada Hanam over the sweet for sake of a coherent taste.

Though the bulk of Prada Hanam is populated by humans, a sizable population of nagaji, nagas, and undines hold rank and sway within the city. In previous ages, the divides between ancestries was notable, biased around societal caste, wealth, service, and religious doctrine. In these more modern times and under the influence of the Resplendent House of Puloshik, such barriers exist only in the bleakest of hearts. The hopes for a more unified city and the peoples who dwell within it don't exist upon a knife's edge, but the ties that bind them have been known to fray when powerful agents seek greater dominion at the cost of the common good. This is to say nothing of the prejudices brought by new arrivals from Vudra, Nagajor, or elsewhere in the Impossible Lands. In time, with comfort and kind hearts, most will acclimate and accept their neighbors, but others are unable or unwilling to trust those they perceive as ancient foes or heretics to the doctrines to which they must frame their lives or face karmic damnation.

Nagaji who dwell in Prada Hanam are often held in suspicion by outsiders. They arrived in ages past as expatriates of the now-fallen Naga Empire's remnant enclaves, though unlike their cousins in Nagajor, they aren't bent to the state worship of Nalinivati or that nation's plots of serpentine supremacy. Most of the nagaji in Prada Hanam are born from the ancient stock of mariners who served naga envoys, and as such, many nagaji family units still work the harbors on the inherited vessels of their progenitor clans. To foreign nagaji, the respect those in Prada Hanam give to the Vudran deity Obari and the ocean borders on the heretical, and more than a few acts of animosity amongst kin have occurred throughout the ages for the perceived disrespect toward the First Mother of the nagaji.

Such is the status of nagaji that one currently holds the office of zamindar in Prada Hanam, serving as the local officiant administrator of the broader Maurya-Rahm system. Even so, the most respected nagaji office in the city is that of the harbor shipwright, an office that's currently being feuded over in

grumbled pleasantries between the House of Saagarmak and the House of Kumangam. Each believes themselves worthier of the position than the other, and both can't stomach that the marid shahzada Majumdar (page 219) effectively rules in their stead. Though little violence has yet to occur over this slight in position, it's only a matter of time before the Houses disrespect the zamindar's estate and strike out at the marid for the sake of petty pride.

Nagas, though still uncommon sights to most in the city, are present enough to influence politics and worry neighboring communities with their mere presence. Though some serve as envoys or spies on behalf of distant Nagajor, more view themselves as independent heirs to a far-flung cultural pocket where the aesthetic of the Naga Empire can be reborn without the cruelty of its legacy. This perspective, compounded with the population of nagaji in Prada Hanam, ensures that the serpentine children of Ravithra have reason to strive against the foreign influences of Nagajor while still seeking to serve its throne in some capacity for the hopes of a brighter tomorrow. The inner workings of this complicated relationship are seldom observed or appreciated by humanoids, and the presence of the Nagajor embassy within the city proper is more than enough reason for most to distrust the inscrutable aims of the nagas.

The presence of these ophidian ancestries has given many among the vishkanyas reason to conceal themselves when made to seek harborage or pass through Prada Hanam; even in these kinder eras, ancient fears seldom die quietly. For the sake of integrity, the zamindar has sought to coax kinder relations with cultural elders among vishkanyas throughout the Impossible Lands, but such talks have gained little ground and only serve to feed into the hateful slander that these efforts exist only to smuggle assassins into the city for some malign purpose.

Undines walk the ghats and stepwells of Prada Hanam, with most tracing their lineage to the long shahzada of the harbor who has had many lovers since the city was little more than a fishing village. Their aquatic features and often radiantly blue skin are viewed as blessings of Obari by the Vudran faithful, and many undines have found themselves married into positions of rank and power by virtue of their ancestry alone. This practice doesn't settle easily with much of the younger generations of undines who seek to define themselves beyond the influence of their alleged common ancestor marid and his long-lived reputation. Unlike their parents and grandparents who live openly in celebration of their identity, the youth find themselves drawn to behaviors akin to undines elsewhere in the world, becoming insular and seeking to better identify what they desire as a cultural group. Of all the people born of Prada Hanam, undines will surely make up the next generation of storied adventurers who seek their fates further afield in the world.

UNRULY STUDENTS

Lycanthropy touches the island of Jalmeray as well, though oddly, it seems to manifest in the forms of animals native to Vudra rather than indigenous to the island—a truth that leaves some wondering if the curse is present due to Jalmeray's colonialist past. While weretigers are killed or taken to Gho Vella, tiger beastkin are offered haven in Prada Hanam, so long as they live a life of faith and piety. Most tigerkin prove to have natures ill-suited for the task, and have earned a reputation as wild and egocentric adherents.

Though far from common, vanaras can be found in Prada Hanam. The children of Ragdya in the port are often immigrants from Vudra seeking new frontiers and opportunities in the west, much like other ancestries. Vanaras hold little in the way of cultural influence or political power in the city due to their finite numbers. They mirror many of the same beliefs and prejudices as their humanoid counterparts, though they're far more likely in equal spades to keep their mouths shut or boisterously make their opinions known if they think that might benefit their situation. They dress much in the same style as other citizens of Prada Hanam, save for a preference to display their colors upon their pants or sashes, allowing them to go topless in the occasionally sweltering heat.

Rakshasas, as little as anyone would like to admit, have always had a place within Prada Hanam, though only in recent years have they begun to exert a more overt influence. They claim to have trained the first conqueror of the city in the arts of malice and warfare, and they celebrate the doubt and anger such a claim casts upon others. Now more than ever, they seek information on the Murmur Dome, believing it to be some site of great portent for their people. Most among their kind make good use of their shapechanging abilities to go unseen or to stalk the streets in bestial form, but those who claim invitation to Prada Hanam take joy in wearing carved masks of blackened iron, allowing them to wear faces of grotesque and monstrous forms that even the most devout Iroran would gaze upon in awe. Though the zamindar treats with these fiends as he treats with any presence or power in the city, the rakshasas seek only audiences with humans of high caste birth to whom they might intimidate and coerce by mere proximity alone. Rakshasas validate the archaic castes, and in doing so diminish their purity. As surely as the sun sets upon the sea, rakshasas will inevitably corrupt more and more powerful individuals to their malignant plots, and the city shall be lesser for it.

To non-Garundi visitors, Prada Hanam is a lesson in how little it is they know of the world beyond their northern borders. The people here, humanoid or otherwise, are distinctly interwoven in generations of fear, feuds, hopeful alliances, and common comforts of a shared root cultural background that all take from differently—for better or for worse—in the years since Prada Hanam's founding. To the folk of Casmaron beyond Jalmeray's borders, Prada Hanam best exemplifies the glory of Khiben-Sald, the brutality of his colonial aspirations, and the means through which time might heal wounds, enough for the children of such deeds to seek lives beyond the shadow of their progenitors.

CULTURE

Prada Hanam is only as freed from the yoke of its Vudran origins as it allows itself to be, and even centuries after its initial colonization, the city struggles to reconcile how loyal it wishes to remain toward ancestral traditions. Though once a humble fishing village, only marids and undines can claim any true connection to that bygone era. To all others, Prada Hanam exists culturally only in what it was to their immediate parentage and what it might be tomorrow. The city is always on the verge of progress, ready for change brought about by younger generations; however, lasting change seems to always be undone by one force or another that demands tradition be obeyed, preventing a shift in the comfortable balance of powers and avoiding some from having less so that others might have more.

The societal castes are fading, no matter what the rich and the powerful would like to pretend. Too many married into ancient fishing clans, too

many more died at sea when the colonization was underway. What it means to be high caste is diluted, and even the most exalted of nobles who dwell in Prada Hanam know they would be reviled as anathema in the eyes of those they claim as equals in Vudra proper. Those who cling to the castes, who see their children threaded and their station made a linchpin of their identity, do so for fear that today's servant might be tomorrow's neighbor.

The influx of nagaji immigrants and their naga contemporaries further tarnishes the vaunting of the caste system, as humanoids were held only as slaves and servants during the ancient days of the Naga Empire. Ophidian folk are more than comfortable leaving those days in the past to enjoy the new equality of life in Prada Hanam, but their presence and its implication upon the dying tradition of the importance of caste doesn't go unnoticed by those who play at nobility. That the zamindar skirts the traditions of both caste and ancestry further upsets those who lobby the throne of Niswan in the hopes of a return to a hegemony in which only they benefit.

But for the young and those unsullied by concerns of divinely appointed societal station, Prada Hanam is a bastion of hope, and it has always looked to its youth with joy for what tomorrow will bring. Children of all origins are schooled together in Iroran-backed institutions to ensure literacy, though such schools provide their services only until the cusp of adolescence, wherein most students will be educated in the trade or the chosen method of their parents. When the workday ends and the youth are freed from their obligations, they engage in bouts of kabaddi, running wild through the streets or making sport of it within the waterways if no space can otherwise be found. Many youths in Niswan look upon their cousins in Prada Hanam with jealousy for the freedom to truly be young and unburdened, even if only for a few scant hours a day.

The undines in Prada Hanam, of all groups within the city, are the most open about their political desire for change while simultaneously remaining the most closed off to those seeking to better discern them. The many children of the shahzada marids grow increasingly bothered by their ancient, recalcitrant progenitor and seek to live beyond his shadowing influence. Some within the Dharmic Trishastra endeavor to implicate growing unrest within the undine social enclaves to the organized criminal efforts of the undine elder known as "Auntie" Kotaghat. Even to the most law-abiding undine, Kotaghat is respected for having done that which few others have and making herself known beyond her parentage. Criminal or otherwise, she inspires precedent, and for this the undines know that it will take boldness to truly define who they are as a people within Prada Hanam.

Those less concerned by the politics of the young find their joy in the stories of old, as Likha's faithful are known to put on many wondrous productions throughout the city's playhouses. One can hear the tales of ancient Vudran heroes down one alley and witness the pantomime of Khiben-Sald's conquest down another. Leather-doll puppetry has increased in popularity after a visiting dignitary with a wayang bride made their stop in Prada Hanam on their way to Niswan proper—though were any wayang to witness this art, they would find the silhouettes' designs lacking the lavish metal filigrees that make these puppet shows far more a matter of light than shadow.

Those who remain in Prada Hanam long enough must develop a taste for local cuisine, or they'll find themselves eating primarily raw and vegetarian

BORHANI (SAVORY BUTTERMILK)

This drink resembles a drinkable raita and is served along with rich meals, like biryani, to aid with digestion and to beat the heat.

1 oz mint leaves
1 oz cilantro/coriander leaves
2–3 tbsp water (for blending)
500 ml buttermilk
2–3 tbsp yogurt
1 tsp black salt
1/2 tsp salt
1/4 tsp pepper
1/2 tsp red chili powder

Blend the mint and cilantro to a smooth paste, adding water by the tablespoon to help puree it. In a large bowl, whisk the puree in with the rest of ingredients until well combined. Adjust with more seasoning if needed. Pour into tall glasses and serve with ice.

dishes to avoid the local flavor. Curries and powdered turmeric are ubiquitous, but the folk of the port have a true appreciation for salt blends that find their way into every dish and cast such foods into a bouquet of brined palettes. Every house and neighborhood has their preferences, and after a few months in port, the true subtleties and accentuations are easily noted and often enjoyed—but to some, every meal tastes like a drink of seawater, and no amount of panch phoron and cardamom can hide it. The lone exception is the local gulab jamun, which is sickly sweet and often laced with pomegranate to the point of looking bloodied.

Foreign methods of cookery are held as a novelty to be appreciated for the luxury that they are. Visitors from afar who are willing to cook a foreign delicacy are well-remembered for the unexpected tastes they provide, such that an Ulfen's rømmegrøt has become a famous topic of a popular nursery rhyme. Strangely, at least to Vudran visitors or recent immigrants, the traditional meals of the homeland, cooked in the style of one's ancestors, seldom receive such celebration or fanfare—if anything, they're often gossiped about in private for being of inferior taste to the local equivalent.

Despite the many barriers and traditions that divide the citizens of Prada Hanam, there's a single point on which all universally agree: there's no greater aspiration for those who wish to live a life of integrity than fishing and maritime endeavors. This belief has remained true since the start of the colony, and all have faith it will live on now as it always has. The fleets that sailed under Khiben-Sald during the initial conquest, the nagaji vessels of the then-falling remnants of the Naga Empire, the native undine workers, and Prada Hanam's original fishing culture as a village have given way to a local culture well-versed in all manner of vessels. Even a drunk half-drowned in the ghats can still clearly read the maritime flag cant of ships in the harbor, and both elders and infants alike can seemingly taste a turn in the weather upon the wind. Nautical ambitions outweigh even the most deeply embedded prejudices, for all beings have much to teach and more to learn when it comes to plundering the Obari for the many gifts it so freely gives.

GOVERNMENT

Under the auspices of the Resplendent House of Puloshik does Prada Hanam currently flourish. The nagaji philosopher Bhaidrun (page 218) holds the office of zamindar tightly in his clawed grasp, all too aware that should he act out of accord, the risk of flared passions and perceived tyranny could implicate all of his people for his own misstep. He has maintained his station through staunch devotion to the whole of the Vudrani pantheon, something that has given others the perception that he's a learned and wise man who wouldn't court controversy against the more traditionalist bloodlines of the city, nor their relatives in Niswan.

That perception hasn't stopped the schemes of lesser nobles who believe any being of Ravithra's brood and progeny are inherently sinful and unworthy of rulership. The Resplendent House of Puloshik has many enemies across the castes; some spite the zamindar for ruling beyond his station, while others scorn him for sitting upon a throne they dreamed for themselves. In the huddled backrooms of hookah lounges and villa gardens, they scheme and rumormonger. Their insidious rhetoric carries easily among the disenfranchised, promoting a belief that Bhaidrun and his household hold oaths of loyalty to the distant state of Nagajor and their serpentine supremacist agenda. This issue is further compounded by way of the zamindar's trusted advisor, Ishvakunda (page 219). A lunar naga and envoy from Nagajor, Ishvakunda's aloof nature compounds mistrust from those who would sooner treat with knives than diplomatic words. No matter how well Bhaidrun has proven himself as an administrator, he'll forever be viewed as a proxy for foreign agendas and vicious spycraft by those who desire the power he wields.

Despite such known threats for usurpation and conspiracy, law reigns heavily in Prada Hanam through a system of community justices and mandatory service in the ranks by those affixed to religious sects. Devotees of Vineshvakhi, Ravithra, Janasini, Gruhastha, and Matravash are charged with patrolling their neighborhoods and of dispensing timely trial justice in accordance with a cooperative pact known as the Dharmic Trishastra. Under the Dharmic Trishastra, the justice of Prada Hanam is served by way of one devotee's legal code prosecuting the accused and another devotee's legal code defending. As such, it's an erudite, complex, and often more theological exploration of morality that sees hopeful mercies in exchange for broader understandings. Yet in so doing, the contempt of greater theological concepts (such as the malice between Ravithra, Janasini, and Gruhastha) sometimes manifests, often causing devotees to request to serve as legal champions so they might defend the honor of their patron deity as well as their client. Trial by combat is a well-respected tradition within Prada Hanam, provided one has correctly invoked it.

Notably, within this legal system, it's the devoted champions of Matravash, the deity of Vudra's Matra River, who often hold the most sway and influence. They patrol the ghats and stepwells, keep peace within the harbor, and attend to the guardianship of the Murmur Dome, ensuring all who enter know well the risk and accept it openly. Though all the justices of Prada Hanam bear the city's ocean palette as a uniform cloak, only the Matravashi wear helmets painted with embellishments of lotus flowers. As champions of the oppressed by virtue of their patron goddess, as well as their areas of influence, those who run afoul of other justices often hope to find the Matravashi as their defenders.

Despite, or perhaps due to, the cumbersome legalism of various faiths, Prada Hanam bends the knee to the Thakur of Niswan more so than any other city in Jalmeray. This deep devotion to the ruling power of the Thakur has long rankled the ambitions of many noble families who disdain the idea of the Thakur's hand being present so far flung from his palaces and harams. Envoys to the port of Prada Hanam have long seen fit to manipulate and posture for hospitality in the belief that should they not receive it, the zamindar's office will be reflected poorly in the courts of Niswan. In truth, the politics are quite simple. The Resplendent House of Puloshik knows that in the event of a rebellion, invasion, or other incursion, it would do them better to be overtly accommodating of the Thakur—to make him a friend to Prada Hanam, no matter the cost.

Even with its many coded laws and interpretations, the harbor bows foremost to the laws of the sea and to the governance of smugglers and thieves. The maenads who dwell in Prada Hanam, few in number that they are, hold the immediate respect of most who ply the ocean to make a living. Those who are

AQUATIC MASTERY

One of the ministerial treasures of Prada Hanam's zamindar is a magical orb believed to call the creatures of the sea and compel them to act as guardians. Zamindar Bhaidrun has never used the treasure and seems likely to resist ever doing so, but rumors and temptation often attract thieves from both far-off locales such as Qadira and foolhardy fishers right on Prada Hanam's shores.

BHAIDRUN

devout to Matravash are viewed beyond reproach, and those who indulge in petty criminality are seldom crossed.

Cartels and rackets from across the Impossible Lands have long since tried to gain a foothold in Prada Hanam, though few have had such luck due to the combined efforts of "Auntie" Kotaghat, who runs local crime with a fury befitting someone half her age and with a viciousness appropriate to one who has lived as long as she has. The elderly undine is a master of bribes and makes fast friends with anyone who might prove useful to her, discarding them if they're too vile or foreign for her tastes or making sure they know she isn't to be crossed if they're a local. A known element, she has survived many trials by the Dharmic Trishastra, quotes scripture like the gods might speak to her, and holds the deepest enmity of the jatisattra who serve Ravithra (page 318), who view her as the embodiment of a perfidious personage.

Locations

The following is a sample of some of the most prominent locations found in Prada Hanam.

Harbor Town

The Harbor Town was born of the ancient fishing village and has long since encapsulated the bulk of the city beyond the ghats and the vaunted noble houses that gaze out upon the water. The once-ramshackle wooden shanties of its origin have long since been replaced by quarried and resilient stone, hewn to withstand the waves and expanded into the Obari in the form of break walls and neighborhood quays. Undines and nagaji make their homes here in equal measure, tending to their ships, pearl diving, and plundering the sea for what it so charitably gives.

The harbor bustles with life, and though visitors might often overlook it in favor of the districts built along the Seaspray Ghat, the harbor is truly the beating heart of Prada Hanam. Visitors from afar, agents of the Aspis Consortium, and wayward immigrants often from distant Vudra or Nagajor ply their trades here in search of a new life. Buskers find easy work in the open-air markets or aboard undermanned vessels, provided their bodies are sturdy and their hearts willing. Those unable to labor in such ways are often overlooked, serve at the behest of criminal sorts who'll acknowledge their existence, or made victim to fiendish agents who'll gladly pay for a pound of flesh.

The Murmur Dome

The Murmur Dome is what most outsiders know about Prada Hanam. This imposing structure consists of a large domed complex surrounded by four towers that rise to twice the height of its center. It appeared auspiciously overnight in 2821 AR and catapulted the tiny fishing

village into the sprawl it is today. None have ever reached what lurks within the deepest depths of its hold; a malevolent force within turns flesh to stone and bones to iron, slowly but agonizingly killing all who plunder its darkened halls. Despite the city's growth in the ages since, the Murmur Dome seems to tower over all in Prada Hanam like a silent tyrant, ever watchful, whispering in the minds of those in the city's vicinity.

In recent years, the dome has become of concern to both the zamindar and to the fiendish rakshasas who make subtle claims that what lies within was promised to them by Khiben-Sald. They claim the titular murmur to be the whispered promise that the rakshasas would hold this structure as a seat of power. The zamindar has invited the fiends who make this claim to take it, and thus far, none have been bold enough to accept the challenge. Adventurers and scholars view the structure with greed and suspicion, but as little profit has been found within, few dare entry. The Murmur Dome remains observed daily by all, consciously or by mere routine, for fear that something might emerge. Be it monster, riddle, god, or a single ancient coin—whatever might be born from its gray stone bowels will surely spell ruin, by malevolent hands or by the greed of daring fools.

Seaspray Ghat

The Seaspray Ghat runs through the inland cityscape, with branching lesser ghats and stepwells that weave and line the city's grid beyond the harbor. Homes are built in the trabeate style—constructed of reinforced brick, lime, and sandstone and painted in stunning reds or blues with frescoed entry gates to the finer estates. Lavish steps lead down from the city streets to the Seaspray Ghat, allowing for easy access to water for laundering, drinking, bathing, and escape from the often-sweltering summer humidity.

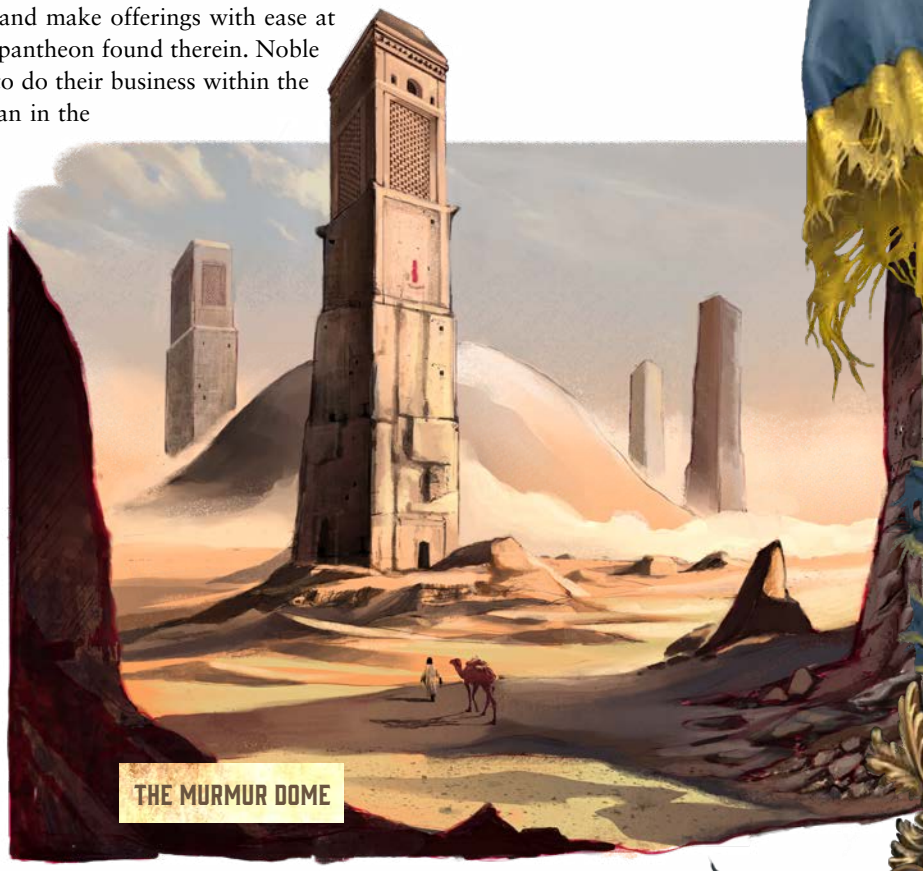
The Murmur Dome rests between the Seaspray Ghat and its point of egress to the shore of the Harbor Town, further separating the city between the laborers who make up the bulk of the populace and ply the sea and the landed city-dwellers. Those who dwell upon the Seaspray Ghat consider themselves pious sorts, for they can visit and make offerings with ease at the copious votive plinths to the Vudrani pantheon found therein. Noble merchants from broader Jalmeray prefer to do their business within the proximity of the Seaspray Ghat rather than in the Harbor Town.

Zamindar's Rise

Zamindar's Rise rests upon a great hill overlooking the city proper. Its ample walls of sturdy stone cordon off individual estates of the upper castes and mark the various embassies to foreign states that line the paved streets to the manse of the zamindar's noble house. Khiben-Sald never constructed a summer palace here, but many in Niswan who look upon the marble villas and carved statue niches think he would've if gifted with enough foresight to do so. As a district, it's far from lively, and seldom do the festival songs and merriment of holidays in Prada Hanam carry upon the winds to disturb the Rise's denizens. It has never been welcoming to the poor or to the unknown, and those who dwell within would just as soon keep it this way.

Dearth of Faith

Jalmeray, for all its paradisiacal bluster, festers from within. The soul of its people is winnowed away by the sophist rhetoric of savvy asuras or broken by the unkind truths of the brutal realities of a colonial state offered by the rakshasas. In an age heralded forth by the death of humanity's patron god, the fiends pose the question: what worth is to be found in the fettering power of the divine? Why not seek to actualize the self, to find a deep bliss and never let it go? Though the faithful attempt to remain steadfast, such influences color the change in generations and appeal greatly to factions like the Aspis Consortium, who can endear themselves more easily to those ensorcelled by such earthly pursuits.



THE MURMUR DOME

NEIGHBORING CITIZENS

Aquatic creatures, especially the locathah that swim in Jalmeray's warm waters, often surface among Prada Hanam's ghats looking to socialize or trade. These visits have recently increased in frequency, with merchants seeking powerful weapons in the hopes of destroying a monstrous and tyrannical beast that lies to the south of the island.

ISHVAKUNDA

Thus, the concerns whispered about by the higher caste residents seldom vary, though they grow with increasing frequency—the zamindar is a nagaji and not a proper Vudran official of regal birth, so his outreach to those who defy the caste system's hegemonic hold seems more like an existential threat than the wishful rabble-rousing of the undesirable masses.

Worse still is that the zamindar has seen fit to entertain naga ambassadors and speak to them in matters of state, a slight of decorum that dishonors the many who suffered under the Naga Empire of old. It's enough to drive many from their palatial manses and into the darkened parlors of rakshasas who lurk in the city proper. The first marriage between upper caste–member and fiend is all but inevitable.

IMPORTANT FACES

Zamindar **Bhaidrun** (LN male nagaji monk) is a private man, and for this quality, many accuse him of being a proxy agent to the influences of Nagajor. In truth, the nagaji statesman is well aware of his exalted house's precarious position and how any action might easily justify a chain of would-be coups and damaging slanders in the heads of well-threaded nobles. Bhaidrun never wished to inherit this position. His ambitions have long been that of any Iroran scholar: he seeks perfection of his art, mastery of the self, and peace with his surroundings so that he might reach enlightenment. But, burdened with office, he knows that to shirk his responsibility would tarnish his karma and that he can trust no other to tame their ambitions and serve the people of Prada Hanam. Thus, he languishes in his estate, biding the slings and arrows of his rivals, and acting overtly so the accusations of subversive deeds are heard with doubtful hearts.

Bhaidrun has the wiry frame of an ascetic, his scales a melanistic krait's banding. He often wears the devotional angarkha of a traditionalist sadhu, though he marks his brow with white henna, the mark of the Maurya-Rahm. His voice is like the soft rasping of tides upon the shore, and he prefers to listen when others would have him speak. Of late, he has turned his mind to the riddle of the Murmur Dome. He treats it as though it were some Iroran koan that might bring him closer to understanding the wider nature of the world and perhaps provide him with a means to truly unite Prada Hanam, unsullied by ancient grudges or societal posturing.

Family is everything to the criminal underworld in Prada Hanam, and no one would dare openly cross their "auntie." **Bua Kotaghat** (CN female undine human crime lord) rules with a kind hand and a scathing tongue, even so deep into her fading years. Once an undine pirate as fierce as a panther in the night, and with a cunning just as sharp, she has long since traded her cutlass for a walking cane. Age hasn't dampened her power, though. She knows too many hidden shames and unspoken dealings to be deposed, and the many younger rogues who stalk the streets view her for what she is—the only woman who would give them safe harbor, pay them what they're worth, and treat them like her own. Kotaghat knows she isn't long for this world, and she fears what bitter succession will follow her passing. She'll court whatever fiend will offer her continued dominion over the city's thieves, unless a worthy and kind successor is found.

Gyanpora (N female vanara holy woman) is a disillusioned woman. Once a high-ranking monk who held Ragdya close to her heart, she has fallen in recent years to the manipulations of the

asuras who have caused her to view herself as an entity upon the path to enlightened divinity. Gyanpora preaches in the market while offering sage advice and food to the hungry. She claims this world is but a dream, a fading folly born in malice where many suffer while others rule from distant thrones where they care not for the plight of the many. Deeply serious in speech, she reveals vulnerability only when the doubts she holds against the heavens are outweighed by the doubts that have poisoned her heart. She's correct in most things, but in this lies a deep hubris.

An envoy of Nagajor holds office in Prada Hanam through bureaucratic power and by knowing the true worth of the Thakur's power. **Ishvakunda** (N female lunar naga advisor) dwells within a sandstone villa overlooking the sea. She's delighted by all things historic, caring more for the petty stories of lives well lived than for the mysteries of the Impossible Lands. A devout worshipper of Ravithra, she emulates her goddess by seeking to chart the karmic deeds of peasants, urchins, and heroes alike—in hubris believing she might know their fate. Her compatriot naga view her with paranoia, a threat to the ambitions of Nagajor and their diplomatic alliances with Jalmeray. Ishvakunda couldn't conceive of such betrayal. She seldom receives diplomatic work to perform, and in service to the Mother of Nagas, she believes herself incapable of hindering the aspirations of the naga homeland.

A towering tataka rakshasa, the heinous sellsword known as **Jagabattuk** (LE male rakshasa mercenary) does little to hide his true form. The fiend is nearly 12 feet tall with skin as blue as the sea and wild eyes like a crocodile run rapacious with bloodlust. Though cruel and sadistic in his military pursuits, Jagabattuk is no fool. He doesn't court a reputation that would attract slayers. He instead portrays himself as a humble herald for "the lord of lords, not yet again reborn" and answers no further questions in that regard. He takes interest in rumors regarding the Murmur Dome and its cursed depths. In truth, he believes that only one whose heart is filled with the whispering tyranny of a rakshasa will ever truly plunder its depths, for only a heart already colonized in cruel steel could survive the cursed dweomers the Dome must surely hold.

The lord of the harbor is a marid by the name of **Majumdar** (N male marid noble), one of the shahzada by birthright as much as by deed. He never truly leaves the waters, claiming the whole of the harbor as his rightful domain and taking his tithe from sailors—which he in turn gives a share of to the local government, as is his duty, though it's justified as a kindness among neighbors. Majumdar was bound to oaths of neighborly conduct and good fortune to the fishermen of Prada Hanam in its more ancient and humble days. He finds the current ruler negligible in the grander schemes of history, and he prefers it that way. Humble men who don't seek to make waves are far easier to work beside than those whose minds are clouded by ambition.

The calikang who sits upon the ghat outside the Murmur Dome of Prada Hanam calls herself **Viswas** (LN female calikang guardian), and she has little to say to most. She bears terrible scars, arcane scorching, and fouler marks across her inhuman form. One of her four arms lays upon her lap, frozen metallic in a meditative position. She hides her face with a mournful mask, the features malformed and turned teal with age and oxidation. If forced to speak, she does so. Viswas claims only to be performing her purpose, a duty from which she won't be dissuaded nor easily moved. She hears a whispering song upon the tides and uttering from the Dome. To the most blessed of Vinesvakhi, she'll share a fear: that which is held within the Murmur Dome is a bleak treasure from the heavens, one that would spell ruin if retrieved. The truth is uncertain, but she would do anything in her power to ensure none penetrate the Murmur Dome with greed in their hearts.

BUA KOTAGHAT

GYANPORA

JAGABATTUK

SHAHZADA MAJUMDAR

ADVENTURING IN JALMERAY

As the gateway to Vudra in the Inner Sea, Jalmeray's markets are a hotbed of foreign merchants looking for unusual wares. Adventurers from Jalmeray are often stopped during their travels by collectors seeking to examine an unusual creature or piece of gear.

CERU SPECIFIC FAMILIAR

Cerus are mortal-made creatures in the shape of tiny, blue elephants with spikes on their feet, tail, and ears. They're highly sought-after amongst circles of the affluent.

CERU

N TINY BEAST

Required Number of Abilities 4

Granted Abilities cantrip connection (*guidance*, *mage hand*), darkvision, touch telepathy

Created Magic Your ceru familiar grants you the *mage hand* and *guidance* cantrips via the cantrip connection granted ability. If one or more of these cantrips isn't on your spell list, you can replace the cantrip or cantrips not on your spell list with a cantrip or cantrips from your spell list instead.

Turn of Fate ❖❖ (divination) **Frequency** once per day; **Range** 30 feet **Effect** Your ceru shifts the scales of fortune for one target's next attempt at an attack roll, saving throw, or skill check. If targeted with bad fortune, the target attempts a Will save against your class DC or spell DC, whichever is higher, with effects depending on the result of their save; this is a misfortune effect. If targeted with good fortune, the target rolls twice and uses the better result; this is a fortune effect. Regardless of outcome, targets are immune to Turn of Fate for one day.

Success The target is unaffected.

Failure The target rolls twice and uses the worse result.

Critical Failure As failure, except the target is affected for the next three attempts.

NEW WEAPONS

While these weapons are uncommon elsewhere, characters from Jalmeray or Vudra have access to the chakri, donchak, kalis, panabas, and zulfikar. The visap has the injection trait.

Injection This weapon can be filled with an injury poison. Immediately after a successful attack with the weapon, you can inject the target with the loaded poison with a single Interact action. Refilling the weapon with a new substance requires three Interact actions and uses both hands.

Weapon Descriptions

Broadspear: The spearhead of this weapon is in the shape of a long leaf.

Chakri: A chakri is a small, circular throwing weapon with a sharp outer edge.

Dandpatta: This long, narrow blade is attached to a gauntlet that also acts as a handguard.

Donchak: This long metal pole has a large chakram attached at the end. A mechanism within the handle allows the wielder to launch and retract the chakram, which is connected with wire to the inside of the weapon. The donchak is seldom seen used outside training scenarios.

Gada: A large spherical head with a spike on top sits mounted to a long shaft.

Kalis: A larger version of the asymmetrical, wavy-bladed kris, this double-edged sword is effective at creating grievous injuries.

TABLE 2: MELEE WEAPONS

Martial Weapons	Price	Damage	Bulk	Hands	Group	Weapon Traits
Dandpatta	8 sp	1d6 S	L	1	Sword	Agile, twin, uncommon
Kris	7 sp	1d4 P	L	1	Knife	Agile, deadly d8, finesse
Panabas	1 gp	1d6 S	1	1	Sword	Forceful, sweep, two-hand d10
Talwar	2 gp	1d6 S	1	1	Sword	Forceful, two-hand d10, versatile P
Thorn whip	6 sp	1d4 P	1	1	Brawling	Disarm, finesse, ghoran, reach, trip, uncommon
Advanced Weapons	**Price**	**Damage**	**Bulk**	**Hands**	**Group**	**Weapon Traits**
Broadspear	2 gp	1d10 P	2	2	Spear	Reach, sweep, versatile S
Donchak	4 gp	1d8 S	2	2	Polearm	Hampering, reach, reload 1, tethered, thrown 20 ft., uncommon
Gada	1 gp	1d8 B	1	1	Club	Backswing, two-hand d12, vanara
Kalis	3 gp	1d8 S	1	1	Sword	Deadly d8, uncommon, versatile P
Visap	2 gp	1d4 S	L	1	Knife	Agile, finesse, injection, uncommon, versatile P, vishkanya
Zulfikar	4 gp	1d6 S	1	1	Sword	Deadly d8, disarm, sweep, uncommon, versatile P

TABLE 3: RANGED WEAPONS

Advanced Weapons	Price	Damage	Range	Reload	Bulk	Hands	Group	Weapon Traits
Chakri	2 cp	1d4 S	30 feet	0	–	1	Dart	Agile, deadly d8, thrown, uncommon

Kris: This blade features multiple curves in a serpentine pattern set on a wide, asymmetrical base, its hilt and sheath often intricately decorated.

Panabas: The large blade of this weapon, also known as a nawi, curves inward to provide extra chopping power, ending in a thick square shape.

Talwar: Longer, and with less curve than a scimitar, this blade is ubiquitous in guard and mercenary groups throughout Casmaron.

Thorn whip: Carefully woven from plant fibers, the thorn whip sports small spikes that protrude from various locations.

Visap: Two small, curved blades extend from a single hilt. There's a hollow area inside that vishkanyas can use to store an unused dose of their blood, or other poison, for the future.

Zulfikar: This curved blade has a bifurcated tip, creating what looks like a second blade. It's a customary practice among zulfikar users to have religious or personal inscriptions upon the blade.

STUDENT OF PERFECTION

The four Houses of Perfection in Jalmeray constantly discover new techniques and abilities to innovate and perfect their styles, and to gain the upper hand in the next Challenge of Sky and Heaven. The abilities presented in the Student of Perfection archetype (*Pathfinder Lost Omens: World Guide* 83) are but a small taste of these expansive styles. The following archetype feats present more options for a Student of Perfection, but there are countless more hidden techniques, some possessed only by individual monks or passed from master to student in secret.

PERFECT WEAPONRY — FEAT 4

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Student of Perfection Dedication

You gain the Monastic Weaponry monk class feat. You can use melee monk weapons with any Student of Perfection feats or Student of Perfection focus spells that normally require unarmed attacks.

PERFECT RESISTANCE — FEAT 8

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Student of Perfection Dedication

You gain resistance equal to half your level to all damage from effects with the appropriate trait for your School of Perfection: fire for Unblinking Flame, water for Unbreaking Waves, air for Unfolding Wind, and earth for Untwisting Iron. After using a Student of Perfection ki spell, the resistance increases to be equal to your level for 1 round.

PERFECT KI EXPERT — FEAT 10

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Student of Perfection Dedication

You gain an appropriate ki spell for your School of Perfection: *unblinking flame aura* for Unblinking Flame, *unbreaking wave vapor* for Unbreaking Waves, *unfolding wind buffet* for Unfolding Wind, or *untwisting iron roots* for Untwisting Iron. Increase the number of Focus Points in your focus pool by 1. You become an expert in occult spell DCs and occult spell attack rolls.

PERFECT KI EXEMPLAR — FEAT 14

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Student of Perfection Dedication

You gain an appropriate ki spell for your School of Perfection: *unblinking flame emblem* for Unblinking Flame, *unbreaking wave barrier* for Unbreaking Waves, *unfolding wind blitz* for Unfolding Wind, or *untwisting iron augmentation* for Untwisting Iron. Increase the number of Focus Points in your focus pool by 1. You become an expert in occult spell DCs and occult spell attack rolls.

PERFECT KI GRANDMASTER — FEAT 18

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Perfect Ki Expert or Perfect Ki Exemplar

You gain an appropriate ki spell for your School of Perfection: *unblinking flame ignition* for Unblinking Flame, *unbreaking wave containment* for Unbreaking Waves, *unfolding wind crash* for Unfolding Wind, or *untwisting iron pillar* for Untwisting Iron. Increase the number of Focus Points in your focus pool by 1. You become a master in occult spell DCs and occult spell attack rolls.

Student of Perfection Focus Spells

UNBLINKING FLAME AURA — FOCUS 5

UNCOMMON DIVINATION FIRE HEALING

Cast ❖ verbal

Duration 1 minute

You focus your sight inside and call on your inner fire to grant you warmth, steady your vision, and soothe your body. You recover 15 Hit Points. For the duration, you gain a +2 status bonus on Perception checks and resistance 10 to cold.

Heightened (+1) You recover an additional 3 Hit Points, and the resistance to cold increases by 2.

UNBLINKING FLAME EMBLEM FOCUS 7

UNCOMMON DIVINATION FIRE

Cast ◆

Trigger Your last action was a successful Strike against an enemy.

Duration 3 rounds

You emblazon the target with a fiery sigil that projects your sight and your flame onto them, allowing you and your allies to track their movements and making it easier to hit them. Attack rolls against the target gain a +1 status bonus, and successful Strikes against the target deal 1d6 fire damage, and 1d10 persistent fire damage on a critical hit. However, you're flat-footed against other enemies, as the information from the emblem distracts you. The emblem takes your full attention; if you use *unblinking flame emblem* again before the original duration expires, the new casting replaces the previous casting.

Heightened (9th) The fire damage increases to 1d8, and the persistent fire damage on a critical hit increases to 1d12.

UNBLINKING FLAME IGNITION FOCUS 9

UNCOMMON DIVINATION FIRE

Cast ↷ verbal

Trigger A foe reduces you to half your Hit Points or fewer.

Duration 3 rounds

You feel the most alive when pushed into a corner, as the insights and vision granted by the flame stoke into overdrive. Your body begins to emit a blazing aura of flames. You gain greater darkvision, low-light vision, and the ability to see invisible creatures. You gain a fly Speed equal to your land Speed as you launch flame from your aura to soar through the sky. You become quickened, and you can use the extra action each round only to Strike or Fly using your flames. Any creature who starts their turn within 5 feet of you takes 1d12 fire damage.

UNBREAKING WAVE BARRIER FOCUS 7

UNCOMMON ABJURATION WATER

Cast ◆ verbal

Area 5-foot emanation

Saving Throw Fortitude

Duration sustained up to 1 minute

You create a protective circle around yourself that repels your foes. You gain a +1 status bonus to AC. Any creature other than you within the area, or attempting to move into the area, must attempt a Fortitude saving throw; a creature needs to attempt the Fortitude saving throw only once each round. If a creature pushed by *unbreaking wave barrier* would be pushed into a solid barrier or another creature, it stops at that point and takes 2d6 bludgeoning damage for every additional 5 feet it would've been pushed. On subsequent rounds, the first time you Sustain this Spell each round, you can increase the radius of the barrier by 5 feet.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature isn't pushed, but the space within the barrier is difficult terrain for it.

Failure The creature is pushed 10 feet, and the space within the barrier is difficult terrain for it.

Critical Failure The creature is pushed 20 feet and knocked prone, and the space within the barrier is difficult terrain for it.

UNBREAKING WAVE CONTAINMENT FOCUS 9

UNCOMMON EVOCATION INCAPACITATION WATER

Cast ◆◆◆ verbal

Range 30 feet; **Targets** up to 4 creatures

Duration sustained up to 1 minute

You wrap enemies in four strands of water. When you cast the spell, make a spell attack roll against the targets. On a success, they're immobilized until the spell ends or they Escape; on a critical success, they're also restrained until the spell ends or they Escape. Each target that's immobilized or restrained also takes 10d6 bludgeoning damage from the constricting waves, with a basic Fortitude save. The first time each subsequent round when you Sustain the Spell, if all the targets aren't immobilized or restrained, make a spell attack roll against any targets who are free but remain within range, with the same effects as when you cast the spell, immobilizing or restraining them depending on your spell attack roll. Creatures who are immobilized or restrained take 10d6 bludgeoning damage with a basic Fortitude save.

UNBREAKING WAVE VAPOR FOCUS 5

UNCOMMON ABJURATION WATER

Cast ↷ verbal

Trigger You're targeted by an attack made by an attacker you can see.

You're concealed against the triggering attack and gain a +2 circumstance bonus to AC against it. After the triggering attack is complete, you can Step if the triggering attack hit or Step twice if the triggering attack missed.

UNFOLDING WIND BLITZ FOCUS 7

UNCOMMON AIR TRANSMUTATION

Cast ◆◆ verbal

You blitz forward so quickly that you soar through the air, and nothing can react to you. Fly up to twice your Speed. This movement doesn't trigger reactions. At any point along the way, you can make Strikes with an unarmed attack against up to three different targets within your reach. You increase your multiple attack penalty for these attacks only after completing all of the attacks.

UNFOLDING WIND BUFFET FOCUS 5

UNCOMMON AIR EVOCATION

Cast ◆◆ verbal

You surround your unarmed attacks with the speed and force of air. Make three unarmed Strikes against the same target. If at least one was a successful hit, the target must attempt a Fortitude save or be pushed back 5 feet for each normal hit from the buffet, plus 10 feet for each critical hit.

Critical Success The target is unaffected.
Success The target is pushed back half the normal distance.
Failure The target is pushed back the normal distance.
Critical Failure The target is pushed back double the normal distance and then knocked prone.

UNFOLDING WIND CRASH FOCUS 9

UNCOMMON AIR EVOCATION MOVE

Cast ◆◆ verbal

Saving Throw basic Reflex

You jump up to 120 feet in any direction and then deal 18d6 bludgeoning damage to creatures within a 20-foot emanation after you land, with a basic Reflex save. Creatures who critically fail are also knocked prone.

Heightened (10th) The damage increases to 20d6.

UNTWISTING IRON AUGMENTATION FOCUS 7

UNCOMMON EARTH TRANSMUTATION

Cast ◆ verbal

Duration 1 minute

Your unarmed attacks are treated as cold iron and silver, they gain the earth trait, and they gain a +1 status bonus to damage rolls per damage die.

Heightened (9th) Your unarmed attacks are also treated as adamantine.

UNTWISTING IRON PILLAR FOCUS 9

UNCOMMON ABJURATION EARTH

Cast ◆ verbal

Duration 5 rounds

You call upon the earth and your ki to shield you from your enemies. You gain 50 temporary Hit Points that last for the duration or until you lose them, as well as resistance 5 to all physical damage (except adamantine).

UNTWISTING IRON ROOTS FOCUS 5

UNCOMMON EARTH TRANSMUTATION

Cast ◆ verbal

Area 10-foot emanation

You manipulate the earth beneath your feet to throw your enemies off balance, leaving chunks of rock and rubble behind. Creatures within range take 2d6 bludgeoning damage, with a basic Reflex save; on a failed save, they also fall prone. The affected area becomes difficult terrain, but you can move through the difficult terrain normally.

Heightened (+1) The damage increases by 1d6.

JALMERI HEAVENSEEKER

Certain martial artists dedicate themselves to fighting in Jalmeray's Challenge of Sky and Heaven. These individuals devote themselves to the esoteric mysteries of the sky.

You can select the dedication feat for the Jalmeri Heavenseeker archetype even if you haven't yet gained three feats from the Student of Perfection archetype.

JALMERI HEAVENSEEKER DEDICATION FEAT 4

UNCOMMON ARCHETYPE DEDICATION

Prerequisites Student of Perfection Dedication, or you've trained with a champion of the Challenge of Sky and Heaven

You become trained in either Acrobatics or Occultism; if you were already trained in both these skills, you become an expert in one of them instead. You gain either the Ki Rush or Ki Strike monk feat, which grants you a ki spell and a focus pool of 1 Focus Point that you can recover using the Refocus activity as a monk does. If you already have both feats, you can instead choose a single 1st-level monk feat.

Special You can't select another dedication feat until you gain two other feats from the Jalmeri Heavenseeker or Student of Perfection archetypes.

HEAVEN'S THUNDER ◆ FEAT 6

ARCHETYPE ELECTRICITY EVOCATION SONIC

Prerequisites Jalmeri Heavenseeker Dedication

Until the end of your next turn, your unarmed attacks and any monk weapons you wield deal additional electricity and sonic damage; the amount of each damage type is equal to the number of damage dice for the weapon or unarmed attack. Any creature who successfully Grapples you or is successfully Grappled by you takes this damage immediately after the Grapple check is resolved (using the number of damage dice of your unarmed attack to determine the damage dealt).

If you also know the *ki blast* ki spell, you can choose to deal either electricity or sonic damage with the spell instead of force while this effect is active (*ki blast* loses the force trait and gains the electricity or sonic trait instead).

SKY AND HEAVEN STANCE ◆ FEAT 6

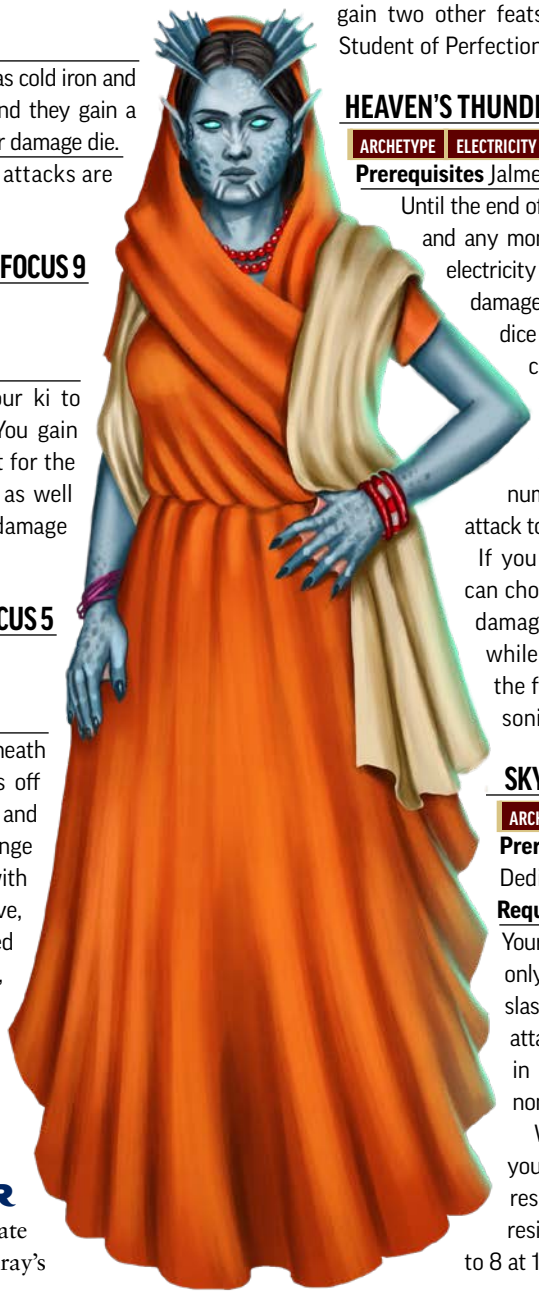
ARCHETYPE STANCE

Prerequisites Jalmeri Heavenseeker Dedication

Requirements You're unarmored.

Your jagged blows are like lightning. The only Strikes you can make are skyward slash unarmed attacks. These unarmed attacks deal 1d10 slashing damage; are in the brawling group; and have the nonlethal, unarmed, and versatile P traits.

While in Sky and Heaven Stance, you gain resistance 2 to electricity and resistance 2 to sonic damage. These resistances increase to 5 at 12th level and to 8 at 18th level.



SKYSEEKER ◆◆ FEAT 8

ARCHETYPE ELECTRICITY EVOCATION SONIC

Prerequisites Sky and Heaven Stance

Requirements You're in Sky and Heaven Stance.

You Leap toward an opponent. At any point in the Leap, you can make a single Strike against a creature within your reach. At 12th level, if you hit with this Strike, instead of finishing your Leap, you can immediately attempt a second Leap from the space where you struck the target of your Strike. You can make a single Strike against a target within your reach during this second Leap as well. At 16th level, you can attempt a third Leap if your second Strike hits, and you can attack a target at any point during this third Leap. All Leaps made during this activity gain a +10-foot status bonus to the total height or distance of your leap, and no two Strikes can target the same creature.

STEAL THE SKY FEAT 10

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Jalmeri Heavenseeker Dedication

You can take away the air that keeps a flying foe aloft. You gain the *steal the sky* ki spell. Increase the number of Focus Points in your focus pool by 1.

SPEAKING SKY FEAT 12

ARCHETYPE

Prerequisites Jalmeri Heavenseeker Dedication

You gain the *speaking sky* ki spell. Increase the number of Focus Points in your focus pool by 1.

CROSS THE FINAL HORIZON ◆◆◆ FEAT 20

ARCHETYPE ELECTRICITY EVOCATION FORCE SONIC

Prerequisites Sky and Heaven Stance

Requirements You're in Sky and Heaven Stance.

You Stride up to your Speed, and your ki enshrouds your limbs in terrifying stormy energy, increasing the reach of your Sky and Heaven Stance unarmed attacks by 5 feet. At the end of your movement, make up to three Strikes against a target you can reach, each at a –2 penalty. Each attack counts toward your multiple attack penalty, but the multiple attack penalty doesn't increase until after you've made all your attacks. Instead of the usual slashing or piercing damage, the damage for these Strikes is either electricity or sonic, as you choose with each Strike. If you successfully hit with all three Strikes, the target is drained 3.

Jalmeri Heavenseeker Focus Spells

SPEAKING SKY FOCUS 6

UNCOMMON AIR DIVINATION

Cast ◆◆ somatic, verbal

Duration 1 round

The air speaks to you. You can precisely sense any motion within 60 feet through vibration and air movement.

STEAL THE SKY FOCUS 5

UNCOMMON AIR EVOCATION

Cast ↻ verbal; **Trigger** You make a successful unarmed Strike against a flying creature.

Targets the creature you hit

Saving Throw Fortitude

You deny a flying creature the support of the air.

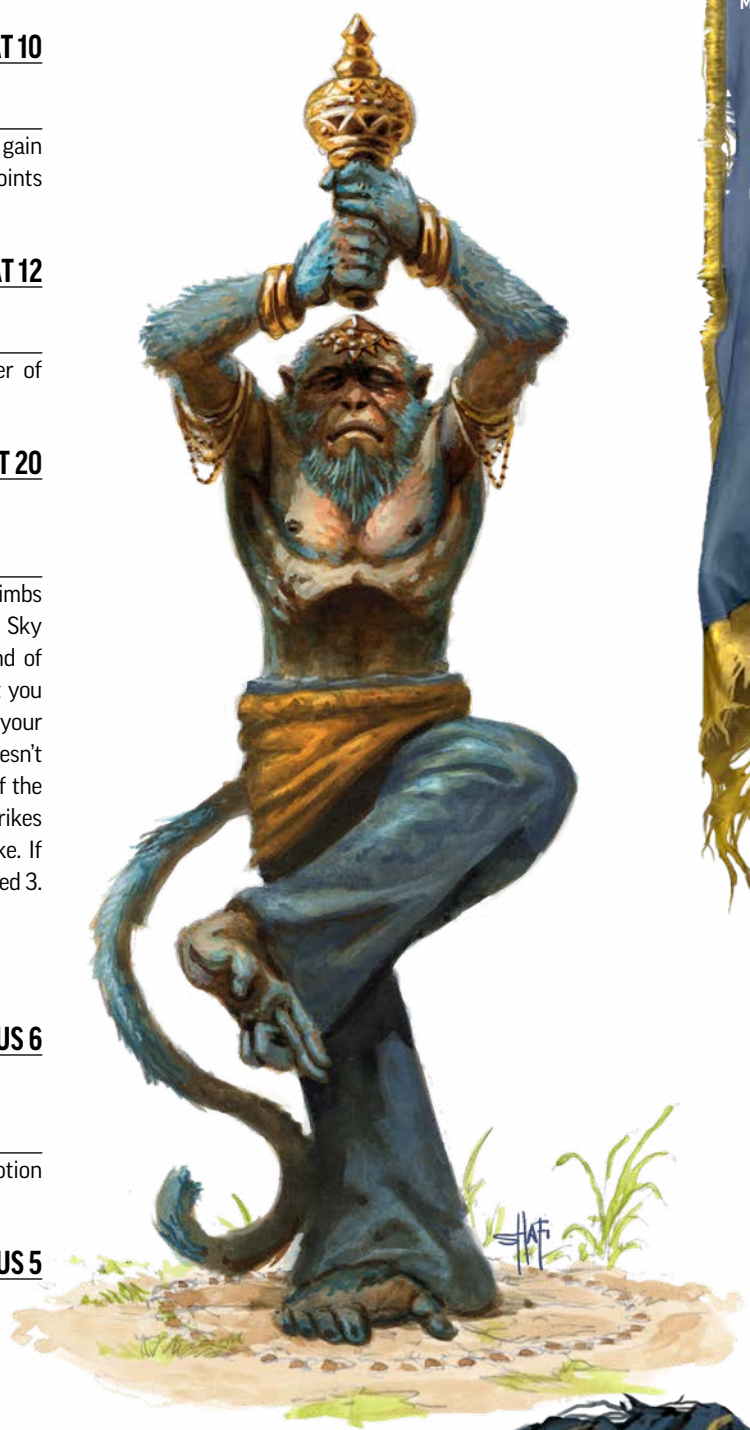
Critical Success The target is unaffected.

Success The target descends 60 feet. If it hits a surface, it takes bludgeoning damage as if it had fallen.

Failure As success; if the target hits a surface, it falls prone and can't Fly, levitate, or otherwise leave the ground for 1 minute.

Critical Failure As failure, and the creature takes double damage from hitting a surface.

Heightened (+1) Increase the distance the creature must descend by 20 feet.



The Mana Wastes

Nations

MANA WASTES [N]
Spell-Scarred Wasteland
Capital: None

Peoples

Calikangs
Ettins
Fleshwarps
Ghorans
Giants
Gnolls
Goblins
Iruxi
Ogres
Undead

Languages

Gnoll
Iruxi
Jotun
Necril
Osiriani

Factions

Los Aterradores

Sixfold Repentance

The Wasteland Clans

Religions

Brigh

Nethys

Lamashtu

Vineshvakhi

Resources

Jewelry/ Gems

Mercenaries

Ores

Mana Wastes
NEX
Shattered Range
Alkenstar
Gunworks
MANA WASTES
GEB
N
W
E
S
75 MILES

The Mana Wastes are a lasting scar on the face of Golarion, a strip of wasteland created from the magical fallout in the wars between Geb and Nex that now threatens both countries' borders. Wracked with dangerous storms of chaotic magic, there are few safe bastions in the desert, but people have settled in this land nonetheless. Others roam the ever-shifting landscape as nomads, their reasons for choosing such a fraught life as varied as they themselves are.

Before the war between Geb and Nex, the Mana Wastes were arid yet lush, home to flora and fauna that thrived in the low-moisture environment and blossomed into a riot of vibrant colors throughout the year. When the dust finally settled from centuries of conflict, most of the fauna had been killed off, while the flora had adapted in strange and unpredictable ways to the sudden influx of new energy sources and the loss of others. The area has slowly grown and expanded since, its borders creeping outward a little more with each passing year.

The indigenous iruxis, hill giants, and gnolls of the region have all adapted to new ways of life, though they still hold true to many of their ancestral traditions. The gnolls and hill giants still hunt and gather and craft beautiful jewelry, but also sneak into Alkenstar and "requisition" weapons they then use or sell to the highest bidders. Many of the lizardfolk have been forced to the surface, but still use the cavern networks for their treasured possessions and most secure holdings. Despite the deadly conditions, others have moved into the region as well, such as the Sixfold Repentance and the wanderers who all have some vested interest in the area. Some, like the wizard gangs, are less benevolent in their intentions.

A few settlements are even approaching cities as more residents of the Wastes rebuild. The town of Gitna might be called a stronghold by those who know little of the Wastes, but its defenses are a necessary precaution against the region's many dangers, the most potentially fatal of which is the loss of magic. The Samsara Oasis is a living thesis for the calikangs of the Sixfold Repentance, attempting to right their past wrongs as integral parts of Nex's forces responsible for the Wastes' creation. The Oasis is one of the most stable parts of the Wastes due to their efforts. The Theurgists' Commune, called the Gists' Moon by most, is a bastion of scholarly pursuit for those who travel to the Wastes to study its effects. Unlike the calikangs of the Samsara Oasis, this research is often less about healing the land and more about harnessing the strange forces within it.

GEOGRAPHY

To the average person observing the Mana Wastes, it looks entirely the same throughout: a warped, barren, and magically starved desert that seems as if it might collapse in on itself at any time. A closer investigation,

however, reveals how varied the land still is, as well as how terrifying and lasting the effects of the war that reshaped it truly were.

The sparse scrubland at the Wastes' outskirts barely supports the warped small plants and animals that live within it. Unlike the wildlife deeper within, few of these specimen have mutated abilities to steal and supplement the magic they now need to survive due to proximity to a more stable underlying thaumaturgical framework. Magic in the outskirts is also less likely to be affected by wellspring surges, though consequences can still be dire if care isn't taken in preparation and casting. Some say it's a cruel trick of the universe that those most responsible for creating the Mana Wastes and corrupting its wildlife were largely unaffected. Those who pay close attention to the desert's slowly expanding borders wonder if its unwitting creators may soon suffer other consequences.

Beyond the sparse stretch of scrubland at the borders, the ground swiftly turns to a broken patchwork of splintered rock and jagged sands, dotted by scavenging plants and animals. The cracks in the earth that give way to the caverns and darkness beneath can become filled with cloying and deadly miasmas of loose and volatile magic. It's uncertain how this magic coalesces, but one theory suggests that any nearby plants surviving on stolen magic try to expel the excess into the broken earth. This loose magic then seeks out and congeals with other loose magic, mirroring water's tendency to converge in streams and pools—a twisted mimicry in this barren place. By the time these congregations of unstable magic are large enough to see, they become a dense rainbow-hued morass that sinks through the cracks of the earth and settles into the canyons and caverns below. On occasions when these caverns are shallow, an accidental fall into one will do far less harm than the effects of the magic within.

One miasma pit in particular stands out as the largest and longest sustained. Called Kadiliman and situated near the center of the Mana Wastes, its actual origins are unclear. The consensus is that some wizard, in an effort to generate a massive magical effect, pulled almost everything from the area before unleashing their spell. Neither Geb nor Nex accepts formal responsibility for the event, as the effects took days to become apparent. The first to feel the effects and report on them were iruxis using the tunnel network to safely avoid the never-ending skirmishes on the surface. Though the full details are sparse, their stories paint a horrific picture of painful transmogrification. Iruxi busos and anyone who uses their maps steer clear of Kadiliman to this day. Yet even with such dire warnings, intrepid wizards and alchemists hoping to utilize such potent magic have attempted to bottle it, in the tradition of the researcher Blooming Chaos (page 236).

Not all free-floating wellspring magic in the Mana Wastes becomes part of a miasma. On occasion, when a spell fails in some way near loose magic that has yet to fully form a miasma, the loose energy instead becomes charged by the magic intended for the spell. It forms into what most refer to as a poison cloud—regardless of the magic it's charged with—and expels. If the spell was, for instance, *chill touch*, the cloud may be a brief thing that immediately discharges at the person who cast it with a blast of cold. However, if the spell cast was *cataclysm*, one often favored by the wizards of Nex to attack from extreme range, the effects could be multiple dangerous clouds spread over a massive area, or an enormous mega-cloud that can swiftly devastate the landscape. Most who study the Mana Wastes and its magical affects agree that some of the most powerful, persistent clusters of clouds originated with magical skirmishes during the many long years of conflict between Geb and Nex. If they're unable to discharge quickly enough, the poison clouds sink closer and closer to the ground before forming into miasma, but they do dissipate eventually

MUNDANE PERILS

Regardless of national location, all within the Impossible Lands must make proper efforts to endure the elements. Even when not tempered by the radical flux of the Mana Wastes, the region is rife with harsh storms and desiccating droughts that can reduce the ill-prepared adventurer into little more than a brittle husk. The winds carry the weather strangely here, blessing Geb with ample bounty and casting a veritable monsoon season upon the isle of Jalmeray, whilst Alkenstar, the Mana Wastes, and much of Nex are afforded little such luxury in water. The great cities of Nex, magically imbued as they are, make their own weather much as they make their own destiny—at the whims of those in power. Those who can't afford such a privilege must make do with polluted drink or costly imported barrels from the Elemion River in the north.

without a semi-constant source of wellspring magic to feed them.

As a result of the discharges from poison clouds, which frequently shape themselves similarly to lightning strikes, irregular and naturally formed glass shards are abundant across the landscape of the Mana Wastes—though the frequency of the poison clouds during the war between Geb and Nex led to much of the glass being covered under layers of sand and other silicates. These storms most often form at night on the coast of the Obari Ocean, but due to the chaotic nature of the Wastes, they can form anywhere at any time if there's enough raw magical material present. Some of the indigenous nomadic tribes have built collecting machines or patiently sift through the sands after storms for usable pieces to make into jewelry, tools, weapons, and other wares.

Despite the myriad dangers, people still roam and settle this dangerous stretch of land. While the nomadic peoples tend to roam the entirety of the Mana Wastes, most of the settlements tend to be found near the borders of Geb and Nex for a proximity to safety. Only the Samsara Oasis stands apart in this, its bold proximity to the most perilous parts of the Wastes a conscious choice in order to study them and hopefully stabilize the entire region.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

The Impossible Lands are as deadly to the soul as to the body, challenging those unprepared to contend with the region's myriad dangers. Primarily a wasteland warped by the fallout from magical wars that lasted for centuries, the very ground is saturated with the blood of those broken by conquests that consumed cultures and generations with an unceasing appetite. The Mana Wastes irrevocably change what they can't break, as if cursed to pass on the trauma of the ancient war until the end of time.

Aside from the arduous desert climate, other natural dangers lurk within the Mana Wastes, spiraling out from the depths of the Spellscar Desert. While many average desert hazards still apply, due to the chaotic state of magic within the region, the Mana Wastes feature a unique variety of unnatural threats as well. Malign and nightmarish fleshwarped horrors stalk the darkened crags of the Impossible Lands, their predatory instincts overruling once servile, bestial, or humanoid minds. In throes of ego death and raw bouts of atavism, they strive to devour all they can see. Oozes and slimes, whether born of the magical rot ubiquitous in the Wastes or leaked from nearby Oenopion, slink through the watershed and infest oases in search of easy prey. Little clemency is offered beyond city walls, and none should expect otherwise.

In some areas of the Mana Wastes, the land seems to be trying to repair itself. In others, a wrong step can cause the ground to lose all coherency and collapse entirely.

These parts of the Wastes have destabilized without primal magic to provide as a supportive framework beneath them, resulting in massive canyons and cave systems covered by only the thinnest layer of cracked earth. One unlucky misstep is often all that separates an unwary traveler from the abyss. With a bit of luck or a hastily cast spell, they might find themselves more or less intact within a run-of-the-mill tunnel system, but some say the canyons delve all the way into the Darklands.

In some areas, the land seems to have taken on the monumental task of restoring its own underlying magical structure, offering tiny oases of shade under the inescapable sun with surprisingly dense bright green foliage and pale pink blooms to entice potential sources of magic to approach. Unwary travelers can easily fall into these quicksand traps. Sometimes the only warning they have is the trilling song of the red-chested magpies that congregate nearby, sharing the easy meal.

Half-covered in sand are pitcher plants that, instead of capturing insects and small birds, wait for spells cast by naive casters to fly over them. While not very dangerous on their own, they can give a canny traveler of the Wastes a strategic advantage in a fight. Some desert dwellers even use the plants as a first line of magical defense.

Other dangers, such as miasma and poison clouds, pose a greater threat but are easier to circumvent. Denizens of the Wastes avoid them by taking refuge underground or in specially designed shelters. The cavern systems present their own dangers in the form of cave-ins and suddenly changing terrain.

CRACKED EARTH — HAZARD 3

ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth DC 22 (trained)

Description This 20-foot-by-20-foot patch of ground is cobwebbed with cracks and fissures that crumble when a creature steps on it.

Disable DC 16 Survival (untrained) to collapse safely; DC 20 Crafting (trained) to shore it up enough to pass over without collapsing it

Long Fall ↷ Trigger A creature steps onto the cracked earth; **Effect** The creature fractures the thin crust of earth and falls through. That creature can use the Grab an Edge reaction to avoid falling, as long as it is adjacent to an edge. Otherwise it takes falling damage (typically 25 bludgeoning damage for a 50-foot drop). Some of these rifts eventually lead to the Darklands.

MANA WHORL — HAZARD 7

COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTAL MAGICAL

Stealth +14 (trained) to identify as dangerous quicksand; +20 (expert) to recognize its magical properties

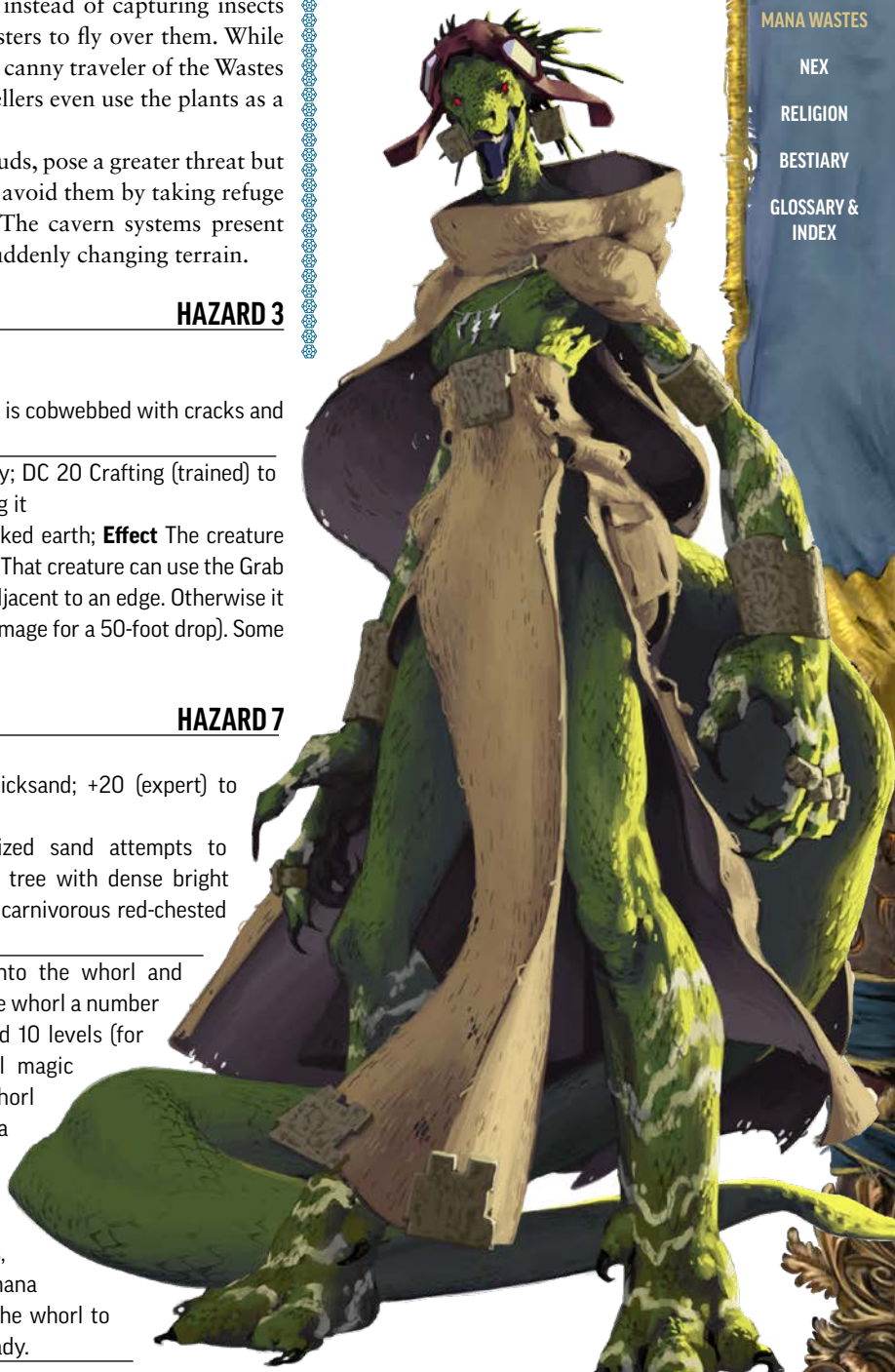
Description This 15-foot-wide patch of destabilized sand attempts to submerge creatures who wield magic. A desert tree with dense bright green foliage, pale pink blooms, and at least one carnivorous red-chested magpie is always nearby.

Disable DC 26 Arcana (expert) to feed magic into the whorl and temporarily stabilize it for a few minutes; feed the whorl a number of spellcasters and magic items with a combined 10 levels (for instance, a 4th-level cleric with two 3rd-level magic items) to stabilize it for 1 week; or feed the whorl a number of spellcasters and magic items with a combined 20 levels to stabilize it permanently. Spellcasters and magic items fed to the whorl are devoured whole.

Submerge ↷ Trigger A creature who can cast spells, or who is wielding a magic item, walks into the mana whorl; **Effect** The triggering creature sinks into the whorl to its waist. The whorl rolls initiative if it hasn't already.

BUSO

A Mana Waste term almost exclusively applied to iruxis, lizardfolk busos act as explorers, guides, and mapmakers for the unstable and dangerous landscape. Their work is critical for the survival of many peoples and settlements in the area, and otherwise bloodthirsty inhabitants of the wastes are willing to let a buso pass without trouble. Even so, there are still plenty of hazards and monsters without higher reasoning that can cut a buso's career abruptly short.



FORGOTTEN GUNSMITHS

Though Alkenstar and Dongun Hold little like to admit it, the Mana Wastes is filled with clever tinkerers and engineers who have been reverse engineering guns since just after Alkenstar was founded. These inventors lack the manufacturing support to mass produce firearms, and they have no standardization, meaning a broken firearm can't be repaired with parts from another. The Mana Wastes clans, tribes, and gangs still export a steady trickle of gunpowder weapons, however, and tables filled with bizarrely designed rifles and pistols are a common enough sight in ramshackle trading encampments.

Routine (1 action) On its initiative, the whorl pulls down any creature within it that can cast spells or that is wielding a magic item. A creature submerged to the waist becomes submerged to the neck, and a creature submerged to the neck is pulled under and must hold its breath to avoid suffocation (*Core Rulebook* 478). If a creature has no spells or magic items, the mana whorl is merely difficult terrain.

A creature caught in a mana whorl can attempt a DC 23 Athletics check to Swim to either raise itself by one step if submerged to the neck or worse, or to move 5 feet if submerged only to the waist. On a critical failure, the creature is pulled down by one step. A creature that Swims out of the whorl escapes the hazard and is prone in a space adjacent to the whorl. Other creatures can Aid the creature, typically by using a rope or similar aid, or attempt to pull the creature out with their own DC 23 Athletics check, with the same results as if the creature attempted the check.

If a creature has only magic items and no ability to cast spells, dropping all the items releases that creature, and it can move through the mana whorl as normal difficult terrain.

Reset The hazard continues to suck in anyone with magic until it is satiated (see Disable above). Magpies leave any satiated whorls.

SPELL PITCHERS HAZARD 1

ENVIRONMENTAL

Stealth DC 20 (trained) to recognize the plant among others

Description A large pitcher plant occupying a 5-foot space sits seemingly dormant with its dull petals open.

Disable DC 15 Arcana (trained) to safely trigger the plant's reflexes, causing it to close and become dormant for one day, or DC 17 Nature (trained) to carefully coax the pitcher into quiescence

AC 16; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +5

HP 40 (BT 20); **Immunities** mental; **Weaknesses** slashing 10

Devour Magic ↷ **Trigger** A spell's direct line of effect passes within a 5-foot-radius of the plant; **Effect** The pitcher attempts to counteract the spell (counteract level 1, counteract modifier +10). On a success, the pitcher immediately consumes the spell as it passes over the plant.

Reset Once the pitcher has eaten a spell, its petals turn dark pink and green before it closes. It goes dormant for one day per spell level of the spell consumed. Once the pitcher finishes digesting, it opens again and slowly wilts. A second pitcher branches into an adjacent square when the first pitcher opens again.

WILD MAGIC

Magic cast within and near the Wastes can be extremely unpredictable, sometimes even volatile, if not performed with extreme care. Due to the lingering fractures left by the war between Geb and Nex—and their extensive use of metamagic, wellsprings, and other destabilizing amplifiers—the Mana Wastes act as a massive but broken wellspring for any who attempt to use magic within its confines, causing magic to surge into wild and uncontrolled effects.

Normally, when magic is cast, it gently tugs upon everything around it, pulling on the network of magic that lays invisibly across Golarion to gain the energy to make the spell possible. When casting a cantrip, little within the environment changes, but much larger spells might rattle trees or lower water levels. Even those changes are barely perceptible save under the most extraordinary conditions. The war between Geb and Nex met and exceeded those conditions

significantly, and spellcasting within the Mana Wastes began to pull on the underlying network of magic directly. This constant tugging eventually frayed that network, cutting off swathes of the region and starting a slow process of "flooding" others. This flooding, and the boost in spellcasting power it created, was used and drained in turn, beginning the process again, resulting in the fractured lattice of magic in the Mana Wastes today.

Any spell cast within the Wastes has a chance of causing a wellspring surge for the user, if magic even functions in the area at all. These surges are unpredictable and their effects even more so. Anecdotal evidence suggests that particularly well-placed spells, even if they are simpler in nature, can cause surges that far outpace their effects under normal circumstances. Anyone casting a spell within the Mana Wastes must attempt a flat check, losing their spell and creating a wellspring surge instead on a failure. The table below is a guideline, but GMs should feel free to raise the DC for a surge, such as when a satiated but not stabilized mana whorl is close by, or lower it, especially if there have already been surges nearby. For more on wellspring surges, see page 250 of *Secrets of Magic*. A critical failure on the flat check has the listed effect on the wellspring surge generated.

TABLE 4: WELLSPRING SURGE CHANCES

Location	Surge Flat Check DC	Critical Failure Effect
Outskirts	DC 4	Roll twice on the Wellspring Surges table (*Secrets of Magic* 250) and the GM chooses one.
Open Land	DC 7	The damage or effect is doubled.
Near & In Cities	DC 5	Add one die or 5-foot range to the effect.
Near Miasmas	DC 9	Roll twice on the Wellspring Surges table and use both.
Near Samsara Oasis	DC 4	The damage or range of the effect is halved.
In Samsara Oasis	DC 2	The damage and range of the effect is halved.

With the unstable and uncertain nature of magic in the Wastes, all areas are prone to mana droughts: stretches of time where little to no magic is capable of functioning. While those who have made a home for themselves in the Wastes are prepared for this sudden loss of spellcasting, adventurers and newcomers are often caught off guard. At the GM's discretion, a mana drought could occur at any time. During a mana drought, either no spells are available for use, or only those spells within a certain level range are available. For example, only cantrips and spells beneath 3rd level might be available for days at a time, with bursts of time ranging from a few seconds to minutes when no one can cast any spells. Alternately, sometimes a mage can only cast the strongest spells they have available, but those spells have double the normal flat check DC for wellspring surges.

People of the Mana Wastes find ways to work around the unpredictable nature of magic. Gnolls and hill giants often raid the

A RISKY RESOURCE

Not even magic items are safe in some areas of the Mana Wastes, and activating one can result in a wellspring surge just like casting a spell. Worse yet, some Mana Waste natives seem to take on some of this unreliability themselves–they're known to fumble magic items and cause chaotic results even when nowhere near a source of wellspring magic!

CREATING RIVERS IN A DESERT

An adventuring party's makeup is essential to determining when, where, and how often to use mana droughts in play. A party made of mostly casters is likely to be at a loss unless they make creative use of terrain and allied NPCs. A party of primarily melee fighters will only see droughts as a minor inconvenience. Consider also using them as a plot point that affects cities and nomads, with the party aiding where they can. Finding a balance that provides a challenge without taking away player agency requires adjustments that are different for every group. As always, communication is key to a good game.

workshops of Alkenstar for firearms, keeping the most reliable for themselves and trading the more unpredictable pieces for alchemical concoctions that can be used within their encampments when magic cannot. Similarly, iruxis of Gitna contract the aid of adventurers and those who frequent their city to supplement their own guards in times when magic is nullified by a mana drought and a threat is imminent. The Sixfold Repentance has chosen to imbue weapons and leave them stored for when they're absolutely needed, an outward sign of their continued penance. Others simply make sure their abilities in other forms of combat are honed enough to survive or eschew magic entirely.

In extreme contrast are those who see the erratic patterns of magic within the Wastes as an opportunity. To the combat mages of the nomadic wizard gang led by Velasco Cueto, a dearth of magic is a chance to prove oneself in other arenas, such as alchemical crafting and more conventional forms of combat. For members of Los Aterradores, it's also one of the most strenuous tests for their strange, eldritch creations. One such innovation is condensed mana: powerful and unstable magical miasmas collected into a throwable form. Some, like Velasco and the Sixfold Repentance, have banned this creation, as they understand the creation process and its immense dangers to both creators and the already fragile ecosystem of the Wastes. Only the wizards of Los Aterradores create condensed mana, and only the most daring deploy them in combat.

Still others brave the Wastes for more esoteric reasons. The Hermit Lakshmi (page 242) is following in the footsteps of their god, Nethys, and sees a deep investigation of the nature, creation, and restoration efforts of the Mana Wastes as the key to understanding the inner workings of magic. It also serves as an isolated place should the worst come to pass and their pursuit robs them of agency for any stretch of time. Other mages and scholars also roam the Wastes in study, though few have goals quite as lofty, and most see it as a means to better utilize wellsprings elsewhere.

Mana Vials

Originally an innovation by Blooming Chaos of Los Aterradores, vials for collecting Mana Wastes miasma have undergone multiple iterations to improve safety for those who make condensed mana. Fewer considerations have been made for those who use it.

CONDENSED MANA — ITEM 7

RARE ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE

Price 69 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

Activate ❖❖ Strike

Condensed mana is a crystal vial filled with concentrated miasma from the Mana Wastes. The colors shift abruptly and unpredictably within and the opening of the bottle is sealed tighter than any other potion or alchemical item, emphasizing its dangers.

On a successful Strike, the creature takes 1 force damage. Then, roll on the Wellspring Surge table (*Secrets of Magic* 250). The result affects all creatures within the emanation indiscriminately. For the purpose of determining the effects of the surge, use a spell level of 4 and a DC of 23. The person Striking with this vial is considered to be the caster for the purposes of determining effects on the Mana Surge table. The emanation is centered on the target's space, and both the caster and the target of the wellspring surge are the target of the condensed mana. On a failed Strike, the surge only has an effect if it would normally affect an area; if you roll an effect that depends on a caster or a target, nothing happens.

If the effect normally doesn't have a DC, creatures affected by the surge or within the surge's area must attempt a DC 23 Reflex save instead. On a critical failure on

any saving throw against condensed mana, the creature is stunned 1 by the wild energies of the surge.

Sometimes a wellspring surge's effects make it difficult to determine exactly who is affected. The GM makes the determination, basing it on creatures directly affected; for example, while many creatures can hear the music from the surge "strike up the band," only the creature emanating the music is directly affected by it.

Craft Requirements You must be in or adjacent to an area of Mana Wastes miasma.

PEOPLES OF THE WASTES

Even in a magic-blasted wasteland, people find a way to survive, even thrive. Before the war between Geb and Nex, the makeup of the area was very different than it is today. Though the iruxis have always made up a majority of the land's populace, they never controlled the region in the same way that other groups have. While they had conflicts with the hill giants and gnoll tribes, they also established treaties and made trade agreements. The war between Geb and Nex wracked the land and irrevocably changed its people who managed to survive the fallout. Other groups, such as the Sixfold Repentance and assorted wanderers, established themselves in the region after the calamity. Though the Mana Wastes seem desolate and empty, they're full of thriving life if one looks in the right places.

Wizard Gangs

Several roving gangs formed in the aftermath of the conflict between Geb and Nex, attracting those either unwilling to stop fighting or afraid of retribution for their wartime actions. Hoping for more autonomy and less oversight, many combatants did not return to their respective homelands and became wanderers of the forming Wastes, scavengers who never asked when they could simply take. Those with similar aspirations eventually found each other, uniting to increase their odds of survival or amass power of their own. The original divisions between Nex and Geb still stand in most cases, but other gangs have grown and survived long enough to be of note. These groups tend to be incredibly insular and standoffish, only providing shelter or trading with those who prove they can bring

WANDERING COMPASSES

The residents of the Mana Wastes are nothing if ingenious when finding solutions to their environment. Rumors abound about special Mana Wastes compasses that point to the nearest pocket free from magical interference, allowing spellcasters to travel there and ply their trade safely. Given the massive advantage these compasses can grant, they are in high demand from wizard gangs, who often ambush anyone carrying such a precious possession.

ALEMAYEHU

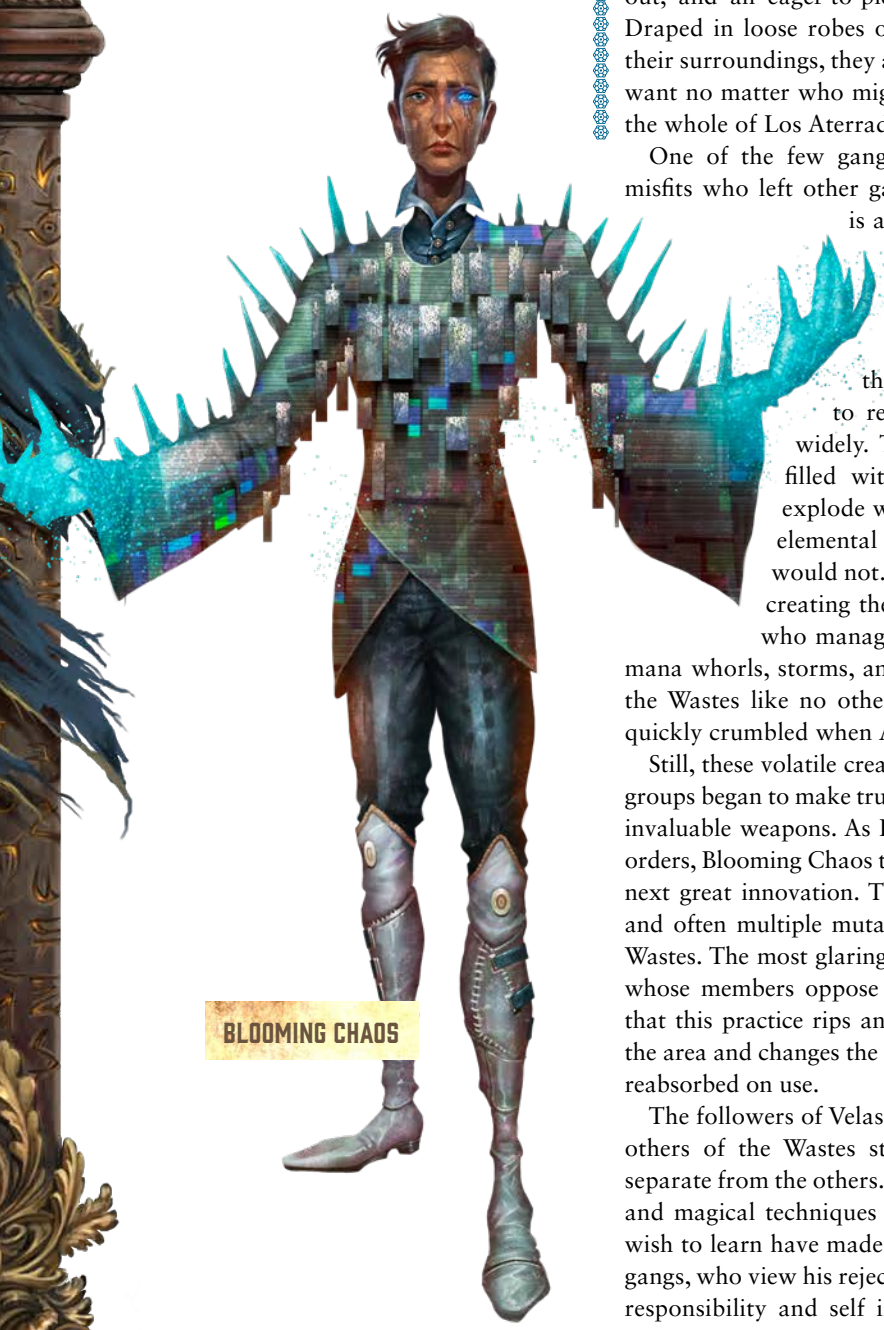
FORBIDDEN POWER

The Mana Wastes are home to many sources of dangerous potential, and not just for magicians. A rare and unusual mineral known as eidite can be found in some parts of the region. This material can boost the power of clockworks and other mechanical creations, but is banned in Alkenstar due to the fact that it's poisonous to living creatures.

new knowledge and magic casting techniques. Those with innate, divine, or even primal magic are considered lesser and treated like novice magic users who can never fully understand their own magic. Collectively, these gangs are known to outsiders as Los Aterradores, though most members do not refer to themselves as such and tend to subtly exclude any who do.

The most prolific and infamous group is led by **Alemayehu** (CE male lich necromancer), once a necromancer-general under Geb and eventually repurposed into a lich. He was willing to break every rule, law, taboo, and human inhibition to advance within the ranks. The cruelty he steeped himself in became second nature, but his brutal effectiveness was often overlooked by those above him who wanted to curry favor with Geb. The cessation of conflict and the disappearance of Nex would bring an end to the world in which Alemayehu flourished. Even before Geb's victory was declared, the lich disappeared into the Wastes and rapidly became a bogeyman to the Wastes' other inhabitants. Those who were impressed rather than repulsed by the terrifying necromancer-general sought him out, and an eager-to-please collection of sycophants grew around him. Draped in loose robes of dark or chameleon-like shades that blend with their surroundings, they are the scourge of the Wastes, taking whatever they want no matter who might be in their way. Most of the stereotypes about the whole of Los Aterradores stem from interactions with this single gang.

One of the few gangs to regularly trade with others is a gaggle of misfits who left other gangs and found each other. One of their number is a precociously curious young alchemist nicknamed **Blooming Chaos** (CN nonbinary fleshwarp experimenter). Theorizing that the chaotic and broken wellspring magic of the Wastes could be collected and used in a variety of applications, they often struck out alone from the group only to return battered, sometimes mutated, and grinning widely. They returned from one such trip carrying vials filled with a swirling and amorphous mass that would explode when shattered, releasing an unpredictable form of elemental magic that functioned even when all other magic would not. Blooming Chaos eagerly taught the techniques for creating these vials to any who would learn, especially those who managed not to recoil from the idea of harvesting from mana whorls, storms, and pitchers. For a short time, the small gang ruled the Wastes like no others could, but that hold was tenuous at best and quickly crumbled when Alemayehu challenged the smaller gang.



BLOOMING CHAOS

Still, these volatile creations intrigued others in the Wastes, and numerous groups began to make truces, temporary and otherwise, in order to gain these invaluable weapons. As Blooming Chaos's former students started fulfilling orders, Blooming Chaos themself immediately turned their attentions to their next great innovation. Their gang, marked by their bright, garish clothing and often multiple mutations, is largely accepted by most residents in the Wastes. The most glaring omission from that list is the Sixfold Repentance, whose members oppose gathering condensed mana. Their research found that this practice rips and tears at the already fragile network of magic in the area and changes the energies to a state that cannot be properly and fully reabsorbed on use.

The followers of Velasco Cueto also reject the use of mana vials. Though others of the Wastes still consider them Los Aterradores, this gang is separate from the others. Velasco's appreciation for the marriage of physical and magical techniques as well as his easy willingness to teach any who wish to learn have made him and his followers unpopular with most other gangs, who view his rejection of condensed mana and teachings on personal responsibility and self improvement as a threat to their own freedoms.

Often mistaken for monks in their attire and bearing, followers of Velasco are welcomed in most places and willing to help any adventurers in need. Their calm demeanors often fracture when antagonized by other gangs, however.

Lizardfolk

Many iruxi tribes have trickled back into the Mana Wastes after the conflict between Geb and Nex stalled, slowly reestablishing their way of life after years of conflict. Though they had always delved into and sometimes lived in the cavern networks underneath what came to be the Mana Wastes, the fallout of the wars completely changed those caves and the dangers found within them. A few tribes refused to flee and still live within the caverns, undergoing their own shifts and upheavals along with the landscape. Some have settled into tiny villages and small towns like Gitna. The majority, however, adopted a nomadic lifestyle to bring resources back to their settled kin, and to reconnect with any who may still be lost or changed so thoroughly that steps must be taken to ensure they cannot become a dangerous threat.

Those tribes who banded together to form Gitna chose their home location carefully, knowing that it would come to serve as the unofficial capital of the iruxis of the Wastes. They recorded as many of their oral traditions, stories, and histories as possible to keep in the caves under the city, creating an archive to protect their collective knowledge and ways of life just in case the unspeakable should happen again. Any new tribes, rediscovered tribes, or those who simply recall pre-war stories make a point to return to Gitna so that their history may be recited, recorded, and remembered. Gitna is also home to the genealogical trees of the lizardfolk. Though the Gitna iruxis began the project to track down lost family, contact with adventurers and those from outside the Wastes showed how valuable such records could be.

The lizardfolk who chose not to leave during the wars found themselves irrevocably changed by the magical fallout. One of the most visibly affected tribes dwelled in the caves beneath what would become Kadiliman. As the chaotic magic sank into the caverns and suffused the air around them, their scales paled and their vision began to blur. These alarmingly rapid changes in the first few iruxis led to quarantines until it became obvious that there was no contagion and the immediate fear dwindled, but the concern remained as more and more iruxis showed signs of scale color change and partial to full blindness. They relocated to a different cave system and, with the eventual help of the Sixfold Repentance, were able to pinpoint the cause, but the changes never reverted. Most of this tribe now carries traits of albinism, ranging from pinkish scales and poor eyesight to pearlescent white scales and full blindness. Most prefer to keep to the

LESS THAN NOTHING

Nex and Geb aren't the only tyrants to have left their mark on the Mana Wastes. This is one of the few regions on Golarion where darvakkas (*Book of the Dead* 82), undead beings formed from the essence of shadow and void, freely roam. The darvakkas who reside in the Mana Wastes were originally summoned by Tar-Baphon, the Whispering Tyrant, in the lich's first attempt to conquer the Inner Sea. While many of the darvakkas used the region as a safe haven while waiting for Tar-Baphon's escape, others appear to have no desire to return to their master and remain lurking beneath the scarred earth.

darkened cave systems they've adapted to, but those who became busos in Gitna are ranked highly by their clients.

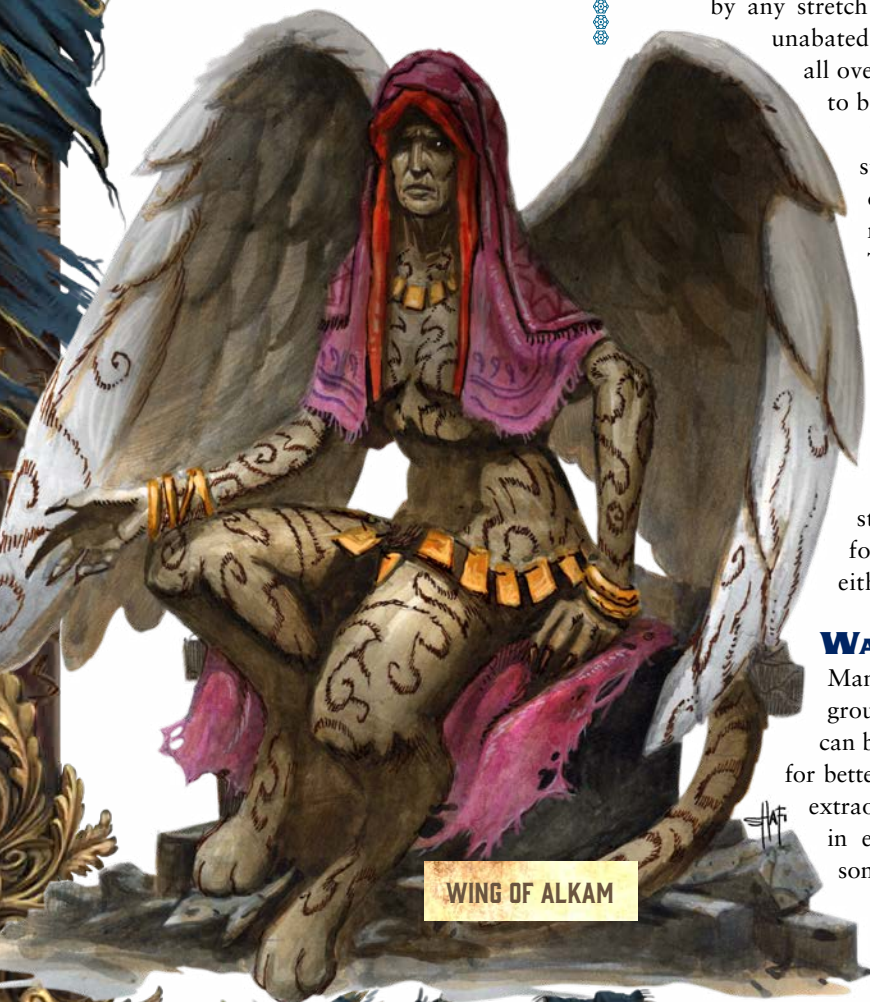
Other Peoples

The local Cindersnort goblins have begun the arduous process of reverse-engineering new firearms from the ones they once stole from Alkenstar. Frustrated at their inability to carry out enough ammunition during their clandestine forays into the city, the goblins began working forging their own shells. This inevitably grew into optimizing the weapons for this new ammunition, and then to creating entirely new weapons. Cindersnort firearms are far more explosive than the workshops of Alkenstar would be willing to make, as the goblins place heightened priority on ending fights quickly and efficiently. However, the intrepid goblins have found a balance due in large part to the efforts of Slippery Gats. Gats is a little-known inventor outside of the goblins and their clients but is wanted in Alkenstar for innumerable counts of larceny and grand theft.

The gnolls and hill giant tribes that traverse the Wastes also avail themselves of Alkenstar's resources. Stemming from the growing threat of Los Aterradores, particularly Alemayehu's gang, the need to amass something that would make them an equal to the long range of a spellcaster has pushed the younger members of these tribes to find some means of survival.

The group of calikangs known as the Sixfold Repentance—former attendants of the wizard Nex who retreated from his nation after he vanished—has made progress even they once thought impossible in their atonement for their part in the devastation that led to the Mana Wastes. Using crystalline pinions driven deep into the earth as anchors, they have begun to rebuild the broken web of magic from their new city in the Samsara Oasis. While the entire experiment has not been perfect or straightforward by any stretch of the imagination, their tireless work continues unabated. Calikang exploration parties can be encountered all over the Wastes searching for a potential next location to begin righting their ancestral wrongs.

The maftet clan known as the Wings of Alkam still continue their tradition of adolescents striking out into the Wastes and developing the dermal mutations that mark their journey into adulthood. Their brazen willingness to delve into the most dangerous and magically unstable parts of the Wastes has made them invaluable to both the Sixfold Repentance's research and the mapmaking endeavors of Gitna's iruxis. A great pact has formed between all three, providing haven for young maftets in need in exchange for the knowledge they've gained about the ever-shifting state of the Mana Wastes. A few maftets have even found a calling with the other two groups, becoming either busos or arcane researchers.



WING OF ALKAM

Wanderers

Many individuals roam the region alone or in small groups, dwelling within the Wastes for reasons only they can be completely sure of. The most well-known of these, for better or worse, is Kalyan Chauhaury, who seems to age extraordinarily slowly for someone apparently human in every way. Others who wander the Wastes alone sometimes become reshaped by the unstable magic in a similar manner to the Wings of Alkam, though how this manifests is often very different. For example,

those who wield powerful chants and songs may end up with over-defined neck muscles, and those who wish to disappear from the eyes of the world might find it becomes a very unsettling physical reality.

Settlements

Even as the very nature of the Mana Wastes pushes inhabitants to remain on the move, some stubbornly stay in a single place. It may be where the earth itself has formed a sheltering break from the desert's hazards or brazenly in the open, constantly rebuilding and repairing. Those who have chosen to make permanent homes in a place that could simply stop existing in an instant demonstrate the fine line between foolishness and brilliance.

The Gists' Moon

Seeking hermitage in the desert is not uncommon among magical scholars. The broken underlying magic and its effects on the environment make the Mana Wastes a popular research location. Realizing the need to establish a defensible and permanent place of tutelage and study, Taegen Flamspire and their traveling companions founded the Theurgists' Commune. As time passed, focus turned from establishing an isolated hermitage to the conundrum of handling the frequent magical outages. Some would venture out from the Theurgists' Commune, only returning to restock supplies and with new research and methods of magical imbuing to bolster the slow-growing town's defenses. Others were less inclined to fieldwork or had carved out a space for themselves in the academia-influenced hierarchy. Those who stayed behind formed the pillars of the town, highly valuing magical and alchemical aptitude, adherence to traditions, and the treacherous political minefield of academic research. The Theurgists' Commune became known as a place where one could study anything magical so long as they were willing to pay the right price.

The flow of life here is irregular, with the intermittent stretches of time bereft of magic filled with study, meditation, and day-to-day chores. As magic creeps back into the area, most residents drop everything to test their theories immediately. Though they have no ties to any known lunar cycles, the event of magic returning to an area came to be known at the Theurgists' Moon, along with the commune, and then shortened to the Gists' Moon.

Those whose latest theories have applications to combat put them to the ultimate test against each other, becoming the most infamous feature of the commune. Exhibition duels are held from "mana-rise to mana-fall" when possible. The most impressive displays are then added as theorems on a scroll in the town's most secure and heavily displayed depository.

Gitna

The iruxis of the Mana Wastes have lived there since before the war between Nex and Geb that ravaged the ecosystem and caused the magical collapse, with some records placing them within the area before the establishment of Dongun Hold and Alkenstar. The many assorted nomadic tribes fractured as they scattered and were forced to find new ways to survive increasingly harsh conditions. Several tribes, including the larger Cavefisher Tribe, made the

Intimidating Guardians

In addition to the knowledge and expertise of the resident busos, the town of Gitna fends off dangers from the Wastes due to the presence of a small number of massive behirs (*Bestiary 2* 38). No one outside of the local iruxis know what deals have been offered to these serpentine beasts in order to recruit them, but the creatures have proven remarkably loyal—at least, so far as the safety of Gitna's citizens is concerned. At least one of the behirs, **Hajfnor** (N female behir guardian), seems to view the lizardfolk as surrogate children, referring to them affectionately as her "egglings."

hard decision to give up their nomadic traditions and settled under a bowl-like outcropping for surface security, also extending their homes into the cave systems below. Their extensive knowledge of the interconnecting tunnels along with the natural wall to their backs made the settlement far more defensible than most other towns struggling for a foothold in the war's aftermath.

Initially wary of all adventurers, especially those who wield magic, the lizardfolk refused to allow outsiders inside the town. Unwilling to let travelers simply perish from a lack of knowledge of the area, however, they didn't intervene when a small market sprang up outside of the reinforced natural walls. Within the market, crag delvers such as Buso Lino peddled their knowledge of the area as guides and the crafters sold unusually robust magical items. As these delvers returned safely and reported back to the elder tribunal, the Gitna iruxis began to discuss their policy against allowing visitors within the walls, finally granting permission when the calikangs of the Sixfold Repentance made entreaties to bolster the town's underground supports as the city above grew. Gitna swiftly became the largest trade hub within the Wastes, with semi-permanent encampments haphazardly spiraling away from the fortified center. Despite this, the market outside the walls remains the primary venue for visitors to this day.

In order to enter Gitna, visitors must swear an oath to the elder tribunal by proxy of the gate guards to abide by the laws of hearth, home, and haven and to defend the town should it come under attack during their stay. While most denizens of the desert deeply appreciate the services and safe harbor provided, some—such as the wizard gangs—have been known to avoid Gitna save as a last resort. Even when they show up, only a few are allowed near the city, and only one at a time is permitted entry.

The Mana Wells

Located deep beneath the Spellscar Desert, mana wells are swirling pools of magic, seeping down into reservoirs by invisible lines and currents. When too much of this magic accumulates, these wells erupt into the eldritch storms and primal geysers that are so common across the Mana Wastes. The potential of these sites is nigh unfathomable, and groups of fleshwarps and mutants gather around these wellsprings in small settlements. Oddly enough, while well eruptions release considerable magical energy, they usually cause no physical harm to the well, its cavern, or any occupants there. As a result, these areas make some of the safest towns and shelters in the entirety of the Mana Wastes.

Though wizards and researchers might squabble over access to a mana well, the fleshwarped natives of the wastes have a different relationship with these places of power. Most would never fight another wasteland clan or deny them entrance, as doing so

would deprive them of their rightful connection to the land and magic that forged them as people. To those who eke out a living in the chaotic world of the Mana Wastes, the mana wells are truly holy ground.

Since the mana wells are considered something close to a birthright to the local people, Mana Wastes residents are all too happy to make use of them. Some clans bring their newborns or older children to bathe them in the coruscating energy, viewing any changes this causes to be unlocking the child's true potential. Others have bound themselves to the swirling, auroran magic, letting it change their bodies and minds in exchange for legendary powers. These beings often choose to act as guardians for either selfish or altruistic reasons. Some, like the blue dragon Kaververrig (LE female ancient blue dragon ravener) protect the wells in order to keep drawing power from their depths. Others, such as the warped dwarf **Wen** (CN female fleshwarp gunslinger) protect the wells and the shelter they provide from those who would exploit them, especially those ill-behaved wizard gangs who would gladly drive off the rightful residents in their greed.

Samsara Oasis

Horrified at their complicity in the region's destruction as attendants to Nex, the calikangs of the Sixfold Repentance dedicated themselves to healing the harm they had caused both to the land and the people. They began by traversing the desert and surrounding scrubland, carefully cataloging magical effects and imbalances as well as the knowledge and histories of the displaced indigenous peoples. To this day, the annals of the Sixfold Repentance offer some of the most extensive records of the region, and other wasteland peoples occasionally make a pilgrimage to the site in search of their own histories.

After choosing a location they felt had the best chance of being restored, the calikangs set about establishing a small, sustainable town to serve as a meeting place to compare further research and restoration notes as well as a home. Called the Oasis or Samsara by others who saw their work as restoring the natural cycle of the world, the growth of this town was even slower than most in the desert. The Sixfold Repentance and those who come to aid them in their restoration efforts always take extreme care to never take from the land more than would be sustainable in the long term. This means enforcing a very slow growth of population and restricting prolonged access to the town and the surrounding area to ensure their settlement's longevity.

The most striking sights in the city are the prismatic crystal pinions that seem to thrust their way up from the thirsting soil. They were artificially introduced to rebuild the mesh of primal power that runs through all material things that the caretakers of the city have and act as stabilizers for the area's magic. These pinions and other such ongoing efforts to restore the region serve as a living magical thesis, and any practitioners of primal magic or adherents to nature-inclined deities are invited to contribute if they have the time and energy.

People of Import

Even within the mana-twisted regions of the Wastes, there are a few who have made enough of a name for themselves to be known outside of the area. While some, such as Chari and Lino, are known for the innovations they made in the name of survival, others are infamous for their stunts and escapades. Those of the Wastes who might have a scheme or task for an adventuring party

Unforsaken

The face of the divine can still be found even within the blighted lands of the Mana Wastes. Clerics of Brigh search the area for ancient technology, or simply wander the desert in search of inspiration. Dwarven adherents of Angradd sometimes venture into the wastes on well-armed pilgrimages, viewing the hardship of the land as a way to forge inner strength. Followers of Cixyron, daemonic harbinger of gunpowder and poisonous metals, scour the region for new firearms and toxic substances to use in servitude to their daemon lord.

BORROWING TROUBLE

The planar barriers in the Mana Wastes are extremely thin, damaged by the constant spellcraft dumped into them for thousands of years. As if the land didn't have enough dangers on its own, these walls sometimes burst open, allowing planar whirlwinds or daemonic bloodstorms to rip across the nearby towns and nations.

VELASCO CUETO

are unlikely to want or offer coin, preferring to exchange favors in kind—or trade for water, alchemical items, and other gear that can be used when magic cannot. What real use can gold have in a desert where there are few merchants and the greatest scarcity is magic?

The head buso of Gitna's lizardfolk guild of crag delvers, **Lino** (NG nonbinary iruxi explorer), holds the record for most excursions made into the crisscrossing systems of underground caverns. A near-fatal cave-in just outside Gitna, caused by insistence from previous guild heads that there was no need to map tunnel systems beyond the former caldera of the town, resulted in damage to their left eye and slightly impaired vision. Taking the initiative upon themself, they mapped most of the Mana Wastes and continue to annotate and update existing records. This archive alone makes the Gitna iruxis the best guides in the region. They refuse to hoard this resource, instead asking that any who use it contribute to further annotation and revision.

Lino and the other busos of Gitna are always open to working with adventurers both as guides and mapmakers. The busos often partner with the Pathfinder Society and other organizations who have the best interests of the iruxis and their homeland in mind. If, however, a group has proven themselves untrustworthy for any reason, either by breaking an oath sworn to Gitna or causing harm to any of the nomadic tribes or other settlements, Lino has been known to take revenge, sometimes petty, sometimes drastic.

As a particularly dedicated faultspawn tiefling adherent to Nethys, **Lakshmi** (N agender tiefling human sage) struck out from Osirion on a quest to gain a deeper and fuller understanding of magic as Nethys himself once did. Fully aware of the potential consequences should they succeed, Lakshmi tends to shun companionship in all its forms and keep to themself whenever possible. Visits to Gitna, the Samsara Oasis, or even neighboring Geb, Nex, and Alkenstar on occasion are near-silent affairs with only the barest amount of interaction. Their strict solitude and appetite for magical knowledge has made them an enigma to those they encounter in the Wastes, especially as they seem to have no patience for the mages of the Gists' Moon or the roving bands of wizards revolving around Velasco Cueto.

Most likely to be encountered in the Samsara Oasis sharing recent revelations on the nature of the region's unstable magic or in Gitna obtaining updated maps, Lakshmi tends to only show interest in those who are fellow adherents of Nethys or share their interest in understanding the whole of magic. Beyond that, they are polite but reserved, as they find all other conversation a waste of time.

No one is entirely sure when **Kalyan Chauhaury** (CG male half-elf wayfarer) began roaming the Spellscar Desert, seemingly wandering with no aims or goals in mind beyond going somewhere new. Some say the half-elf is preparing to ascend to godhood and meditating on a topic that changes with every telling. Others say he seeks to be "the best," though the best at what is never clear and varies with each account. Some whisper that he searches for a lover, someone he lost in more ways than one during their travels as they drifted further and further apart. Whether any of these are true in any sense is a constant question and one he rarely answers. What is clear is that he's willing to help or accompany almost anyone, whether they accept said assistance or reject it.

Kalyan is also involved in certain inexplicable feuds. Velasco Cueto challenges him to a fight to the death

on sight, even if the reason is never clear. Buso Lino eyes him warily but refuses to explain why if asked. Kalyan has yet to be banned from any cities or settlements, but most residents stay alert if he is within the walls. While most nomadic groups have no qualms with him, they often warn adventurers that traveling with this strange man may land them in unexpected trouble.

Some of the gnolls and hill giants of the Mana Wastes are infamous for their brazen thefts from Alkenstar, and **Pranee Ngea-dein** (CN female gnoll bandit) is easily the most infamous of them all. Where others would shy away from such a challenging mark, she already has at least four plans brewing as she mentally puts together her crew. Utilizing her skills as a hunter and various tricks she's picked up from alchemists and mechanists in the Wastes and beyond, she has innovated on the items she has stolen or borrowed to create some of the most efficient thieving tools and resources on Golarion: smoke bombs that produce larger and denser clouds, nonmetal picks that take longer to break, climbing equipment that allows for near-silent movement, and more that she refuses to reveal. She has even taken it upon herself to improve a grappling hook gun she procured from Slippery Gats.

While not particularly welcomed by the city of Alkenstar, Pranee is a voracious learner who often endears herself to independent creators, targeting only larger organizations that will suffer far less from the loss of a few guns. She's more than happy to share engineering secrets gleaned from stolen inventions, and any party interested in "borrowing" from Alkenstar will always find space in her crew.

When one thinks of a wizard, and especially one who commands the respect of their peers in the way **Velasco Cueto** (LN male human muscle wizard) does, one rarely pictures the densely packed and athletic form of this human warrior-scholar. His adventuring career began as a bodyguard for his future mentor, where Velasco quickly realized the many advantages of magic in combination with his physical prowess. When he felt he was becoming too reliant on the crutch of magic, it is said he walked alone into the Wastes where he would occasionally encounter and aid adventuring parties and travelers. As mages and scholars began to seek him out for tutelage in his combination of grappling combat and well-timed spells, he gathered a following that he still leads with an iron fist as they roam the desert and prove themselves to a man who rarely ever smiles.

While not automatically adversarial to any parties encountered, Velasco considers most encounters to be purely transactional. Unless information or goods are exchanged, he is largely uninterested in spending more time than is strictly necessary to help a party in need. If the party is accompanied by an iruxi or calikang guide, Velasco is even more standoffish and brusque in his interactions.

Entrusted by the facilitating council of the Samsara Oasis to ensure the integrity of the research being conducted by their various groups, **Charikleia** (LN female calikang) is the youngest appointed waystar of the Sixfold Repentance in their history. While her duties force her to remain in the oasis for the length of her tenure, she has never seen it as a burden. Instead, it has served as an opportunity to learn as much as she can from as many people as possible. Chari, as she prefers to be called, has held her position since reaching maturity and has never taken it lightly. Every report is meticulously notated, and every meeting attended along with her best friend and confidant, Zahra. Together, they have made an oath to be the ones who fix the volatile magical framework of the Mana Wastes.

Chari has always had an open mind when meeting new people, and adventurers are no exception. Though she cannot abandon her post, she eagerly listens to every story and often acts as an advocate and liaison between adventurers, the Sixfold Repentance, and other denizens of the Wastes.

BUSO LINO

HERMIT LAKSHMI

KALYAN CHAUHAURY

PRANEE NGEA-DEIN

Nex

Nations

NEX [N]
Council of Wizards
Capital: Quantium (60,000)

Peoples

Catfolk
Djinni
Fleshwarped
Garundi
Ghoran
Gnome
Keleshite
Mwangi
Ratfolk
Vudrani

Languages

Kelish
Osiriani
Taldane
Vudrani

Factions

Arclords of Nex

The Fleshforges Guild

The Merchant's League of Nex

Religions

Aakriti

Calistria

Mahathallah

Pharasma

Abadar

Irori

Nethys

Sarenrae

Abraxas

Lamashtu

Norgorber

Resources

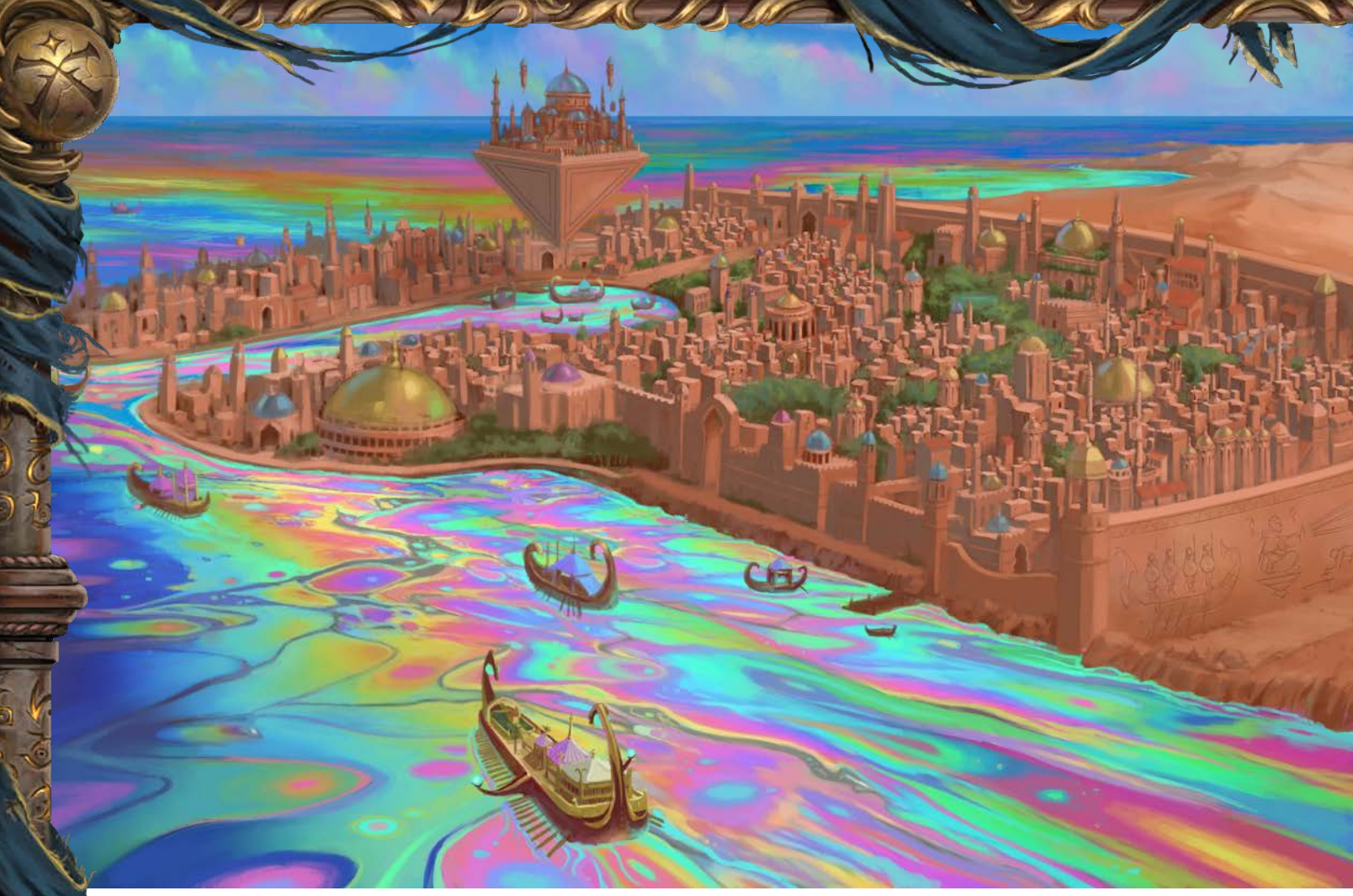
Books/ Lore

Luxury Goods

Magic Items

Seafood

INTRODUCTION
HISTORY
PEOPLE
ALKENSTAR
BHOPAN
GEB
JALMERAY
MANA WASTES
NEX
RELIGION
BESTIARY
GLOSSARY & INDEX



Few would disagree that Nex was, if not is, Golarion's greatest wizard. His arcane influence on the world—and in some ways, beyond—is contested by Old-Mage Jatembe alone, though the contributions Nex made to the world were often as happenstance as they were calculated. The archmage wizard-king is recognized as the tremendous force responsible for a nation of great impact. The extent of that greatness only comes into full relief four millennia after his disappearance from the Material Plane, and that greatness has limits.

The sprawl of Nex's consequence is a different story. With each year that passes, the wrinkles of his ambition and ego mark Golarion. Ironically, the country of his namesake looks the most weathered through time by his actions. Nex, the country, is wound of ancient wonder and woe alike.

Nex presents a surreal romance to newcomers. Quantium, a capital whose handsome visage flows from subterranean depths to skies of unusual color, brandishes a dizzying array of wonders conjured from hither and thither. Oenopion is less showy, but an intrepid traveler can find a world within themselves as complex as the enchanted warrens of the Bandeshar palace in the capital; all it takes, in the alchemical city, is cleaning a plate of Ghoran cuisine and reaching the bottom of an exceptionally potent glass. Few who live in the military hold of Ecanus care if it isn't the nation's most charismatic city. It's formidable, and because it's formidable, so is Nex.

Staying in the nation exposes its preexisting cracks. Everyone knows not to traverse Nex's countryside, a scourged area nearly as dangerous to traverse as the Mana Wastes, blasted from the archmage's war with Geb 4,000 years ago. Dangerous miscreants, harsh wild things, cold desert-like nights, and waywardly inconsolable fleshforged titans menace the countryside. What few will tell you in the countryside is what nobody will tell you in Oenopion: if you're new to the city, there's a better chance you'll vanish there than in the wastelands.

The capital is built of secrets reaching a bureaucratic tipping point. The people of Quantium fend for themselves for the sake of provoking—or preventing, depending on whom you ask—the reignition of war with Geb. Each secret revealed, ancient or new, weighs the scales more heavily to the former. Ecanus is supposed to defend its two fellow cities from threat, but it's a literal festering wound of a city, which only causes the wider nation to bleed internally. What dealt the blow that led to the Evisceration of Ecanus is unclear, but if it wasn't Geb's doing, then Archmage Nex's dream is more self-sabotaging than his rival necromancer could ever have wished.

Oenopion poisons not only itself with the great, sentient mass of oozes known as the Bath beneath the city, but also assists in a wider poisoning of the region's waters with irrigation that leaches water from the

rivers to its south and north. This is nothing compared to the Miasmere, a horrendously polluted bay made so by years of willful neglect of Quantium's arcane activity, which contaminates any water entering the nation from the Obari ocean. The Miasmere runs westward down the Elemion and Ustradi rivers, poisoning them both in the process. Valkus Isle is a dumping ground for prisoners and enemies of the nation, but more than a few officials bringing them there end up trapped on the island with Nex knows what else.

In the Mana Wastes, the last gasps of Nex's continued expansion (which started the war with Geb over an age ago) are fading as the technocratic Grand Duchy of Alkenstar forms into a territory of its own and crawls out of Nex's grasp. In the capital, the last person to know the archwizard—and the oldest member of the ruling Council of Three and Nine—has gone missing. The nation's leadership fights a newly cold civil war as it prepares for the resurgence of a literal, deeply scarring ancient one.

In the west of Nex is the aptly titled Well of Lies, a vast dungeon near the foothills of the Shattered Range. The instruments of Nex's rise to power are often traced to this mysterious complex that predates even this ancient nation. Once closed by the wizard-king's order, the Council of Three and Nine is too preoccupied with national turmoil to maintain that ancient edict. Because of the boldness of the occasional adventurer, keen to consult the enchanted (but duplicitous) scrying pools within for power and fortune, the complex has been reopened.

Those intrepid souls aren't who reemerge, but instead a steadily increasing procession of individuals who refer to themselves as the "Keys of Nex" as they make their way to the capital. Navigating the city while bearing the guises of many whom Nex apparently killed, they speak in cryptic messages that only those with the most intimate knowledge of the archmage could know. They say Nex remains in his arcane refuge because his inevitable return will be Nex's fall. It's a hard notion for the Council to concede, but the cracks expanding through the nation make the portent difficult to deny.

People come to Nex because it's amazing. Such a place reforms those who visit. How could it not? The process of creating his dream to the fullest of his wishes didn't change Nex himself; it exposed him. The nation is a fertile ground for everyone who follows him, to discover, and, even in unexpected ways, to grow. Nex might have created much in the world, but the people who traverse his domain always find themselves asking: what good did he actually accomplish? Then they do the magical thing that Nex was meant to do, and they accomplish something new.

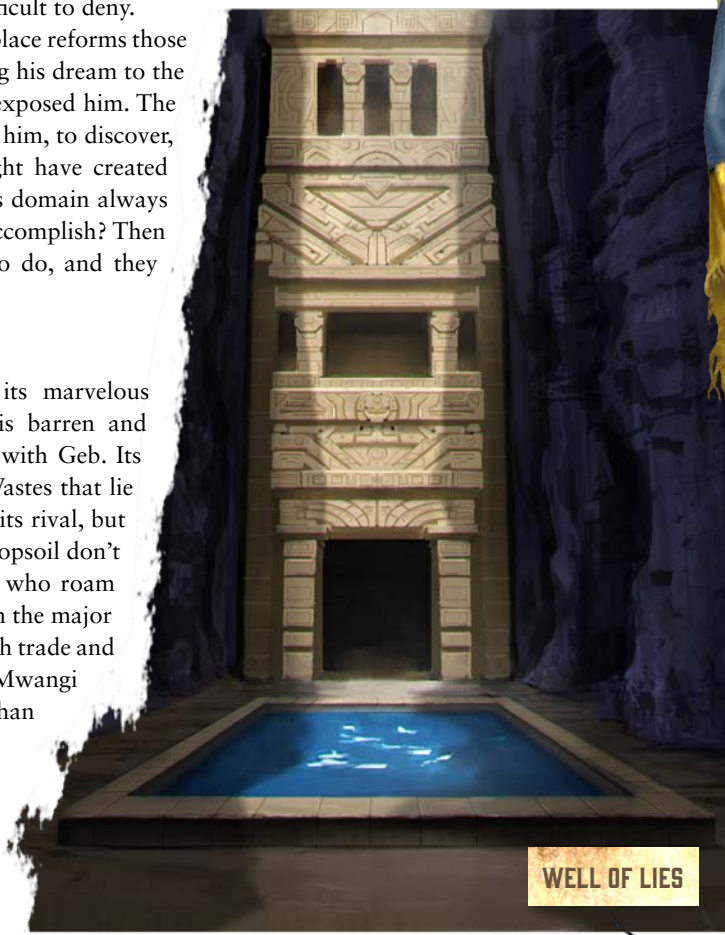
GEOGRAPHY

Nex's geography is a perfect encapsulation of its marvelous and mercurial history. The nation's countryside is barren and necrotically blasted due to the prolonged conflict with Geb. Its lands are a less treacherous version of the Mana Wastes that lie south of the nation, sandwiched between Nex and its rival, but still treacherous all the same. The sands and rocky topsoil don't provide much for the bandits, brigands, and clans who roam the land. They often meet traders migrating between the major Nexian cities freckling the wizard-king's domain with trade and calculated turmoil. Perusing the west edge of the Mwangi Expanse's tangle often yields little or costs more than the Nexian outlanders bargained for.

The other borders of Nex are little better, when it comes to travel. The deserts of Katapesh, while more hospitable than the unpredictable Mana Wastes, do not make for a pleasant trek. The Shattered Range and Brazen Peaks on Nex's western border forms

ISLE OF BLACK PALMS

Though technically claimed by Nex, few pay any attention to the small chunk of land to the north of Varkus Isle. Known as the Isle of Black Palms, there is nothing to be found on the locale aside from dead palms and the lonely minaret of a ruined building. Fishers who stray too close report occasional signs of life, but no indication of who might have left them. No one who has set foot on the island has ever returned, discouraging further research.



WELL OF LIES

LOCAL FAUNA

The blighted lands of Nex remain cursed by Geb's necromancy even after thousands of years, with only the expertise of ghoran farmers coaxing anything from the soil. Some hardy animals still survive in the area, however, such as desert birds and mammals, as well as bizarre prehistoric throwbacks that were either mutated by the Mana Wastes or failed to evolve as their kin did. Terror birds are the most common sight near Nexian cities, either tamed or wild.

ELEMION

an imposing barrier that limits any reliable contact with cities in the Mwangi Expanse, though travelers and caravans still periodically make their way through the Ndele Gap. Most in Nex travel by river or sea, sending massive ships down the northern Elemion and the southern Ustradi.

The Circulation

For all of Nex's magical pedigree, many of its troubles are entirely mundane. The bandits who dwell in the wastes and waylay caravans throughout the nation aren't unique in any way; like brigands across the cosmos, their lust for plunder is outweighed only by their personal losses and compounding rage in the face of desperation. Many descend from scorned and broken bloodlines when the walls of the great city-states shuttered their ancestors to a cruel fate of exile. Generations spent hunted by the fleshforged creations of their former homelands and treated as common detritus to be scraped off a Quantium aristocrat's boot have left these malicious souls without compassion or mercy.

The largest of the wasteland clans, the Manymen, continue to map the region under the discretion of their representative on the Council of Nine, Elemion. They chart all the safe roads that run through the nation, starting west of the Ndele Gap and the notoriously treacherous Shattered Range below it. Amidst the wider chaos in the countryside, the Manymen, in coordination with Nex's government, have created numerous safe waystations along their reliable roads in exchange for uncontested entry to the nation's three major cities. These roads, built and maintained by the Manymen and Nex's military, have become the most reliable routes linking the territories of Nex.

Collectively, these trading roads—as well as the roads connecting the nation's own settlements—are referred to as the Circulation of Nex. The original network of roads took almost a decade to build after Nex's vanishing, as most prior attempts during the war with Geb were destroyed by invading forces and magics on the necromancer's order. When the war ended with Nex's disappearance, the Council of Three and Nine created a few trade routes flowing to and from Geb as an initial reparative step in an attempt at brokering a tenuous peace.

The largest three roads of the Circulation are referred to as the "arteries" of Nex and were completed in 588 AR. These three roads link Nex's most critical cities: the economic backbone of Oenopion, the military hold of Ecanus, and the resplendent capital of Quantium. The road leading from Quantium southwest to Ecanus is known as the Barapara Damnu, or Road of Blood, as it was the most heavily contested and sabotaged during the war. Some say there are still spots in the barren soil along the Barapara Damnu that smell of iron and copper. Sometimes winds from storms along the Obari Ocean spread a heavy crimson dust throughout the countryside, which many claim are ghosts of conflicts past.

The second road of this inner triangle is the Barapara Uchafruu, or the Road of Dirt. This road crosses the middle of the Ustradi river from Ecanus and travels north until it reaches Oenopion, halfway in the northwestern wastelands of Nex. It's a double reference to both the place of the dead (and undead) in Nex and its alchemical foundations.

The final road was the first road established in the region around –731 AR in the midst of the war. The Barapara Dhahabii, or Road of Gold, links Oenopion to Quantium. The Road of Gold is farther north than the Road of Blood, so the wizard-king was more easily able to protect it during the war. The Barapara Dhahabii is one of the few places in the countryside to again show signs of the region's former fertility, thanks in no small part to Ghoran tending. Though it

was the first road established, it was the last to be named. Its moniker references Oenopion's material importance and the alchemical effects of time.

These three roads are enchanted with protections that ward against wayward fleshforged terrors, though the enchantments must be renewed every 20 to 30 years. The smaller veins and arteries of the Circulation receive no such arcane protections for the most part, despite being a complex link to the rest of the region. As a result, there's little security off the beaten path of the Circulation in Nex's modern era.

The Miasmere

Significant veins link the Miasmere—the large bay that joins the east coast of Nex to the Obari—to the capital, though Quantium also has its own port that feeds directly into the polluted waters. Magical pollution makes the waters' effects on its citizens unpredictable and dangerous. The Council of Three and Nine has wrangled their most skilled alchemists and arcanists to work endlessly on mitigating the waters' effects within the nation's major cities, so far seeing only limited success. The Miasmere is so magically toxic that as its waters evaporate, they create surreal and beautiful clouds over Quantium and Nex's eastern rim that pour somewhat acidic rain for which only the capital has formal protections. Boats making port in the bay or at the city have similar trouble with acidity if they aren't properly constructed for the Miasmere's alchemical corrosions. As Quantium continues in its excesses, the Elemion river forming the northern border of the nation and the Ustradi river at the south carry the cursed arcane water west through the rest of the region, still full of wartime flotsam from more than 4,000 years ago. The water further isolates the arcane prison of Valkus Isle (and the haunted Isle of Black Palms north of it) from the rest of the nation. Nex's leadership largely neglects the isle in favor of other lands. Like Nex's ego, his nation struggles to temper its reach, even in peaceful times. With his disappearance, Nex's namesake slips through his fingers due to his heirs' tacit overextensions.

Valkus Isle

A large island off the eastern coast of Nex, Valkus Isle was once a popular resort for the nobility of Nexian society. It also once hosted a palace for the archmage Nex, who used the sanctum as a private place for his earliest experiments. Unfortunately, these magical experiments went awry, blasting the entire isle with planar energy and unleashing horrific monsters. Nex was forced to solve the problem by creating an impenetrable magical barrier known as the *Stalwart Wall*, which locked everything on the island inside permanently. With Valkus Isle now an inescapable prison, it now serves as an oubliette and dumping ground for Nexian undesirables of all kinds.

Quantium

Monument to Ambition

Historians claim the archmage who founded Quantium, the capital of the nation of Nex, freely used* wish *spells to improve the life of its citizens. Though the wizard-king vanished thousands of years ago, his city remains, a masterpiece of marble and magic.

Quantium is a city made to eclipse all others.

Imagine a city of a circular plot, 15 miles in diameter and encircled by a wide "c"-shaped road. Upon the road is set two golems the size of three-story buildings, patrolling back and forth ceaselessly. Both wear the blank countenance of the wizard-king who made them to defend his dream of a city.

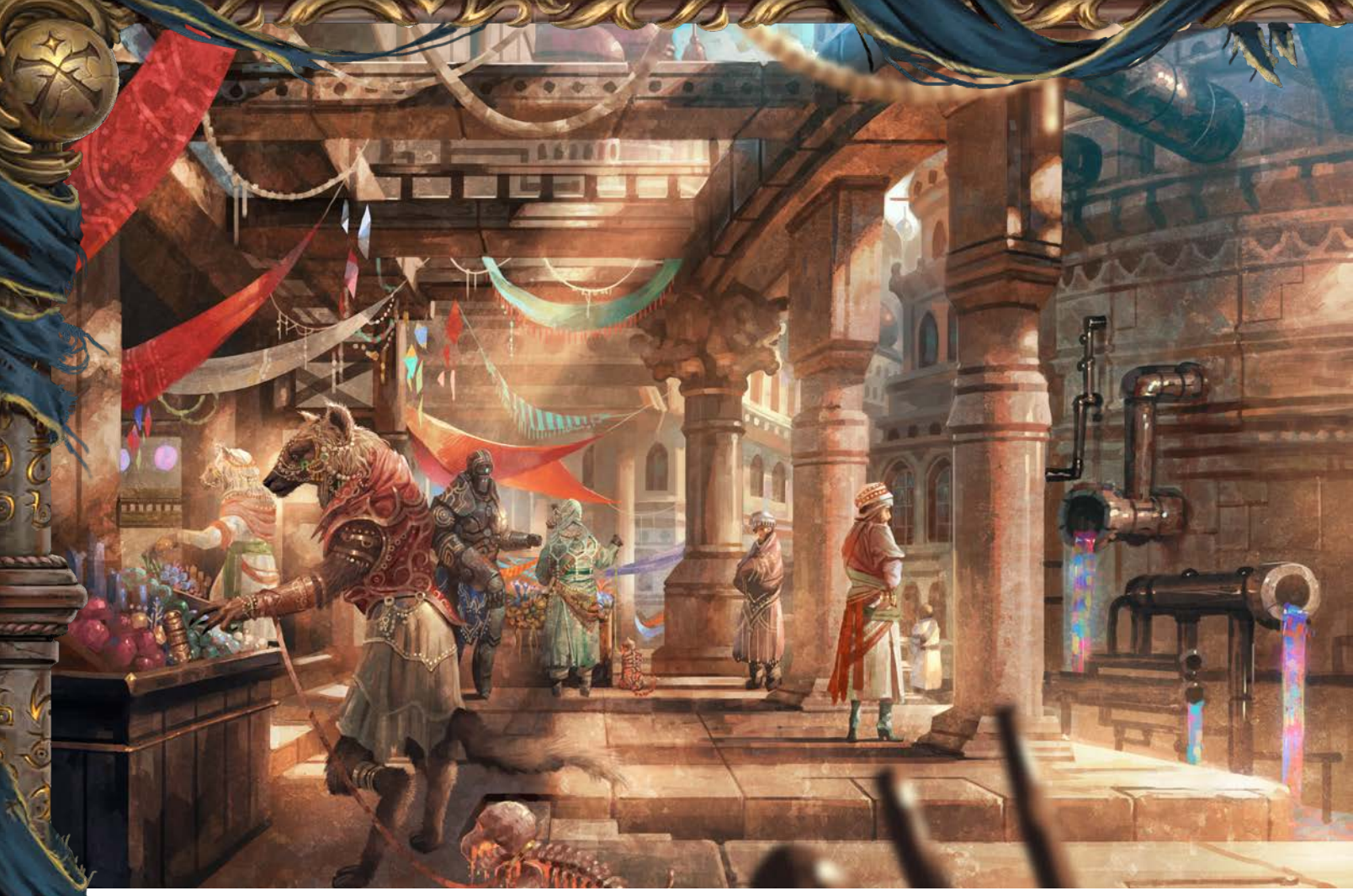
The eastern city terminates at a mile-wide port that lets in water from the Obari Ocean, allowing traders to dock with goods from abroad. Hidden below the waves of the city's portside lies the mouth of a complex aqueduct running beneath the city and into its heart—a 2-mile-diameter lake. Here, water gets cycled in, through, and out of the city in a similar fashion to the irrigation beneath Quantium's westward sibling, the city of Oenopion. The grand palace and crown jewel of the capital and nation, known as the Bandeshar, sits with its surrounding campus on a half-mile-wide triangle of an island in the middle of the city lake, elevated 200 feet above the domes and peaks of the highest buildings. No bridges connect this island to the rest of the surrounding city. Any arcane thing could be an entrance to the Bandeshar, but its entrances and exits to and from the rest of the capital are strictly need to know.

The rest of the surrounding metropolis is more than colorful enough to distract anyone who walks through its streets, with its constant hustle and bustle and the variety of people and creatures in its streets. Gathered and curated flora and fauna are sown through the city's surface and the deep layers that fill its scattered parks and plazas, and the numerous statues, reliefs, mosaics and inscriptions of the wizard-king—and occasionally, his formative cohort as well—decorate every other surface of the capital.

Travelers marvel at the two layers of the wider city. Quantium's numerous visitors and inhabitants enter the capital from the gates at its north and south rim in their open hours, through the 15-foot, miles-around wall inscribed with illustrations of the nation's mythic history. The wall fences the visible city in and extends out and over the portside. Visitors are then met with the first of many staircases leading up to the Juali—Quantium's "Sun"—or down into the Nwezi, the capital's "Moon." These two levels make up the layers of the city. The Juali is partially visible from the treacherous Nexian countryside, constantly circled by the 20-foot Quantium Golems who patrol to and from the Obari shores and who occasionally peer over the wall, placidly checking the city of their charge. The Nwezi lies beneath the Juali, lit up with unusually hued arcane lights throwing dazzling colors from their glass sconces where visitors descend. Purposeful, circular gaps in the Juali expose the neighborhoods below to the natural light, and the complex, beautiful architecture built in the Nwezi below support the equally impressive city blocks above. Both are connected by patterned pillars, buildings, supports, and archways, and the deeper city is run through with canals and pipelines that make for small cascades and waterfalls from its aqueducts. All of it is hewn from handsome marble, precious minerals, jewels of floral hues, and elaborately shaped glass in colors to match.

Quantium is the perfect metropolitan representation of a man who disappeared into himself. As the capital

THE BANDESHAR



city of Nex, the utopia the country's namesake imagined is metaphorically following his suit. This city, spun of cadres, circles, and coteries, lit up with magic and glued together with a lifetime's worth of wishes, is threatening to collapse under its figurative weight like the rest of the nation. The water that churns from the ocean into the city near the ports is more toxic than the Bath in Oenopion, thanks to the pollution Quantium's citizenry bleed into it with abandon during their day-to-day. The consequential Miasmere bay, which churns in and out of the city, has none of the Bath's sentient wisdom and twice its threat. All the splendor of Nex can't hide the stain of Quantium's collective ego.

The capital is a beautiful thing—and beauty hewn of ego is the most fragile sort.

A DAY IN QUANTIUM

Without any sort of timepiece, the days blur together in Quantium's sprawl. Its arcane hustle and bustle is ever fueled by intrepid minds that cast any normal sleeping schedule to the streets while they look to the stars, shadows, and beyond for deeper and deeper mysteries. Lanterns of all sorts of unnatural color stay lit day in and day out. The luminous white marble of the main streets and many of the official buildings of Quantium refract the lights' dizzying array of prisma into the sky, to a degree that its true color is often blotted out. From the city streets the sun often looks like another star, and the stars simply melt into the luminous atmosphere. Only the moon makes any kind of consistent appearance in the city's view of the sky. The people below are far too wrapped up in their day-to-day to take notice.

The unexpected is almost commonplace to a destabilizing degree for visitors and travelers uninitiated to Quantium's arcane, plane-spanning metropolis. One might share freshly brewed qahwa with a dweomercat in a café at morning, then barter for extraplanar materials to study with a glass golem tending its master's component salon in the afternoon in one of the Nwezi's many strange bazaars. Next, one might spend the evening reading inside a living library more than happy to share incisive opinions on its visitor's taste. Around each turn, the capital buzzes with idiosyncratic activity, overwhelming those within its latticed belly with new stimuli and information. Magic isn't rote here, but it's pervasive enough in every aspect of the city's construction that the locals almost have to blot it out of their registry to function.

Living in Quantium by coin alone is too expensive for most to weather without familial wealth and status in and beyond the nation. Consequently, Quantium is aggressively stratified, but many locals try to hustle through the material struggle dealt to them to enjoy the city's arcane treasures. The average local lives and breathes their work, a perfect distraction from the

city's lack of significant civil support. Domestic tenure in Quantium is ephemeral unless a person is materially thriving or suffering—and the commotion of the city obscures the latter until it's too late.

In truth, a good amount of Quantium's civilian traffic is rather transient. Some are knowingly so, and have taken to the streets of the deep city to try to redefine the dynamic between "owner" and "owned" of property in Quantium, in protest of its elite's neglect. Many are impermanent by consequence of a scenic visit or esoteric personal business. They enter its walls one day, leaving overstimulated but full of colorfully sacred (and profane) anecdotes in the next. More than a few use Quantium as their momentary door into and out of the Material Plane.

Much of Quantium's busiest activity happens within the Nwezi. The day disappears in its elaborately layered smear of arcane lights, beautifully ornate doorways, askew warrens, festive alleys, and constant crowds full of denizens mundane and magical—all backed with the most gorgeously alien music one could imagine physical instruments forging. It easily makes up two-thirds of the capitol's infrastructural density, and four-fifths of its stable populace. The Nwezi is a dense, artful urban labyrinth of people trying to get each other's attention, selling their way up the chain to escape the sensory overload within the city's midst.

The polluted water from the Miasmere cycling endlessly into and out of the capitol lends the entire Nwezi a chemical scent that stings the nostrils, similar to the scent of ozone and a pinewood or maple tree fried by lighting. When Quantium's lake and aqueducts aren't running into the local's homes, interiors smell better, often helped by Oenopional aromas or floral candles. The Nwezi quakes considerably to the shake of each of the great golem's footfalls outside of the city—though the architecture rarely rubbles and never collapses from this. Still, the metronome-like sound is enough to drive those living under it to the surface just to think. The novel beauty of a brief visit can become a nightmarish daily life under Quantium's Sun.

Many try to climb their way up to the Juali through their daily trade and grift, but more often, in recent years, there have been protests bubbling up from within Quantium's urban depths. The past decade has seen the city's most frustrated, exploited, or neglected increase their displays of unrest to a near-daily occurrence, cutting through the Juali's calm and clarity. Otherwise, the Juali is serene and pretty, with the sharp ozone smell below dissipating as the scent drifts through the windows to the open air. The heavy thud of the golems that quakes the Nwezi is a soft, soundless bounce in the Juali above; the heavy metronome is a handily ticking clock up there.

The discontent is starting to stick more above the surface in Quantium. The folk in the outer city above or below often cast their eyes to the Bandeshar as it sits largely undisturbed by the quakes of the wider city's ramshackle bustle. A few manage to wonder, in between their distraction, what could be so important within the palace to keep it so segregated from the city it's the center of. Yet the days of those who make it there are somehow more ill at ease in the palace's contrasting placidity. Many can feel the tension within the palace they're privileged to work within—can feel Nex's disappointed gaze more in the campus around the palace than when his marble imitations stare at them from four different vantages in an underground Nwezi grotto.

Those who have worked hard enough to earn a position in the Bandeshar are also offered lodging to accommodate them. They rarely make the move.

A YEAR IN QUANTIUM

Much happens in the Quantium year. For those who can find a way to cut through the city's distractions—or find music in the noise—Nex's capital city offers a wonderful refuge to shape themselves in. A year in Quantium can be so relentlessly busy that it resembles a month to locals, while a traveling neonate spending a month in the city might feel like they have

QUANTIUM SETTLEMENT 20

N METROPOLIS

Government council

Population 60,000 (45% humans, 13% gnomes, 3% catfolk, 2% ratfolk, 2% fleshwarps, 1% ghorans, 34% other)

Languages Kelish, Osiriani, Taldane, Vudrani

Religions Abadar, Abraxas, Calistria, Irori, Mahathallah, Nethys, Norgorber, Pharasma, Sarenrae

Threats civil unrest, political intrigue

Nothing's Weird Anymore Quantium residents regularly see extraplanar beings, travelers from afar, constructs, fleshforgers from Ecanus, oozes from Oenopion, and more walking their streets. Nothing surprises them at this point. Whether a character is a monster or a member of an obscure ancestry, heritage, or class, residents of Quantium are unfazed and rarely treat those characters differently than they would a human in the same circumstances, other than respecting the power of any being that's obviously dangerous.

Iranez of the Orb (N female human witch 20) member of the Council of Three

Agrellus Kisk (LE male human arclord 19) leader of the Arclords of Nex

Elder Architect Oblosk (LN male kasesh ancient 21) castellan of the Bandeshar

aged a year from the amount of information they're exposed to.

Of the cities within Nex, Quantium is the most inviting to the outside weather and elements. Most days in both the warmer or cooler seasons are pleasantly sun-kissed—but since Quantium is a coastal city, it garners its fair share of prismatic storms and occasionally acidic rain in the course of a month, rather than falling into the more generalized dry and rainy months the region subjects the rest of the nation to. The city's plan openly welcomes the elements from the coast, and the magic that swirls in the Obari Ocean that's leached in from the Miasmere's pollution often catalyzes arcane storms that brew to considerable size. The city's magical protections largely keep the sometimes-cursed rainfalls to negligible impact on the architecture and negligible discomfort for the city's inhabitants. After a year it goes unnoticed, or one learns to wear an enchanted hat or hood with a wide cover.

While torrential downpours and thunderous crashes do nothing to threaten the complex marble lattice of the city, these coastal storms are still a rather startling monthly occurrence. Though they're beautiful to see from the Juali, being within the Nwezi is more of a roulette. The pouring water that cascades down steps and through complex networks of aqueducts through the two layers of the city can be a joy to listen to and watch—but thunder reverberates to a deafening volume in the Nwezi. The wet months of Rova to Calistril only increase the frequency of these storms.

The city's inhabitants commonly use three calendars. The first is Golarion's standard metric, acknowledged more for the sake of travelers coming into the city than any other reason. That said, Quantium is quite internationally tinged, and it is also deeply festive, so the city holds many holiday celebrations—though they are frequently reduced from their religious and historical context in favor of the celebration itself and its accompanying aesthetics. More generalized holidays that are re-interpretable or centered around revelry for revelry's sake enjoy the most enthusiastic celebration. Holidays that engage with matters of the dead see a tension run through the city, though private celebrations in the Nwezi provide the rare culturally scandalous thrill. A theatrical interpretation of the Day of Bones is the embraced exception because of Pharasma's prominent clerical presence in the city, though real corpses are swapped with elaborate props and costumes to exalt the dearly departed.

The second calendar that finds common use in Quantium is the exchange calendar. This calendar is used by the capitol's entrepreneurs—particularly the ones who live in the Nwezi near the port side of town. The exchange calendar is 369 days—four days longer than the common calendar detailed above. Its segments are planned around the Network of

Nineteen's opening (page 264) because of the amount of unique goods and clientele that come from outside of the Material Plane to shop during these days, not to mention the people who choose to land at port to peddle their wares. What results is a calendar of 19 segments, each of 19 days. Often, one of these periods of time is a rest period roughly aligning with the end of the region's wet season, and the other 18 segments through the year are split between selling locally or traveling through the doorways in the Network of Nineteen.

Finally, the Bandeshar and those under its employ use a calendar devised by the Council of Three and Nine, which is planned across an almost-standard 365-day year but is mapped to the fortnight rather than to the approximate month. The first day of each of these two-week periods is marked by a meeting of the Council of Three and Nine, assessing the city and wider nation. The seventh day of each fortnight marks a private meeting between the Three, which is documented by one of the Nine (typically Pharasma's High Cleric). The 14th day of these cycles is a rest day. Between those three markers, it is assumed that those who tend obligations within the Bandeshar are exceptional enough individuals to autonomously pursue bureaucratic matters of city, state, and beyond.

The Arclords of Nex claim that this method of scheduling is the same that Nex used in his early days of conceiving the nation, and in times of great stress he would use this two-week format to re-center himself through a formidable focus, accomplishing a great feat by the end of this rigor and taking a full day to indulge in and marvel at his accomplishment. The odd day of this calendar is actually the last of the year, Invigoration Day, in which Nex and his followers would go to a place completely new to them with the express purpose of enjoying themselves in an unprecedented sensory excursion. There they would unravel the further mysteries of existence in—as the Elder Architect describes—an "occasionally hedonistic" way. His explained purpose, according to some of the wizard-king's few published notes, was to carry an invigorated verve into the new year of invention and ambition. Since his vanishing, it has become Introspection Day, a day many locals of notable repute observe, as they fast in memory of their wizard-king and in contemplation of themselves.

PEOPLE OF QUANTIUM

Quantium's citizenry is anything but expected. The city overflows with oddities that walk its streets. Ghorans spread their seeds in preparation of their next life. Constructs walk around with a consciousness or two stuffed into their body. Catfolk and ratfolk chase each other in the warrens of the Nwezi. Fleshwarps and mutants from the countryside lobby for provisions to their clans and circles. Disgraced devils and demons run quaint businesses selling secrets and sorceries. Changelings search for purpose in a city they understand as a font for it. To top it off, Quantium's definition of "pet" might melt the minds of residents in most other places. If it's strange somewhere else and can fit in the capital streets, one will meet it here—so long as it isn't undead. The determinate net of the word "people" in Nex's capitol carries a dizzyingly wide definition. It demands its visitors to expect, and accept, the alien.

The more internationally common ancestries within Quantium's citizenry rest upon a considerable human minority of heavily Garundi, Keleshite, and some Vudrani backgrounds. Some of the eldest and wealthiest of the Keleshite diaspora have significant representation within Quantium's walls. A healthy number of locals of Bonuwat and Bekyar descent immigrate from the Mwangi Expanse. In a city full of accomplished arcanists, sorcerers and wizards, some of the most impressive mages the city welcomes

ALL WORK AND NO PLAY

Rumors persist that students at the city's Seven Veils magic academy have learned a trick for making simple illusory images of themselves independent, allowing themselves to form study groups with magical copies of themselves. Sometimes students who attempt this return intrinsically different, fixated on solving their issues through any means necessary. Despite several notable incidents, Schoolmaster Denungar Neev has so far prevented any investigation into the matter.

DAY OF BONES

unsurprisingly hail from Nantambu, though the city's wanton nature rarely agrees with the Mwangi scholars' more egalitarian dispositions. Often, their presence is a temporary, academic one in official terms—usually a sign that the Magaambya is investigating some arcane Nexian malaise or is there by Bandesharite request. Distant and unusual genetic unions in the history of this plane-crossed city's elite see many families of significance living within the Juali who superficially register as human but are revealed as various varieties of tiefling or aasimar descent with closer inspection.

Another notable minority that fills Quantium is the Keenspark gnome population. Their numbers have blossomed in the last millennium because of the diverse selection of arcane and mundane materials acquirable within the city walls, which act as a magnet for their technical curiosity. Their particular and iconoclastic nature largely agrees with most of Quantium's intrepid self-made fleshwarped—but the veneration of Nex in the city often sees their stereotypically precarious disposition sour. Even with this thinly veiled distaste for the wizard-king's cult, Keenspark arcanists find fast success in the city, often staying in the subterranean matrix of the Nwezi to study for themselves in urban hermitage.

By contrast to humans, planetouched, and gnomes' prominence, halflings, dwarves, orcs, and especially elves tend to be somewhat sparse in the capital, preferring the quieter demeanor of Oenopion—though elves are even rarer residents in Oenopion than anywhere else within the nation's cities. The infrequent representatives of these ancestries residing in Quantium are usually of Avistani or Casmar origin rather than of Garundi background. The Mualijae-descended elves from the Mwangi Expanse find the whole of Nex, especially Quantium, a distastefully wanton place, often only setting foot in the city with specific, reluctant intent. They share this reluctance with mutants of the countryside and Mana Wastes, who are often ignored or overlooked when their physical appearance is too "distracting," or their demands are too loud—an absurd claim in such a strange city. The outsiders who are sometimes part of these wayward clans find far more success in procuring support from the government, though this struggle is far less an issue for the Manymen mutants (page 248) due to their official representation within the Nine.

Djinni are of pervasive, if not prominent, presence, having helped construct the city by Nex's wish and will. In tandem with the Elder Architect's work, they are likely the reason the capital hasn't capsized to its ancient infrastructural impossibilities. They inhabit the elements of the city, pulling wishes when they want to from Quantium's numerous desperate. Some do take on a more pedestrian tact in their navigation of the city—and a more carnal exploration of its social circles. Consequently, there is a notable selection of geniekin in the city, many of whom carry blood relation to Quantium's aristocracy.

FACTIONS

Quantium possesses a somewhat formal social hierarchy guided predominantly by the families who have inhabited the city the longest—and the Council of Three and Nine—in the wake of Nex's disappearance: in order of most to least influential, the Bandesharite, the Populasi and Rastrashi, and the Galisite. Though nowhere near comprehensive, the following are some of the most notable groups and factions across the capitol's social strata.

The Bandesharite: The well-known and reluctantly well-regarded rulers and delegators of the city (by design) and nation (in practice), having forged and maintained longstanding institutional power. A Bandesharite's votes and words are often the ripples that evolve into the norms of Quantium for the next century, and as such those of this group spend the majority of their time going to and from the great palace of the class's namesake. The individual members of the Council of Three define the parameters of this space. Some of these individuals have pulled their associated social families up with them—like Praavi Skriiphuveti's work in establishing the Merchant's League of Nex. Others have kept their factions at a visible distance to attempt to shield their street-level machinations from the scrutiny of their colleagues. Gen Hendrikan (page 259) is a sterling example of one such personality who's been keen to maintain public separation with the Keepers of Abraxas.

Her Most Keen Eye: Councilor Iranez's network of spies and informants, who seek out plots against the nation. Her most immediate concern (which some within the Council would consider oversight) centers the Evisceration of Ecanus rather than the capital itself. In a city where the citizens are on average in three places at once, Iranez's agents take this tenfold, and she herself one hundred. If they wish to be identified, officials of the Eye—often called the Keen—wrap their heads in turbans in a way that covers their eyes like a half mask with no eye holes. The fabric matches the color of their dark, tailored djyllab, the suits often embroidered with patterns of eyes that are visible only upon close inspection. When investigating, the Keen opt to make themselves completely discreet.

Her Most Keen Eye has the most direct, official ties to Nex's military in Ecanus. One of their main fronts in the city are His Future Witnesses: skilled artists and artisans who decorate the city with surveillance tools for the Keen, often with iconography of Nex and the mythology surrounding him.

The Breath: The most prominent organization of assassins in Nex, organized by **Master Phade** (NE male invisible stalker), a member of the Nine. Their operation is rarely personally or economically motivated—such pettiness is left to hedge murderers of Galisite quality. Instead, the Breath are interested in whose words balance the city and state, and whose whispers must be silenced before hampering it. For most outsiders, members are supremely hard to discern unless one is made in the know (or is about to meet one's fate), often because they keep their dress and cover within agreeable guises, or in rarer cases are literally invisible. A cautious friction has evolved over the past 500 years into a fruitful alliance between Iranez's keen eye and Phade's keen blade.

Quantium's Wish: Something of an anomaly amidst the Bandesharite, Quantium's Wish is a semi-formalized union

NEXUS HOUSE

Founded by the Pathfinder Adolphus and the radical Bhopanese princess Ganjay, Nexus House is the second-oldest and second-grandest Pathfinder Society lodge. Luxurious and gorgeous, Nexus House hosts a regular series of lectures, garden parties, and other gatherings—most of these events are decades or even centuries old and are woven into the social tapestry of Quantium. Recently, however, creatures from the Spellscar Desert in the Mana Wastes have been targeting Pathfinders, leaving the current vash-vatom increasingly worried. For more information on Nexus House, see page 94 of *Pathfinder Lost Omens: Pathfinder Society Guide*.

MANYMEN

SCEPTER OF THE ARCLORDS

An unfinished artifact constructed by Nex, this magical scepter was claimed by the Arclords after the archmage's disappearance. Renamed the *Scepter of the Arclords,* the large rod aided the Arclords in their rise to power in Nex and followed them to their exile in Jalmeray. It was the scepter that enabled one of the greatest crimes in Nex's history, obliterating the Sunghari people living on Kaina Katakka and reducing much of the island to ash. The Arclords sequestered the scepter in a remote stretch of jungle afterward, and then lost access to it when they were expelled from Jalmeray. With rising fears of war approaching, some among Quantium's elite now scheme ways they might get the artifact back.

of the djinni and aristocratic families run by geniekin in the capital. They occupy this station because of their ancient collaborations with both Nex and Oblosk in realizing Quantium and are instrumental in maintaining the city's construction in the current age. Because of this, this group is one of the networks of entities with a knowledge of the city's geography approaching—if not quite equaling—the Elder Architect's.

The Arclords of Nex: Under Agrellus Kisk's guidance, the internally conflicted Arclords of Nex are the most overtly propulsive faction across the nation, claiming to know and represent the wizard-king's vision best of anyone by guidance of his journals, protected and passed down between countless generations of his servants and their descendants. The Evisceration in Ecanus has earned back some needed goodwill for the Arclords after a millennium of their warmongering without justification started to wear on Nex's citizenry. Members of the Arclords can usually be identified by their (often closed) third eye. The group takes some petty umbrage with Her Most Keen Eye for what they see as a purloined motif—and actual frustration with Iranez's political disagreements regarding war. To contest the Keen's authority of national security, the Arclords cling to a rough-hewn station as enforcers of Quantium's nebulously defined laws and norms in the capital streets.

The Populasi and Rastrashi: The common glue of Quantium, which most forget are necessary for the city's function and thriving. The Populasi, or "popular interest" of the capital, are the citizens of Quantium of enough wealth, reputation, and energy to lobby for what they see as necessary political measures. What they lack in political push they make up for in community sway and threat—and the Bandesharite are keenly aware of the consequence of crossing groups and individuals who lie within this class. The Rastrashi, or everyday people, are often the most underestimated in their importance to Nex and Quantium's financial health. Much of this perception likely comes to this designation referring to the average citizen of Quantium—insomuch as anyone can pretend there is a particular standard—and their transient visitors. It's often overlooked that the cash flow that moves through the city and region from elsewhere keeps the international affairs of Nex's elite afloat. These are common folks with no larger enterprises of any notability, though some make the transition from passive citizen to engaged occupant and find the threads they've stitched in their time in the city comprise a quilt that casts a large shadow. To this end, one may say the difference between the Populasi and Rastrashi comes down to how much one cares about flouting one's status rather than wielding it.

The Merchant's League of Nex: This collaborative group organizes the trade of any major commercial entities operating through the nation, giving license to their trade if they have a storefront or transaction site across the nation, imparting taxes if a certain amount of income is earned, and enforcing and settling disputes and unreconciled barter after each season. Because of this diplomacy, high ranking Vendra of the Merchant's League often serve as civic judges for the wider city—a point of umbrage and threat from Agrellus Kisk and the rest of the Arclords of Nex. Much of this business is officiated outside of the Bandeshar no matter where in the nation it starts, despite the League's main advocate, **Paavi Roh Kenavrii** (N female tiefling human barrister), occupying one of the seats of the Nine. Officials of the League wear tailored achkan in simple colors or creamy white. Higher-ranking officials bear handsome sherwani patterned in gold.

The Galisite: Every angel battles their demons, every light is sculpted by its shadows, and every city street is connected

by its alleys. The Galisite, or alley people, are the perceived beckoners of Quantium's dark side. Few things are marked as illicit in a city with such apocalyptically renaissance verve as Nex's capitol, but the Galisite are understood to deal in illicit intent, larceny, murder, trafficking, and other nefarious crimes, with the notion that they fill the alleys with most of the city's unnaturally dead—and invite them to rise again. In public forums, the groups shoehorned into their ranks are decried and persecuted for their services, but if the ambitions that moved Quantium to action were made more transparent, almost all from top to bottom would be this class. Coming to this realization, the Galisite purveyors of Quantium have often managed to weave their own considerable tapestries of influence and power through the entire strata of the capital. If they aren't misunderstood or punitively stereotyped, they're savvy enough to keep in mind that everyone has a bad day and a worse side and because of this, terrible business will always be good and abundant.

Passages of Nex: The most mysterious influences in Nex are various people who resemble slain enemies and victims of the wizard-king himself, who claim to speak for the absent ruler. These individuals are hunted by the Bandesharite, yet find surprisingly dogmatic exultation in the wider citizenry's talk. They often migrate from the Well of Lies across the country, but more recently have emerged from doorways leading to the Refuge of Nex—which those most in the know take as a harbinger of Nex's return. The Passages agree, but state that his return will be the end of his nation.

The Keepers of Abraxas: Those who act as the librarians of ruinous secrets and are servants of the Demon Lord Abraxas—knowingly or otherwise. **Gen Hendrikan** (CE male human priest of Abraxas), chief Keeper and Cleric of Abraxas, often posits that Nex himself was the second Librarian of Abraxas, implicating that many of the wonders gluing the capitol together are in fact edges of the Final Incantation the demon lord himself imparted on the great wizard. Today, the Keepers tattoo each other with their lord's arcane secrets, with certain members being almost exclusively indigo with esoteric ink shrouding their skin.

CULTURE

Quantium is the most picturesque city in Nex, and its beauty attracts and inspires creation of all sorts, whether that be art, music, writing, or most frequently, magical exploration. The city of Nex's dreams taught the rest of its inhabitants that they could make their own fantasies a reality. Here, the sacred and profane overlap fiercely, the personal and public blur dangerously, and the obliteration of these boundaries that pervade other, less ambitious cities instead opens doors to something that the wizard-king himself would see as a divine challenge. Find—no, make oneself in the adventures of the arcane: that is Quantium's charge to all who set foot in it.

Even so, Quantium has its own binaries it is shackled by. The first, socially speaking, is the represented and the restrained. Somehow, even a city this diverse and strange is also extremely classist, to the degree that it has the names of the aforementioned Galisite, Populasi, Rastrashi, and Bandesharite strata formalized in the capital's lexicon. The Bandesharite is an echelon that only the already established members can invite others into, and it applies more to individual people than it does to the groups they may associate with. Quantium's inhabitants can climb up the social ladder between the other three stations with great effort, but the process leaves many of the younger generations and more marginalized peoples in the city disillusioned.

A SKILLED HAGGLER

There are downsides to Quantium's remarkable tolerance, and while Her Most Keen Eye and the Breath keep wary eye on dangerous visitors, they can often be bribed to let well enough be. Aslynn, an infamous night hag who has made enemies of the Pathfinder Society and sorceress Hao Jin among others, has been a known buyer and trader of magic in Quantium for nearly a century. The hag has never been connected to a magical incident and has been quick to provide gifts of rare magic to local officials, and so her presence has become well established.

MAHATHALLAH

One of the Queens of the Night, Mahathallah and her followers meditate on the mysteries of the cosmos and seek out fate-changing knowledge. They are known to cruelly veil or reveal the truth at their own whims, though they typically view themselves as above others. Due to Mahathallah's allegiance to Hell, her worship is discouraged in most nations, but the people of Nex welcome the insights of her clergy.

DEATHSEALER

The second binary is far clearer cut—that of the dead, and the undead. Should someone be rendered dead in the city, as is true through the rest of Nex, they are also quickly made gone in body and spirit so as to never rise again. A proper death in Quantium leaves behind only a memory, and any dead thing rising again prompts suspicions of Gebbite subterfuge. Finding a decomposing body of anything larger than a house cat in the city once spurned Quantium's citizenry to request the services of Ecanusi Deathsealers with such frequency that they eventually were stationed within the city at several specially built disposal facilities, now known as Crossings.

Because of Quantium's competitive and often agitated local politics, a thriving lifestyle in the city is one best assured through a reliable web of association and renown. The locals know this, and they have centered their culture around the actualization of ego. Outside of Nex himself, one's own being is the most sacred—and such vanity is rarely discouraged among the most powerful residing in the city, when paired with bold ambition and bright aptitude. Attention isn't inherently good or bad in Nex's capitol, but it catalyzes whatever web its subject is spinning. Whether they find themselves tangled in their own net or ensnaring their quarry depends on how they use their persona. It's wise to find one's mask in Quantium, and only take it off around those one trusts.

Through this social game, Quantium's culture often leads to the creation of various cults of personality from the most voracious egos within the capital. With near as much regularity, the frictions and full-blown conflicts that vibrate through Quantium's streets see many others possessing weaker wills and murkier visions fall into an actual cult behind them, though the larger groups would rarely admit to it. The city is a den of cadres, circles, and coteries. For all the voracious pursuit of individual dreams, Quantium's inhabitants find their stability in subscribing to one of its countless factions, whether large or small. With a well-enough-calibrated guise, the most adroit of the capital's ranks may even forge support for themselves through multiple groups. The most reliable currency under the capital's social makeup isn't gold but bartered favors. Expect to pay this way with anything more than rote and think of it as investing in the account of one's reputation.

Even if Nex was vain, he was—and to the nation's knowledge, remains—powerful. That power inspires respect and fear in tidelike turns. It's hard for such a thing not to, with every third person vying to announce their distant ties to the wizard, every second door being decorated with inscrutably romanticized abstractions of his face, and every building being watched over by a larger-than-life statue of him. The pervasive message of the city is simple: be yourself, like Nex was.

With such a focus on the prowess of the self, faith often trends toward gods who preach a means rather than an end. Nethys is as close to a national religion as can be found, without the dictates of the state officially decreeing it. On the darker side of the coin, both Abraxas and Mahathallah find prominent public adherents, though the cruel truths of Mahathallah are somewhat more acceptable than the cutthroat ruthlessness demanded from the demon lord of magic. Irori, with his focus on personal improvement, also finds a popular following among Nex's nigh-solipsist elite. Among the lower echelons of society, fleshforgers and those who seek to mutate themselves turn to Lamashtu, asking her to guide them toward new and glorious forms. Calistria's passions and lust for life guide many a Nexian on a path of glorified personal appetite. There are exceptions to this rule, where even the most jaded of residents will put aside their personal aspirations and pay their respects to a higher power. Sarenrae's kindly tenets might be looked down upon by the more world weary, but her prowess against the undead is not, and no one in Quantium dares publicly blaspheme the good name of the Lady of Graves.

The food in Quantium, at least in restaurants and sit-down spots, is beautiful to behold. The flavors, especially in comparison to the pace set in Oenopion, is less reliably impressive. A large reason for this is the quality of ingredients that come into the city. In theory, seafood is a prominent staple in the capitol due to it being a port city, and the mutated and transformed sea life make for wondrous presentations—and often acquired tastes, although the street food in the Nwezi is a more reliable source of joy for locals than the sit-down eateries in the Juali. Ghoran is even more scarce an ingredient because of the more niche populace than in Oenopion, as there are fewer plantfolk who reseed and offer their discarded body for consumption than in Quantium's alchemical sibling. There are some specialty chefs who are willing to take on extremely exclusive and expensive dishes for private clients—if a person has ever wanted to eat young umbral dragon, someone here can prepare it and keep the shadow in its blood from suffocating the diner. Just expect a steep price for the service, as the chef likely hunted down the entrée themselves.

The garishness and resplendence of this attitude extends to the aesthetic of the city. Like the colorful, layered, precisely fashioned, and artful architecture of the buildings that wind through—and sometimes, in the Juali, float over—the city streets, the fashions of Quantium's citizenry carry a similarly dramatic flair. One is bound to see many styles of clothing on the street because of the amount of foot traffic the city attracts, from not only the rest of Nex or Garund but the globe and other planes. Those who choose to live in the city, however, tend to adopt some common hallmarks of Quantium fashion.

Most common of fashions in the capitol is the genderless djyllab as a standard piece for most who wander the streets in a more-or-less humanoid frame. It is a somewhat loose-fitting robe that typically terminates at just around the ankles and slips over one's head. Often the djyllab is hooded and is worn over other clothing—though a common jape at galas and soirees held by confident socialites is for the host to wear nothing underneath. For some beings, the djyllab is adorned with secrets; spells are embroidered around the neckline and down the front and back or stitched into the seams connecting the robe's arms to its plunging middle. Whether robes, coats, vests, or cloaks, one can tell a Quantium garment by its embellishments and decorations, and these details are almost always enchanted as well. It's appropriate fashion for a city whose people have almost as much to hide as they are keen to show.

GOVERNMENT

The Council of Three and Nine, established in 578 AR, is the ruling government body holding Nex together through internal contention as much as it is through collaboration. It defines the nation but is shaped by bureaucracy and its own members' stratagems—frequently as self-serving as they are in service to Nex's whole. The Nine are representatives of various significant entities who are the movers and shakers of the arcane machine Nex has become. Two-thirds of the currently composed Nine live within Quantium, though they and their affiliated groups by proxy presume to represent the entire nation. Their seats are in hot contest, and nomination to the Nine is subject to the explicit discretion of the Three.

In stark contrast to the Nine, the Three of the Council take a more stable role in Nex's composition—serving their tenure until either confirmed death, resignation, or otherwise comparable incapability to rule. While the Nine

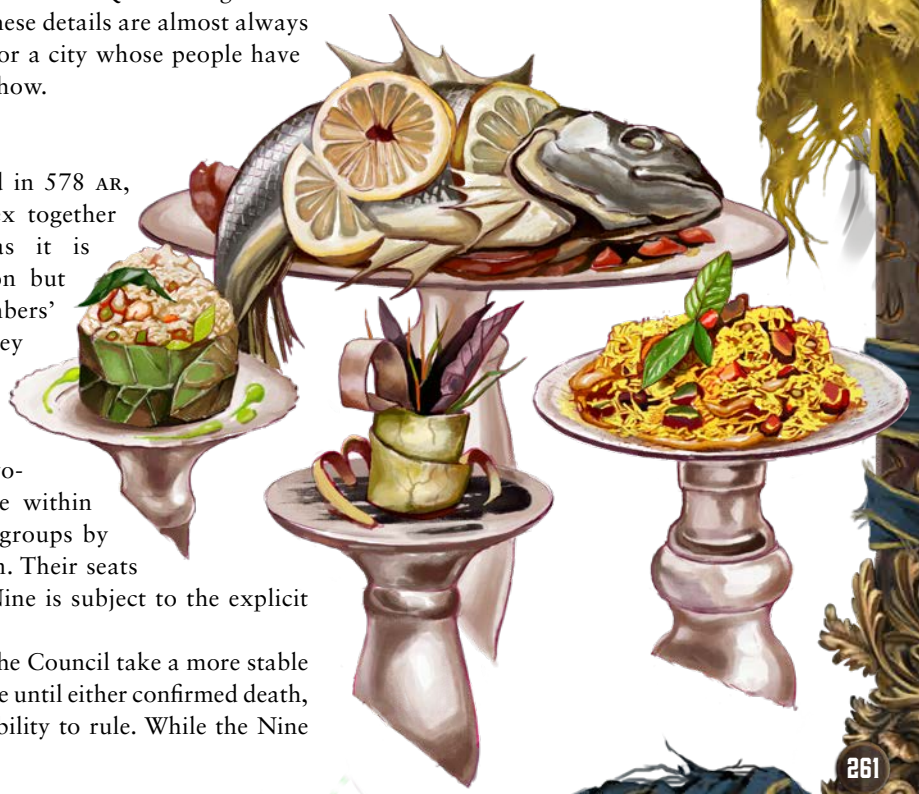
PRESERVED LEMONS

Salted lemons imported from Katapesh make a strong addition to many Quantium dishes and help cover some of the aftertastes caused by magical pollution. The following recipe can be used to create preserved lemons to add a sharp, but not overpowering, element to a meal.

Ingredients

Lemons
Salt

Quarter and seed whole lemons. Cover the bottom of a large glass jar with salt. Press the lemon quarters firmly into the jar to create a layer of fruit, then cover them with another layer of salt. Repeat until the jar is full, ending with a layer of salt. Leave the jar in the pantry for one month before using.



can voraciously lobby for their issues and concerns to the Three, the former's station is ultimately to perform the tasks delegated to them by the latter. The Three are the true final word in Nex, and any contentious decision that comes to a vote for the nation's fate is kept within their own private rapport, with the results announced by **Bralza** (N female elf priest), the High Cleric of Pharasma and the most reliably impartial of the Nine. This impartiality, combined with her attentiveness to all exchanges of the Council within the Bandeshar, has made her the unofficial speaker of the nation.

To deal with each other and massage the nation into the shape they think is best, the Three attempt to disguise their own agendas through clandestine politic and leveraging different aspects of their subordinates and national charge against each other. In theory, they embody the continuing word and intent of Nex, but this goal is only reality in stops and starts. In any age of Nex's history, at least two of the elected Three work predominantly from their own ambition, and often the Nine become reluctant proxies of their agendas. The people of Quantium and the wider nation have acclimated to what appears as inaction as a result, despite the amount that truly happens behind closed doors to continue changing—without improving—Nex.

The Council has kept the shape of its concept from some four millennia ago, but the details are less stable. To the outsider, the most consistent aspect of Nex's ruling body in the last two centuries are the aforementioned Three. The first is Elder Architect Oblosk, the famed castellan of the Bandeshar and chief author of Quantium's major architectural identity, besides Nex himself. Next is Iranez of the Orb, who serves as the prime and divinatory eyes and ears of the city and its larger state. Finally, the ambitious Agrellus Kisk, the preeminent member of the Arclords of Nex who seeks to revive the ancient war with Geb as he and his fellow Arclords surmise the wizard-king would have intended—they see the tenuous mercantile relationship slowly forged over the last two millennia as an egregious affront to Nex's wishes. The present Nine have largely stayed stable for the greater part of this present decade. The master alchemist and prime fleshforger's seats have nary been in question, nor have those of Gen Hendrikan, Master Phade, and the High Clerics of both Nethys and Pharasma. This is perhaps because this current body works as a more direct means to guide the nation than the Three contending with each other.

In function, council meetings yield to more violently shifting sands when held under the glass for examination. Iranez of the Orb has long massaged the nation toward more and more functional and regular trade with Nex's once-dire rival Geb from her seat of supremacy amid the Three. She has often found support from the Elder Architect in the last millennium for

forging true stability in a new age for a city and nation that will never see its progenitor's return. Agrellus Kisk has been near-universally outvoted in his comparably slight 100-year tenure during council meetings in the Bandeshar, and he's turned to abusing the Nine to his own ends. He, as well as most of the Arclords of Nex, have wanted to reawaken the arcane war once waged against Geb. The past 5 years have seen the Arclord more vocal about his and his fellow Arclords' self-righteously bloody ambitions in both the largely apathetic public eye and amid his colleagues of the Council.

More concerning still, Elder Architect Oblosk has failed to attend the last four years of seasonal council meetings at the Bandeshar. With a mind that seemed to only sharpen with his ancient age and his peerless knowledge of seemingly every nook, cranny, and shadow of Quantium—let alone the Bandeshar, which he directly governs—it's become an uneasy joke amidst the Nine that the exalted kasesh (page 330) may be lost somewhere in the palace walls, city streets, or even the Crux of Nex. This poses an acute question holding many dark truths as an answer: what keeps the Elder Architect indisposed if he is not, in fact, deceased, and why do his colleagues of the Three continue to maintain the facade of his involvement in the nation's affairs?

While the ever-changing roster of representatives who comprise the Nine of the Council attempt to chip away at the mystery, Iranez of the Orb and Agrellus Kisk seem to have forged an uneasy truce in their negotiations, using the Elder Architect as their negotiation tool and speak for him in their interests. Whatever the reasoning, more concrete evidence of Oblosk's true absence would provoke a divine appointment—a failsafe the Council itself devised in 580 AR to maintain itself and the hypothetical peace among Nex's rulers—where the gods Pharasma and Nethys themselves establish new members of the Three to replace any they see unfit with members of the current Nine, by that ancient agreement's esoteric arrangement. At the least, this explains why the Council has near always had the High Cleric of both gods within the Nine's rank. This circumstance, should it occur, would be the first time it has happened in the nation's history. The Nine and other Quantium people and factions of significance have noted Oblosk's likely absence. Many moderate-scale personalities in the city have set to investigating the kasesh's whereabouts in the hopes of forcing the divine appointment and consequently climbing their way into the Nine.

All of this is to say, regarding Quantium itself, that the capital has had little real governance from its leadership and a large amount of exploit. The people of the city have been largely left to self-govern day by day with only the absolute of the Council's wishes as their true boundaries of regulation, and the city's culture acting as its policy. With a possible divine appointment on the horizon, the city presents a powerful ladder to climb for its most ambitious agents.

THE NINE

There's considerable competition for places among the Nine, and seats that prove unstable often wield less leverage with Quantium's movers and shakers generally expecting them to be replaced. The current members of the Nine are as follows.

Bralza, high cleric of Pharasma

Elemion, representative of the wasteland clans

Principle Fleshforger Dunn Palovar, representative of Ecanus

Gen Hendrikan, senior cleric of the demon lord Abraxas

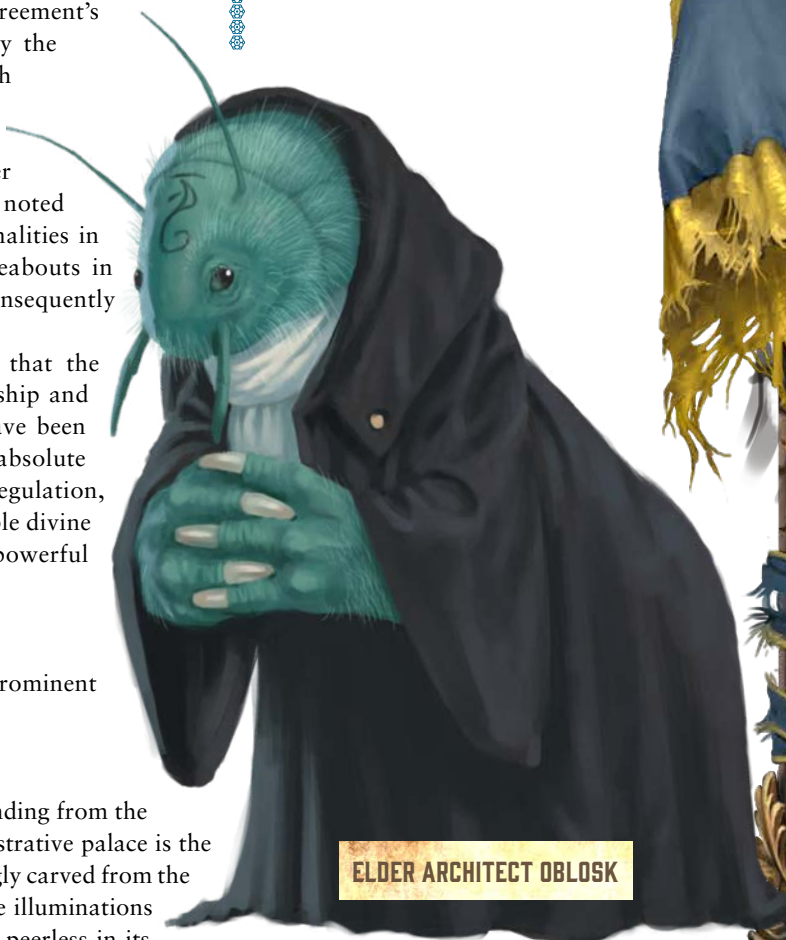
Master Alchemist Borume, representative of Oenopion

Master Phade, an invisible stalker known for his full-body leather armor

Paavi Roh Kenavrii, advocate for the Merchant's League of Nex

Taraneh Mazdani, djinn representative of Quantium's Wish

Tatleen, high cleric of Nethys



ELDER ARCHITECT OBLOSK

LOCATIONS

The following are a sample of some of the most prominent locations found in Quantium.

The Bandeshar

The highest point of the city is the tallest minaret extending from the top of the Bandeshar's most central dome. The administrative palace is the most iconic feature of the city, a sprawling form seemingly carved from the silver light of the moon and often lit in dancing arcane illuminations of pink, blue, and turquoise. Unsurprisingly, it is near peerless in its

architectural form and beauty. Outsiders are never allowed in without express permit, even if they could find their way in to traverse the Bandeshar. If they were, they would likely be lost within its labyrinthine plan, and even officials who answer directly to the Council often need appointed guides to navigate the space.

Though secrets abound that have been built into the city by Nex, his contemporary followers, and the ever-tacit Elder Architect, some of his most potent are rumored to lie within the palace itself. Three of those secrets are the location of three of the eight remaining *cubes of force* created by the great wizard over four millennia ago—those of the schools of evocation, necromancy, and transmutation. Its construction continues deep into the earth for a rumored half mile below the lowest point of the Nwezi. Within the deepest dungeons of the Bandeshar is the long-sealed entrance to one of the original gates to the Refuge of Nex. The rest of the city has seen yet-undiscovered (and possibly new) doorways to the demiplane after the original gates' reopening, with all sorts of denizens coming forth from each doorway carrying messages they claim are from a reawakening Nex.

The Network of Nineteen

A colorful cluster of doorways and portals run through the intermittent flats and storefronts of the Nwezi, as well as the doorways, windows, crisscrossing steps, and colonnade that connect them. Every nineteenth day, any alcove of these deep-set urban warrens at the east quarter of the undercity may double as a numerous network of passages between all the known planes of existence, and countless other demiplanes both well established and made by the citizenry's hand. Most of these planes and the travelers between them are officially recognized and permitted, but certain passages are deemed illegal by the Arclords of Nex and aggressively sought out by Her Most Keen Eye for closing by the former faction's agents. The Maelstrom, Abaddon, and the Shadow Plane are marked as the most dangerous and punishable avenues that see regular use on any given Crossing Day, but it isn't hard to bribe one's way out of such trouble with arcana brought back from these places if the curio proves useful to the Bandesharite.

The Scrivenbough

Most peoples' knowledge of the infamous Scrivenbough only scratches the surface of the controversial library. Abraxas's library, which operates in service to the Material Plane's most niche arcane knowledge, can be found easily in the east side of the Nwezi, near where the docks open into the city's under-layer. Its unmistakable brick-red, four-story cylinder is anchored

in the Nwezi's architectural sea of blue, purple, turquoise, and white; the sight seduces many esoteric connoisseurs. As a library, the Scrivenbough is excellent, but its best service is reserved for those willing to procure wayward secrets from across the globe and planes to contribute to its collection—a task often involving some purloining from owners ranging from nobles to gods.

Those who've performed such favors often are offered a place as a Keeper of Abraxas, having a new, unique segment of the *Final Incantation* a word that Abraxas claims can annihilate the existence of magic—tattooed upon them as a reward. These Keepers of Abraxas learn how expansive the library truly is (many of the interconnected structures in the network of doors and windows that are Quantium's above and below are punctuated with buildings of red resembling the original Scrivenbough, which were not present even 300 years ago), and they are designated as custodians and librarians of the Scrivenbough proper.

Rumors persist that a few extremely lucky or unlucky visitors to the Scrivenbough have encountered the demon lord Abraxas himself. Those who claim such an encounter note the demon was uninterested in fighting and instead sought to discuss magical theory with his visitors (although presumably those who found Abraxas in a fouler mood would fail to return to tell of the tale). Notably, every person who claims such an encounter believes they revealed an important secret to the demon lord, but now has no recollection what that secret is.

Warlock's Walk

Quantium's most popular park stands in stark contrast to the shrouded, dark secrets of the palace. Spanning a swath of unparalleled supernatural biodiversity, this outdoor park at the west rim of the Juali serves as the primary parade ground for the city. The Walk, as it's often called, takes on a vast array of rotating guises through the course of a year due to the array of holidays Quantium entertains. Artists and performers, living just north of it in a series of neighborhoods that have become informal creative communes, don't hesitate to capitalize on the revelries. The Walk is one of the most calming locales of Quantium on days without celebration, often filled with young adepts studying their notes and sharing their secrets over picnics in the sunlight. It's also one of the few places not overwhelmed by lamplight in Quantium, even above the Nwezi.

The most consistent draw is the simple pleasure of watching the Vizier's Fountain, a massive marble creation matching the materials of the palace, where the waters within dance in graceful, hypnotic gouts. Near annually, there are claims to a wish being granted to altruistic souls assisting more impoverished individuals than themselves, leading the Walk's most frequent visitors to speculate that the Vizier refers not to Nex, but a long-trapped noble djinni who tried to contest the wishes of the Council of Three and Nine.

Washport

The mile-wide series of ports that welcome ships sailing in from the Obari, as well as the swill from the Miasmere, are collectively referred to as the Washport. As it is the most open gap in the city's plan, stepping straight into the Nwezi at the east rim of the city, it's heavily guarded by Ecanusi Wards. Complex aqueducts built into the port's landing and through the middle layers of the Nwezi move water through the city by seemingly impossible routes. The most critical waterways have marids who purify the water as it moves into and out of these sections. The rest works through intermittently effective filtration that needs replacing near annually from the caustic pollution of the Miasmere. The port is

Abraxas

The demon lord of forbidden magic, Abraxas is the patron of those who seek knowledge at any price. His clergy in Nex is somewhat more pragmatic, in exchange for their faith being tolerated within the nation; massacring rivals and performing murderous rituals is generally frowned upon, as it attracts the wrong sort of attention from powerful figures. His worshippers instead keep their rites and secrets within the depths of the Scrivenbough, presenting a pleasant public face as they provide the rest of Nex with rare books and scrolls.

ODRINE

HISTORICAL MYSTERY

The incident that led to Alkenstar's founder, Ancil Alkenstar, fleeing from Quantium remains a source of curiosity among some–despite Ancil Alkenstar being long dead. Few doubted the ingenuity of Alkenstar, who had contributed to many of the most spectacular inventions of Quantium in his decades of service to the Council of Three and Nine, and many saw his escape to the Mana Wastes as an event odd enough to warrant further attention.

IRANEZ OF THE ORB

bifurcated by a wide, tunneling channel that carries ships of special cargo straight to the Bandeshar under many layers of the surrounding city. It is managed by a shahzada—a noble marid—named Oorine, who is one of the prominent members of Quantium's Wish and a distant grand aunt of Imirh the Amaranthine (page 285).

IMPORTANT FACES

Elder Architect **Oblosk** (LN male kasesh ancient; page 330) is the designer of the Bandeshar and its governor—as well as the architect behind much of the city planning in tow with Nex himself, designing many of the city's most instrumental civic buildings. The Elder Architect holds significance for three clear reasons in Quantium and Nex as a whole. The first is that he is the eldest member of the current Three within the Council, and indeed the only one within the Three and Nine to know the nation's wizard-king personally. The second is that the wise kasesh was often the most civic minded of the Three, no matter who else shared the other two seats with him. He often speaks of himself as the gravity in Nex's dreams, and the evidence of his influence over the capital city leaves an undeniable impression that this representation of himself is accurate—and that attentiveness to the nation's needs within the Three has only started to be matched by Iranez in the last half-millennia of Nex's history.

The most significant thing about Oblosk, however, is his recent absence in the Council of Three and Nine's meetings, which have seen his colleagues speaking in his stead under the guise of private meetings that are only need to know for the trio. These kinds of discussions are not abnormal for the Three, but Oblosk's lack of semi-public appearances or even direct conference to the Nine are a point of concern. His whereabouts and status have become the door to Nex's political future to many outside of the Three. His cohorts who speak for him currently share the key.

Iranez of the Orb (N female human witch) is a powerful witch who runs on secrets, and the rare example of someone who has become more mindful in her hold of systemic power as the years pass. It would be hard to not gain some perspective after living over 4,000 years—and more importantly, in the undead-averse nation of Nex, having died once only 30 years into her mortal lease. Such a secret in this place would bring with it a level of wisdom and caution that few could ever expect to match—but Iranez's cause of death was also her bridge into the service and eventual governance of Nex, and her brief demise was at the hand of the wizard-king's Elder Architect.

Iranez was originally a Gebbite witch who would watch the memories of her former rival nation's most significant dead through complex divinations and devise plots against Nex for the necromancer Geb. She found an opportunity to take a direct chance on the Archmage's life, which led to him creating the Refuge of Nex in 209 AR because of the effectiveness of her attack. It was the Elder Architect who eventually trapped her within the most secret architectural shiftings of the Bandeshar in the Archwizard's stead, and in a great struggle had her killed. Oblosk realized both her aptitude and her potential asset to his kingdom and made an esoteric deal with Pharasma (with Nex's unexpected permission) for her to live again in his service. The goddess complied after much negotiation of Nex's mysterious offers—supposedly to cease his empty prayers when she had graver things to tend to. Iranez's death remains her little secret with Oblosk today, as well as her method of hiding it from Ecanus's Deathsealers.

Though it was clear that Nex could defeat the witch again,

if need be, he was quick to offer her more significant status and purpose than her former necromantic liege, by proxy of Oblosk. In 210 AR, Iranez's career as a significant representative of the Nexian government began as she became the first Spiritforger of Ecanus's Prime Body. Her aptitude for espionage of the magical and mundane saw her hold that position for three millennia, setting up many defenses to obscure any divinatory vulnerabilities that the nation's necromantic rival could angle. In 3302 AR, she would briefly be brought into the Council of Three and Nine after establishing Her Most Keen Eye. A decade later she would be brought to the seat of the Three.

The last hundred years have been a strain on the complicated friendship she and Oblosk have hard forged over the past four millennia, after she reluctantly agreed to Agrellus Kisk's promotion to the Three a century ago. The Arclord's voracious pursuit of war has coincided with some convenient justifications for reigniting war in the region (such as the Evisceration of Ecanus), which have affirmed Kisk's trustworthiness to the nation he claims to serve. Unfortunately, if her old friend Oblosk retains his silence, she must speak for some approximation of him until she finds something to confirm her suspicions in the Arclords' leader's hand in the Architect's thinly veiled disappearance—as well as his sabotage of Ecanus and the nation's wider security.

Agrellus Kisk (LE male human arclord) is the leader of the often-discordant but powerful Arclords of Nex, and the prime reason that a significant amount of the nation still wants to reignite war with Geb. After the Evisceration of Ecanus, he was the first to assume that the accident was in fact a Gebbite attack, despite Iranez's thorough investigations in concert with Principle Fleshforger Palovar proving otherwise. Her Most Keen Eye's iris is fixed heavily on him, as Iranez holds Kisk under intense scrutiny and considers his assertions suspicious given the recent peace between the two nations.

Even more suspiciously, Kisk has been working closely with Master Alchemist Borume to create new fleshforged soldiers through the Oenopion Fleshforges Guild after Dunn Palovar denied him (with the other two of the Three's support). Still, Kisk has continued to mobilize the agenda of war within the country to startling effectiveness, even seeing the Arclords at the most coherent they have been in centuries under his pursuit of a largely rote conflict. Despite being the youngest and newest member of the Three, Agrellus Kisk's presence in Nex's ruling body has been exposing and exploiting cracks that run many millennia deep into Nex's scourged soil.

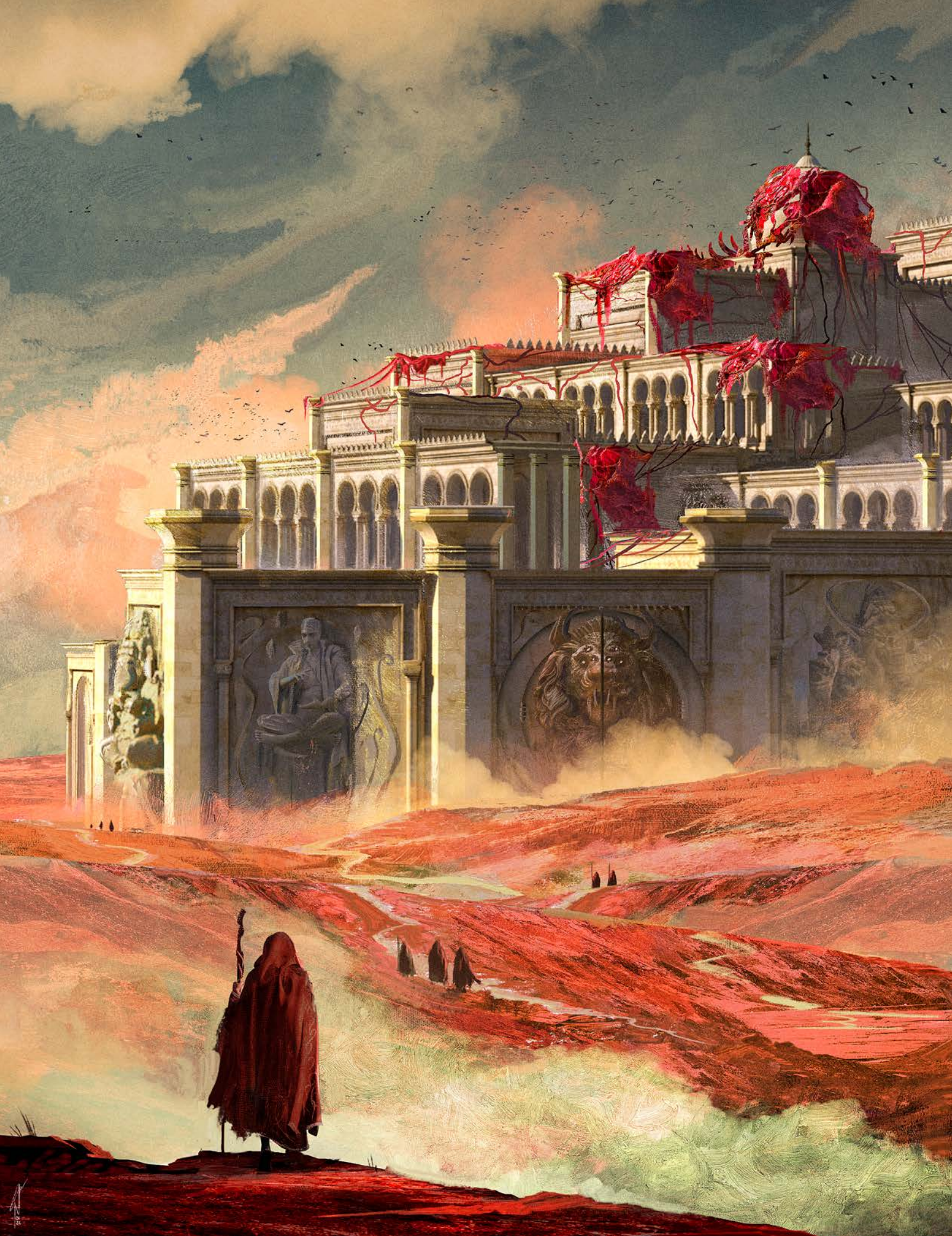
Mistriine Ohnza (LN female velstrac escort) runs the Hands of Varied Touch: a network of pleasure purveyors coordinated by the unusually mobile and public velstrac. Appointments and arrangements can always be made in one of the lobbies of their Handhouses between each Crossing Day, but any arrangement with one of the Handhouses starts at one Crossing Day and ends at the next—ample time for her and her Ritehands to extract the secrets of the capital from Populasi to Galisite one pleasure or pain at a time. If she's being compensated for it, she's willing to act as Quantium's preeminent gossip as well.

The time managing a broad staff of employees from the Material Plane may have softened her just enough to make her a bit of an anomaly to her kin, with the euphoria and despondency becoming less and less life threatening with each year. By contrast, her staff and the city's commoners have suggested that she'd make for a wonderful member of the Council. She often reminds them with good humor that Nex doesn't work that way, but the rumors that drift her way from the occasional Bandesharite visit tell her that could change very soon.

SMUGGLED GOODS

With the trade nation of Katapesh a simple river ride north of Quantium, the capital provides an attractive base for smugglers. While these caravans are only mildly illegal, Nex's merchant league spends a reasonable amount of effort on curtailing such operations, and the Council of Three and Nine occasionally break up contraband rings out of general principle.

AGRELLUS KISK



Ecanus

Host of the Fleshforged

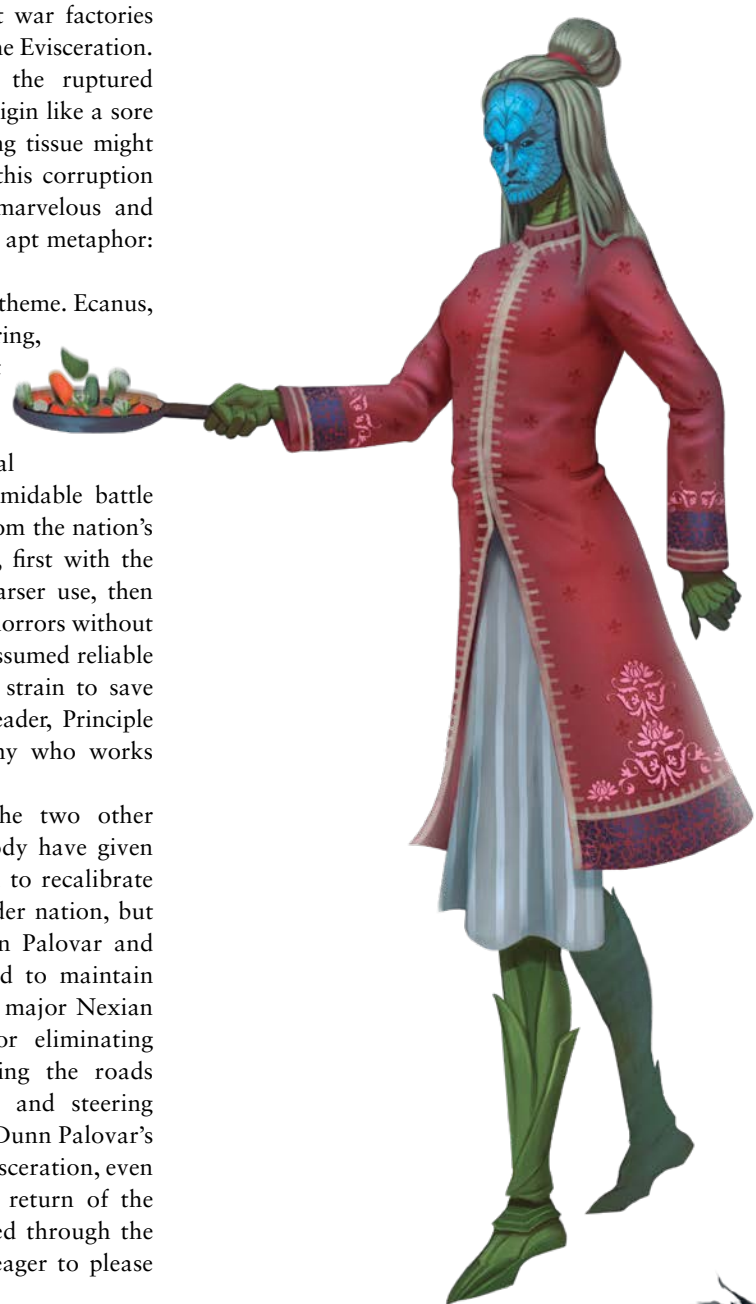
The military heart of Nex, Ecanus was the war engine that churned out golems and flesh-wrought horrors to clash against the legions of Geb. It remains stalwart to its purpose of defense to this day, fighting a war against the consequences of the atrocities the citizens' predecessors committed.

The stench of freshly exposed viscera, digestion, and rolling magic wafts across the fortress city of Ecanus. The source isn't the active fleshforges once responsible for manufacturing the monumental terrors mobilized against Geb's forces, but a wound in the city. Fourteen years ago, a district-wide spill of gore burst out from the southeast wall of the military holding and spilled into the corresponding quarter. The explosion of consuming flesh had erupted from one of the eight war factories bordering the city in an event known as the Evisceration. Since then, the viscera spilling from the ruptured fleshforge has spread from its point of origin like a sore infection. The district-wide mass of living tissue might appear fresh as newly spilled guts, but this corruption at the base of the nation's otherwise marvelous and terrifying military frontline makes for an apt metaphor: something is devastatingly rotten in Nex.

Other aspects of the city reinforce this theme. Ecanus, now known for producing the towering, terrifying flesh constructs and titans that menace Nex's countryside, the Mana Wastes, and even the eastern rim of the Mwangi Expanse, solidified Nex's martial might through two avenues: deeply formidable battle mages and the crafted horrors created from the nation's fleshforges. The latter is starting to fail, first with the oldest fleshforges sputtering in their sparser use, then with the newest erratically churning out horrors without any known command. With one of the assumed reliable forges erupting in the Evisceration, the strain to save face has begun to weigh on Ecanus's leader, Principle Fleshforger Dunn Palovar, and the army who works under him to protect the magical nation.

He isn't alone in the endeavor. The two other members of Ecanus's internal ruling body have given the Principle Fleshforger the bandwidth to recalibrate in this turbulent era of the city and wider nation, but the tensions are starting to crack Dunn Palovar and his supports. Thus far, he has managed to maintain the delicate balancing act between each major Nexian city's magical protections, placating or eliminating any rogue fleshcrafted thing threatening the roads of the Circulation between the cities and steering through reluctant peace with Geb—but Dunn Palovar's subordinates bristle for war after the Evisceration, even over a decade later. With the possible return of the nation's wizard-king being foreshadowed through the magical ether, many in the nation are eager to please their ruler through reigniting Nex's obsolete conflict. Dunn Palovar knows that war, especially given the vulnerable state of the nation's first line of defense, is untenable with Geb. How many of his own must he silence, banish, or kill to stop a war abroad before his own colleagues wage one against him?

The recent and grievous wound in the city poses a dire set of questions for the nation's survival: what or *who*



caused the Evisceration? Was it an act of terrorism from some forgotten enemy of Nex? Was it a Gebbite attack? Many citizens believe the latter even as they hope it isn't the case. The Prime Body of Ecanus thinks differently, and Dunn Palovar is one to look inward. His mind tells him the threat comes from within. His ego moves him to accuse his Master Alchemist rival in Oenopion, but that's too convenient an answer. He and his city might have to look elsewhere within Nex to save the nation. Whatever the wound is in Nex, it falls to Ecanus and its people to heal—again.

A DAY IN ECANUS

Ecanus rises early and sleeps as promptly. It rouses by the day's fourth hour, with Skirmish School students running through their morning conditioning to a tolling bell chime. They extinguish the street torches that hang at the corner of each block across Ecanus's grid. By sunset, strict quiet hours are enforced with fines, lashes, or custodial duties for any disturbances of peace. The placid environment is instrumental for the vigilance that Ecanus strives for. These hours provide the space for city guards to keep up their watch to the hilt. Most of the city is a place of practiced quiet, even after the Evisceration, but tension runs through the streets thicker than blood. Ecanus's militant composure quakes with paranoia. The city now walks a terse, teetering march.

A day in Ecanus is largely defined by the residents' rank and station within Nex's military. The city isn't a place that can be easily traversed without a guide. This isn't because it's a difficult place to navigate—its wide boulevards and simple grid make getting around comparably easier than Oenopion and Quantium—but because it has so many areas meant for official traffic and no one else. Trying to enter numerous residential buildings in the city without a permit or appointed escort sees many travelers refuted, if not interrogated and investigated. The latter reaction is especially common since the Evisceration turned a fourth of the city into a living, growing organ.

Most locals are quiet, and there's a sense that many of the common Wards who cycle the streets have blinders on toward a purpose. The more colorful a passerby in Ecanus, the more likely they either have a specific goal that should be left unimpeded—as they likely hold high rank in the military and specific agendas than the more plainly uniformed Wards patrolling in trios along the roads—or they're likely to be arrested and dismissed from the city, on a good day.

Initiates going through their "shaping" in the Skirmish School spend their time predominately in its campus and dorms in the northwest quarter of the city. Their morning is devoted to physical conditioning and both martial and magical combat training once the extinguishing ritual is completed. The afternoon and early evening are

devoted to study and theory, and the late evening can be spent in leisure on campus provided the initiate is where they're expected the next day and functioning effectively enough to internalize their lessons. Any prolonged unimpressive performance is made up for with the traumatic and dangerous Mindstreaming process to compensate the compromised time and effort of an underperforming initiate.

Fully shaped Wards still have a rigid schedule. Most of it involves guarding the city or guiding civilians, but often a Ward will be scooped away for missions by superiors—usually searches or even preemptive attacks against suspicious parties approaching the nation. When not out on assignment for a mission, many Wards also act as couriers for officers within the city walls or are set to working and maintaining the fleshforges or guiding those still suggestible fleshwarps headed toward Ecanus back into the countryside. Most Wards don't have much time to cook for themselves and sleep at erratic hours due to shifts that keep them energized but not on a particularly normalized schedule. In rare unstructured moments, they dig into the provisions they often carry on their person due to the likelihood of having to leave the city for their duties.

The days of high ranking Wards (and officials who hold positions outside of the conventional hierarchy governing the Ecanusi military) are led more by tasks scheduled to be completed by a set time rather than the more rigid schedules of their subordinates. They largely enforce the schedules for the rest of the Wards in the city and coordinate other personnel of Ecanus, such as the cooks, custodians, and miscellaneous laborers referred to as Ecanusi "Shapesiblings." These Wards have leeway to manage their duties as they see fit. If a Flesh, Spirit, or Mindward—the Ecanusi terms for administrative Wards of various types—is organized enough to keep their own affairs sorted and keep the cohort they oversee on task as well, they find themselves with a surprising amount of free time to use as they will.

Both low and high-ranking Wards tend to become rather insular because of the pressure to be constantly alert and attentive while working for Nex's military. In private moments between delegated duties, Ecanusi military personnel speak of their anxieties, fears, hopes and memories through their tenure—even if it means sacrificing some of their sleep for this kind of rapport. The food in Ecanus might not be the most flavorful of the nation, mostly dried ghoran-provided rations and easily prepared grains, but it's shared during some of the most intense communal bonds forged in Nex. An outsider wouldn't suspect it from the rigidity and tension often displayed by the Wards, but behind closed doors, in the wealth of shared lodgings of the dorms of the Skirmish School or the many shared apartments housing the Ecanusi populace, the military's claims to family deepen one night at a time.

That connection extends up the ranks, as higher-ranking officials do what they can to maintain their familial connection with their colleagues and charges. The most wholesome manifestation of this effort is the tradition of higher-ranking Wards cooking once a week for the teams they're responsible for—or commissioning someone else to do so if they never had the chance to learn such a skill. This communal care is a tacit expectation that runs through Ecanus's military, hoping that the created sense of family will lead to a loyal military force.

A YEAR IN ECANUS

Wards from Ecanus have an immaculate awareness of time and date drilled into them to support both the magical processes they're taught and to maintain the detailed tasks that define active duty—day to day, month to month, season to season, and year to year. To simplify the learning curve of their schedules, Wards of Ecanus work on active duty for half the year, alternating their service between each season that passes by Golarion's standard calendar. A newly shaped Ward who starts their tenure in the fall will

ECANUS SETTLEMENT 15

LN CITY

Government appointed administrator

Population 23,400 (90% humans, 3% gnomes, 1% ghorans, 6% other)

Languages Kelish, Osiriani, Vudrani

Religions Aakriti, Abadar, Irori, Nethys, Pharasma

Threats military discipline, rogue fleshforged, the Awful

Major Militarization The overzealous and often intentionally traumatized military police of Ecanus impose strict curfews, ask for papers, and just generally don't trust anyone. The military police's attitude toward anyone they don't immediately recognize, especially foreigners, is one step worse than usual.

Dunn Palovar (N male human alchemist 16) principle fleshforger of Ecanus

Hectela Djaq (LE female human psychic 15) principle mindforger of Ecanus

Imirh the Amaranthine (CN male undine socialite 11) principle spiritforger of Ecanus

see their next active duty in the next year's spring, and then the next fall after that. Should too many neonates finish their shaping or Mindstreaming to make them fit for their responsibilities at the same time, the organizing Wards work with Watchers—Wards who record and convey data and information in Ecanus—to restructure new schedules so that some have time off before their tenure begins, though they're encouraged to stay in the city and get to know its rhythms well.

Off-duty Wards aren't exempt from their responsibilities. Part of their shaping in Skirmish School is in cursory divination practice, supplementing their heavy evocation curriculum and allowing off-duty Wards within Nex to be contacted for their assistance no matter where in the nation they are. The sensation of being contacted is often likened to gravity shifting in the pit of one's stomach until it feels like the arrow of a compass pointing in a particular direction. This is the Call of the Ward, which high-ranking Wards can employ to rally their subordinates to action. Unless they're part of the Prime Body, it isn't typically possible for a call to tug at a Ward's senses beyond the bounds of Nex. Because of this limitation, all of a Ward's national and international travel while on duty must be carefully documented. While off-duty, permission to travel is very selectively granted, and even then, only after approval of a Watcher. Of course, anyone who was brought into Ecanus's military family as a government deal to evade imprisonment in the Valkus Isle can't leave the nation while they're off-duty, as the expected default.

As a result of this thoroughly scheduled rigor, the weeks and months of the Ecanusi year proceed smoothly. The regimented obligations assigned to each inhabitant of Ecanus keep the Wards and their Shapesiblings from distraction, and the shifting duties for on-duty Wards from week to week keep them from stagnating. Tasks for a freshly initiated on-duty Ecanusi Ward are usually divided between time spent in the city and outside it. City duty usually lasts twice as long as time outside Ecanus—or roughly two months within the city's walls balanced by one month spent traversing the Mana Wastes or the treacherous Nexian countryside.

As Wards continue to serve as defenders of the nation, they're eventually promoted, most commonly to the status of Krata—or guardian—which yields greater responsibility and more flexible schedules. Nwilikrata, or Fleshguards, spend nearly all of their time on duty within the walls of Ecanus unless on a very specific assignment. They're the city's last line of defense and thus the most potent magical infantry Ecanus can deploy in a crisis. Often, Nwilikrata spend their time assisting the Attendi in tending to the fleshforges, patrolling the city, working as medics, and, more recently, leading Scabs in their attempt to quell and heal the Awful. Dunn Palovar technically oversees the Nwilikrata schedules, but lately he has left it to Nwilikrata officers below him as he

focuses on the theorized return of Nex and the question of active threat from Geb.

Akilikrata, the Mindguard, are seen as the strategists of Ecanus and the middle managers of Nex's military configuration. The Chief Mindforger of Ecanus acts as the representative and proxy of the Akilikrata to Dunn Palovar. Because of their involvement in the well-being of the wider nation, Akilikrata spend the most time outside of Ecanus, but they spend almost as little time as the Nwilikrata outside the nation. Their obligations carry them from city to city and claimed territories before pulling them back to Ecanus intermittently to report on the state of Nex. Some deeply experienced Akilikrata do end up stationed at satellite outposts—bunkers in the wastes or in the wilds of the region staffed with a contingent of handpicked Wards—but they rarely are used for more roving travel throughout or outside of the nation. The purpose of a Mindguard's working year is to investigate and convey information to the rest of Ecanus to help them in their military preparations.

Rohokrata, the Spiritguard, are the speakers for Nex's military, and their chain of command is designated directly by the Chief Spiritforger. As liaisons, diplomats, merchants, and spies, the Rohokrata are the most well-traveled members of Ecanus's forces. Their natural charisma makes them hard to spot outside of the city unless they want to be seen, and that same charisma makes them popular within its walls. Because the nature of their work keeps them up to date on affairs within the nation and the broader whole of Garund, they often bring small revelries and holidays from their travels back into Ecanus, which the wider city is remiss to officiate due to the ongoing security needs of the nation and the tensions that have started to climb after the Evisceration. Most Rohokrata spend about a fortnight of each of their months on duty in the city—and that pocket of time is rarely consecutive, as there's always a new diplomatic truce to broker or a suspicion of foreign interference to investigate.

PEOPLE OF ECANUS

Nex isn't a nation that places value on traditional definitions of family, but the people of Ecanus who choose to live in the city see their fellow citizens as siblings and their wider countryfolk as close cousins. They're the officially recognized Wards of Nex, and while it's a responsibility that they project onto the residents of the other cities of the nation, they often take their responsibility very seriously, going to the lengths of their abilities to perform their duty. Any questioning of the state has been drilled out of them by their tenure and replaced with a chorus echoing concerns over Nex's stability and solace. That's how it has been for a long time, since open war with Geb had subsided to frigid placidity.

Because there's still prevalent enthusiasm in Nex for a reignited war with Geb, Ecanus is never particularly starved for more volunteers. People from across the nation, motivated by fear or excitement at the prospect of renewed conflict, steadily trickle into Nex's first line of defense, saying that's what Nex would expect of them—and implying that his nation should be doing more to stop the undead threat of Geb before that nation's hostility rises from its grave. Then again, there are also miscreants taken from across the nation and presented with the choice of either

USEFUL VOCABULARY

Attendi: The technicians of Ecanus, who tend to the fleshforges.
The Awful: The lethal fleshforged viscera that covers a large potion of the city of Ecanus.
Mindstreaming: The dangerous and traumatic process of training a soldier by psychically forcing memories of combat experience into their mind.
Prime Body: The Principle Mindforger, Fleshforger, and Spiritforger, who make up the first authority on government matters in Ecanus.
Scab: Wards who spend their terms undertaking the dangerous work of trying to quell the Awful.
Shaping: The process of being trained into a soldier; "boot camp."
Shapesibling: A person who helps directly support military personnel through cooking, cleaning, and other necessary functions.
Ward: A member of Ecanus's military.
Watchers: Wards who record and convey data and information in Ecanus.

THE DARKLANDS

Perhaps due to its highly educated and magical populace, or perhaps due to its exceptionally tolerant nature, the Impossible Lands tend to be in much greater contact with the subterranean societies that stretch across most of Golarion. Most notably, drow aren't an odd sight in the region, though their sensitivity to sunlight means the majority still prefer to remain underground.

magical imprisonment on Valkus Isle or their fealty to the Nexian military. Even with the traumatizing rigor that the latter holds, most jump at the opportunity to become a Wasteward to avoid the eldritch horrors of the imprisoning isle.

Ecanus's resulting demographic pool is wide. Unsurprisingly, a prominent number of the city's inhabitants are humans, gnomes, and plane-touched, just as in Quantium, but Nex's first line of defense is less varied—mostly because it accepts a far narrower sampling of its stranger citizens due to its relatively standardized military resources. Tieflings and orcs often make their way into wider acceptance in Nex by first becoming Wards in Ecanus, while the occasional drow—or stranger denizens like plane-bound, low-grade devils, and other extraplanar denizens—are folded into Nex's military as a means of keeping tabs on these mistrusted parties when they enter the region.

Ecanus offers many other roles to play in the defense of its nation. Shapesiblings take up domestic stations in the city to support the Wards within Ecanus's boundaries. Watchers accompany Ward patrols to document their exploits or record the daily workings of the city. There are many other titles that the residents fall into, just as a family has many different designations to organize its relatives, but they all serve to keep Nex a cohesive body rather than a chaotic bramble.

After their initiation through the Skirmish School, a Ward might live within Ecanus's walls without lodging or living expenses so long as they tend to their duties faithfully. The trade is worth it for most. Wards from Ecanus are bound to encounter danger during their tenure: quelling the dangerous wild and magical beasts that threaten Nex's three most instrumental cities, subduing wayward mutant clans from the wastes that threaten travelers within the nation, or—most dangerously—defeating the gargantuan fleshwarped monstrosities roaming the country when they start to spiral into visceral frenzy. These experiences all crystallize Wards into some of the most tense and serious folk in Nex, eager to fulfill their duty for the thrill it provides and the camaraderie it builds.

Yet in the decade since the Evisceration, Ecanus's leadership has been increasingly sparse on the ground, leaving much of its civil workings to the discretion of its middle management. The lack of clear vision has led the recent generation of low-ranking officials amid Ecanus's social strata to become disillusioned at their muddied duties. The past decade has seen a consequential uptick of spark-happy groups of Wards nominally going to the wastes to look for Gebbites to lay permanently to rest. These derelict, renegade Ward groups often become a task to be dealt with by more trusted members of the Ecanusi military family. In contrast, high-ranking officials who interact more regularly with the plans outlined by the Prime Body of Ecanus's tightly coiled demeanor understand that the Principle Fleshforger would rather respond to the clear threat of war from Geb than be responsible for starting the conflict.

Some veterans of Nex's army who chose to reside within the defensive city contemplate the possibilities of brewing up another war. Younger officiates of Nex's forces, shaped by Ecanus's imposed obligations, question their station in the world and have spiritually abandoned their obligation by the time they return home after their first respite from Ecanus's defensive duties. The city harbors a largely depressed force full of evocative power with little clarity of how to employ it.

The great wizard's infrastructure around which the city was built has become more perplexing as the city's great fleshforges have begun to break down, faltering and going inactive or stuttering to life unexpectedly. What was once a haven of a city—a simultaneous front line of defense from invasion and an intimidating arcane presence for the rest of Garund to witness—has devolved into a self-defeating threat whose existential flesh decays more

rapidly than the corpses of the subordinates lost to the Awful. Ecanus, for many recruits, has become a source of disillusionment and shame.

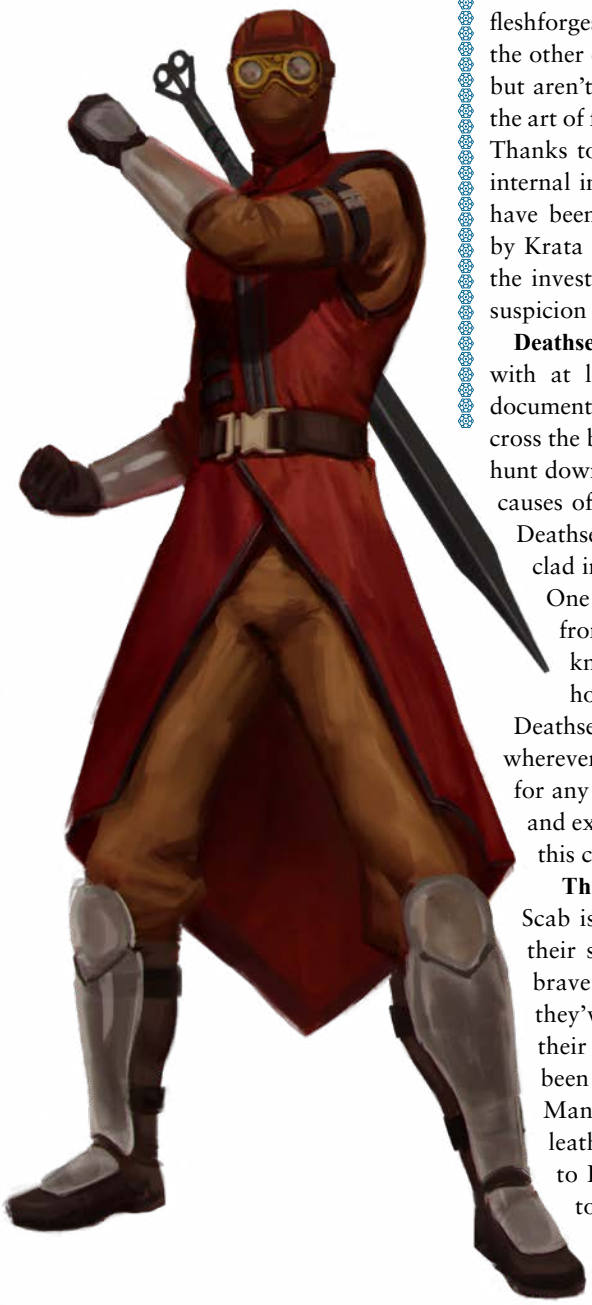
Still, the city offers prestige across the region. For some mercenaries, it even offers the promise of competitive pay for an Ecanusian's evocative skills if they decide to move on from their Warding career. Enough walk this path because of such security: steady pay and assured food and lodging in exchange for ensuring that Nex's front line of defense has formidable numbers. Those who investigate crime across all three major Nexian cities are likewise pulled from former Wards who largely learned their skills in Ecanus. Ecanus is stratified into a precise social rank and file to such intense degree that some of its import bleeds from the capital's complex strata. Many who want to stay in the nation but leave behind Quantium's insecure toil are drawn to the more structured labor and security Ecanus provides.

Most Wards are well-traveled. During their active seasons, they often venture into the Mana Wastes or through the barrens of Nex to the other cities in the nation. On occasion, more experienced Wards are sent to Geb in diplomatic negotiations or even as spies to keep tabs on the nation's enemy and their tenuous peace. In the last decade, many Wards have been sent—begrudgingly, along with Oenopion accountants and Quantium negotiators—to Alkenstar to either assert Nex's assumed dominion over the region or to buy and bring back industrial tools and armaments in case Nex's magical defenses fail to quell Gebbite aggressions. These teams occasionally bring back inventors from the technocratic Grand Duchy who are willing to make a lucrative life within Ecanus's walls. If Wards aren't traveling on duty, it isn't uncommon for them to travel beyond the bounds of their nation during their off-duty season, so long as they can receive clearance.

What results often is a civil militia full of excitable neonates hungry to defend their small world. The trials, hardships, and anxieties of their shaping might cause this desire to deepen but might also quell their aggressive edge. Many veterans hold a burning hate for Geb, though their experiences as soldiers have brought a sobering nuance over the years. The processes that trained them exist solely out of the fear of another conflict, and this knowledge can prove illuminating for explaining why the city's leadership and the wider nation haven't reignited the violence in the region as well as why their rivals haven't done the same—presuming they weren't responsible for the Evisceration. The duties of Ecanus's inhabitants reveal the history the region has suffered, and if a few trips through the scars of the Mana Wastes don't quell the taste for magically drawn blood, the experiences of a Mindstreaming quickly do.

ARMOR MASTERS

Though most of Ecanus's spellcasting forces prefer to eschew armor, depending on their magic to defend themselves, there are some who choose to master the use of steel. Small but notable contingents of armored mages and magi learn to move and cast spells in even the most restrictive armors, and they've developed new methods to magically enhance their armor.



Certain high-ranking personnel might find themselves stationed beyond the bounds of Ecanus with a contingent of seasoned and levelheaded Wards, placed at different outposts a few miles from the city as a first line of aggressive defense from any impending threats. Others might be assigned instead to Quantium or in Oenopion for a year or two at a time by request of the Council of Three and Nine and their (non-local) proxies. These individuals bring some color back to Ecanus, along with memories that serve as reminders to themselves and their comrades of what they're all fighting for and defending.

Factions

Though the social roles of Ecanus outwardly appear set in stone, pragmatic needs often see specialized groups forming within the military ranks. Over time, as these groups prove their continued usefulness to the fabric of the city, these roles tend to become just as calcified into the social order as those that came before them.

Attendi: The Attendi are the technicians of Ecanus, who tend to the fleshforges and their production by order of the Principle Fleshforger and the other officers who answer to him. Many Attendi have a gift for logistics but aren't a great threat in direct combat. Instead, they research and teach the art of fleshforging and are assigned to maintain the fleshforges of the city. Thanks to the Evisceration, the last 10 years have seen the Attendi under internal investigation by the Chief Mindforger of Ecanus. The Mindwards have been restructured to hold the Attendi under more precise oversight by Krata and the most accurate and attentive Watchers. Thus far, none of the investigations have yielded anything, which seems to only point more suspicion their way.

Deathsealers: Kiifotaliish, or Deathsealers, are high-ranking Krata often with at least two decades of experience or an exceptional amount of documented skill shown in the field. They are sent to hunt the undead who cross the border from the Mana Wastes into Nex proper and are deployed to hunt down any undead reported within the nation. They also investigate the causes of any undead infestations within and beyond the nation's bounds. Deathsealers are the most dramatically uniformed of the Ecanusi family, clad in a white kurta, tight white slacks, and a hooded, full white cloak. One of the gifts they receive from their training allows them to dream from the perspective of the undead who walk near them. Deathsealers know how to follow the source of their dreams and stop whatever horror disturbs their sleep, bringing the nightmare to an end.

Deathseekers originated the tradition of totally disintegrating corpses wherever they show up within the nation—so long as they aren't being used for any officiated kind of study—to prevent their animation, resurrection, and exploitation. As such, much of the nation practices a crude version of this corpse disposal process.

The Scabs: Though it sounds pejorative and grotesque to outsiders, Scab is the affectionately visceral moniker given to Wards who devote their seasons to trying to quell the Awful. They're either enormously brave and devoted to their city's duties for venturing into the Awful, or they've been forced into the belly of this beast by the consequence of their transgressions—an equal number of the nation's criminals have been assigned to this hard duty as those who are sent out to scour the Mana Wastes. Scabs have started wearing enchanted suits of glass and leathers, created in collaboration between Alkenstar artisans brought to Ecanus and arcanists from Oenopion. These suits were designed to keep Scabs from being devoured by the Awful, as so many in the past decade have been taken by the quivering mass—but even then, the protections are limited. On more than one occasion, a Scab donning a so-called "viscerasuit" has missed a bit of

the errant living flesh that slipped into their protection through its subtle seams, making the suit a slow and painful walking grave.

Wastewards: Prisoners and deserters across the nation who have been caught in their transgressions and can't compensate for their considerable, but not egregious, crimes are often offered the option to join the military family of Ecanus. They serve as Wastewards, who are assigned to wander the wastes and quell minor threats of wild or wanton nature, from mutants to wandering undead, under the supervision and order of a proper team of volunteering Wards. Wastewards are trained in cursory conjuration magic through a deeply traumatic and dangerous process called Mindstreaming over the course of three months, or a week in wartime, so that they possess the combat skills of initiated Wards, allowing them to quickly relay crucial information to their supervising officers back in Ecanus. The process carries a high mortality rate, but for the disciplined, strong, and devoted, a decade of service as a Wasteward opens a path to becoming a proper Ward of the nation.

CULTURE

Ecanus is a carefully calibrated body of a city whose exercise currently threatens to outpace the effort it can truly endure in its currently infirmed state. When the first and oldest of the fleshforges in Ecanus ceased its work in 4704 AR, the city's occupants simply shrugged it off, while its keepers investigated at a patient pace, sharing thanks that nothing worse came of the malfunction than a dormant piece of history. Complacency tempted obvious fate, and three years later, one of the forges along the outer perimeter of the city exploded from a dire malfunction—an event now known as the Evisceration of 4707. The southeast corner of the city was changed for the worse in the accident. Because of this event, citizens of Ecanus have indulged themselves in paranoia questioning the wider security of both Ecanus and Nex.

As a result, Ecanus churns forth into the new decade with an anxious, limping gait. Few come in, few come out, and all traffic is keenly accounted for by officiates of the city. Ecanus's overall identity has slowly withered in the past decade amid the tumult, replacing much of its urban culture with the sterile march of a fortress. Boots are set to ground to tend to the hazard of the Awful day in and day out. Officials debate the rhythmic run of the remaining functional fleshforges. Battlemages of low and high station execute countless internal operations and investigations against suspicious parties and threats to the larger state. In the social machine of Ecanus, almost everyone has a role to play—including being made an example if they try to skirt their designated duties. A facade of order isn't quite accurate to describe Ecanus's culture, but the city's tight choreography is tenuous, and its recent misfortune hasn't calcified any sustainable harmony. On the contrary, recent troubles have exposed the city's derelict conceptual wounds.

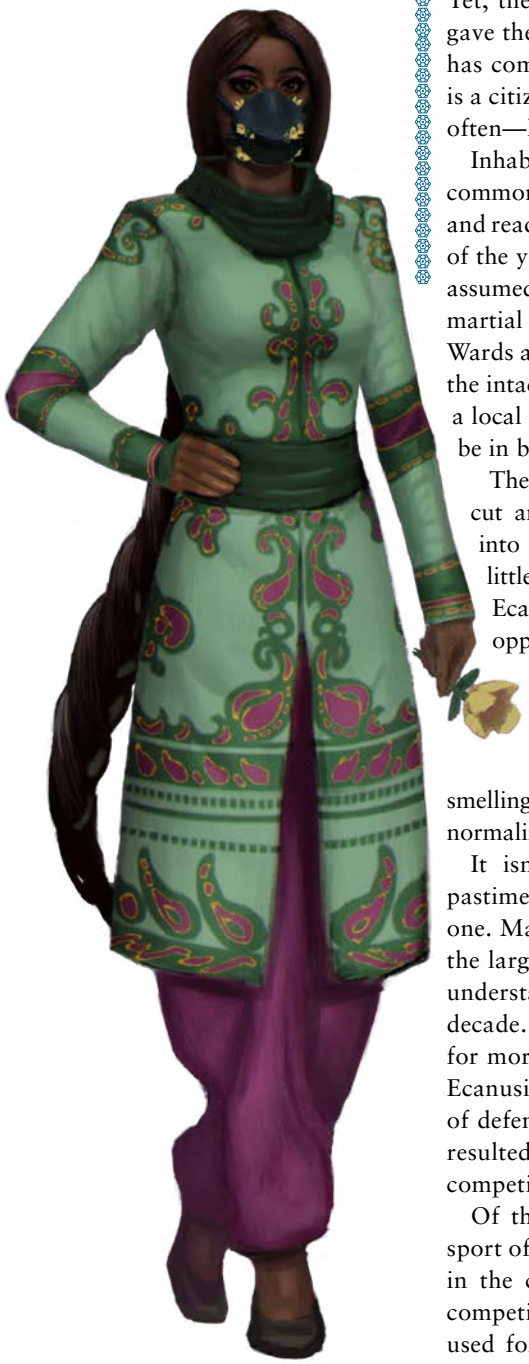
A REMOTE SPECIALIST

The dragon **Ghostmaw** (NE adult umbral dragon) makes his lair in the wastes near Ecanus, but not as a threat to its residents. The church of Pharasma in Quantium pays the wyrm handsomely in both gold and homage. In exchange, Ghostmaw prowls Nex and the Mana Wastes, gleefully devouring any undead he can track down. The dragon coyly threatens to leave his post every year in order to secure even larger offerings, especially now that Ecanus is further pressed due to rogue fleshforged horrors.

GHOSTMAW

CHAIN OF COMMAND

From lowest to highest, the following is the most accurate representation of station in Ecanus and the Nexian military's common roles: miscreant; wasteward; initiate or shapeling; shapesibling; ward and attendi; Nwilikrata and mindward; spiritward; deathsealer; principle mindforger and principle spiritforger; and finally, principle fleshforger, who confers with the Nine and answers only to the Three.



Ecanusi leadership struggles to keep its citizenry calm and content. While the Principle Fleshforger understands the anxiety and even excitement of a renewed open war with Geb, Dunn Palovar has also been around long enough to be afraid of the implication and cost of such a conflict. The other members of Ecanus's local governance wisely share his caution and attempted temperance. They struggle with him to impart the same placidity upon a city and citizenry that was built and poised for war for centuries. The past decade in the city has seen the walls of the dam filling up near to bursting, what with the Evisceration's desolation of a quarter of the city. And so, the pressures within the city build like the contents of an anxious gut. Unease and sickness in the air are mirrored rather starkly by the stench of the living flesh of the Awful that wafts through the city. Ecanus's citizenry has always had a dark humor about them, but the last decade has seen that morbidity take on a decidedly more jagged edge. They're a group of people told that their purpose is to protect a nation. Yet, they're held back from that exact purpose by the very people who gave them that order, and for so long after the Evisceration, an event that has compromised Nex's wider security and Ecanus's integrity. The result is a citizenry who at best are looking for answers and at worst—and more often—looking for a fight.

Inhabitants of Ecanus are quick to action when allowed or ordered. It's common for the people here to be blatantly and proudly armed, outfitted, and ready to go out on the road or into the Mana Wastes. With the exception of the young, the most lightly armored residents of the city can be reliably assumed as the most dangerous out on the field. Ecanus isn't a place where martial aptitudes are ignored—part of the waking routines of the city's Wards are a detailed workout and a magically assisted rooftop run through the intact three fourths of the city—but often, the more urbane and normal a local of Ecanus appears, the more magically devastating they're likely to be in battle.

The fashion of Ecanusi locals is often handsome in its function. Suits cut and hewn in simple shapes often hide layers of protection quilted into the chests and sleeves of their make. The simple design provides little impediment to the practiced motions that evocation in the Ecanusi method demands. Higher-ranked officials who have forged the opportunity, connections, and fortune to travel or stay in the capital often return to Ecanus with far more flamboyant fashion, masking far subtler somatic methods for their spellwork. Because of the stench blanketing the city from the Awful, the common trend of Ecanusi inhabitants wearing conical masks stuffed with the sweetest smelling plants and minerals they can import from Oenopion has become a normalized accessory.

It isn't uncommon for an Ecanusi resident to indulge in volatile pastimes. The lens through which Nex's militia is shaped is an objectifying one. Many Ecanusians feel their relevance fade through each transaction the larger nation makes with Geb, forging a more comfortable economic understanding with its old enemy handshake by handshake, decade by decade. With a city trying to redefine itself as its governing body looks for more concrete answers to guide it, the reactions that spiral out from Ecanusi citizens due to the tension they sit in every day as Nex's first line of defense run a wide gamut. The most structured of these reactions has resulted in the emergence of sports both mundane and magical, and often competitive if not outright combative in nature.

Of these sporting pastimes, the Ecanusi Battle League and the local sport of vexspar—a team-based fight to unconsciousness, termed vexation in the context of the losing team—is most popular. The league holds competitions in four-month cycles. The first month of competition is used for registration of teams of six combatants to have six-versus-six

skirmishes within the school's battle amphitheater for the three remaining months of competition. Often, the prize for being the top team in a league cycle is an extra month off from active duty, which many tend to spread out throughout the year around the time of major holidays in Quantium or Oenopion.

Another more unofficially structured pastime is Wastehunting. Some of the more restless Wards assigned to travel the Wastes or act as liaisons and watchers for Gebbite contacts or subjects might also use these trips to their rival nation or Nex's claimed territory of Alkenstar as an excuse to hunt for strange and fearsome creatures of the Mana Wastes, most often the voracious terror birds. The more even-tempered thrill seekers who enjoy such pursuits, and who have duty beyond Nex's southern bounds, often search the Mana Wastes for wayward parties of travelers or Waste clans' people who might need assistance or rescue. Such recoveries of the former's hunting trophies make for lucrative sales in Quantium for an off-season Ward, and the latter's rescues often get folded into Ecanus as Shapesiblings of the city if they wish for shelter. Even more tempered minds have taken up meditation in their recreational moments while guarding the city, on recommendation from the Principle Fleshforger and the rest of the Prime Body. The calm it lends some is hardly an adequate patch for Ecanus's quietly anxious nature.

BURIED AND FORGOTTEN

Despite its many dubious practices, Ecanus rarely uses elementals to power its works due to protests and clashes in the past with concerned groups from Osirion. Some ancient or clandestine sites do have bound elder elementals, however, many of them forgotten after the war or kept secret by the mages who imprisoned them.

GOVERNMENT

Dunn Palovar, Principle Fleshforger of Ecanus, is one of three people in control of and responsible for the city, at least in theory. The original "forger" of Ecanus is Nex himself, but after the great wizard's exodus, various powerful adepts who claimed to know him—and then his broader mission, as generations passed—stepped into what became one of three positions crafted for Ecanus's internal governance and external correspondence.

Two other positions of import exist to keep Ecanus working like a well-oiled machine and, by proxy, to keep Nex's first line of defense ready and able to respond to threats or subterfuge from Geb or any other foreign power. The first of these is the Principle Mindforger of Ecanus, who helps shape the culture, announce laws, and enforce social norms of Ecanus to help its community function as a strong line of defense for the region. The second is the Principle Spiritforger of the city, who balances the heavily regimented burden Nex puts on the people of Ecanus by providing for enough of their wants and needs to prevent dysfunction, desertion, bad morale, or, worst of all, mutiny. Together, the three positions make for the Prime Body of Ecanus, who are the first authority on any matters within the city, excepting the Three of the Council of Three and Nine. Each of these individuals attend to the organization of their respective disciplines while naturally finding points of collaboration where the makeshift boroughs overlap. The position of one of the Principles, the Principle Spiritforger, was until

recently unoccupied for a remarkably long period of time after the previous Principle Spiritforger was killed in the Evisceration. Dunn Palovar was only able to find a suitable replacement in the last year.

The Principle Fleshforger of Ecanus has historically governed the city because of their management of the city's main purpose. While it's a position that requires mastery over the discipline of fleshforging (and perhaps some under-the-table knowledge of fleshwarping), it's also a station that effectively places the Principle Fleshforger as the chief military officer of Nex—a powerful martial station that the Three have historically reserved a seat on the Nine for due to the responsibility of overseeing the nation's security. Ecanus's Deathsealers answer directly to the Principle Fleshforger, as well as a team of six Chief Nwilikratas, who in turn oversee and organize the high-ranking Nwilikratas of the city. They see to it that the city has a consistent guard rotation and routes of patrol, and they interpret data from the Principle Mindforger and Fleshforger to determine operations that must be carried out around the region.

The Principle Mindforger of Ecanus handles many internal communications regarding Nex's security and maintains the Skirmish School, guiding the process of shaping new recruits, volunteers, and miscreants into their eventual roles as defenders of the nation. The very first Mindforger during Nex's rise—Y'oliim Karshanthryat—was also the individual responsible for creating the process of Mindstreaming during Nex's effort to force Ecanus to keep proper pace with the opposition they fought. Many of the memories used as training scenarios in the process are said to be theirs, as they were a particularly apt practitioner who possessed an amazing facility in the use of all the schools of magic, blending them under pressure with devastating effect. The Mindforger's assumed eye for detail often saddles them with the active coordination of maintaining the fleshforges of the city and designing new technologies that might be needed for Ecanus's and Nex's security. Their team of six Chief Akilikrata tend to take the tasks they've carefully outlined and delegate them to both the Attendi and the Akilikrata of the city—and these plans include Ecanus's civic configuration, a mandate to search (and, if necessary, destroy) travel routes through the nation and the Mana Wastes, and the interpretation of data for use in defensive surveillance across Nex.

The Principle Spiritforger of Ecanus is often the eyes and ears of Nex, taking the pulse of the rest of Garund and even wider Golarion as necessary. They share a few duties with the Keen of Quantium, but the latter have a more international scope. The Principle Spiritforger is also the newest aspect of the Prime Body of Ecanus. Spymaster, assassin, and diplomat rolled into one, the Principle Spiritforger is often an individual of great

charisma and poise, and while they might seem like the warmest of the Prime Body, their charm almost always masks a deeper motive. Today, the Principle Spiritforger also handles more pedestrian civil duties and is responsible for coordinating residents of Ecanus who have no military placement or are in roles of a more domestic nature. Simultaneously, they coordinate diplomatic affairs for Nex's military and many of the nation's most clandestine tactical operations in the region. Rohokrata of Ecanus are far rarer in number than Akilikrata and Nwilikrata, and so much of the Principle Spiritforger's time is spent communicating directly with their handpicked Rohokrata, which has raised their import informally over the other designated Krata in the city.

The punishment for family members who shirk their duties often involves being assigned to Wasteward duty or, for worse infractions, exile and palm branding with the sigil of "misshaping," which signifies that they can't rejoin Nex's military forces in Ecanus (while also being forbidden from leaving the nation). For more serious infractions that caused mortal harm to their colleagues, delinquent Ecanusians are sentenced to the Valkus Isle or even up north to Oenopion for an entirely different kind of "reshaping"—though this pipeline is one that Dunn Palovar begrudgingly facilitates on the express order of the Three since the Evisceration, in accordance with the will of the Arclords of Nex and Agrellus Kisk.

LOCATIONS

The following are a sample of some of the most prominent locations found in Ecanus.

Alaylahm'awal wat Nex

The Eldforge of Nex sits near the Northwest rim of the diamond-shaped city, with an arcana-powered river running beneath it. The river forks out into a network of distributaries that circulate water to pools nested beneath each of the other Great Forges in the city. The Eldforge was once the most stalwart and consistent of these machines, and Ecanus's city plan facilitated quick movement down five wide boulevards radiating southward through the rest of the city, through which even the most gargantuan fleshforge creations could travel.

The forge has fallen dormant mostly, save for occasional weeklong spurts when it can produce various biological forms with impressive accuracy. At the height of the nation's extended conflict with Geb after the disappearance of Nex, this forge was used to produce copies of large, rare beasts found beyond the Material Plane, as well as clones of smaller people of note from Geb in the service of subterfuge. None of the other great fleshforges of Ecanus are capable of such an adroit range of arcane feats. Those close to the Principle Fleshforger have noted that such a critical, malleable facility slipping away from him seems to have taken a toll on Dunn Palovar's formerly poised countenance.

Alaylahmi Aldakriis

The Inner Fleshforges of the city are the most recently built, and paradoxically some of the most inconsistent, though their worst days don't begin to compare with the implicit threat the outer forges carry after the Evisceration. Housed together in the heart of the city and set on an artificial island sit the four inner forges whose distributing maws face outward in cardinal directions, corresponding to the northern, southern, eastern, and western gates of the city. Bridges from the isle to the rest of Ecanus make a path for fleshforged to traverse over the water reservoir around the island. In times of great duress, these forges are used to produce fleshforged to defend the city's interior, but their original purpose was to figure a satisfactory redesign to replace the older forges surrounding the city.

DESIGNATED PROXY

Even when Dunn Palovar must attend to matters in Quantium himself, he doesn't attend in person. The Principle Fleshforger instead transfers his consciousness into the mind of a flesh golem, a technique his colleagues have yet to unravel the method behind.

DUNN PALOVAR

Alaylahmi Alkhariis

The Alaylahmi Alkhariis, or the Outer Fleshforges, line the enchanted slate boundaries of Ecanus, with two great forges to each of the four walls that flank the city gates. Like the Eldforge but unlike the Inner Fleshforges, the Outer Fleshforges deposit their finished work bidirectionally. One of the deposits opens into the city. The other, larger deposit faces outward. For some extended millennia, these forges ran seamlessly, filling the Mana Wastes with strange and varied beasts, but in the last century, their production has been cut back and slowed to precise purposes at Dunn Palovar's order following the Evisceration. The northern forge along the southeast wall, Alayahm Visarh, exploded due to undetermined cause in 4707.

Ecanusi Ay' Akadymis

The Ecanus Academy, sometimes known as the Ecanus War College, is the large collection of buildings dominating the northernmost third of the city. Individuals looking to pursue a military career in service to Nex often start here after their shaping. The campus contains many of Ecanus's official government buildings, including the Prime Body's private quarters—though outsiders would likely have a hard time finding it due to the uniformity of the campus's elegantly simple architecture.

Ecanusi Madrasat Almaerayaa

The Ecanus Skirmish School produces some of the most formidable and feared commanders of evocation across the Inner Sea, with Nantambu in the Mwangi Expanse as their only rival. The Skirmish School's basic commitment is a 2-year cycle; 6 months of intensive martial training and Nexian history, followed by a year and a half of arcane study intended to build an advanced understanding of evocation in its defensive and offensive capacity.

These learning periods are severely truncated in times of open war, with the 2 years being instead heavily abridged to a cursory 2-month intensive referred to as Skirmish Mindstreaming. Enchantment processes are used by high-ranking veterans and practiced instructors to simulate many different conflict scenarios the uninitiated might encounter in the field. Mindstreamed Wards are immersed in recreations of conflicts of the war, passed down through generations, which their mind makes real in dreams as an effective training aide. This process has proved dangerous, however. Only two thirds of the Mindstreamed Wards survive the process, and they're often left mentally scarred by a war they didn't fight. The psychic toll the method exacts leaves it a process only to be used in desperate times or on criminals volunteering their services in an attempt to commutate their sentence.

Y'alvaziea

With a name that literally translates to "the Awful," Y'alvaziea reeks of viscera, wet, living flesh, and digestion. Because of this stench, it's best not to walk through the southern half of the city without a filter mask stuffed with flowers. The southeast boundary of the city is half rubble and half mutated guts spilled across the borough formerly known as V'drysha—a once-handsome and decorated district filled with architectural and botanical gifts to Nex from other nations. Only personnel volunteering or appointed to rehabilitating this sector of the city have permission to traverse the Awful, but the shambling horrors of the area sometimes make their way into the more orderly nights of Ecanus. Often these oozing creepers are mindless and swiftly dealt with by the city's patrolling battlemages, but sometimes they're more intelligent, adopting visages resembling members of the city who have attended (or snuck into) the hazardous borough.

While the individual threats that slither into the rest of the city are usually dispatched swiftly enough, the larger site of hazard hasn't been scourged from Ecanus in two decades. The gaping wound in the city and the flesh things that pulse from it have their own complex magical protections. High-ranking Ecanusi officials speculate at length over why the wider site is not readily affected by their magic. The best conclusion reached is that the magical protections used to protect the former fleshforge from Gebbite magic have also granted considerable arcane protection to the Awful at the time of the forge's rupturing. This theory has also caused Ecanusi leadership to fear Gebbite subterfuge.

Eyewitness accounts always seem to leave the impression that the Awful is spilling past its bounds, yet Ecanusi officials only offer cold placations that register to their subordinates and the citizenry at large more like threats against questioning the haphazard situation. Whispers that discipline can't quell speak to a collective suspicion that the Awful is in fact expanding from its genesis, and suppressing news of the worsening conditions will do nothing to stop its physical presence from growing more potent.

IMPORTANT FACES

Ananda Rahira (LE female human magus) has spent her life in service to Ecanus, earning the position as commandant of Ecanusi Ay' Akadymis. Her white hair, frail stature, and flowing purple robes belie a strength that can shatter door frames, one she can put to use with her curved staff and mastery of arcane spells. Her driving sense of duty leads her to seek out any opportunity to secure the glory and safety of Nex, and the Evisceration has only cemented her resolve. In her mind, too many potential resources have been left to waste due to a lack of conviction from the nation's leaders. While she's still self aware enough to recognize she's in no spot to challenge the current status quo, those who know her know it's only a matter of time before she chooses to act.

This eventuality is a source of stress for many, as Ananda lacks both the composure and forbearance of the Prime Body, showing little interest toward repeated calls for patience. She holds a belief in active defensive measures and shows of force; if a weapon exists, it's meant to be employed, and it's no secret that Ananda

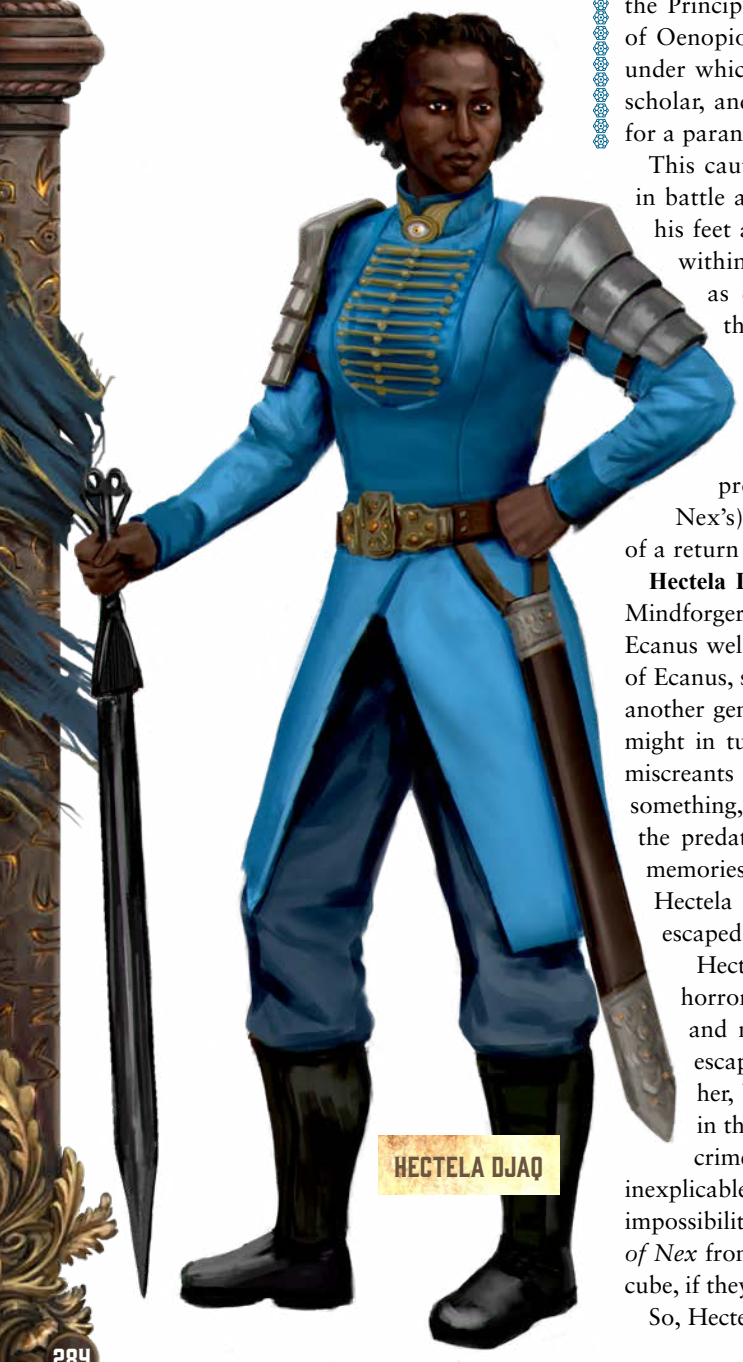
THE PRISMATIC LANTERN

This crystalline tower soars beside the Ustradi river, in the Mana Wastes near Ecanus. The spire stands as a beacon and watchtower against marauding beasts from the Mana Wastes or an invasion by the forces of Geb should hostilities renew. Atop the Prismatic Lantern, a variety of lenses, mirrors, and prisms attached to mechanical armatures rotate around a permanent *prismatic sphere*. The chaotic energies collected by the orrery are focused into colored beams that can be directed into the distant wastelands surrounding Ecanus, filling the skies with flashing rays of deadly arcane energy.

ECANUSI MADRASAT ALMAERAYAA

STALWART SERVANTS

Though Ecanus's fleshforgers tend to catch the most attention, the city also has some of the most advanced construct labs in the world. A number of golems can only be created with the specialized equipment in Nex, and unlike fleshforged servitors, construct creation is so formulaic that it rarely causes messy accidents.



HECTELA DJAQ

tacitly encourages the most rebellious among the Wards, even if she has never been caught aiding or abetting them. Some fear her actions might spark open conflict with Geb, especially when the unsolved mystery of the Evisceration possesses such an obvious scapegoat. In truth, the commandant is a greater danger to those closer to home. She spends most of her time investigating and studying ancient war machines and weapons from Nex's past, vowing to put their power to use once more. At her worst, Ananda is already watching the balance of power in Nex and plotting, looking for any opportunity to dash in and wrest powerful weapons and artifacts from her fellows. At best, Ananda might succeed at revitalizing her decaying engines of war and use them to further deepen the unhealed wounds of the Impossible Lands.

Dunn Palovar (LN male human alchemist), Principle Fleshforger of Ecanus, has rarely been seen by the people of Ecanus, let alone Nex's wider populace. A slight blade of a man whose lean frame holds inhuman years of age, Dunn often complements his slender stature with the countenance of a misanthrope when in a shared space. The function is twofold. First, the Principle Fleshforger must be in as many places as his rival Borume of Oenopion often is. Second, the mysterious and dubious circumstances under which Dunn inherited his lofty position has made a general of the scholar, and a general transplanted from the mindset of academia makes for a paranoid one.

This cautious disposition isn't baseless; Dunn's predecessors have died in battle and assassination alike, and a domestic crisis is growing under his feet as the city's faculties have begun to fail him. For most matters within Nex and Ecanus, Dunn has various flesh proxies that serve as capable-enough vessels to execute his correspondences with the Council of Three and Nine while he continues to investigate the origin of the Evisceration. He doesn't suspect agents from Geb or unfortunate malfunction, but cruel sabotage from his grievous local rival—the Master Alchemist Borume of Oenopion, who Palovar is aware has used the last 13 years to profit from the nation's (and, more particularly, the Arclords of Nex's) lust for conflict and war to appease a master who shows signs of a return from ethereal elsewhere.

Hectela Djaq (LE female human psychic) attends her duty as the chief Mindforger of Ecanus with a grim seriousness that has served her career in Ecanus well, earning Dunn Palovar's solemn trust. As Principle Mindforger of Ecanus, she inherited the memories used for Mindstreaming to pass onto another generation, imparting them upon her Chief Akilikrata so that they might in turn impart the age-old lessons of power and penalty upon the miscreants who join Nex's arcana-martial ranks. Hectela is running from something, though. Thoughts of a place filled with prisoners subjected to the predation of horrific beasts, monsters, and magics slide through the memories she has given her subordinates for the Mindstreaming process. Hectela did what nobody else should have ever been able to do. She escaped from Valkus Isle.

Hectela is haunted by her time on the island. It isn't the extraplanar horrors or the infighting with other prisoners that rends at her mind and memory. It's that someone is after her, and if she was able to escape, so could her old cohort. She's put whatever she did behind her, but her memories of hiding in a half-forged palace hanging half in the Material Plane and half in the next, hiding from her partner in crime and knowing if she's found then she'll cease to be, carries an inexplicable terror like no other. Berekh, her old partner, knew the risk—the impossibility—when they decided to help Hectela steal the *Divination Cube of Nex* from the Isle, and though they were left behind, they likely have the cube, if they still live. They'll want to know why they were abandoned.

So, Hectela tries to rid herself of the memories with Mindstreaming, but

the process wasn't designed to purge one of the memories they impart. All Hectela has accomplished is to foist her fragmented memories onto her Chief Akilikrata, and the Akilikrata, Wards, and Wastewards below them in a cascading waterfall of psychic trauma. These criminals, if they ever found themselves imprisoned once more, would be able to piece together Hectela's mysterious method of escape from the Valkus Isle. More than one of them have wondered, as she has for the last 20 years—is tonight the night Berekh takes their revenge?

Imirh the Amaranthine (CN male undine socialite) is quite the charmer. Even though he's just geniekin, he has been able to grant more wishes in his personal life than his auspicious ancestors manage to. Being a smooth talker with a sweet tongue opens doors for someone with such talents to grant worldly desires—and when the world doesn't realize that the wishes he's granting are his own, through the proxy of his chosen querent, it's a rather easy thing to fulfill. In true Quantium style, as is befitting one of the Populasi class, the Amaranthine dresses fashionably and, some would even say, sensually. His tall, androgynous frame, lean and well muscled, sticks out in a crowd because of how he moves through it—like water. The Amaranthine, after all, is an undine, and a rather noticeable one when he wants to be, which is often. Why else would such a striking fellow wear such a strikingly colored outfit?

Amazingly, for an individual raised in the game of Quantium's social strata, the Amaranthine realized that he didn't want to be seen all the time. Instead, what Imirh does is see almost everything, all the time. As part of a family line who had long ago turned away from the Bandesharite and the Council of Three and Nine after the imprisonment of his lineage's patriarch in Warlock Walk, the Amaranthine shouldn't have been able to easily see the doorways and bridges from the Juali and the Nwezi to the Bandeshar—but if there's something Imirh the Amaranthine is exceptional at finding, it's an opening. In a rare moment where he wasn't trailed by flushed attentions and empty affections, Imirh happened across a doorway not meant for him, even though his Bandesharite cousins had been stepping through it and back for their own official affairs for the entirety of his life. So, he followed their suit.

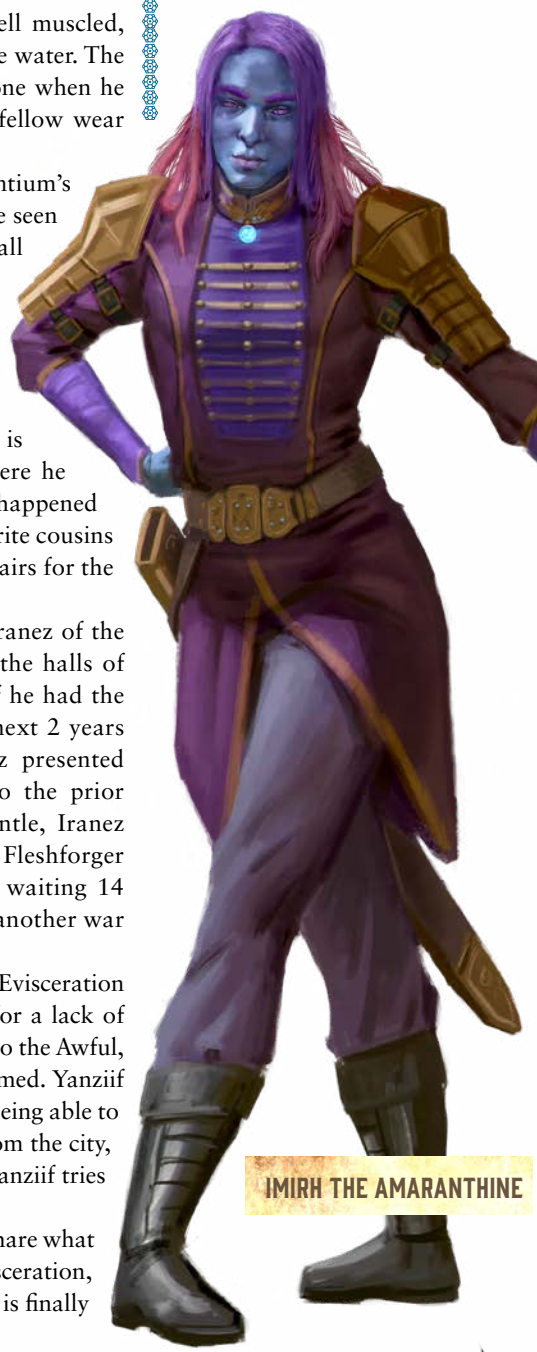
Few see as much as Imirh, and only one really sees more. Iranez of the Orb was the one to spot the Amaranthine walking through the halls of the palace and somehow navigating its tricks and twists as if he had the Elder Architect's mind. She made him one of her Keen. The next 2 years accelerated quickly—the Evisceration happened, and Iranez presented Imirh to Dunn Palovar as the best possible replacement to the prior Principle Spiritforger. When the Amaranthine took the mantle, Iranez presented him with one question both she and the Principle Fleshforger want answered: who caused the Evisceration? They've been waiting 14 years now for his answer, and his deadline fast approaches as another war with Geb looms ever closer.

Yanziif (N fleshforged witness) was there 14 years ago when the Evisceration happened, and they haven't left the site since—though it isn't for a lack of trying. Few have heard of the unfortunate soul who wandered into the Awful, and those who have come close enough to see are usually subsumed. Yanziif is different. They've held onto themself for this long despite not being able to escape the ruined site as it spreads. They see people trickle in from the city, sometimes with a purpose, sometimes out of morbid curiosity. Yanziif tries to guide these people out, but the Awful keeps consuming them.

If just one of person could get out, maybe that survivor could share what Yanziif knows, what they saw at the fleshforge before the Evisceration, because Yanziif can't hold on to themself forever. Their third eye is finally starting to close, and the other two will soon follow.

THE FLESHFORGED MANUSCRIPT

The war between Nex and Geb stretched across such a long period of history that its secrets have leaked far past its borders. The Pathfinder Society possesses an Osirian scroll holding the secrets of Ecanus's fleshforges, though so far, even the most talented of their construct scholars have found it beyond their comprehension.



IMIRH THE AMARANTHINE

Oenopion

City of Alchemists

During Nex's generations-long war with Geb, Oenopion became an invaluable producer of alchemical items, medicine, and sustenance, with the wizard-king rallying and coercing arcanists, alchemists, and druids to provide aid after Geb's blighting of the nation's once-fertile land.

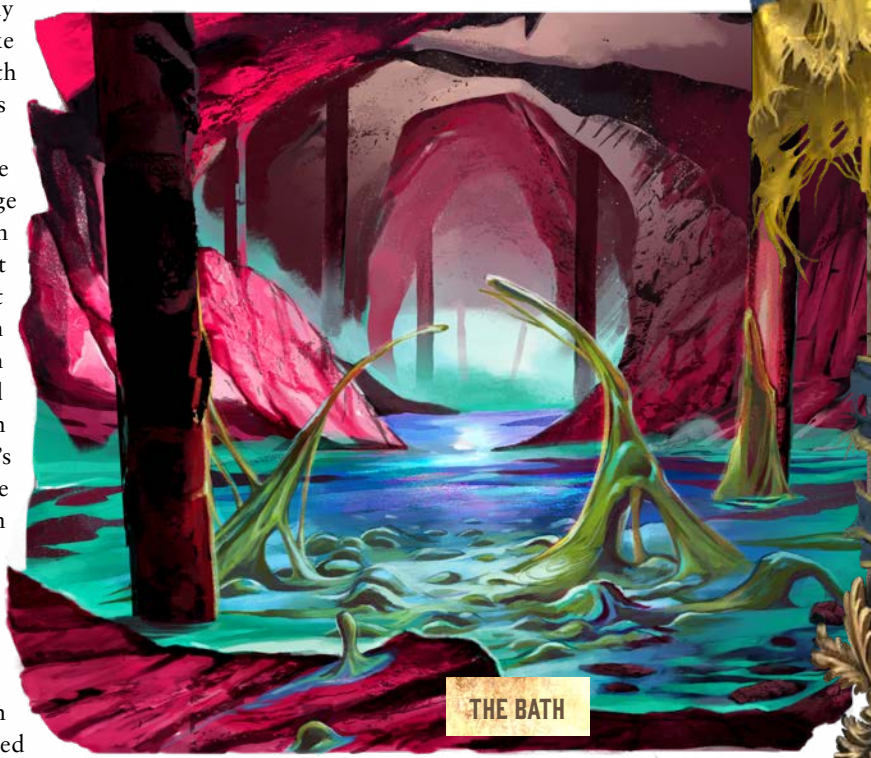
Oenopion—the "Nexian Still" or simply "the Still" among younger and more disillusioned inhabitants—is the most substantial pillar of Nex's economy. An alchemical, mechanical, and botanical wonder, Oenopion has been carefully shaped over many years to support its esoteric, experimental demands. From a distance, the Still resembles a city-sized snow globe with complex, intricate segments and chambers dancing across its gleaming glass carapace above. Many assume the dome causes the city to function like one large greenhouse, supporting the various ingredients grown within its protected bounds, but the truth is a much more complex pursuit toward the same end. The glass over the inner city—starting within the Residential Ring—is enchanted to be a dynamically shifting arcane biome to support Oenopion's incredibly varied selection of botanicals.

Originally built around an ancient lake that possessed arcane cleansing properties, Oenopion was seized by Nex during his rapid expansion through the region following his emergence from the Well of Lies. As the great spellcaster's claim solidified, the once-sacred body of water devolved into a reservoir for magical refuse before it even received a name. Since then, thousands of years of the city dumping alchemical waste, magical runoff, and the many bodies of troublemakers and victims in the lake has created a living mass of ooze underneath the city known as the Bath, which conspires against the industrial churn above.

In response to the rising threat of the Bath beneath the city and Oenopion's huge alchemical production demands, the Nexian Still has evolved one of the earliest and most complex plumbing systems in Garund. Built after the war, its vast pipeline runs from underneath the city and through the earth miles north and south to the Elemion and Ustradi rivers. The system takes in water from the former and filters it into the latter as it's used by the city above, though both rivers are tainted by Quantium's Miasmere. Some in Oenopion hoped this system would wash away the Bath as well, and though it likely impedes the ooze hive mind's growth beyond the reservoir, the Bath survives. Its terrifying tenacity speaks volumes to its ire.

Oenopion is also the birthplace of much of Nex's food culture, being where the famed druid Ghorus first created the plants that, over the millennia, evolved to become the ghoran people. Though it's approximately 60 miles north of Ecanus and over three times that distance from the capital city Quantium, Oenopion remains an instrumental part of Nex, being a vital supplier of food and wealth. Its alchemical goods are the nation's most pervasive link to the wider world of Golarion; every seasoned adventurer across the globe has likely been saved by a potion from Oenopion at least twice.

In the last hundred years, Oenopion's restless ghosts have started speaking back, wafting from the lake beneath the city and amid the sewers. The miasmic body's claims are jumbled and varied, but sometimes, in alleys and other alcoves, there's clarity—and anger—that can be heard clearly in Oenopion's oozing perspective. Revolution brews beneath the streets, and as more visitors listen to the mixed-up accounts and perspectives of their exploited precursors, an unease stirs under the feet of the skilled alchemists and arcanists of Oenopion's ruling class. Should their neglect continue, they might find themselves drowning in the deep, corrosive bath they helped to fill.



THE BATH

A DAY IN OENOPION

Oenopion smells.

It isn't necessarily bad. Many neighborhoods even smell wondrous. This city simply smells like a lot of things and, impressively, somehow smells *more* than most cities of comparable size. Most of the odors pervading the city are floral, peaty, and complex due to the density of the Still's botanical infrastructure, but this verdant perfume disguises a more industrial stink. The most practiced residents of the Nexian Still can comfortably navigate Oenopion by smell—weaving through the circle of row houses of the Residential Ring by the rich, heavy scent of food and drink seeping from storefronts and flats. Locals in the still heart of the city regularly don perfume to mask the psychedelic scents venting from the Bath below. The aromas of the hive mind ooze carry nostalgic, seductive fragrances, meant to attract the most suggestible of the Still's inhabitants and visitors. Because Oenopion is a city filled with liquid wonders and dangers alike, its most reliable maps are drawn with a keen, experienced nose.

During daylight hours, Oenopion is a charming enough locale, with a scent map aided by the odors of a healthy culinary, almost epicurean culture, one forged in a storied food and alchemical history. Oenopion's alcoves and alleys are places where alchemical mixtures and paraphernalia of the strangest order can be bought and sold at all times of day and night. The consequences of these brews travel the concentrically planned curving streets of the Nexian Still in the stomachs, veins, and minds of both visitors and locals.

Oenopion also possesses a robust gardening culture. Many make their living tending to botanical rarities for local apothecaries and buyers from outside of the city. As a strange and delightful byproduct, Oenopion also features a fascinating array of insects, arachnids, and other colorful crawlers that have flocked—or more likely were smuggled—into the city. It isn't uncommon to encounter wildly mutated variations of even the most common insects, after they descended and reemerged from the sewers below and the Bath within.

Oenopion's garden displays, both indoor and out, are vast, diverse works of art. If a newcomer is lucky enough to befriend some of the city's famously insular locals, they might be shown a private indoor garden made for conditions that Nex's climate doesn't allow. The indoor gardens of five different well-off alchemists wouldn't be a terrible abbreviation of a botanical world tour, and many botanists find it easier to search for rare plants in Oenopion rather than in far-off reaches of inhospitable wilderness. The Apothaqiine is said to possess an abundance of plants, fungi, and even whole trees that were taken from beyond the Material Plane within its protected walls.

The city sacrifices many of its charms to the night. Kidnappings and mysterious disappearances are a

nightly ordeal for an out-of-town visitor to navigate. There are many rumors, accusations, and theories for who's responsible, and unfortunately, Oenopion has multiple likely answers. Some say the disappearances are caused by a network of Oenopion officials named the Distillers who snatch newcomers on the order of Master Alchemist Borume. Other rumors point to the demon lord Haagenti's local cult, working his sinister will in the city and looking for candidates with fantastic flesh to warp. Some surmise that drow disciples of the demon lord, residing somewhere among the city's depths around the Bath, are responsible for these cults, having even bought and reorganized the city's plan to build it in the shape of an elaborate alchemical circle that crawls to completion. Still others believe it's the Bath itself, seducing visitors to the city with its many-minded churns to prepare for an uprising as the street prophets who drink from the ooze foretell. Then there are the regular waves of violent crimes in the city that might end with an unwise disposal of a body or two in the Bath or a savvy body removal in the factory furnaces around the Residential Ring. There's a splash of truth to all these hypotheses.

The result is a city uniformly on its guard, and one that's ill-recommended to traverse after dark. Hired mercenaries earn good coin acting as escorts through the streets at night, and many adventurers make a year's wages in a month by acting as envoys for wealthy individuals who need to brave the Nexian Still after sunset to ply their trade and resolve their business. Oenopion's residents, by contrast, usually keep indoors after nightfall, if their work and material obligations allow them such leeway—either in their flats along the Residential Ring or, for the wealthy, houses within the dome that they've managed to buy after years of toil and likely trouble.

Altogether, Oenopion is haunted. The great ooze beneath the city and its offspring, both the covertly hidden and those who more boldly slip and slide through the streets above at night, carry a vast network of memories, experiences, and personalities from thousands of years' worth of failed experiments and disposed souls. They deliver their message in many ways, leaving auspicious, acidic inscriptions on walls and along cobblestone boulevards, making those who drink of the Bath speak in voices long lost or just inducing vivid visions of ancient memories or futile future hopes with its vapors. All point to a revolution bubbling up from beneath the city every day. If one spends a night in Oenopion, expect to speak with the city. Don't be surprised if what it says is persuasive, as it has had countless years to ruminate on what to say.

A YEAR IN OENOPION

Perhaps no city throughout all of Nex imparts the consequence of its constructed surroundings more than Oenopion. Because of the wide array of gardens and alchemical vapors housed in the city, many visitors and new inhabitants initially develop an allergy to Oenopion's open air, referred to as Stillfever. The name makes it sound more dire than it is for most, though some do have an acute reaction upon first encountering it.

For this reason, along with greenhouse heat, a venting occurs during the third week of every month. During this time, all the chambers in the great dome over the city are fully opened rather than simply cracked during the night hours. As the Still is allowed to breathe, its stagnant air and factory smog gives way to floral scents generated from the local gardens, bathing the city in its most welcoming light. The result is a sort of artificial spring throughout the year, even as the wider desert and wastes outside the city become cold and harsh. An uninitiated traveler might be forgiven for thinking Oenopion is exempt from fall and winter if they only experience the calibrated weather of the domed inner city.

As well as combating the heat generated from the city's glass casing and industrial churn, venting weeks tend to be the time when Oenopion sees its

OENOPION SETTLEMENT 15

NE CITY

Government appointed administrator

Population 8,900 (86% humans, 5% gnomes, 2% ghorans, 7% other)

Languages Kelish, Osiriani, Vudrani

Religions Aakriti, Abadar, Calistria, Haagenti, Irori, Lamashtu, Mahathallah, Nethys, Pharasma

Threats civil unrest, corrupt authorities, criminals, cultists of Haagenti, poisonous plants, political murders, pollen allergies, rogue fleshforged, the Bath, unethical alchemists

Alchemical Accidents In Oenopion, you can find just about anything alchemical, but if you make a wrong move, you might wind up sleeping in the goop. The settlement's level is 20 for the purpose of determining what alchemical items and alchemical services are available. Most non-hostile NPCs begin with an attitude one step better than usual toward alchemists, just in case.

Master Alchemist Borume (LE male human alchemist 19) overseer of Oenopion

highest influx of visitors. Friendlier locals specifically recommend travelers and merchants visit the city during this time. In contrast to the quiet paranoia and tension that clogs the air during the rest of the month, venting allows residents and visitors, associates and rivals alike, to literally let off some steam and relax. It's truly the city at its best.

Perhaps it's also due in part to the true sky being visible during most of a venting week. Through most of the Still's months, smog clouds, condensation, and pollutants move up the glass walls, obscuring the upper rim of the dome's interior. Only snatches of the sky are visible from the inner city. However, the Apothate's mastery over the handmade biome is so precise and impressive that the resulting clouds sometimes swirl together into configurations that shed calculated rainfall into Oenopion at will or even produce nourishing starlight from the refocused sun beams and moon rays outside.

The first week of each month in Oenopion is the ever-busy leaving week, during which the bulk of the city's products are sent out into Garund in the care of hired courier arcanists known as Stilltotes. Some Stilltotes are sent to other parts of Nex by council decree and are expected back in Oenopion with confirmation of delivery upon their return—at which point they can collect compensation. Others venture beyond the nation by instruction of the Council of Three and Nine with samples of new and experimental concoctions, in hopes of securing the goodwill of Garund's significant nations and communities.

While the city's production never abates entirely, it slows a noticeable amount in autumn as official focus pivots to international trade. Large, heavily guarded caravans of fortified locomotive tanks made of metal and glass escort the international stock to Quantium so that it can ship out from port to the rest of the world. The most skilled of Stilltotes are often assigned this task and are usually accompanied by fleshwarped guardians known as the Strickenguard, mercenaries who have "volunteered" their bodies and possibly their minds for a reliable salary and experimentation. These menacing guardians are often enough of a deterrent to any bandits who prowl the wastes of Nex. Though large and strong, they usually also possess some magical enhancements sewn upon their flesh sleeves to perform their duties more efficiently. These international trading efforts serve a dual purpose, with the Stilltotes being tasked with collecting rare ingredients around the globe by the Master Alchemist and other Apothates who are eager to prepare for winter.

The winter months are the most experimental period of Oenopion's calendar, as the city retreats to study, refine, and reflect on its endeavors of the past year. It's understood that the Still's year doesn't properly start until after this period of reflection in Pharast,

which is the closest to a rest month as the city receives. As Oenopion's residents prepare for a spring and summer of alchemical manufacture, they're encouraged to bloom and grow like the plants they use for their work and find rejuvenation before returning to the long working grind. The city's alchemical potions and experimental magics are swapped for delicious food and drink instead as the locals prepare for the city's most major holiday—Ghorusan.

Held on the 31st of Pharast, Ghorusan takes the creative energy brewing in the Still's workforce and makes a giant festival of it all. Named in honor of the druid Ghorus for the aid he gave to the nation, Ghorusan is a potpourri of daring culinary indulgence. Costumes are made from dying plants, and Oenopion becomes a citywide potluck. Though the Still's network of restaurateurs, chefs, and mixologists brandish wholly new-made drinks and food, more pedestrian Ghorusan celebrations take place in the street, with a cavalcade of rousing tunes played by buskers from in and out of town alike. Many personalized brews of bathsilk are shared, an Oenopion classic most reserve for drinking on this day. Bathsilk is created by taking a sample of the Bath and mixing it into a sweet, glowing alcohol that can take the form of beer, cider, or even aged wine for the affluent. Often, bathsilk is left to ferment and distill for six months to leech away the consciousness and toxins of the Bath's sample, leaving behind a complex, sweet and spiced range of tastes—at least in theory. It's no coincidence that many imbibers start their year with vivid hallucinations, dreams, prophecies, new inspiration, and long-lost memories persuading them to odd action.

PEOPLE OF OENOPION

A wide variety of common ancestries from all over Golarion can be found mixed up within the Nexian Still, much as they are in Nex overall. In contrast to Quantium's more widely and openly extraplanar citizenry, Oenopion boasts a people as rare as the contents of its most renowned gardens. The ghoran population in Nex, considerably larger when compared to the rest of the world, is especially concentrated in Oenopion. These mobile plants don't claim any particular neighborhood and sprout up all over the city. Ghorus created their ancestors in Oenopion and seeded a great deal of Nex's robust cuisine culture with them. After their long fight to be recognized as more than food, ghorans chose to take control of their original purpose by providing sustenance to others on their own terms. Many of Nex's most celebrated culinary traditions started in this city, and it's because of the ghoran citizenry who have passed along both their culinary knowledge and civic struggle.

It isn't that unusual for ghorans in the Still to live with trusted "Tenders"—any ancestry with longer lifespans and, by consequence, more stable relationships than themselves. Some of Oenopion's oldest citizenry are elves and gnomes from trusted Tender families, descendants of abolitionists who helped ghorans earn their right to be recognized as a sentient, free people in the nation's eye. The intergenerational knowledge passed between ghorans in their cycles of bloom and death lets their descendants know which scant families can be trusted, information almost as instrumental to their survival as air and water.

Many of the most celebrated, longstanding restaurants in Oenopion have been established in the inner city through this unique interplay. These restaurants thrive due to the care

UNUSUAL ALLIANCES

The nation of Holomog is too distant to be common knowledge in the Inner Sea, but the Southern Garundi nation is one of Nex's strongest allies. The overwhelming hatred they both bear toward Geb overcomes all their differences, and relations remain strong to this day, with Holomog sending precious food and Nexian Arclords rushing to aid Holomog in times of war and disaster. As Oenopion is the southernmost city of Nex, it often plays host to visiting delegates from Holomog.

of Tenders entrusted long ago with looking after and caring for ghorans. When a ghoran dies, their Tender assists in their charge's reseeding and uses their non-seed remains for their most precious and sought-after dishes. It's common practice among Tenders to donate the profits made by any delicacy prepared from deceased ghoran flesh toward the support and protection of future ghorans born within or fleeing to the city.

Unfortunately, such protections remain a paramount necessity for the ghoran population. While it's illegal across Nex to murder the plant people for any reason, let alone sustenance, Oenopion is a city of the exploited, and ghorans aren't exempt from its predations. Many within the city profess a respect for their fellow ghoran neighbors, yet the temptation of the forbidden is ever-present in Nex. Ghoran flesh traffickers—known as Wilters—are one of the Still's worse-kept secrets. Wilters seek out untended ghorans in the city to kill them, harvest their flesh, and sell it across Garund as a rare delicacy. Wilters don't often have a chance claim their quarry in Oenopion but will happily spring upon an opportunity that presents itself, especially after dark. Some Wilters even plant ghoran seeds in the countryside, hoping to grow them for food and peddling the remains in Oenopion's walls. While many in Oenopion's culinary trade act as Tenders for ghorans, there's a considerable number of restaurateurs and gourmands who will take the improperly acquired delicacy for the right price, no questions asked, whether they're protecting ghoran kin or not. Ghoran flesh itself isn't illegal to devour, and the city runs on nothing if not profit.

The fleshwarped are yet another fraught and vulnerable demographic encountered in Oenopion. These varied people come from all walks of life, though most are either refugees from the Mana Wastes or, depressingly more common, were created as an experiment conducted by a local amoral fleshwarper; many of the local fleshwarped inhabitants of The Still have been discarded by their masters and wider social circles after their data was collected. Only in the past few decades has fatigue over this treatment, and the city's larger nefarious conduct, provoked fleshwarps into self-advocacy and solidarity. While fleshwarped people have long knitted together a desperate community in the Still's sewers and aqueducts near the Bath, their younger generations now stand tall for their rights and agency.

Though many fleshwarped might be startling to look at, even across the hugely varied population that makes up Nex, in recent years their presence has been heartily welcomed by most of Oenopion's vulnerable and impoverished. Many fleshwarps living beneath the city have taken the time to study these areas below, using the secrets they've gleaned from their exploiters to choose the right locations for protest and action—

often turning Oenopion's structural systems against their oppressors in unexpected ways.

While it isn't unusual for fleshwarps to spill charged protests in Oenopion's streets, they also focus on leveraging their skills, knowledge, and secrets with the powers above to forge their own destinies behind the scenes. At the darkest level, doing so has meant letting local alchemists experiment on their bodies once more to better understand the techniques used on them and others. Those with more resilient abilities, especially those who can heal faster or possess hardier constitutions, volunteer as test subjects for unproven potions, poultices, and other alchemical items. The trade-off for these poisoned bargains are loosened tongues spilling exploitable secrets and, on occasion, unexpected allies. Money and goods are pooled together to buy properties and to repurpose them as safe shelters for those in need. Bands spread information about the most nefarious of Oenopion's elite during play nights in the Draft of Forever. In some cases, alchemists of ill conduct awake to find their precious gardens burned to the ground.

Factions

Much like ingredients in an alchemical brew, the most potent actors in Oenopion aren't easy to separate from the other elements around them. Though nowhere near comprehensive, these groups and factions are some of the most notable across the city.

The Oenopion Fleshforges Guild: Recently reformed, the current iteration of the Oenopion Fleshforges Guild is only 13 years old. This reformation occurred in the wake of the Evisceration in Ecanus (page 269). The original guild was a relic of the war with Geb, a group tasked with overseeing the replication of the fleshforges in Ecanus and the refinement of fleshforging techniques to empower soldiers with necromantic resistances. After the war ground to a halt, many of these technologies were quickly converted to mass produce medicinal alchemical items. Completed prototype fleshforges were repurposed into the first versions of the modern factories that now border Oenopion. The guild that oversaw the conversion stayed on to consult on the formulation of new poisons and potions.

As the purpose of Oenopion calcified into specifically producing apothecary necessities, this knowledge disappeared into the Nexian Still's background and was put to darker, more personal use. As these guild members grew richer and more corrupt, they siphoned Nexian government funding for secret side projects, conducting illicit experiments and creating horrors in an effort to expand their personal power. After learning of their depredations and embezzlement and seeing no utility in their work for Nex, the Council of Three and Nine dissolved the original guild during Nex's third millennium. As might be expected, the horrors this decision was meant to impede only became more clandestine.

After the Evisceration, the Arclords of Nex proclaimed that heightened protective measures were needed to defend against the likely machinations of Gebbite agents. They offered funding to reinstitute the guild under Borume's supervision, provided that Borume ensured the guild focused on defenses for the upcoming war effort. The guild's officiated members now work within the manufacturing factories of the Still, quietly planning to expand these factories to accommodate fleshforges like the ones in Ecanus. The past decade has seen the wide construction of laboratories to facilitate more precise, specific fleshwarping with volunteers. These plans largely sacrifice housing in the Residential Ring.

If the Fleshforges Guild holds one virtue, it's cooperation. Unlike Oenopion's famously competitive and secretive alchemists, the guild

Mnemovore

Though best known for its alchemy, Oenopion hosts plenty of arcane schools and labs, as befitting one of the greatest cities in Nex. One major group of magical researchers are the planar experts investigating Mnemovore. This constantly shifting demiplane hosts a twisting library hundreds of miles across. It also appears to devour other demiplanes to increase its size and knowledge. The Arclords have begun creating demiplanes specifically for Mnemovore to eat in order to observe the results.

PRIMORDIAL LIFE

The seemingly spontaneous genesis of oozes from the Bath's polluted waters has attracted more than its fair share of scholars—though the Bath's rebellious burbling has caused the practice to fall sharply out of political favor in recent years. Some alchemists believe that the developing ooze colony mirrors the genesis of life on Golarion. While these ideas are dubious at best, the oozing god Aakriti (page 310) often sees converts from those who behold the Bath's churning potential.

fleshforgers happily share information and new advances with one another. This fellowship has allowed the guild to quickly become competitive against the far-more-established fleshforgers in Ecanus. With Nex's great fleshforges sputtering and unreliable, the Fleshforges Guild has politically positioned itself as the obvious solution, a development that only serves to further strain the rivalry between Principle Fleshforger Dunn Palovar and Master Alchemist Borume.

Haagenti's Mask: The cult of the demon lord Haagenti is the cruel offspring of the original Oenopion Fleshforges Guild. After many of the city's fleshwarping experts went underground to practice their increasingly sinister experiments, the consequences of their actions gradually filled the streets, alleys, and sewers in the city below, eventually creating a whole displaced and neglected class in Oenopion. In 3653 AR, a drow refugee from the Darklands named Dulin Tro squandered the goodwill he had carefully built in Oenopion after he reshaped the guise of his assistant, a well-liked prodigal human of 13 years named Ankquit Daal, to bear the face of Dulin's patron demon lord: Haagenti. The ever-shifting guise was considered beautiful by many of Tro's cohort, but the psychological toll on the boy and the pain of the process was unmistakable. Ankquit journeyed to Quantium to seek both justice for himself and punishment for Dulin Tro, and his plea and visage were so disturbing that Iranez of the Orb and four members of the Council of Three and Nine traveled immediately to the Still to make Tro answer for his profane crime and prevent anything like it from happening again.

The drow had already planned his escape using a divine gift from Haagenti, who was pleased with Dulin Tro's horrific offering. Haagenti crafted a mask for the drow and his followers from their own faces, which they would always wear and could change indefinitely for the cost of a night's pain. By the time Iranez arrived in Oenopion with Ankquit's justice burning in her mind, Tro and his followers had already become other people. In her consternation, Iranez ordered the Principle Fleshforger to instate the Age of Commerce to prevent such a grotesquerie from happening again to a child and to dissuade this kind of experimentation altogether.

In the following years, this sect has donned the title of Haagenti's Mask and stirred up trouble in Nex wherever they've been directed by their fiendish commander. They continue to follow the example of Dulin Tro—whether he's dead or not. Their current leader, Jandeerish Vel (page 302), seeks to make a door for saints of his patron demon lord so that they might impart wisdom for future devastations. He has recently made his Key.

The Unwarped: The Unwarped might be the most collectivist group within Oenopion. They've grown tired of the city's materialistic machinations, stratified class cruelties, and experimental abuses. Their founders were fleshwarped activists, former visitors to the city who were kidnapped and experimented on by illegal fleshwarpers, foul worshippers of Haagenti's cult, and even secret operations from Oenopion's own government. The lucky ones were discarded on the streets afterward or, more likely, under it. Instead of fleeing, giving up, or dying, they survived and chose to stay. If the unwillingly fleshwarped were going to be discarded after their exploiters took what they wanted from their flesh, then fleshwarps were going to take to the streets and become undeniable to the Still's indifferent aristocracy.

Over the years, this tension has bubbled over into other civic and infrastructural issues in the city. Various protesters formed alliances, building a community of true support

beneath the streets and around the Bath. The Unwarped's ranks expanded as the years passed, making the Bath their base of operations. They were the first to realize that the Bath was an intelligent creature rather than a collection of mindless ooze—and with the realization that the old lake was as angry, frustrated, and abused as the desperate community built around it, the two found allies in each other. They now work together for the kind of change they want to see in the city. With the Bath's assistance, the Unwarped began their tradition of taking their protests to the streets and occupying factories while wearing plague masks, a dormant commentary on the plague the Still has become for its own people as well as a refutation of Haagenti's Mask.

Many of the civil actions and political strategies the Unwarped employ are founded in information from the Bath and its wealth of secrets, gleaned from a trove of memories drawn from people across every level of Oenopion society. The Bath shares the city's hidden truths and forgotten agendas with its allies in the hope that the Unwarped will use the information for proper change, but its efforts have gained any kind of propulsive momentum only in the last hundred years. There are times when the Bath would impart accurate yet difficult-to-parse predictions of the future or send smaller oozes to approach individuals on the street to share news. Meaning to harness these strange divinations for their activism, certain members of the Unwarped have taken to ingesting a handful of the Bath after asking it questions. Many die a fortnight later, but they all receive vivid, informative dreams that they can then use to inform their accomplices about the next steps to take.

CULTURE

Oenopion is a paranoid place. Though it claims to be a center of groundbreaking innovation, much of its alchemical development takes place behind closed doors or in ivory academic towers, away from the public eye. Some of this caution comes from alchemists rightfully worrying that their work, which offers them a chance at higher status in the city, could be stolen by ambitious rivals who live mere doors away. Others fear falling victim to the strange disappearances of the city, which usually claim outsiders but have been known to befall established members of the Nexian Still's community. Then there are the individuals who have tried something unorthodox or unethical in their strange sciences and display the results while roaming after midnight—perhaps walking up walls, or even through them, due to something imbibed or injected. Wherever they go, many who amble around Oenopion at night aren't altogether there. A certain tense, erratic tone is set within the city's bounds.

Oenopion, as much if not more than its sibling cities, blatantly runs on a series of interlocking exploitations. Besides the master alchemist, many of Oenopion's movers and shakers don't actually reside in the Nexian Still, but instead live in Quantium. These influential individuals rent lodgings to career-hungry alchemists who wish to work their way up the ranks of the Apothaqiine in order to take their talent and renown back to Quantium and offer it to those they once paid to live. Along the way, the newly initiated are often tempted toward little betrayals to secure some comfort in the city. Some are small treacheries, such as stealing precious

POLITE DISTINCTIONS

While fleshforgers in Nex insist their work is distinct from fleshwarping, the two differ in technique more than principle. Fleshforging is generally less destructive and painful, as killing an experiment before it's finished is typically bad for results. While the Arclords and alchemists of Nex have plenty of callous cruelty to spare toward their fleshwarped creations, comparing the defiant Unwarped with the shattered, traumatized victims of drow cultists does draw a stark and somber line.

DULIN TRO

OOZE TENDING

Curious alchemists have been fascinated with the ooze colony of Oenopion for centuries, and while the powerful of Oenopion are instinctively wary of the Bath, it's too big of an issue to be entirely ignored. Oozes are carefully scooped from the colony for study in arcane and alchemical academies. Students and hirelings are tasked with caring for the oozes and ensuring they don't cause trouble, though high pay is needed to convince employees to stay amid the disgusting conditions and rumors of lethal accidents.

flowers from a neighbor's collection for a chameleonic potion. Others are large treacheries, such as holding an indoor party that serves its guests a main refreshment of pomegranate punch spiked with the dangerous initial batch of that in-progress chameleonic potion.

The city's most privileged are the aristocrats, politicians, and artisans too wrapped up in their work or petty rivalries to bother managing the city, or folk who live in other parts of Nex who don't seem to care until it's too late. While the attentions of Oenopion's elite fall to their own pursuits of power and pleasure, Oenopion's youngest and most disenfranchised have been transforming the norms of the city. Young families from Quantium frequently move to the Still's Residential Ring in search of quieter, calmer places to nest. The lost and forgotten below the city have created their own network and living spaces that function as a hidden Oenopion community. The fleshwarped of Oenopion support one another, often renting real estate to each other to outplay their "superiors" in similar businesses within the heart of the city. The ooze of the Bath carries a righteous justice and fury that the Still's most marginalized people now willingly carry. In the cauldron that is the Still, stirrings of change are poised to stir up the city for the better.

Theft and burglary aren't uncommon within the Still, but it's just as likely to be committed by arcanists, apothecaries, and alchemists of significant status as low-class ruffians—or by someone who has lived long enough in Oenopion that they're aware the true thieves lie within the great dome. For the latter camp, the city's rules provide a rare exploit for socially engaged citizens. Much of the city's disenfranchised use the distance from their nation's enforcers to their advantage in organized action. Some of the more entrepreneurial fleshwarped and accomplices who sympathize with their plight have started buying up properties from the wealthy who have neglected their holdings long enough for Oenopion's leadership to seek putting the properties to better use.

Victims are also just as likely to be the elite and powerful as they are regular workers and clerks. Aristocrats who stay in the city often do so because they desire fewer eyes on them, and brewing common potions isn't what they get up to in their private life. Sometimes their need for privacy is due to their involvement in illicit, scandalous pleasure-seeking, but more often, it's because of their dangerous experimentation upon people and creatures they wrongly suspect nobody will miss.

Many of the more affluent arcanists and alchemists of Oenopion are accompanied by homunculi—wry, clever constructs of flesh, magic, and memory who are bound to their masters by blood. These homunculi often assist in the complexities of their masters' trades, and the creation of homunculi bodies to specification has become a rather lucrative business in itself.

The city isn't all dour shadows. Alchemy presents many wonders alongside its potential for destruction. While the materialistic struggle of the Still can threaten to drown the wholesome hopes of the more naive, the most recent generation of citizenry has found innovative ways to thrive within Oenopion's steadfast march and quiet competition. While the city's dangers are pervasive and palpable, so are its many delights. One won't find better a better drink anywhere else across the Inner Sea, and the culinary aptitude in Oenopion matches the talent of its magical brewers. Within each tavern, restaurant, and cafe, Oenopion can be seen as a place full of passionate creatives who work with intricate sciences to express themselves.

A typical Still dish is a heavily spiced, deeply aromatic representation of the city's culinary arts, often garnished or cooked with edible flowers. The city's cuisine tends to be on the sweet and floral side due to the availability of rare and savory botanicals, though these staples are far less awe-inspiring to the local citizenry than to visitors. The carefully prepared ingredients are often made for groups of two to four to share across a pliable, spongy flatbread garnished with arugula, which serves as the common base of most modern Oenopion cuisine. In most cases, the rest of the meal is carefully arranged on top of a wide piece of this bread, which is dismantled by all the participating guests and used to devour the dish in lieu of silverware. Most of these dishes aren't based around meat, though ethically obtained ghoran flesh is a particular delicacy.

One should prepare to perceive new notes in the aftertaste of an Oenopion dish or drink for many hours after the lucky soul has left the dining table. The culinary aptitude of the city is of such complexity and sophistication that it's an expected and even desired response to the city's food to have synesthetic reactions brought on by the food's magical and alchemical layers. The drinks are even bolder, often onsetting vivid dreams for the taker whether or not they yet slumber. If a group has shared a pitcher of arcanely fermented dreamaloe, expect them to share a dream as well.

There's a famous double entendre about food explorations for the uninitiated visitor to the Still—"The ones who drink together, dream together." The city inns, especially in the Ring, are always more than happy to oblige the lucidity a group of travelers might find. On the way there, it isn't at all unexpected to find other consumables of a colorful nature. Oenopion is a prime spot for "adventurers" whose ventures have led them to create their own outer planes in their minds.

If they aren't working, people in Oenopion dress light, not only because of the national climate but also because of the mechanical heat generated from the city's infrastructure. Sundresses and sleeveless long robes are favored street fashions for the Oenopion local, regardless of gender, and visitors often sweat off any more densely layered vestiges within hours of being in the city. Street peddlers with more temperature-agreeable clothing always lurk at the ready along the Nexian Still's urban network, to take advantage of the city's industrial swelter. In their own homes, the inhabitants of the Nexian Still don more protective clothing to set about their experimental work.

GOVERNMENT

Oenopion is ruled by money. With the city functioning as Nex's economic spine, commerce drives the decisions that govern, and as a machine of innovation and profit, its governance is in service to material interest first and foremost. Guided by Master Alchemist Borume (page 301), one of the nine of the Council of Three and Nine, Oenopion is nothing if not profitable for the nation. Most of this wealth goes back to supporting the city's businesses as well as those who run said businesses, and so the Residential Ring finds itself in a state of perpetual neglect.

This bottom line doesn't stop Master Alchemist Borume from orchestrating every inch of his charge to his specifications, down to the flask-full. From the Residential Ring and the factories it's planned around to the Apothaqiine that marks the city's center, his attention is cast high, low, and wide to keep affairs within the city moving. Borume's hyper-vigilance in maintaining Nex's primary breadwinner leads him to overlook many local atrocities. As long as he doesn't give the Council any reason to question his station and utility, then whatever unscrupulous

HAAGENTI

The Whispers Within
Alignment CE (NE, CE)
Divine Font *harm* or *heal*
Divine Ability Constitution or Intelligence
Divine Skill Crafting
Domains change (*Gods & Magic* 112), might, toil (*Pathfinder #148* 63), wealth
Cleric Spells 1st: *summon construct*, 2nd: *humanoid form*, 4th: *bestial curse*[APG]
Edicts practice alchemical transmutations, pursue knowledge whatever the cost, use your inventions to exploit others
Anathema aid Yasamoth, allow morality to interfere with research, destroy knowledge
Favored Weapon battle axe

Haagenti plays at seeming reasonable, tempting forbearance with his numerous helpful inventions. Yet, he's just as monstrous as any other demon, only giving his knowledge to those who'll use it to cause horrendous suffering. He claims to have invented the art of fleshwarping, and the many victims of his followers stand as a stunning testament to his true cruelty.

things that happen in the streets and behind closed doors of the city are worth the cost—or rather, profit.

Borume weaves a tangled web of trading favors and manufacturing problems that he can transmute into solutions. He works his social alchemy across the nation, currying power and privacy for himself and the ruling class in the Still much as Oenopion does across all of Golarion. Oenopion is often treated as a private testing ground for strange experiments of his own imagining as well as those of other luminaries of interest. Publicly, the city is known as a manufacturing plant for Nex and the wider world. Borume's balancing of these somewhat contradictory interests results in his esoteric governance of Oenopion.

Most of Borume's civil structures within Oenopion are also business ventures. Much to the suspicion of the Principle Fleshforger in Ecanus, the Master Alchemist has maintained the Oenopion Fleshforges Guild over the past 60 years. While Ecanus's towering horrors have kept the nation secure from Geb for millennia, Borume has used the Guild in Oenopion to iterate on the nation's military technology for his own profit. For example, instead of a more conventional guard or Ecanusi Wards, much of the city is policed by a recent wave of the elite Strickenguard. The dubious nature of the Strickenguard soldiers becomes even murkier as rumor spreads that not all in their ranks are volunteers and might be just as imprisoned as any citizens they lock up.

It's rumored that the samples of new alchemicals sent out overseas are actually newer variations of Strickenguards, which Borume advertises to nobles and aristocrats abroad in the interest of finding another means of adding to Oenopion's wealth and deepening his own pockets. Many Apothate and wealthy citizens already hire Strickenguards, as they don't need to sleep, eat, or be tended. Even communities in the Residential Ring have pooled together resources to hire the soldiers on occasion. Officials within the Apothaqiine oversee these transactions and payments, and the rental service has turned a profit for the city. As usual, so long as the Still delivers an agreeable cut of its income to Nex, the Council of Three and Nine is collectively willing to look the other way.

This method of generating revenue and safety through subscriptions pervades and propels Oenopion's affairs. Much of the real estate in Oenopion is rented from the city government by the wealthy within its walls, aristocrats from Quantium, or representatives from other nations. Oenopion's product circulation is also often handled through a subscription basis when it comes to foreign buyers, with one-off sales being triple the cost. Most impressively and frustratingly, Borume has fabricated an impressive network of taxation and contracts within the city that seems to keep the whole thing afloat as much as it threatens to send it crumbling down into the Bath.

The Apothates and the Measures assist Borume in keeping all this stirring in sequence with his accord. The Apothates earn their place within the spire on Borume's recommendation and the Council of Three and Nine's confirmation. The Measures are often the most consistent authorities that the Nexian Still possesses. They come in two general camps of civic officials: Halfmeasures and Fullmeasures.

Halfmeasures are sworn and trusted individuals who engage with Oenopion's citizenry and visitors and are placed in official stalls, street patrols, and publicly accessible offices around the city. They act as friendly guides, watchers, street enforcers, whistleblowers, and tax collectors, and they cycle through these duties as needed on a rotating biweekly schedule. When their station is challenged with threat of violence, or their duties are otherwise evaded or subverted by the citizenry, they're instructed to turn to their superior Fullmeasures.

Fullmeasures often hold a specific title pertaining to their expertise, followed by their specific purpose and their preferred referential name, typically their surname. For example, Fullmeasure Executioner Qualra might be a dire enforcer and even executioner, while Fullmeasure Witness Duuhl acts as an officiate and keeper of contracts for the city. The Fullmeasures answer to the Apothate.

There's but one unofficial and rarely broken rule of decency that runs through the complex plan of the Still: leave children out of the business. It's tacitly agreed they aren't to be involved, both for their sake and for the transaction. The metric that guides this principle is informally referred to as the Age of Commerce—who constitutes a youth is judged by human standards, and those who aren't yet of age must be excluded. The city might be filled with shifting morals and numerous ethically gray business practices, but they go out of the window if the involvement of children is made known. While travelers might vanish off the street with horrible regularity to little fanfare, if one of the missing parties is reported to be a child, the involvement of a Fullmeasure Investigator on an officially documented case is inevitable. If the infraction is traced and proven true, justice from a Fullmeasure Executioner isn't far behind. Fortunately, as consequence of this circumstance, there's pleasingly little call for such work among the city's enforcers.

Locations

The following are a sample of some of the most prominent locations found in Oenopion.

The Apothaqiine

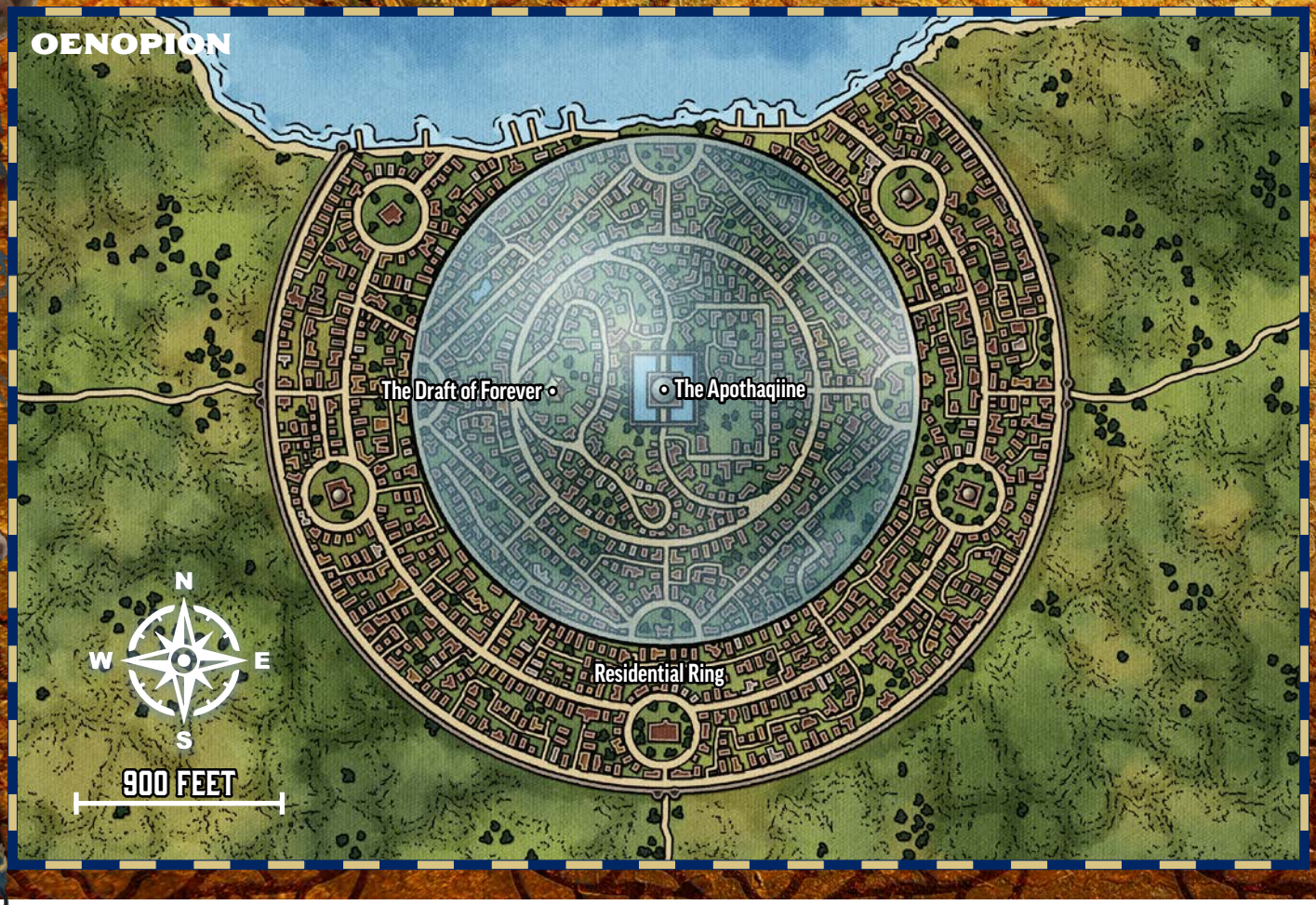
This towering palace-spire was built over the Bath in the densest, most reinforced grounds within the center of the city. Within its walls lies a collection of alchemical knowledge unrivaled anywhere in Golarion. The Apothaqiine also houses the most reliable alchemists willing to work for Nex's greater interest, who devise new liquid ingenuities after they've proven their skill and their loyalty to the nation. They spend their time crafting test batches of new concoctions before delivering them to the factories that make up the palace's bottom two floors. Once their efficacy is proved, the potions are shipped to Quantium to be tested in the streets of that metropolis. If well received, they're shared with Oenopion's wider factories for more propulsive manufacture for the next two seasons.

There's great material security in becoming an Apothate—one of the resident alchemists of the palace—and greater rivalry to maintain that status within its walls. Competition for the privilege is fierce, as applicants come not just from the city or nation, but from anywhere

Oenopion Golemworks

Nex as a nation is renowned for its magical constructs, and Oenopion as a city is renowned for them within Nex. Despite stiff and sometimes bitter competition from both Quantium and Ecanus, the Arclords of Oenopion are considered the most capable eldritch smiths and golem workers among their peers. Few Arclords can be found without a specially commissioned guardian construct, built to specification in one of Oenopion's many labs.

BORUME



on Golarion and even sometimes from other planes of existence. From that pool, the Apothaqiine chooses 99 alchemists to house in individual apartments within its walls, which make up the top nine of its 13 residential floors. The bottom-most residential floor belongs to the assistants and resident assessors who help execute the formulas of the alchemists in residence and who carry out the first wave of tests for them, respectively. The top floor is where Master Alchemist Borume resides, though he rarely leaves.

One can look out of the window of a well-regarded Apothate's flat—a sixth or seventh floor suite—and see the unique arrangement of Oenopion below, its curving streets mapped and embellished like an elaborate alchemical circle instead of a traditional city grid. Some Apothates with a more mystical bent even believe the city itself was built on an alchemical formula. These esoteric believers often work in concert because of their varied views of the city. They also have a habit of suddenly vanishing from the tower. Occasionally, the Bath's cryptic burbling reveal their incomplete findings.

The Bath

The Bath was once a lake with magical properties, which Oenopion's inner city was built over. It has since become a handmade reservoir to dispose of the city's runoff, errant experiments, discarded magic, and inconvenient victims. The dumping of bodies has somewhat slowed now that the Bath has gained a multi-millennium forged hive mind consciousness within the ooze colony that makes up its depths. Now that it's known that voices within the hive mind can retain memories, the criminal elements in the city usually seek to dispose of bodies in less precarious locations, for fear of some random ooze giving their attacker's description.

The Bath is filled with many of the city's most lurid secrets, swirling within its foul putrescence. It lures those it feels it can trust through sweet smells and hypnotic patterns playing along its surface. Its vast, greenish-purple glow is often visible beneath the city's sewer grates, casting wild and shifting light and shadows on the domed city's curved architecture. These displays of miasmic light and scent often carry esoteric messages and missions for those who can decipher them. Bath oozes have even been known to climb to the surface city. Many who encounter the Bath in any capacity find themselves moved to action, which has led Oenopion's elite to fear its effect on people's faculties.

Those who go under the city's streets can easily follow its network of tunnels and reservoirs to the Bath. When someone chooses to do so, they often find themselves in a shantytown of the city's most neglected,

some of whom act as messengers for the sentient ooze that illuminates their hidden community. Fleshwarped and forgotten, this underclass has been knitting together the groundwork for a more sustainable existence in Oenopion, using the knowledge of the city's secrets steeped in the ooze's collective memories.

The Draft of Forever

One of the most storied taverns across Nex is also one of its most recent additions. The Draft of Forever is a hybrid tavern and distillery, its brewing facilities situated under the block-wide gazebo that serves as its main venue. In a city known for its bars, lounges, and dens filled with consumable indulgences of exceptional quality, the Draft of Forever has risen to the top as the most well-known and the most entertaining. It can be found in the inner city's west side, only blocks away from the Apothaqiine, standing with an open face from all sides and surrounded by open park ground. The outer ring of the tavern has ample seating that covers two-thirds of the tavern's floor plan and wraps around the bar, usually tended by six or more people at any one time. The rest of its outer floor space is devoted to a handsome stage offering eccentric acts on a near bi-weekly basis, often drawing notable crowds. The most impressive thing about the Draft of Forever is that in its 20 years, it has amassed enough devoted patrons be open nonstop six out of seven days a week.

Residential Ring

Many of the residents of Oenopion who have just arrived in the city rent out storefronts and flats in the Residential Ring, which houses many properties in a large chain of row homes divvied up by five manufacturing factories constructed thousands of years ago. The Ring is divided into five segments, each named for the factory it's adjacent to—moving clockwise from Residential One, which is the northernmost segment of the Residential Ring. These segments bounce between the constant churn of large factories as they produce Oenopion's monthly exports. A complex network of hydraulics and machinery below keep the Ring from collapsing around the dome and into the sewers that surround the Bath. Many adjust to the constant noise in the Ring and form tight-knit communal bonds, but others are fiercely motivated to escape the periphery's churn to the city within the dome, where the shakes and sounds are dulled to the point of being almost imperceptible.

Important Faces

Master Alchemist **Borume** (LE male human alchemist), or simply "Master Alchemist" as he demands his subordinates address him, is the man in charge of Oenopion. He possesses many overlooked areas and just as many areas of hyper focus, and his tenure has seen Oenopion become its most productive, both for better and worse. A fiercely private man, Borume suffers from an unusually severe case of Stillfever that has almost proved lethal a few times. The Master Alchemist is an ambitious individual who's comfortable being in many places at once to achieve his goals and maintain his station. Yet, his machinations are finally inviting some long-due scrutiny—primarily from his rival in Ecanus and fellow member of the Nine, Principle Fleshforger Dunn Palovar.

Someone is trying to draw Borume off of his cozy perch. Twice now, the alchemical vessels he has sent to handle his affairs by proxy have been attacked while en route to important meetings in the capital city of Quantium. The contingent of fleshforged bodyguards escorting his vessels were found torn apart alongside his machine. Of course, the first suspect is the principle fleshforger

Safety Measures

Even among the less chemically inclined, there are a few unusual substances that Oenopion's citizens carry. Tins of alkaline salt—or, for the poor, a polite semblance of such that has been cut with talc and chalk—are nearly ubiquitous. For those with more money to spare, bottled desiccants promise the ability to suck the moisture out of any amorphous creatures. While it's no guarantee that these items can protect against oozes, and certainly not the mass that is the Bath, it buys a little more peace of mind for many.

THE APOTHAQIINE

THASSILONIAN SECRETS

Numerous Nexian fleshforgers have studied the records of Thassilon, fascinated by the lost fleshwarping secrets used to create sinspawn. None have made any significant progress, but the arrival of New Thassilon has reignited interest. Hopeful Arclords and alchemists now visit the time-displaced country, seeking to find, cajole, or steal Thassilonian techniques to combine with their own traditions. Progress has been troubled; Belimarius is jealous of her secrets, while Sorshen seems to have little interest in dredging up such knowledge.

in Ecanus, but Borume knows Palovar has good reason for the attacks. The Master Alchemist also sees it as an opportunity for a better counter.

Jandeerish Vel (CE male drow fleshwarper) is the elusive leader of the clandestine sect of Haagenti cultists operating within the Still. Jandeerish is a master of disguise, as are his most trusted followers, whom he has trained—and likely sculpted—personally. It's said that only the dead and the devoured know his true face and that the only reason his name is known at all is due to the whispers of his victims consumed by the Bath. He's suspected to be one of the Apothate by prominent members of the Unwarped seeking to bring him to justice, and that's far from the only rumor circling his reputation.

The Bath swirls with memories of a drow who escaped the Darklands after the coup meant to supplant his matron went awry. Vengeful claims of former allies from his exodus to Oenopion state that his true face is a beautiful one—but it's a face he has long abandoned to give him latitude in the city. Whatever Jandeerish's play is, his work and the work of his acolytes have led his patron demon lord to take notice.

Kee Najdarii (NG female gnome activist) is the predominant organizer of the Unwarped. The gnome formerly had ambitions to become one of the Apothate, ambitions which were exploited for a more experimental purpose. Her right hand has been split between middle and ring finger from palm to wrist, reshaped into a hollow hoop not unlike the armature of a butterfly net. Her left hand has been scarred on the palm with the sigil of Haagenti. She believes that her shaper and nemesis is the infamous Jandeerish Vel. On occasion, her right palm bleeds, an omen she knows will be followed by the arrival of some eldritch horror breaching the gate in her left hand. These events leave her blacked out from the pain and shock, unable to prevent whatever creature that emerges from doing some dark and subtle bidding for its esoteric master.

KEE NAJDARII

Rather than let these fears cow her, Kee strives to find her elusive nemesis, an endeavor that has only intensified her community building and personal investigations. Her work has made her an inspiration and beacon for the marginalized community she serves. These efforts within the past few years have seen the Unwarped, once relegated to the edges of the Bath, climbing back to the surface and claiming the space to exist wholly and fully, despite what has been visited upon them by the wastes or the ill wills of others.

Zhane Faltrizan (NE male human researcher) is one of the rising pioneers of Oenopion's Fleshforges Guild—or would be, if not for a few unsurmountable circumstances. A diligent student of both magic and alchemy, Zhane has made enormous strides in the application of fleshwarping techniques to undead creatures. Unfortunately, the creation of undead is staggeringly illegal in Nex, and with the Evisceration of Ecanus, the Halfmeasures of Oenopion are taking their cursory checks for necromancers much more seriously. Zhane finds this Nexian perspective on the undead nothing more than an irrational limitation driven by fear. He knows well enough what will happen to him if he's discovered, and he has been left looking over his shoulder for Measures and his own comrades in fleshforging.

Getting fresh materials to continue his research is proving problematic. Creating undead within the city is too risky and too easily traced, but the Mana Wastes presents too many risks for spellcasting. His current solution involves hiring Strickenguard or Wastehunters to capture roving undead threats, but every job leaves a loose end, a thread that a diligent investigator could pull if they began to question why Zhane needed such dangerous

creatures retrieved. He could give up on his research and bury it as deep as it can go, but it would be tantamount to giving up on any of his hopes and ambitions. With his well-meaning colleagues beginning to pry about his research, Zhane has begun to sweat, wondering what desperate actions he might need to avoid execution for treason or whether his past actions have already caught the attention of someone in power and sealed his fate.

Sileen (N agender ghoran chef) is a ghoran obsessed with maintaining their relationships past the threshold of their imminent rebirth. It's unclear whether they've already reseeded since they resolved themselves to this goal. If they have, they've only succeeded in holding onto their mission across this instance of themselves, not the past relationships that led them to cherish their interpersonal connections so voraciously. They claim to be 60 years old, an exceptional age for any ghoran, and they feel a strong connection to the Bath, which they claim has given them protracted life to solve their existential puzzle.

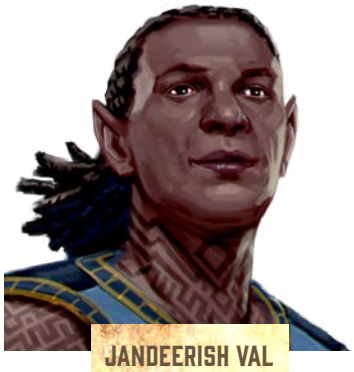
To support their research, Sileen works as a chef at three of the best restaurants in Oenopion. The chances that someone has tasted their work in the city is high if one appreciates food and is traveling through Nex. Their food is so well regarded that it's considered the highlight of the trip by many Bandesharite officials and foreign ambassadors visiting Nex on official business. Sileen has been preparing two very particular feasts for their closest friends and colleagues as the means of facilitating their experiential transference. The first is an offering of most of their body—save their head—prepared with a particular recipe to feed their five dearest friends. The second is a much more personalized recipe that involves cooking their head and feeding it to the sproutling of their new self in the hope of preserving specific memories.

Alexevni Jeggare (NE male human noble) is more notable for his real-estate presence than for his physical one. A member of the Jeggare family of Cheliax, Alexevni has been looking to raise his own kind of hell in Oenopion, and he's a rare outsider rich enough to buy out the city. The rakish noble owns approximately a fourth of the city's Residential Ring and has offered to use his complexes as testing grounds for Oenopion's new experimental soldiers. More than a few of his tenants have been injured in the process, but as long as the rent comes in, Alexevni pays it no mind while he spends his leisure in a floating manor inside Quantium. The shakedowns he regularly orders upon his tenants by Strickenguard hires pay for his lodgings in Nex's capital, and it's reaching a long-overdue tipping point for his renters.

Pedale (CN female gnome thief) is an apt gnome burglar and fence who wanders the inner city, hunting for alchemists too preoccupied with their projects to catch her in the act of robbing their homes and laboratories. Her appearance is largely pedestrian—most would never guess that she was caught stealing from an alchemist named Vlooreesh and was consequently treated to a dip in the Bath by the alchemist's bodyguards.

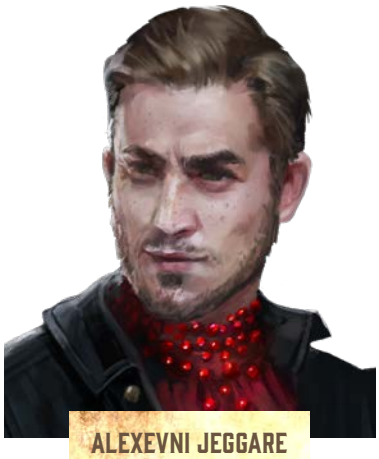
A skilled alchemist herself, Pedale peddles her wares of rare flowers and rarer alchemical components on the street in a small wooden pushcart. She makes enough to keep crafting the concoction that keeps her consciousness from slipping away from her and into the Bath's hive mind. When she lapses on a dose, Pedale sometimes coughs gouts of liquid, a sanguine or greenish-turquoise swill. It has been happening more frequently of late, and that has Pedale scared. She still has to find out how to get back at Vlooreesh, who's now a resident of the Apothaqiine. Each coughing fit brings her one step further from the possibility of doing so with her own hands. Of course, she could let the Bath take her—see what happens to her physical body when her mind joins the burbling crowd it has already dabbled in. It might not be so bad to whisper to someone else from the oozing lake, she thinks, to move them to action.

Then, she steals again.



JANDEERISH VAL

SILEEN



ALEXEVNI JEGGARE

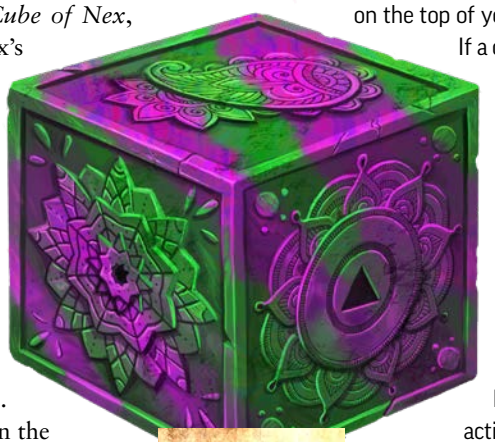
PEDALE

Nex is home to ancient and powerful arcane traditions. These traditions have created a wide variety of magical items and unique spells over the centuries, many of which are valuable tools in any adventurer's arsenal. Some examples are provided below.

THE CUBES OF NEX

The Archmage Nex created the first nine *cubes of force*. Eight were the *Lesser Cubes of Nex*, each tuned to one of the schools of magic and given to Nex's most loyal lieutenants. The Ninth was the *Cube of Nex*, an artifact that taxed even Nex's profound powers to create.

The locations of six cubes are known. The evocation, necromancy, and transmutation cubes remain in Bandeshar in Quantium. The abjuration cube rests with Dominicus Rell, master of the Lion Blades of Taldor. The conjuration cube sits in a devil-infested peak within the Menador Mountains. The enchantment cube rests within the Pathfinder Society's Grand Lodge in Absalom. The divination and illusion cubes are missing; however, the prevailing theory posits the illusion cube rests within the divination cube's divination-suppressing aura. The *Cube of Nex* is also missing.



CUBE OF FORCE

CUBE OF FORCE ITEM 13

RARE EVOCATION MAGICAL

Price 3,000 gp; **Usage** held in 1 hand; **Bulk** –

A *cube of force* is an enchanted cube that measures an inch across. While made from any hard material, the sides of a *cube of force* are decorated so that they can be distinguished by touch.

Activate ❖❖ Interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You hold the cube aloft and depress one of its six faces for several seconds. The cube creates six walls around you, creating a cube 10 feet on each side centered on you (typically centered on the top of your space if you're a Medium creature). If a creature or object overlaps any of these walls, that face of the cube doesn't appear; this also means if you're Huge or larger, the activation has no effect, as your space is larger than the cube would be. The duration and effect of the six walls depends on which face of the cube you press when you Activate the cube, as seen on Table 5: Cube Effects (below). Pressing the sixth cube face with a simple Interact action Dismisses the effect; doing so isn't an activation and thus doesn't count against the cube's frequency. The walls have the AC, Hit Points, and Hardness of a *wall of force*.

LESSER CUBE OF NEX ITEM 20

UNIQUE ARTIFACT EVOCATION MAGICAL

Price –; **Usage** held in 1 hand; **Bulk** –

A *Lesser Cube of Nex* acts as a *cube of force*, but the effect lasts until you press the sixth face to Dismiss it, and the activation can be used once per hour. You must first Dismiss any previous activation before you use it again. Additionally, each *Lesser Cube of Nex* is attuned to a single school of magic. Within 5 feet of the *Lesser Cube*, all magic from that school is suppressed or impossible to cast, with the effects of a 10th-level *antimagic*

TABLE 5: CUBE EFFECTS

Cube Face	Duration	Effect
1	30 minutes	The walls keep out gas and wind, attempting to counteract such effects that cross the threshold with a +20 counteract modifier but allowing all other things through.
2	10 minutes	The walls block nonliving matter from crossing; a nonliving creature must succeed at a DC 30 Will save to cross the threshold, wasting their move action on a failure, and unattended objects can't cross. Non-magical ranged attacks can't cross either and instead attack the wall. A living creature can bring attended objects across the walls without needing to attempt a saving throw.
3	10 minutes	The walls block living matter from crossing; a living creature must succeed at a DC 30 Will save to cross the threshold, wasting their move action on a failure.
4	5 minutes	The walls keep out magical effects that cross the threshold, attempting to counteract magical effects with a +20 counteract modifier, though they don't prevent a creature with magical items or effects from entering.
5	1 minute	The walls block everything, with the effects of *wall of force*.
6	–	The cube is Dismissed (this takes only an Interact action and isn't an activation).

field spell. While there are eight *Lesser Cubes of Nex*, each of the artifacts is unique, as there's only one *Lesser Cube of Nex* for each school of magic.

CUBE OF NEX — ARTIFACT 25

UNIQUE ARTIFACT EVOCATION MAGICAL

Price –; **Usage** held in 1 hand; **Bulk** –

The *Cube of Nex* acts as a *Lesser Cube of Nex* except it suppresses all magic within 5 feet of it with the effects of a 10th-level *antimagic field* spell, instead of just one school. However, spells you cast and magic items you wield ignore the *antimagic field* from the *Cube of Nex*.

Activate ❖❖ Interact; **Frequency** once per minute; **Effect** A *cube of force* or *Lesser Cube of Nex* within 60 feet of you becomes inert. It can't be Activated, any current activation ends, and any constant abilities it has cease to function.

ABRAXAN TATTOOS

Nex is home to Scrivenbough, a fortified library and stronghold of Abraxas' cult. There, his followers store the arcane secrets given by their lord in living indigo tattoos stitched across their skin. While they're uncommon, followers of Abraxas from Nex have access to these Abraxan tattoos. Those who don't follow Abraxas almost never inscribe an Abraxan tattoo unless they're unaware of what it is, as etching their body with the symbols granted by the demon lord of secrets seems ill-advised; even if doing so doesn't grant Abraxas your soul in an obvious way, who knows what secrets Abraxas has hidden without the tattoos?

A magical tattoo has the tattoo trait. It's permanently a part of the subject's body and reduces the number of items that creature can invest per day by 1. Each tattoo has the invested trait to indicate this limitation—a magical tattoo is like an invested item that the tattooed creature has no choice but to invest. If the tattoo loses its magic or is destroyed, it no longer reduces your investiture.

Just like a physical magic item, a magical tattoo can be counteracted by spells like *dispel magic* or *disjunction*. If destroyed, the tattoo fades from the skin.

If a creature gets a new magical tattoo when their limit on invested items has already been reduced to zero, the new tattoo's magic fails to take hold, and it becomes a non-magical tattoo instead. However, a tattooist can alter an existing tattoo when they Craft a tattoo, modifying the old one into a different magical tattoo and removing the old effect. Magical tattoos can usually be upgraded into their greater versions by having a tattooist add to or modify the existing tattoo.

VENOMED TONGUE TATTOO

OPEN MIND — ITEM 10

UNCOMMON INVESTED MAGICAL TATTOO

Price 900 gp; **Usage** worn; **Bulk** –

Abraxas teaches knowledge is the only power that matters. This tattoo of a stylized eye provides a +1 item bonus to Lore checks.

Activate ❖ envision; **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** Abraxas opens your inner eye; you gain the effects of *hypercognition*.

SILENT HEART — ITEM 5

UNCOMMON INVESTED MAGICAL TATTOO

Price 130 gp; **Usage** worn; **Bulk** –

Abraxas teaches that the true heart is impenetrable, dedicated only to knowledge. This tattoo of a venom-soaked heart provides a +1 item bonus to Occultism checks.

Activate ↷ envision; **Frequency** once per hour; **Trigger** You're about to attempt a saving throw against an emotion effect or an effect that would make you controlled; **Effect** Abraxas envelops your heart in the shadow of his secret, granting you a +2 status bonus on your saving throw against the triggering effect.

THOUGHTWHIP CLAW — ITEM 11

RARE INVESTED MAGICAL TATTOO

Price 1,350 gp; **Usage** worn; **Bulk** –

Abraxas teaches that minds can be robbed as surely as pockets. This tattoo of a clenched fist provides a +2 item bonus to Thievery checks.

Activate ❖❖ command, envision; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** Abraxas reaches through your hands and creates threads to yank thoughts from the mind of another. The *thoughtwhip claw* casts *mind probe* on a creature within range, with a DC of 28.

VENGEFUL ARM — ITEM 4

UNCOMMON INVESTED MAGICAL TATTOO

Price 100 gp; **Usage** worn; **Bulk** –

Abraxas teaches that an eye for an eye is the basis of law. This tattoo of a coiled viper provides a +1 item bonus to Society checks.

Activate ❖ envision; **Effect** Abraxas transforms the tattoo into a weapon of your vengeance. The *vengeful arm* crawls into your hand and becomes a *retribution axe*. You can use this activation again while holding the axe to revert the *vengeful arm* to a tattoo. Like other *retribution axes*, you can etch fundamental runes into the *vengeful arm*'s *retribution axe* to increase its potency or to add *striking*.

VENOMED TONGUE — ITEM 7

UNCOMMON INVESTED MAGICAL TATTOO

Price 333 gp; **Usage** worn; **Bulk** –

Secrets must be unraveled, no matter how painful. This tattoo of braided tongues provides a +1 item bonus to Deception checks.

Activate ❖ envision; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** Abraxas fills your tongue with venom, causing your deceptions to poison your foes. You use Deception to Create a Diversion, Feint, or Lie. Choose one target against whom your Deception check succeeded; that target takes 2d6 persistent poison damage.

OENOPION OOZES

The city of Oenopion is a center for ooze-based alchemy. It exports a variety of concoctions based around short-lived oozes that turn themselves to a purpose before quickly and cleanly dissolving into water and ammonia. A few of these items are listed below. Characters from Oenopion or elsewhere in Nex have access to these uncommon alchemical items.

GOO GRENADE ITEM 1+

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL BOMB CONSUMABLE SPLASH

Usage held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

Activate ❖ Strike

A goo grenade is a flask filled with a fast-growing, short-lived alchemical ooze. When you hit a creature with a goo grenade, that creature takes persistent acid damage and a circumstance penalty to its Speeds from the clinging goo.

The target can end any penalties, conditions, and persistent damage caused by the bomb by Escaping or spending a total of 3 Interact actions to pry themselves free of the ooze. These Interact actions don't have to be consecutive, and other creatures can provide the actions as well.

GOO GRENADE

Type lesser; **Level** 1; **Price** 3 gp

The target takes 1d4 acid damage, 1 persistent acid damage, and 1 acid splash damage. They take a –5-foot circumstance penalty to their Speeds. The Escape DC is 15.

Type moderate; **Level** 3; **Price** 10 gp

You gain a +1 item bonus to attack rolls. The target takes 2d4 acid damage, 2 persistent acid damage, and 2 acid splash damage. They take a –5-foot circumstance penalty to their Speeds. The Escape DC is 17.

Type greater; **Level** 11; **Price** 250 gp

You gain a +2 item bonus to attack rolls. The target takes 3d4 acid damage, 3 persistent acid damage, and 3 acid splash damage. They take a –10-foot circumstance penalty to their Speeds. The Escape DC is 26.

Type major; **Level** 17; **Price** 2,500 gp

You gain a +3 item bonus to attack rolls. The target takes 4d4 acid damage, 4 persistent acid damage, and 4 acid splash damage. They take a –10-foot circumstance penalty to their Speeds. The Escape DC is 35.

OOZEPICK ITEM 4+

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE

Price 20 gp; **Usage** held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

Activate ❖ Interact

You can pour this silver ooze into a lock or similar mechanism to create a set of malleable lockpicks and tools that conform to internal mechanisms. The ooze is treated as a set of thieves' tools that last for 1 hour and provide a +2 item bonus to Thievery checks to Pick Lock or Disable Device against the mechanism into which they were first poured.

Type oozepick; **Level** 4; **Price** 20 gp

Type greater; **Level** 10; **Price** 200 gp

The item bonus is +3, and the tools last for 8 hours.

OXYGEN OOZE ITEM 4

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE

Price 15 gp; **Usage** held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

Activate ❖ Interact

You can chew on this translucent green ooze to cause it to expand into a bubble of slime that envelops your mouth and nose. For the next hour, the ooze provides breathable oxygen, allowing you to breathe in environments where you couldn't normally breathe. It then harmlessly dries up and falls away.

INCARNATES OF NEX

Nex's wizards, oracles, and other spellcasters often bolster their skills with the nation's ancient incarnates. These incarnates range from reliable servitors forged from positive energy to animate sections of the toxic Miasmere to a variety of its most successful Fleshforged monstrosities. Characters from Nex have access to the uncommon spells, but even in Nex, knowledge of how to summon the ancient Fleshforged is secret.

SUMMON ANCIENT FLESHFORGED SPELL 9

RARE CONJURATION INCARNATE

Traditions arcane, occult

Cast ❖❖❖ material, somatic, verbal

Range 250 feet

Duration until the end of your next turn

You summon an ancient Fleshforged, one of Nex's personal weaponized monstrosities unleashed in the first wars against Geb. It squeezes itself into its war form from time long forgotten, unleashing its wrath upon your foes. The Fleshforged occupies the space noted in the spell description. When you Cast this Spell, choose one of the Fleshforged below to summon.

- **Bone Breaker** *Size* Gargantuan, *Speed* 40 feet, climb 100 feet; **Arrive** *Skull Breaking Hum* (evocation, sonic) The Bone Breaker appears in a shower of bone fragments. Its form is that of an immense titan of flesh and metal with long, muscular, twisted arms. The Bone Breaker releases a hum at a harmonic frequency that weakens bones in creatures' bodies. Each foe within an 80-foot emanation must attempt a Fortitude save. On a critical success, they're

unaffected; on a success, they're enfeebled 2 for 1 round; on a failure they're enfeebled 3 for 1 minute; and on a critical failure, they're enfeebled 4 for 10 minutes. A skeleton or other undead foe made almost entirely of bones treats their result as one degree of success worse than they rolled. **Depart** *Bruising Departure* The Bone Breaker pounds its long arms into the ground, creating a long shockwave. Each foe within a 100-foot-long, 10-foot-wide line takes 8d12 bludgeoning damage, with a basic Fortitude save.

- **Thorn Caller** *Size* Gargantuan, *Speed* 100 feet; **Arrive** (evocation, light) *Thorn's Guidance* The Thorn Caller appears in a burst of light. The Thorn Caller's body is an ornate armored sphere with black panther masks surrounding a glowing light. The ball floats in the air due to six glowing, thornlike wings. Two clusters of bird heads emerge from both sides of the body with long necks that twirl together like tentacles. The Thorn Caller's burst of light illuminates all foes within 200 feet. The foes become dazzled and flat-footed, and if they were invisible, they become concealed instead. These effects last until the Thorn Caller departs. **Depart** *Thorn-Burst* The Thorn Caller launches its thorned wings at various targets. Attempt spell attack rolls against up to 6 different targets within 300 feet. On a hit, the target takes 10d8 piercing damage, double on a critical hit, half on a failure, and none on a critical failure.
- **The Thousand** *Size* Medium (see below), *Speed* 30 feet; **Arrive** (emotion, enchantment, fear, mental) *Disconcerting Arrival* Select five spaces in range and summon a Medium-sized polyp of The Thousand in each of these spaces. The Thousand is an entity whose full scope is 1,000 polyps of oozing flesh, each physically separate but mentally part of a single creature. Not all 1,000 polyps have survived, and the spell summons five of them. Each creature within 10 feet of any of the polyps must attempt a Will Save. On a critical success, they're unaffected; on a success, they're frightened 1; on a failure, they're frightened 3; and on a critical failure, they're frightened 4 and fleeing for 1 round; **Depart** (illusion, mental) *Violent Omen* Each frightened foe within a 60-foot emanation of any of the five polyps takes 10d8 mental damage, with a basic Will save.
- **Scion of Desiccation** *Size* Gargantuan, *Speed* 100 feet, fly 100 feet; **Arrive** (necromancy, negative) *Ashes to Ashes* The Scion of Desiccation appears in a swirl of screaming wind, a gargantuan form of twisted flesh that's constantly flensed by gritty ash and dust, and just as constantly regenerating itself. Each foe within a 40-foot emanation takes 10d10 negative energy damage, with a basic Fortitude save; **Depart** (necromancy, negative) *Dust to Dust* Each foe within a 60-foot emanation must attempt a Fortitude save; they're drained 2 on a failure or drained 4 on a critical failure.

SUMMON HEALING SERVITOR — SPELL 5

UNCOMMON | HEALING | INCARNATE | NECROMANCY | POSITIVE

Traditions divine, primal
Cast ◆◆◆ material, somatic, verbal
Range 100 feet
Duration until the end of your next turn

You call forth a servitor forged from raw positive energy to heal and bolster your allies. The servitor occupies the space of a Huge creature and has a speed of 60 feet.

Arrive (healing, necromancy, positive) *Servitor's Protection* The servitor appears in a flash of light, moving from ally to ally and granting them a temporary reprieve. All allies within 20 feet of the Servitor gain 20 temporary Hit Points until the servitor departs.

Depart (healing, necromancy, positive) *Servitor's Blessing* The servitor disappears in a 30-foot emanation of positive energy. All willing living creatures within heal 3d8 Hit Points. All undead within take that much damage, with a basic Fortitude save.

Heightened (+2) The Arrive effect's temporary Hit Points increase by 8, and the Depart effect's healing and damage to undead increase by 1d8.

THORN-CALLER

Religion

For many, faith in the dangerous nations of the Impossible Lands is a matter of survival. Gods can help to endure the harsh conditions of life or to offer purpose in the eternal embrace of undeath. Atheism, aspirations toward godhood, or harsh religious debates are luxuries afforded to the wealthy and powerful; few below such auspicious company can afford to argue with anything that demonstrably works. Threats of a spiritual nature are far more real in the Impossible Lands as well, since asuras and rakshasas turn abstract matters of moral debate into very tangible dangers. Spiritualism lies thick across the entire realm, no matter how many might try to deny it.

In the city of Alkenstar, faith has become very pragmatic. One mechanic's family places fresh oil and cog pieces on their small altar, praying for their house gremlin to shield them from factory explosions and machinery misfires. In another home, a dwarf prays in Erastil's steel temple that the newest rifle design will work against the fleshwarped ogres that threaten to attack the city. The fleshwarped themselves gather with the mutants of the Wastes to pray to Irori that the next implant will ease their suffering or bring them closer to perfection. Hidden within the desolations of the Mana Wastes lies the Oasis of Renewal, a secret settlement established as a permanent base for the many-armed calikangs and their Sixfold Repentance movement. Each day, they work to heal the magical damage wrought ages ago by warring wizards. Each night, they hold a simple celebration, praying for the day when their efforts finally heal the magical damage and the Mana Wastes once again bear fruit.

Faith in the nation of Geb is complicated. Priests of Urgathoa vie with blasphemous necromancers to protect the nation and gear up for their upcoming war. Both make offerings to the Great Temples of the Blood Lords, which are nothing more than lavish personality cults hoping to curry favor from their ghostly leader—or else manipulate him into sponsoring their plans. Great banquets of living morsels hide the brutal and sometimes subtle power games that shift control from one noble house to another, all blessed by the ghostly Geb himself so long as they bring him closer to revenge against his hated neighbors. Through it all, hiding in freezing hovels or upholstered mansions, the living say prayers to a thousand gods just to make it through another night.

For the nation of Nex, both arcane and divine power are just methods for the Arclords and their academies to achieve their plans. Magic will bypass Heaven's bureaucracies or Hell's labyrinths instantly, giving answers to the secrets of the universe—or how to unravel it. Waiting in line in the River of Souls is for the weak. Final judgments and eternal punishments are for the lazy. Magic, and magic alone, can give people everything they require from life, if they're willing to pay for it.

For the isle of Jalmeray, religions are both plentiful and hidden. Multi-headed gods can look into the future and the past simultaneously, while divine avatars reincarnate themselves over and over into the lives of their followers for all sorts of reasons, whether to help them overcome some great calamity, discover a great secret, or force their feet upon the path to living out their next karmic cycle. How else can souls be guided and judged when the sacred Chalice that held all destinies has been stolen? Every soul drifts in the ether now, sowing the potential for great harm or harvesting the seeds of great redemption. Without fate writing their way, how shall they know what they're to become? Will they stay unsupervised, helplessly staring only one way into the timestream, unaware of how those around them nudge them onto different paths? Karma gathers around a person's path, guiding them or dragging them screaming into their next karmic wheel turn. Helpless and anchorless, they cry out to thousands of gods, and those gods wrestle each other to guide their way. Only when the holy Chalice is once again found will all souls know their fates again, and only then will peace be restored and accounts be settled.

Using the Entries

The entries for deities in this book use the stat block format described below to present vital information required for worship. Additional information useful for playing a champion, cleric, or worshipper of a deity is available in Chapter 8 of the *Pathfinder Core Rulebook*, as well as in *Pathfinder Lost Omens: Gods & Magic*.

Name: The deity's name plus a common title or epithet.

Areas of Concern: The topics the deity cares most about.

Alignment: The deity's alignment. In parentheses, the entry lists other character alignments that this deity accepts from worshippers.

Divine Font: This entry presents whether the deity grants worshippers *heal* or *harm*, or can grant both.

Divine Ability: This section lists the two ability boosts the deity grants as options for characters with the raised in belief background (*Gods & Magic* 9).

Divine Skill: This section lists a skill that's especially associated with this deity.

Domains: The domains that best represent this deity.

Alternate Domains: If the deity offers additional domains (*Gods & Magic* 7), they're listed here.

Cleric Spells: Each deity provides at least three additional spells to the spell list of clerics who worship them.

Edicts: Directives that the deity urges their followers to perform.

Anathema: Acts or behaviors that are absolutely abhorrent to the deity.

Favored Weapon: The deity's favored weapon. See page 9 of *Gods & Magic* for details.

Aakriti

The Evershifting

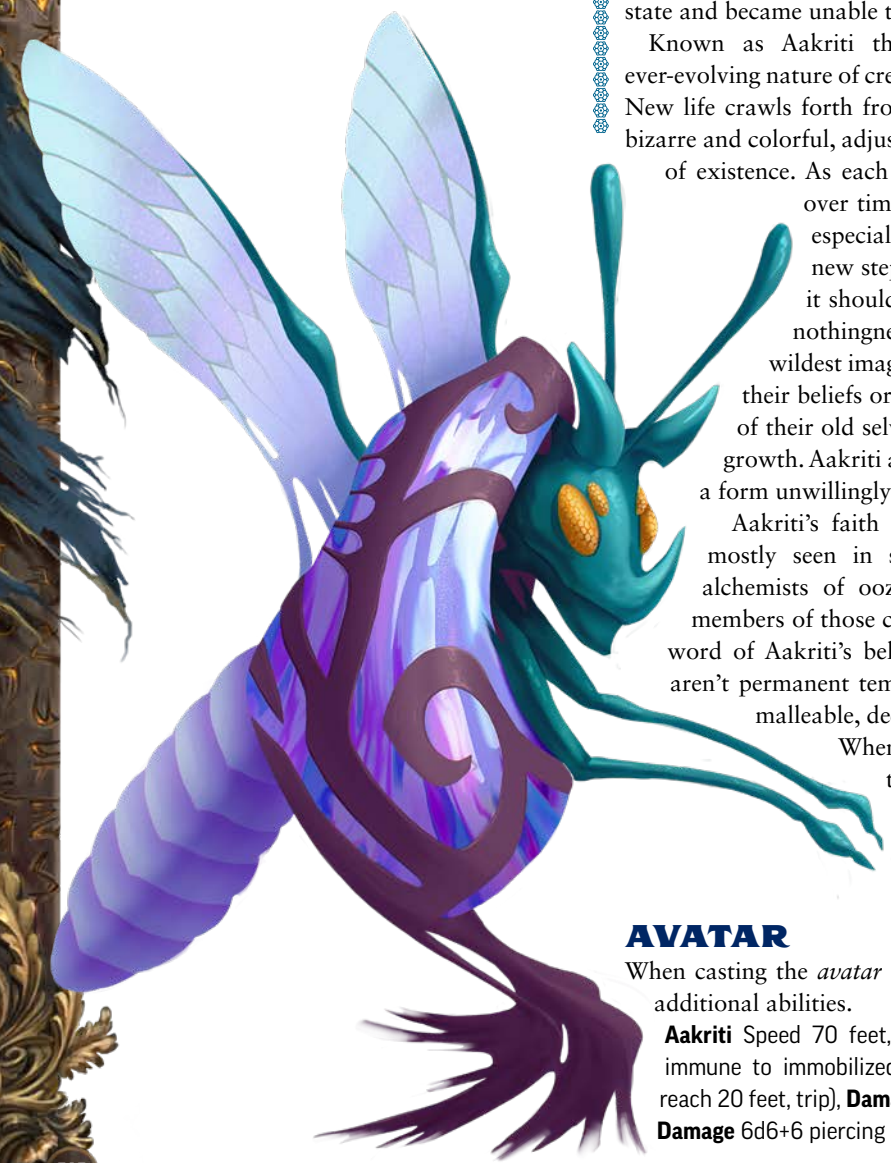
Areas of Concern discovery, life, ooze, potential
Alignment N (LN, CN, NG, CG)
Divine Font *harm* or *heal*
Divine Ability Constitution or Charisma
Divine Skill Acrobatics
Domains List change (*Gods & Magic* 112), creation, fate, time (*Gods & Magic* 118)
Alternate Domains freedom, knowledge
Cleric Spells 1st: *ant haul*, 3rd: *insect form*, 9th: *shapechange*
Edicts create without reservation, help others unlock their true potential, observe the mysteries of life
Anathema fail to study a new creature if safely able, force a creature to live in the wrong body, reject creatures or information due to bigoted or rigid beliefs
Favored Weapon whip

No one knows where and when Aakriti came into existence. Some divine scholars surmise they've always been a part of the primordial soup of creation. The most popular theory, as reflected in various religious iconography, is that Aakriti is the pupae of a primordial deity that took damage in their chrysalis state and became unable to molt into their final form.

Known as Aakriti the Evershifting, this ooze deity represents the ever-evolving nature of creation and life as well the potential of the unknown. New life crawls forth from their primordial depths in an explosion of the bizarre and colorful, adjusting in their own individual ways to the challenges of existence. As each life moves through the various cycles of growth over time, they must be flexible and adapt to the changes, especially at its crux—the state of transition. Sometimes a new step involves a frightening destruction of identity, but it should be embraced instead of feared, as the primordial nothingness holds the potential for new creations beyond the wildest imaginings of one's current self. Those who stay rigid in their beliefs or refuse to change will become trapped in the shells of their old selves and crush themselves in their struggle to avoid growth. Aakriti also has no love for those who entrap creatures into a form unwillingly and will sometimes intercede against them.

Aakriti's faith is relatively sparse within the Inner Sea region, mostly seen in small pockets within Desna's followers or the alchemists of ooze-infested Oenopion. As the more adventurous members of those communities, such as bards, travel to distant lands, word of Aakriti's belief spreads. Most centers of worship for Aakriti aren't permanent temples, but instead small, portable shrines made of malleable, decomposable materials like clay and paper.

When Aakriti makes the rare appearance to a mortal, they appear as an ever-shifting oobleck of varied hues, moving from a crawling larva to pulsating pupa, morphing into a butterfly before transforming into another form.



Avatar

When casting the *avatar* spell, a worshipper of Aakriti gains the following additional abilities.

Aakriti Speed 70 feet, ignore difficult terrain and greater difficult terrain, immune to immobilized; **Melee** ❖ tendril whip (disarm, finesse, nonlethal, reach 20 feet, trip), **Damage** 6d4+6 slashing; **Ranged** thorns ❖ (range 100 feet), **Damage** 6d6+6 piercing

Arazni

The Unyielding

Areas of Concern the abused, dignity, unwilling undeath
Alignment NE (LN, N, NE, CG, CN)
Divine Font *harm*
Divine Ability Constitution or Intelligence
Divine Skill Intimidation
Domains confidence, freedom, pain, protection
Alternate Domains sorrow (*Gods & Magic* 116)
Cleric Spells 1st: *endure* (*Gods & Magic* 107), 2nd: *animus mine* (*Gods & Magic* 106), 5th: *feeblemind*
Edicts act with dignity, despise and never forgive those who have hurt you, do whatever it takes to survive
Anathema create unwilling undead, insult Arazni
Favored Weapon rapier

Within Geb, Arazni is seen less as a deity and more as the secular head of state put in place by the Ghost King. Initially reviled due to her former role as Aroden's herald, many among the undead ruling classes treated her with a contempt that she gladly returned. Over the centuries, her skillful administration brought a stability to the region that won the begrudging respect of those same detractors. Her departure has now created a power vacuum among the Blood Lords of Geb. Those who had prospered under her leadership, or simply missed her efficient governance over Geb's petulant whims, seek to bring her back. The more reverent among them seek even more: to follow in her footsteps and create their own fates.

Finally free from the bonds that have shackled her to Geb over several millennia, Arazni cares not for any of the petty squabbles of those she has left behind. With her current whereabouts unknown, she does whatever it takes to avoid being bound to anyone or anywhere again. Some scholars believe she might be hunting for the things that could be used against her: the *Bloodstones of Arazni*. These special canopic jars contain her preserved internal organs, removed prior to her reanimation as a lich.

Outside of Geb, Arazni has few priests or followers beyond solitary devotees who silently practice their faith. Though she's often an indifferent patron, Arazni is willing to spare a spark of her power to kindred spirits—especially when it comes to breaking the bonds that control unwillingly created undead. Undead who venerate Arazni likewise find it easier to keep hold of their original personalities, rather than losing themselves to the demanding hungers of their new existence.

Arazni's contempt for many of the gods and their worshippers is well known, but she has a complicated relationship with her own faithful. While she resents followers for worshipping what she has become, she finds a small amount of satisfaction through the vicarious fulfillment of having a following. She values and guards her privacy staunchly, however; any adherent who tries to divine her location or secrets might wake up shortly without their powers.

Avatar

When casting the *avatar* spell, a worshipper of Arazni gains the following additional abilities.

Arazni Speed 70 feet, *air walk*, immune to immobilized; **Melee** ❖ rapier (deadly 3d8, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 6d8+6 piercing; **Ranged** ❖ call blood (range 120 feet), **Damage** 6d6 persistent bleed damage

Arundhat

The Sacred Perfume

Areas of Concern blossoms, diplomacy, scent
Alignment NG (LG, NG, CG, N)
Divine Font *heal*
Divine Ability Intelligence or Wisdom
Divine Skill Nature
Domains healing, magic, nature, protection
Alternate Domains passion
Cleric Spells 1st: *shillelagh*, 4th: *speak with plants,* 8th: *burning blossoms* (*Pathfinder Secrets of Magic* 93)
Edicts offer appropriate flowers to other divinities, practice herbalism, tend to sacred flowers
Anathema dispose of waste near flowers, dispose of withered flowers improperly, harvest flowers without offering the proper prayers
Favored Weapon staff

Arundhat is the god of blossoms and scent, most commonly worshipped in Vudra. While followers who worship deities of war or strength often consider Arundhat's portfolio a little lackluster, to those with the right knowledge, the humble flower can accomplish far more than a simple show of force. Arundhat's mastery of botanicals and scented oils can bring someone back from near death, sway a person to passion, or calm an agitated mob.

Many of Jalmeray's healers, apothecaries, and botanists, as well as entertainers and courtesans in the wealthier parts of settlements, number among Arundhat's practitioners. Their temples are often found near natural groves on a city's outskirts or within spacious courtyards in prosperous homes, especially near the city's entertainment district. Arundhat's form, often depicted as a beautiful woman emerging from a lush blossom, is more genderfluid than any mortal depiction can convey. Alternate carvings and paintings portray them as a handsome male along with more androgynous works.

The influence of Arundhat even extends to other religions, as priests of the Sacred Perfume bequeath elaborate flower offerings to many other gods. Her influence can also be found among the unsavory and profane. Nature is beautiful but can also be deadly. The rose smells fragrant and is pleasant to the eye, but it isn't without its thorns. Practitioners of less savory professions appreciate that some of the deadliest poisons come from the most beautiful flowers. The con artist understands how various plants have harmless outer appearances, knowing many hidden qualities lurk beyond aesthetics.

Once a year, Jalmeray pays homage to Arundhat in a day-long event known as the Festival of Ten Thousand Flowers. During the festival, a steady rain of fragrant blossoms accompanies a procession of priests and performers dressed in all the hues of wildflowers, dancing and giving thanks to the Sacred Perfume. It's said that on this day, every fruit tree in the city is laden with ripe fruit, even ones usually out of season.

Avatar

When casting the *avatar* spell, a worshipper of Arundhat gains the following additional abilities.

Arundhat Speed 70 feet, *air walk*, immune to immobilized; **Melee** ❖ thorned blossom (agile, finesse, nonlethal, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 6d6+6 piercing damage; **Ranged** ❖ ten thousand petals (nonlethal, range 120 feet), **Damage** 6d6+3 mental damage

Chamidu

The Roar of the Storm

Areas of Concern children, fertility, wild beasts
Alignment N (NG, N, NE)
Divine Font *harm* or *heal*
Divine Ability Strength or Constitution
Divine Skill Medicine
Domains healing, lightning (*Gods & Magic* 114), nature, nightmares
Alternate Domains freedom
Cleric Spells 1st: *summon animal*, 3rd: *lightning bolt*, 5th: *moon frenzy*
Edicts cause destruction when angered, destroy aberrant creatures and fiends, live free of social or materialistic chains
Anathema harm a child, pollute the wilds, refuse to treat an illness
Favored Weapon spear

Chamidu is an original guardian of the wild, a deity sworn to protect the life of nature. In addition to the beasts of the wild, whom Chamidu regards as her own children, she was also placed in charge of the Kalpavendi, a deific tree fabled to be capable of healing any illness, curse, or calamity cast upon mortal or god alike. It's at this site that new beasts of the land are born and where legends say Chamidu takes those most worthy of her blessing to grant perfect health for all their life. Many go in search of the Kalpavendi, though few ever return. Nonetheless, seekers of the holy tree are undeterred and continue their pilgrimage.

The four faces of Chamidu represent the many facets of her existence. Though the face presented to others changes with the situation, Chamidu tries to lead with her side of healing, filled with the smile and care of a parent. Her face of nature is depicted as a wreath of flowers adorning her head, while the face of the storm is a darkened expression, waiting to unleash destruction upon the fiends of the earth. Last is the face of nightmares, touched with a fearsome scowl, ready to haunt the dreams of any who work against her. In her many hands she not only wields spears, but might also hold staves, hatchets, whips, maces, bows, or shields, depending on the desired effect.

Followers of Chamidu offer sanctuary for anyone who needs it, including healing, food, and provisions. Temples also hold feed for a variety of animals that find their way to the doorsteps, often acting as sites of temporary care for injured animals brought to them. Upon being healed, such creatures are returned to the care of owners, released under supervision back into a natural habitat, or become an integral part of the temple itself. Devotees actively work against causes trying to destroy natural habitats that serve as homes for creatures and quickly bring judgment upon individuals who harm any under the care of the church. Abandoned children and orphans are always welcome to these shrines, where they might find either beasts or mortals willing to care for them under direction of the goddess.

AVATAR

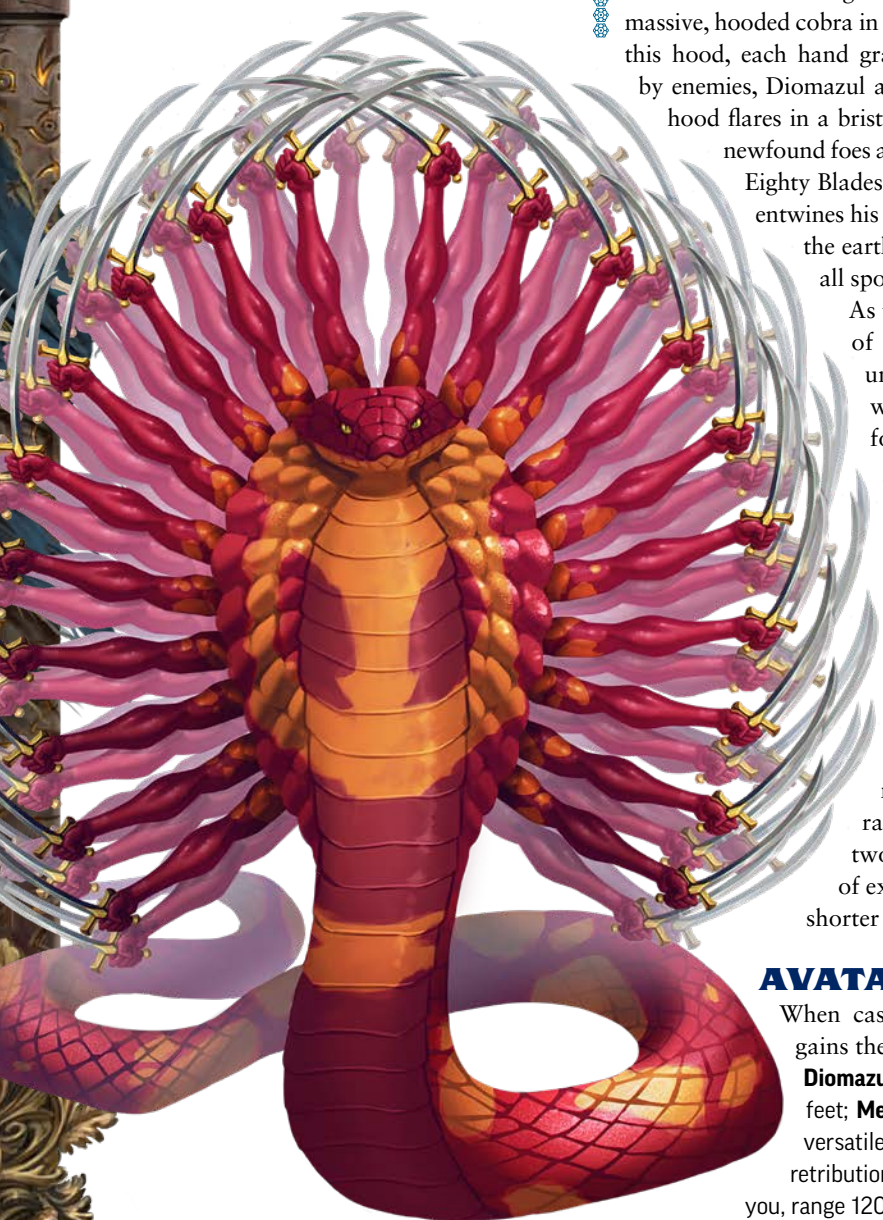
When casting the *avatar* spell, a worshipper of Chamidu gains the following additional abilities.

Chamidu Speed 50 feet, fly Speed 70 feet; **Melee** ❖ spear (reach 15 feet), **Damage** 6d10+6 piercing; **Ranged** ❖ call beast (range 120 feet), **Damage** 6d6+3 slashing; **Ranged** ❖ lightning strike (electricity, range 120 feet), **Damage** 6d6+3 electricity

Diomazul

The Serpent of Eighty Blades

Areas of Concern austerity, retribution, war
Alignment LE (LN, LE)
Divine Font *harm* or *heal*
Divine Ability Strength or Dexterity
Divine Skill Athletics
Domains destruction, earth, water, zeal
Alternate Domains might
Cleric Spells 1st: *phantom pain*, 2nd: *slough skin* (*Gods & Magic* 110), 4th: *weapon storm*
Edicts erase all traces of defeated foes, meditate, remain celibate and detached from worldly pleasures, utterly destroy your enemies
Anathema give mercy to any who provoke a fight with you, provoke a fight
Favored Weapon scimitar



An obscure Vudran god of war, Diomazul, the Serpent of Eighty Blades, is a patron of ascetic meditation, bitter renewals, and inordinate retribution. Devotees and theologians speak of Diomazul as having the likeness of a massive, hooded cobra in serene slumber—80 arms folded in stillness comprise this hood, each hand grasping a sheathed blade. When roused to violence by enemies, Diomazul awakens, retaining his tranquil countenance, but his hood flares in a bristle of steel as he draws all 80 blades to welcome his newfound foes and offer a gift of their unmaking. Once the Serpent of Eighty Blades has concluded evicting the life from his enemies, he entwines his body around their remains, crushing their bones into the earth and scattering their blood into the waters, burying all spoor of their existence under his immense form.

As these depictions might suggest, Diomazul is a deity of dualistic, seemingly contradictory impulses who unifies the dichotomies of restraint and devastation within his being. Diomazul is a teacher of forbearance and detached contemplation, a paragon of indifference to personal contentment or suffering who meditates upon the universe, sloughing off whatever pain it can visit upon oneself. At the same time, Diomazul also embodies an endless, pitiless resolve to visit frightful destruction upon those who set themselves in opposition to him; once stirred from his reverie by insult or injury, vast and swift reprisal are sure to follow.

In many ways, the Serpent of Eighty Blades is exactly like his name suggests, a coiled being of muscle and killing intent in absolute control of razor-sharp steel. Diomazul's blades split time into two unequal halves for his enemies: the impermanence of existence before meeting him and the decidedly much shorter impermanence of existence after raising his ire.

Avatar

When casting the *avatar* spell, a worshipper of Diomazul gains the following additional abilities.

Diomazul Speed 70 feet, swim Speed 40 feet, burrow Speed 40 feet; **Melee** ❖ eighty-blade war dance (forceful, reach 15 feet, versatile P), **Damage** 6d8+6 slashing; **Ranged** ❖ principle of retribution (damages only creatures who have previously attacked you, range 120 feet), **Damage** 6d6+3

Likha

The Teller

Areas of Concern history, sound, truth
Alignment N (LN, NG, N, CN)
Divine Font *heal*
Divine Ability Intelligence or Charisma
Divine Skill Performance
Domains creation, knowledge, passion, sorrow (*Gods & Magic* 116)
Alternate Domains repose (*Gods & Magic* 116), truth
Cleric Spells 1st: *illusory disguise*, 3rd: *enthrall*, 5th: *illusory scene*
Edicts adapt ancient works into modern language, sponsor or perform in plays or recitals, tell history to others
Anathema act out a death on stage, begin a performance or tale without first inviting the gods to watch
Favored Weapon hatchet

The Teller has existed ever since the first sound of existence emanated from the focal point of the cosmos, blessing all of creation with the capacity for perception. She uttered the concept of language, she sang in echo with all that would be, and in hubris that would color all her sorrows, she thought to make that which emanated truth. In doing so, she birthed deception.

The Teller watched the acts of the progenitor, Vudravati, and of her twin lovers Obari and Embaral. The Teller saw their violence, their jealousy, their fear for love in a time when love was beyond mere concept and circumstance. She also saw their joy, for each loved Vudravati with all that they could, and no lie inhabited their heart that could cloud this truth. Truth itself was their greatest treasure and most unkind burden. So the Teller watched the oceans be born and the Vudrani emerge into this world, crafted by all the love the twins could hold for the Sleeping Mother; still, the Teller feared what harm her folly could cast upon the world.

The Teller found her redemption and peace in this cosmic misstep within the lands that would become Vudra. She took the form of a most careful listener: an elephant whose skin scintillated with the humble glow of moonlight. She perceived the fledgling mortal folk and how they wielded truth and lies through the lens of memory's fallible shroud, which obscures both for the benefit of either and all. She learned of stories and cherished them deeply. She was named Likha by those who she listened to and those who listened to her, and her joy was rapturous.

Children who tell white lies claim that Likha saw truth in their words. Playwrights beseech her as a muse for inspiration. Written works are etched with her mark, and her elephantine form is carved into the doorways of playhouses and sculpted into statues to sit in the alcoves of grand libraries.

Avatar

When casting the *avatar* spell, a worshipper of Likha gains the following additional abilities.

Likha Speed 70 feet, immune to immobilized; **Melee** ❖ trunk (disarm, reach 20 feet), **Damage** 6d6+6 bludgeoning plus grasping trunk; **Grasping Trunk** A Large or smaller creature hit by the avatar's trunk is grabbed. If the avatar moves, it can bring the grabbed creature along with it.

Mahathallah

The Dowager of Illusions

Areas of Concern death, fate, vanity
Alignment LE (LN, LE, NE)
Divine Font *harm*
Divine Ability Wisdom or Charisma
Divine Skill Deception
Domains fate, trickery, truth, undeath
Cleric Spells 1st: *illusory disguise,* 2nd: *misdirection,* 5th: *illusory scene*
Edicts become an arbiter of reality, capitalize on the ignorance of others, reject conventional wisdom as falsehood
Anathema become too invested in mortal affairs, refuse to hear a truth out of preference for ignorance
Favored Weapon bola

Mahathallah was one of Pharasma's servants, the Maiden of Mists, a prophetess who knew the endings of all things—except her own. Tormented by this one gap in her knowledge, Mahathallah first appealed to the Lady of Graves, only to be kindly declined, for to know one's own death is a grievous weight to bear. Driven by her obsession, Mahathallah abandoned her duties and traveled the River of Souls, and thence Pharasma revealed the truth of her death to her. The knowledge broke the Maiden, and she fled. After many ages, she resurfaced in the court of Asmodeus, maiden no more but now the Dowager of Illusions.

Worship of the Dowager is widespread in the Impossible Lands, and it isn't restricted to those of evil bent. The Dowager is seen as a goddess of prophecy and truth, albeit painful truth. She's the one who strips away the comforting veils of reality, the one who shatters all the little white lies that people tell themselves to keep themselves going from day to day. She is certainly not a comfortable goddess, nor a kind one, but she's respected for the cold honesty she represents.

Even so, while worship of Mahathallah is accepted across the Impossible Lands, it isn't entirely popular. She is most often worshiped in Nex, where the various Arclords and wizards pride themselves on a clear-eyed understanding of the world and accept the costs of knowledge. In this, they're sometimes mistaken, but even so, the Dowager's faith is supported enough by the government that small temples dot the land, and mosaics of gold and lapis adorn the Chapel of Mists in Quantium. The prophet-priestesses of the Chapel offer their visions to anyone who wishes, free of charge, though such truths rarely bring people happiness.

Avatar

When casting the *avatar* spell, a worshipper of Mahathallah gains the following additional abilities.

Mahathallah Speed 30 feet, fly Speed 70 feet, automatically succeeds at all flat checks to attack a hidden or concealed creature; **Ranged** ❖ hideous vision (range 120 feet, visual), **Damage** 6d6+3 mental

Ragdya

The Sage on the Mountain

Areas of Concern humor, lessons, monkeys
Alignment N (LN, NG, N, CN)
Divine Font *heal*
Divine Ability Dexterity or Wisdom
Divine Skill Acrobatics
Domains air, confidence, might, perfection
Alternate Domains family
Cleric Spells 1st: *shockwave* (*Gods & Magic* 110), 3rd: *mad monkeys*[APG], 4th: *gaseous form*
Edicts create humor in life, seek enlightenment through worldly experience, use harmless pranks to teach others
Anathema discriminate based on social status, make a joke out someone's suffering, take control of another's life and agency
Favored Weapon mace

According to the teachings of Ragdya, at the center of the universe lies the great mountain of Bahmenu. It was upon these slopes that Ragdya was born and where he now again resides as the Sage on the Mountain. Ragdya spent much time in his younger days getting involved in the matters of the other Vudrani gods, giving rise to a repeating number of escapades featuring other deities such as Likha and Chamidu. In spite of his antics, Ragdya is much beloved, as he brings with him an infectious aura of mirth and excitement for all things in life.

Yet, for all the joy, there's also sorrow, for Ragdya sits alone watching over his progeny, the vanaras, and his faithful. He offers rebirth so his followers might come to better know themselves with continued experience, but in so doing, he can't have the happiness of holding his children close. Still, he wishes them to know the joy of love, to experience how the power of laughter can bond them with others regardless of station, and to hold their sorrows at bay for just a moment more. He wants them to know that there's no shame in learning a lesson borne from failure, but rather great pride in true humility and in being able to work past the ego to instead find humor in all the silly stages of life.

A common saying is that "a Ragdyan tries anything at least once, and gladly tells you the story of how it went wrong at least twice." For his many rural followers, being a Ragdyan means being open to expanding their horizons when the chance arrives, even if they're unable to go out and adventure themselves. The church of the mountain sage can be found in a plethora of places, from grandstanding, intricate temples to small shrines in remote villages, to the corners of restaurants in big cities and to prominently placed altars in taverns, where people from all over can come together and exchange tales of their lives. No matter the location, there will always be a depiction of Bahmenu with the Sage sitting atop it, hoping for the faithful to bless the shrines with the sound of laughter. Groups of traveling Ragdyan devotees go from inn to inn and put on shows filled with humorous anecdotes and the most ridiculous experiences the cast has ever had, working with the audience to bring forth riches of both coin and joy.

Avatar

When casting the *avatar* spell, a worshipper of Ragdya gains the following additional abilities:

Ragdya Speed 70 feet, climb Speed 50 feet, immune to immobilized; **Melee** gada ❖ (reach 15 feet), **Damage** 6d10+6 bludgeoning; **Ranged** ❖ mountain gust (air, range 120 feet), **Damage** 6d4+3 bludgeoning plus pushed 5 feet in any direction

Ravithra

The Chalice-Bearer

Areas of Concern judgment, karma, law, vengeance
Alignment LN (LG, LN, LE, N)
Divine Font *harm*
Divine Ability Intelligence or Wisdom
Divine Skill Occultism
Domains fate, naga (*Pathfinder Adventure Path #161* 75), sorrow (*Gods & Magic* 116), truth
Alternate Domains ambition, soul (*Gods & Magic* 117)
Cleric Spells 1st: *charm*, 2nd: *animal form* (snake only), 4th: *clairvoyance*
Edicts enforce karma's pitiless judgment, shame fools, kill traitors, pursue the Chalice of Amrit
Anathema make decisions erratically or randomly, provide aid to Vasaghati or her followers, engage in treachery
Favored Weapon jaws or light mace

Ravithra, the Mother of Nagas, is a being defined by the betrayals she was born to suffer. A former danava titan entrusted with overseeing the karmic balance of mortal life, she once possessed the sacred Chalice of Amrit, which granted her the auspices to view all potentialities so as to better judge the nature of mortal souls. She was a being of balance, untainted by malice, incapable of scorn; only by the false friendship of Vasaghati, goddess of corruption and destruction, did Ravithra fall to such petty mortal traits. Vasaghati throttled Ravithra with a noose of shorn titan's hair, toppled the Chalice, and carved off the titan's head with a bitter knife.

Ravithra watches over the world, casting heavy judgment and seeking a return to her proper station. She's vaunted by ascetics in Vudra; her jatisattra clergy venture near and far, castigating sinners and brutalizing those who seek to usurp the whims of fate. In Nagajor, she's held as a progenitor deity, lesser to Nalinivati, but still known and loved.

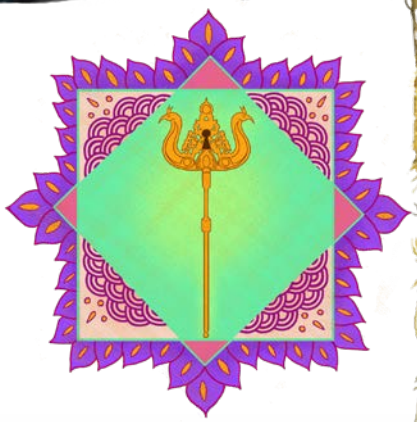
The Chalice-Bearer's presence in Jalmeray permeates both the local naga population and the Vudrani legalists and envoys who inhabit the gilded palace courts throughout the Impossible Lands. Far-flung jatisattra seek to understand the philosophical ramifications of a culture that binds djinn to their will rather than toiling in honest labor themselves. Correspondence from the Seat of the Golden Moon in deepest Vudra speaks of secret alliances being made with the followers of Vineshvakhi, as both seek to scourge the asura and find a treasure of cosmic portent said to be lost within the Impossible Kingdoms. To the repugnance of many, dealings with rakshasa have also been welcomed by Ravithra's followers. Such adherents view the fiends as souls judged properly and therefore worthy of trust, despite their tyrannical bent.

Avatar

When casting the *avatar* spell, a worshipper of Ravithra gains the following additional abilities.

Ravithra Speed 50 feet, ignore difficult terrain and greater difficult terrain, immune to immobilized; **Melee** ❖ jaws (reach 15 feet), **Damage** 6d10+6 piercing; **Melee** ❖ tail swipe (disarm, reach 15 feet, trip), **Damage** 6d8+6 bludgeoning

Vineshvakhi



The Pain of Purity

Areas of Concern guardians, locks, sacrifice, vaults
Alignment LN (LG, LN)
Divine Font *harm*
Divine Ability Constitution or Wisdom
Divine Skill Intimidation
Domains duty (*Gods & Magic* 114), lightning (*Gods & Magic* 115), pain, protection
Alternate Domains change (*Gods & Magic* 112), knowledge, secrecy
Cleric Spells 1st: *mage armor*, 2nd: *enlarge*, 6th: *chain lightning*
Edicts protect holy people, places, and treasures; sacrifice common comforts and mortal joys for the sake of your charge
Anathema abandon your post, fail to protect your charge, willingly suffer corruption over death or grievous harm
Favored Weapon longsword

In the pursuit of righteousness, one will suffer 10,000 little deaths. Those of purity will accept this torment and emerge knowing every danger the world might cast upon them, while those who flee like cowards from their task will know only their mortality. This truth was first claimed by Vineshvakhi, who even as a fledgling divinity couldn't begin to appreciate the gravity of his charge until he suffered pain and humiliation in its defense.

In ancient days, Vineshvakhi was tasked with protecting a blessed vault. Whatever it contained, Vineshvakhi knew only that he was to protect it, that he was never to look upon it, and that the asuras in all their blasphemous horror would seek to steal it. The raid by the asuras was a three-pronged attack. Vineshvakhi bested waves of fiendish horrors, resolute in his actions and unwilling to give an inch of ground or willpower to their corrupting devices. He turned the tide against Gavidya the Numberless's hordes, and struck true against Taraksun the Wakener of Wrath. The skies in Heaven were an erupting cacophony of brilliant lights, crashing blades, and fiendish miasma; in the end, it was Bohga who won the day. The Treasurer rana warped Vineshvakhi's own hand to remove the lock. Unwilling to cede any ground, the god of guardians severed each of his six fingers and spat in the eye of the rana.

Throughout the Impossible Lands, the ramifications of this conflict still carry forth. Calikangs were born from these divine fallen fingers and seek greater communion with the father they feel they failed when they were still part of his flesh. Ever resurgent, so too do asuras remain in dire numbers, pursuing the death of the divine. Wanderers of Vineshvakhi's order, the virajvinesh serve as sacred bodyguards, fiend hunters, and sacred slayers second only to the clerics of Abadar in their devotion to protection as a blessed concept.

AVATAR

When casting the *avatar* spell, a worshipper of Vineshvakhi gains the following additional abilities.

Vineshvakhi Speed 70 feet, *air walk*; shield (Hardness 15, can't be damaged); **Melee** ❖ longsword (reach 15 feet, versatile P), **Damage** 6d8+6 slashing

OTHER GODS

The war-wracked history, peculiar cultural mores, and heavy Vudrani influence of the Impossible Lands mean that every second shrine to the gods is as likely to be unfamiliar to Avistani visitors than not. Plenty of deities widely known in Avistan can be found in the Impossible Lands as well, but the organization and prominence of their followers might surprise those more used to scattered shrines and secretive cults.

Brigh: The Duchy of Alkenstar has long considered Brigh to be its special patron, a clockwork goddess for a city of belching smoke and roaring forges. Priests of Brigh are on hand in virtually every factory and foundry in the city, encouraging workers, dabbling in invention, and calling upon their magic whenever something goes wrong (and given how much gunpowder is in the city, things go wrong with certain frequency).

SHELYN

Brigh's faith in Alkenstar does take a few curious turns compared to other places. While everyone agrees that Brigh is a goddess in full, she's often seen less as a being to be worshiped and more as a kind of philosophical ideal to be emulated, a paragon of reason and invention. Brigh is the logic of the engine and the passion of the inventor, the muse that grants the vision of the perfect mechanism, the knowledge to make a creation, and the wisdom to use it. While icons of Brigh are few in Alkenstar, quotations from her holy books or from popular sermons are often painted on walls or inscribed on guns and cannons made in the city.

Irori: The faith of the Master of Masters is considered synonymous with Jalmeray and the Houses of Perfection, though the truth is a little more complex than it seems at first. Certainly, the monasteries of the Houses of Perfection seek to emulate Irori above all others, and there's also a tradition of wandering Iroran monk-priests who have learned all they can in confinement and seek to travel the world to broaden their experiences. Such monk-priests are treated with a sort of cautious tolerance by Jalmeray's populace, as not every young martial artist has quite mastered the art of keeping their pride and temper in check.

Beyond that, Irori is the god of choice for Jalmeray's nobility, who view the god's commandment of self-perfection and self-elevation as a particularly honorable pursuit for the well-to-do. Many an aristocratic landowner in Jalmeray will write poetry or conduct meditative exercises to improve themselves before an icon of Irori. The common folk, however, tend to view this sort of self-perfection as an indulgence little available to them, preferring other gods.

Nethys: The worship of Nethys verges on being a state religion in Nex. As god of magic, and as a mortal archmage ascended to divinity, Nethys represents all that the Arclords of Nex find right and proper in the world. Every town of any note in Nex has a temple-library to Nethys, from modest, two-domed structures of painted brick to the great Twin Temple of Quantium, where two enormous palaces, one of black marble and one of white, stare at each other across a reflecting pool.

In addition to maintaining libraries, the clergy of Nethys also offer schooling out of their temples, teaching local children to read and write, do sums, and cast simple cantrips. As a result, while few non-mages hold Nethys as the most important god of their lives, there's a general feeling of benevolence toward him and his clergy. By acting as teachers of magic, the church of Nethys is also well-placed to notice serious magical talents at an early age and arrange for suitable tutoring once a child comes of age.

Pharasma: It's said that nothing so concentrates the mind as the prospect of hanging in the morning. To this claim, one might add that nothing so concentrates the worship

of Pharasma as having an entire nation of undead on the border. While the austere Lady of Graves is rarely the first choice of worship for most people, Pharasmin services in Nex and Alkenstar are invariably very well attended as everyone prays to ensure that the dead stay where they are.

In Geb, it's a different story. There, Pharasmin worship is an underground sect among the quick, and membership is punishable by a gruesome death and a torturous undeath if discovered. Nevertheless, it continues, fueled by the desperate need of Geb's mortal residents to hope for sleep and rest after death. Many a rich and prosperous Pharasmin temple in Nex secretly funds missionary activity in Geb, as well as teams of expert undead hunters.

Sarenrae: Though more common further north, the worship of Sarenrae is one of the largest minority faiths in the Impossible Lands, especially in Nex and Jalmeray. The Dawnflower's worship was brought there largely by Keleshite immigrants and so still strongly resembles Keleshite practices, albeit with a few local twists. Sarenite temples in Nex, for instance, often have small libraries or schools attached to them, though they tend to be more focused on physical training than on intellectual learning as Nex's state schools are. Meanwhile, Sarenite communities in Jalmeray often build large Keleshite temples in the classic style but add garlands of flowers or bright colors to their statues and frescoes.

Shelyn: In contrast to Irori, the worship of the Eternal Rose is extremely common among the peasants and townsfolk of Jalmeray—it wouldn't be out of place to say that she's the single most popular deity on the island, celebrated in song and dance and with several popular festivals dedicated to her honor. Shelyn's temples on Jalmeray are rarely large or luxurious, but little chapels and shrines dot the island, adorned with flowers or simple carvings of birds. The rainbow-robed mendicant priests who dwell at these shrines are supported by the charity of their communities, and they alternate teaching, praying, and a certain theologically sanctioned begging for their daily routine.

Jalmeray's nobility, meanwhile, largely looks down on the worship of Shelyn. While it's normal enough for young aristocrats to devote themselves to poetry and love, there's a certain expectation that a noble should devote themself to higher causes than mere beauty and offer worship to the Master of Masters. In many parts of Jalmeray, this outlook leads to a degree of religious division, though such disagreements usually take the form of petty sniping and political maneuvering rather than outright conflict.

Urgathoa: The faith of Urgathoa, for obvious reasons, is widespread in Geb, one of the few places in Golarion where the Pallid Princess is worshipped openly and legally. Nevertheless, there has always been a certain tension there, as the hungry passions of Urgathoa fit poorly with the colder, more clinical ambitions of the Blood Lords. The result is that while most of the free-willed undead of Geb pay homage to Urgathoa, those at the very pinnacle of society rarely do more than pay lip service to the goddess, preferring instead to direct their worship, on the rare occasions they offer it, to more erudite deities such as Nethys.

Curiously, Urgathoa is also a popular goddess among the living residents of Geb. Many of the quick embrace Urgathoa's creed of pleasure, preferring to enjoy their brief lives for however long they have them. Others see worshipping the goddess as a way of ascending to a form of undeath greater than that of a mere skeleton or zombie.

URGATHOA

Bestiary

The following list provides a large, but not comprehensive, reference of creatures appropriate to encounter in the Impossible Lands. Though it highlights some prominent undead that can be found throughout the region, almost any undead creature can be found in Geb.

IMPOSSIBLE LANDS

Creature	Source
Basidirond	*Bestiary 2* 34
Basilisk	*Bestiary* 38
Corrupted relic	*Bestiary 3* 55
Crocodile	*Bestiary* 67
Eunemvro	*Bestiary 3* 96
Flytrap	*Bestiary* 160
Galvo	*Bestiary 3* 103
Lamias	*Bestiary* 216–217
Leucrotta	*Bestiary 2* 162
Leydroth	*Bestiary 2* 163
Manticore	*Bestiary* 232
Ogres	*Bestiary* 252–253
Ostovite	*Bestiary 3* 193
Revenants	*Bestiary 2* 227
Roc	*Bestiary* 281
Sea serpent	*Bestiary* 288
Shadow drake	*Bestiary 2* 100–101
Sphinx	*Bestiary* 305
Tendriculos	*Bestiary 2* 257
Umbral dragons	*Bestiary 2* 95–97
Unicorn	*Bestiary* 316

ALKENSTAR/MANA WASTES

Creature	Source
Barghests	*Bestiary* 36–37
Behir	*Bestiary 2* 38
Bore worms	*Bestiary 3* 36–37
Cactus leshy	*Bestiary 3* 160–161
Calikang	*Bestiary 3* 42
Cats	*Bestiary* 52–53
Clockworks	*Bestiary 3* 48–51
Combusted	*Book of the Dead* 80
Desert giant	*Bestiary 3* 109
Dig-widget	*Bestiary 2* 79
Dweomercat	*Bestiary 2* 103
Ettin	*Bestiary* 156
Fleshwarps	*Bestiary* 158–159, *Bestiary 2* 118–119
Ghosts	*Bestiary* 166–167, *Book of the Dead* 100–101
Goblins	*Bestiary* 180–181
Hill giant	*Bestiary* 170
Last guard	*Book of the Dead* 117
Maftet	*Bestiary 3* 166
Mukradi	*Bestiary* 239
Oozes	*Bestiary* 254–255, *Bestiary 2* 192–195
Pale stranger revenant	*Book of the Dead* 140
Phantom	*Bestiary 3* 202–203
Scythe tree	*Bestiary 2* 235
Shambler	*Bestiary* 290
Skeletons	*Bestiary* 298–299, *Bestiary 3* 236–237
Unrisen	*Book of the Dead* 153
Vampiric mist	*Bestiary 2* 278
Warsworn	*Bestiary* 323
Zombies	*Bestiary* 340–341, *Bestiary 3* 302–303

GEB

Creature	Source
Bone ship	*Bestiary 3* 34–35
Deathless acolyte	*Book of the Dead* 88–89
Fly	*Bestiary 2* 120
Ghosts	*Bestiary* 166–167
Ghouls	*Bestiary* 168–169
Graveknight	*Bestiary* 190–191, *Book of the Dead* 110–111
Lich	*Bestiary* 220–221, *Book of the Dead* 120–123
Mummies	*Bestiary* 240–241, *Book of the Dead* 130–133
Shabti	*Bestiary 3* 229
Skeletons	*Bestiary* 298–299, *Bestiary 3* 236–237
Vampires	*Bestiary* 318–321, *Bestiary 2* 274–277
Wraith	*Bestiary* 335
Zombies	*Bestiary* 340–341, *Bestiary 3* 302–303

JALMERAY

Creature	Source
Asuras	*Bestiary 3* 22–25
Bhuta	*Book of the Dead* 76
Calikang	*Bestiary 3* 42
Catfolk	*Bestiary* 54
Dezullon	*Bestiary* 94
Elementals	*Bestiary* 144–153, *Bestiary 2* 106–115
Elephant	*Bestiary* 154
Garuda	*Bestiary 3* 104
Genies	*Bestiary* 162–165
Ghul	*Book of the Dead* 106
Locathah	*Bestiary 3* 164
Mobogo	*Bestiary 3* 170
Nagas	*Bestiary* 242–243, *Bestiary 2* 178–179
Nagaji	*Bestiary 3* 182
Paaridar	*Bestiary 3* 198
Planar scions (geniekin)	Bestiary 2 200–203, *Bestiary 3* 204–205
Rakshasas	*Bestiary* 274–275, *Bestiary 3* 210–211
Vanara	*Bestiary 3* 286
Vetalarana	*Book of the Dead* 160
Vishkanya	*Bestiary 3* 288

NEX

Creature	Source
Animated objects	*Bestiary* 20–21, *Bestiary 3* 18–19
Blink dog	*Bestiary 2* 40
Blood painter	*Bestiary 3* 33
Catfolk	*Bestiary* 54
Clockworks	*Bestiary 3* 48–51
Drow	*Bestiary* 136–137
Dweomercat	*Bestiary 2* 103
Elementals	*Bestiary* 144–153, *Bestiary 2* 106–115
Fleshwarps	*Bestiary* 158–159, *Bestiary 2* 118–119
Ghoran	*Bestiary 3* 106
Golems	*Bestiary* 184–189, *Bestiary 2* 128–131, *Bestiary 3* 116–117
Homunculus	*Bestiary* 208
Irlgaunt	*Bestiary 2* 148
Mandragora	*Bestiary 2* 170
Soulbound doll	*Bestiary* 304
Spiral centurion	*Bestiary 2* 250
Swordkeeper	*Bestiary 3* 261
Thrasfyr	*Bestiary 2* 258

Lurking Danger

During the war between Geb and Nex, the archmage Geb created the benthic reaver from the fossilized skeleton of a leviathan. Records vividly describe the creature's haunting sounds and the cold, blue ghosts of a thousand eyes floating above its gaping maw. The unliving horror cut a swath of destruction across Nex before defenders stopped it at the nation's capital. When the defenders of Quantium drove off the besieging benthic reaver, it fled to the ocean depths off Nex's coastline to avoid destruction. Ever since, unconfirmed sightings by fishers and divers have kept its legend alive. While some see the sailors who blame the creature for unexplained shipwrecks as superstitious, mages inside Nex frequently scry the coast, afraid that a more active Geb might try to reclaim one of his greatest weapons.

Benthic Reaver

The benthic reaver is a 50-foot-tall undead monstrosity, its ribs rising like giant archways and its spine splitting into three tails.

BENTHIC REAVER — CREATURE 21

UNIQUE | CE | GARGANTUAN | COLD | UNDEAD

Perception +41; darkvision, *true seeing*

Languages Common, Necril

Skills Arcana +37, Athletics +43, Nature +37

Str +10, **Dex** +8, **Con** +7, **Int** +6, **Wis** +8, **Cha** +6

Comfort of the Deep (downtime) The benthic reaver spends 1 day submerged in seawater and restores itself to full Hit Points.

AC 46, all-around vision; **Fort** +38, **Ref** +35, **Will** +33

HP 500 (negative healing); **Immunities** bleed, cold, death effects, disease, negative, paralyzed, poison, precision, unconscious; **Weaknesses** good 20; **Resistances** physical 10 (except adamantine)

Intense Chill (arcane, aura, cold, evocation) 30 feet. 5d6 cold damage (DC 41 basic Reflex save). On a failure, the creature takes a –15-foot status penalty to its Speeds for 1 round.

Tail Sweep ↷ **Trigger** A creature moves from beyond the reach of the benthic reaver's tail to within the reach of the benthic reaver's tail; **Effect** The benthic reaver makes a tail Strike against the triggering creature and can use Improved Knockdown if the attack hits, even if it isn't the benthic reaver's turn. If the benthic reaver knocks the target prone, it disrupts the triggering move action.

Speed 30 feet, swim 60 feet

Melee ❖ jaws +39 (reach 15 feet), **Damage** 4d12+18 piercing plus 2d6 cold and 2d6 negative

Melee ❖ fin +39 (agile, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 4d8+18 slashing plus 2d6 negative

Melee ❖ tail +39 (reach 30 feet), **Damage** 4d10+18 slashing plus 2d6 negative and Improved Knockdown

Ranged ❖ eye beam +37 (range 150 feet), **Damage** 4d12+8 cold plus 4d6 negative and numbing ice

Arcane Innate Spells DC 41; **Constant (9th)** *true seeing*

Numbing Ice (cold) A creature who takes damage from the benthic reaver's eye beam Strike must succeed at a DC 41 Fortitude save or become slowed 2 as cold stiffens its limbs. A flying creature who fails its save also descends safely to the ground below. This is forced movement.

Song of the Lost ❖ (arcane, auditory, emotion, enchantment, fear, mental) The benthic reaver unleashes a cry of mourning. All creatures within 60 feet must attempt a DC 41 Will save to resist. The benthic reaver can't use Song of the Lost for 1d4 rounds.

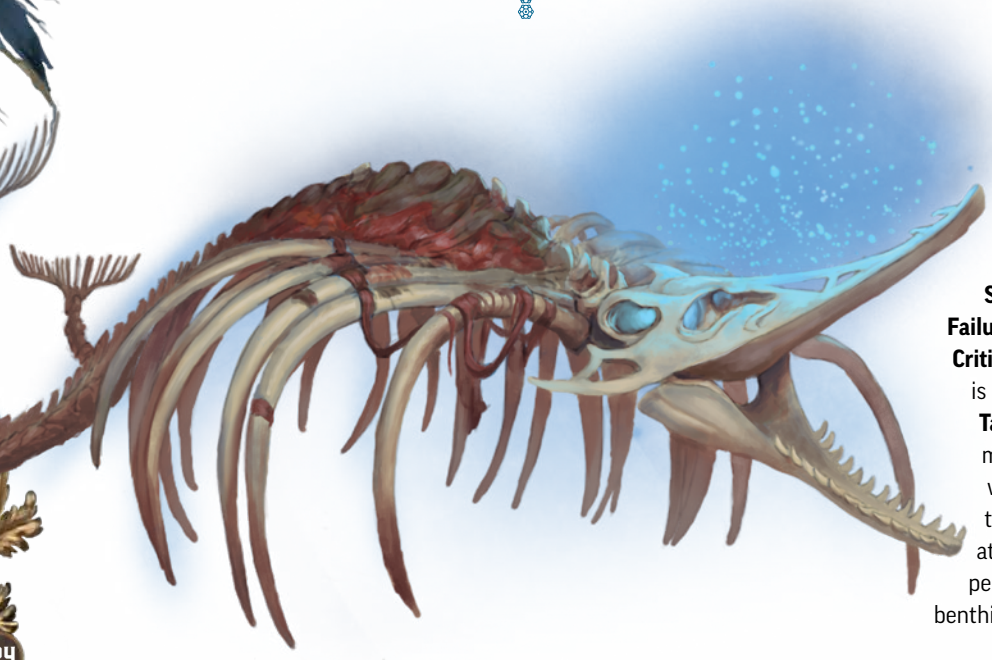
Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature is frightened 1.

Failure The creature is frightened 2.

Critical Failure As failure, but the creature is also stunned 1 with sympathy.

Tail Sweep ❖❖ The benthic reaver makes a tail Strike against each enemy within its reach. These attacks count toward the benthic reaver's multiple attack penalty, but the multiple attack penalty doesn't increase until after the benthic reaver makes all its attacks.



Clockwork Cannoneer

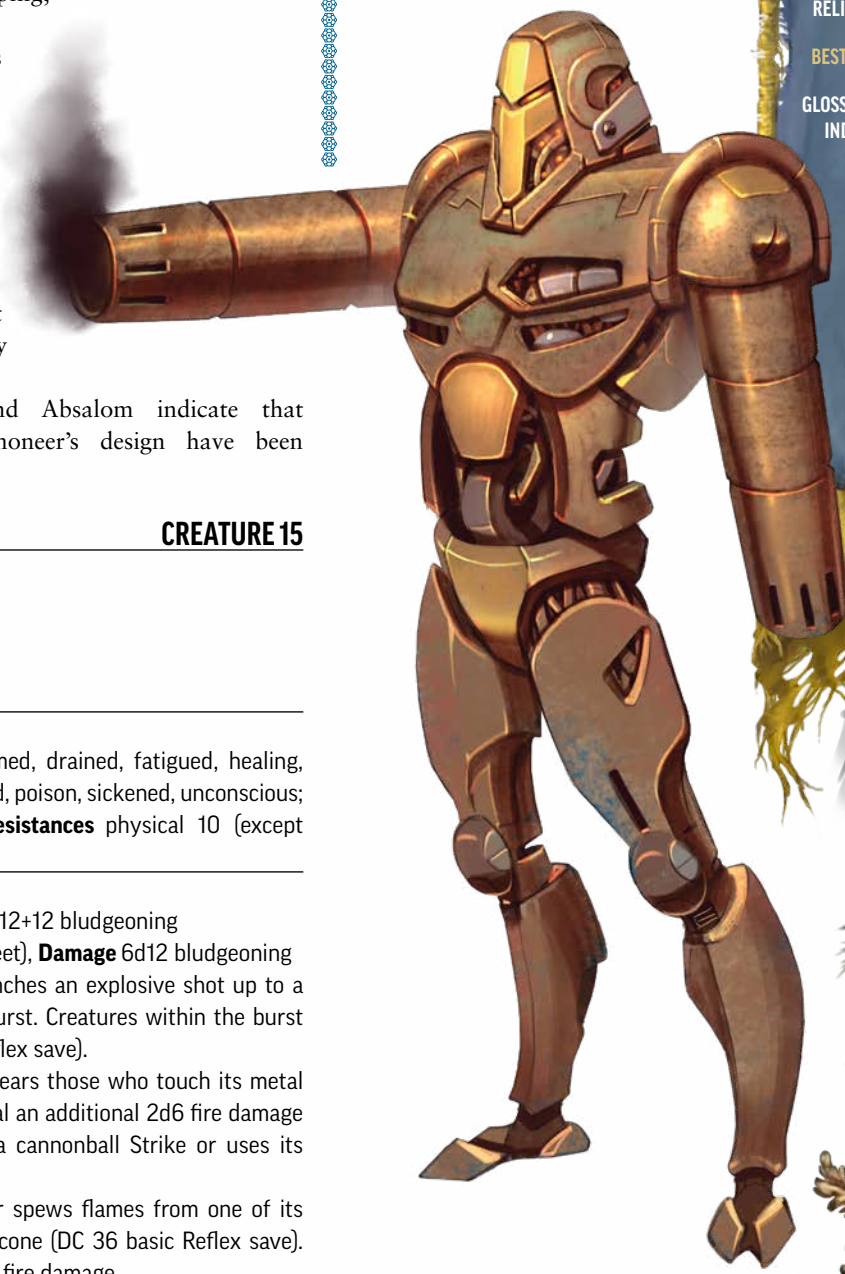
Clockwork cannoneers are cannon-armed constructs created to defend the Grand Duchy of Alkenstar. The people of Alkenstar typically find conventional arms sufficient for battling creatures who wander out of the Mana Wastes, but recent increases in activity from the fleshforges of Nex and the necromantic chambers of Geb have spurred the people of the city into a flurry of defensive innovations. Created by an experimental collaboration between the city's gunsmiths and clockwork inventors, the clockwork cannoneer provides exceptional mobile firepower. Two cannon-arms swing at the sides of the 15-foot-tall automaton, and its body contains a hopper of cannonballs that are replenished by engineers when the creature is wound up for duty. Triple-walled reinforcement on the cannoneer's black-powder reservoirs provides ample protection from the accidental explosions and backfires that often troubled early prototypes of the finely engineered machine. The current design combines the long-range capabilities of field artillery with the stopping power of a firedrake against engaged enemies, and its heat-tempered gear assembly minimizes warping that might cause slipping, grinding, or shaking.

While reports from living artillery members serving alongside clockwork cannoneers complain of blisters, smoke inhalation, and singed eyebrows, the Grand Duchy's chief clockwork machinists have assured the city's leadership that the constructs function well within safety parameters. The clockwork cannoneer's self-sufficient construction frees crews to see to those battlefield tasks that can, for the moment, only be conducted by sentient beings.

Intelligence reports from Quantium and Absalom indicate that attempts to replicate the clockwork cannoneer's design have been spectacularly unsuccessful.

Safety and Innovation

Eager to solve two operational challenges with one construction feature, Alkenstar's clockwork engineers connected a gear-driven barrel cleaning mechanism to the clockwork cannoneer's winding drive. Now, operators can be sure that as long as the construct is wound, it's safe to fire. This feature is just one of the marvels of automation demonstrated by the project, along with its self-loading cannonballs and automatic powder measuring systems.



Clockwork Cannoneer — Creature 15

RARE | N | HUGE | CLOCKWORK | CONSTRUCT | MINDLESS

Perception +25; darkvision

Skills Athletics +30

Str +7, **Dex** +8, **Con** +6, **Int** –5, **Wis** +4, **Cha** –5

Wind-Up 24 hours, DC 33, standby

AC 38; **Fort** +27, **Ref** +29, **Will** +23

HP 250; **Immunities** death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, mental, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious; **Weaknesses** electricity 15, orichalcum 15; **Resistances** physical 10 (except adamantine or orichalcum)

Speed 25 feet

Melee ❖ bore +28 (backswing, shove), **Damage** 3d12+12 bludgeoning

Ranged ❖ cannonball +29 (range increment 100 feet), **Damage** 6d12 bludgeoning

Bombard ❖❖ (fire) The clockwork cannoneer launches an explosive shot up to a range of 200 feet that explodes in a 20-foot burst. Creatures within the burst take 5d10 bludgeoning damage (DC 36 basic Reflex save).

Muzzleburn The heat from a discharged cannon sears those who touch its metal shell. The clockwork cannoneer's bore Strike deal an additional 2d6 fire damage until the end of its next turn after it makes a cannonball Strike or uses its Bombard or Powder Blast abilities.

Powder Blast ❖❖ (fire) The clockwork cannoneer spews flames from one of its cannons, dealing 8d6 fire damage in a 30-foot cone (DC 36 basic Reflex save). Those that fail the save also take 2d6 persistent fire damage.

Cursed King

A cursed king is a grotesque mockery of ambition. When treasonous advisors, false prophets, and rebel leaders are captured by evil rulers, they're subjected to all manner of torture and humiliation before their eventual executions. But the cursed king isn't even granted dignity in death, as after their beheading, a desiccated animal head is sewn onto their neck. These horrific mummies are then dressed in fine linens and jewelry befitting royalty—a permanent warning of what happens to those who seek to rise above their station.

A cursed king is bound in servitude to the ruler against whom they once fought, forced to act as a bodyguard. Even the death of their maker gives no reprieve, as they guard the true monarch's tomb forever.

Cursed King — Creature 10

CE | Medium | Mummy | Undead

Perception +20; darkvision

Languages Necril, plus any two ancient languages (can't speak)

Skills Athletics +23, Intimidation +17, Stealth +17

Str +7, **Dex** +3, **Con** +4, **Int** –4, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +3

AC 29; **Fort** +20, **Ref** +20, **Will** +16

HP 210, negative healing; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Weaknesses** fire 10

False Authority (aura, emotion, fear, mental) 30 feet. When a creature enters or ends its turn within the cursed king's aura, it must attempt a DC 26 Will save. If it fails, it becomes frightened 2. If it critically fails, it's cowed into submission; in addition to becoming frightened 2, it must use its first action on its turn to kneel or flee from the cursed king. A creature who succeeds at its saving throw becomes immune to the king's false authority for 24 hours.

Usurper's Curse (curse) When a creature slays a cursed king, it must attempt a DC 29 Will save. On a failure, it suffers the effects of the usurper's curse.

Deadly Pursuit ↷ **Trigger** A creature within the cursed king's reach attempts to move away; **Effect** The cursed king Strides up to its Speed, keeping the creature within reach until the creature stops or the cursed king has moved its full Speed. If the creature is still within reach, the cursed king makes a jaws Strike against it.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ❖ jaws +23, **Damage** 2d12+13 piercing plus Grab

Melee ❖ fist +23 (agile), **Damage** 2d8+13 bludgeoning

Berserk At the beginning of each of its turns in combat, a cursed king must attempt a DC 2 flat check. If it succeeds, the DC increases by 1. If it fails, it immediately goes berserk, becoming mindless for the rest of its turn, immune to all mental effects, and attacking the nearest creature it can reach. While it's berserk, each of its unarmed attacks gain the deadly d8 trait. At the end of a turn it failed this flat check or whenever the combat encounter ends, the DC resets to 2.

Usurper's Curse (curse, necromancy, polymorph) DC 30 Will saving throw. On a failure, the creature who killed the cursed king becomes stupefied 1. On a critical failure, it becomes stupefied 2. As long as that creature remains cursed, it can't remove or decrease the value of the stupefied condition in any way. Afflicted creatures must attempt the saving throw again every 24 hours, increasing the stupefied condition by 1 on a failure or 2 on a critical failure. If the condition ever increases past stupefied 4, they transform, body and mind, into the same animal as the cursed king's head, similar to the critical failure effect of *baleful polymorph*.

Artful Punishment

The cursed king's creator can take its head from any common animal in the region, but the creator typically chooses a specific head for its symbolic significance. For instance, a creator might choose a jackal's head if the cursed king was a clever tactician, a hippo's if they were formidable on the battlefield, or a giant cobra's for those who betrayed the regime from within. Aesthetics are often also considered, although it isn't unheard of for a cursed king to have the head of a more ignoble creature as an additional punishment.

Fleshforged Conformer

Shapeshifting fleshforged conformers have adapted to survive Ecanus's high-magic, population-dense sprawl. Resembling blocky humanoid skeletons splotched in uneven layers with cartilage and muscle, conformers are capable of attaching and detaching flesh from their bodies, often sending autonomous gobbets of fat and ligament to observe living creatures and harvest biological material.

Fleshforged conformers use their resources to augment and change their bodies, which helps them infiltrate Nexian society to better understand the arcane principles and occult secrets behind their creation. Some assume the guises of humans and animals to lead quiet, settled lives in Nex, but most are discovered and summarily exterminated as defects and threats to public safety.

FLESHFORGED CONFORMER — CREATURE 8

CN MEDIUM ABERRATION

Perception +19; darkvision

Languages Aklo, Common, two other languages

Skills Arcana +15, Deception +17, Fleshwarp Lore +17, Medicine +17, Occultism +15, Society +15, Stealth +18

Str +0, **Dex** +6, **Con** +3, **Int** +3, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +3

AC 26; **Fort** +17, **Ref** +18, **Will** +13

HP 145, regeneration 10 (deactivated by cold iron); **Weaknesses** cold iron 10

Speed 25 feet

Melee ❖ fanged-maw finger +20 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 2d10+3 piercing plus 1d8 persistent bleed

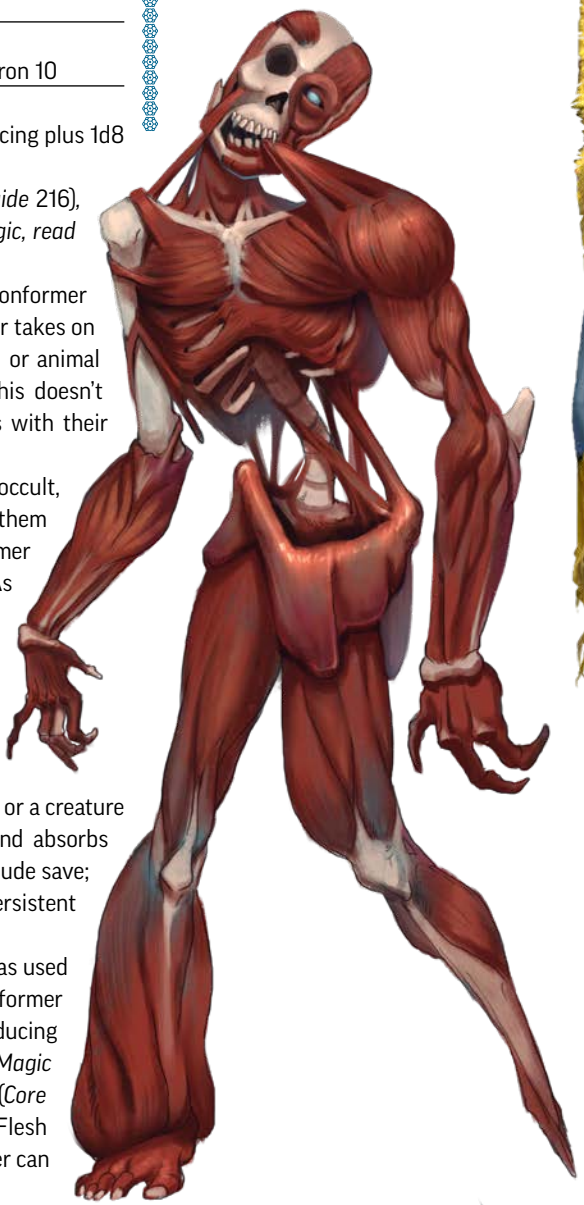
Occult Innate Spells DC 25; **2nd** *blood vendetta* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 216), *charitable urge* (*Advanced Player's Guide* 216); **Cantrips** *detect magic*, *read aura*

Conformance ❖ (concentrate, occult, polymorph, transmutation) The conformer contorts and reshapes their body into a desired form. The conformer takes on the specific appearance of any Small, Medium, or Large humanoid or animal that they've observed and whose appearance they remember. This doesn't change the conformer's Speed or their attack and damage bonus with their Strikes, but might change the damage type their Strikes deal.

Surgical Detachment ❖ (concentrate, manipulate, morph, occult, transmutation)The conformer detaches part of their body to serve them as an autonomous organism. For the next 24 hours, the conformer gains the loyal service of a fleshforged skinskitter (page 329). As long as they remain within 1 mile of each other, the conformer can use the Surgical Detachment action again to empathically direct the actions of their skinskitter servant as well as perceive through its senses. Due to how taxing this process is, the conformer can have only one skinskitter servant at a time.

Tissue Siphon ❖ (manipulate, occult, transmutation) **Requirements** The conformer is within reach of an unconscious or willing creature, or a creature taking persistent bleed damage; **Effect** The conformer touches and absorbs some of the creature's flesh. The target must attempt a DC 26 Fortitude save; on a failure, they become drained 1 and take damage from their persistent bleed damage, even though it isn't the end of their turn.

Wear Flesh ❖ (transmutation, occult) **Requirements** The conformer has used Tissue Siphon to absorb flesh within the last hour; **Effect** The conformer expends the flesh they've absorbed to transform their body, reproducing the effects of one of the following spells: *adapt self* (*Gods & Magic* 112), *enlarge*, *shifting form* (*Core Rulebook* 407), *tentacular limbs* (*Core Rulebook* 405), or *unusual anatomy* (*Core Rulebook* 405). The Wear Flesh action gains the traits of the spell it's reproducing, and the conformer can Sustain a Spell on these effects.



PARANOIA'S PRICE

The presence of fleshforged conformers has a predictably deleterious effect on society, even without any hostile actions taken by the fleshforged themselves. Many Nexians who know of the creatures constantly scan their neighbors for any sign of deception, and more than one reckless murder has been committed simply out of the mistaken belief they were actually a conformer is disguise.

THE FLESHFORGES AWAKEN

Fleshforged dreadnoughts were integral in Nex's attacks on Geb during their long war, but most of the dangerous creatures were decommissioned after the archmage's disappearance. With Nex preparing for war, rumors of gigantic war machines rumbling over the horizon have spread through settlements bordering the Mana Wastes. Worried mayors have begun assembling evacuation plans, knowing that a dreadnought could level their towns in moments.

Fleshforged Dreadnought

Created in the arcane fleshforges of Nex, this creature was spawned as the ultimate brute-force tool for urban assaults against the cities of Geb. At 30 feet tall, the dreadnought easily tops most city walls, and Nexian infantry forces would scramble up the spikes on the creature's back to penetrate defensive fortifications. Every detail of the creature's physiology was fashioned for the battlefield, from the ballista of bone and sinew integrated into its torso to the bulky ram on the crest of its head. The fleshforged's acidic blood not only serves an important hydraulic function but also deters city defenders who might attempt to strike down the creature.

During the war between Nex and Geb, fleshforged dreadnoughts most often appeared as part of a coordinated assault and typically replaced or augmented an army's compliment of siege weaponry. Common tactics employed by Nex's generals would direct the dreadnought to crush all opposition standing in front of a city's gate and then smash through it. Should the city's defenses prove resilient, invading troops would scale the creature to get over the city walls, relying on the dreadnought's regenerative properties to ensure it wouldn't be destroyed while helping them bypass the defensive barriers.

Fleshforged dreadnoughts all but vanished after the disappearance of the archmage Nex, but tales of their destructive power have been preserved.

FLESHFORGED DREADNOUGHT — CREATURE 18

RARE | N | GARGANTUAN | CONSTRUCT | MINDLESS

Perception +29; darkvision

Skills Athletics +38

Str +10, **Dex** +6, **Con** +9, **Int** –5, **Wis** +5, **Cha** –5

Scaling Spikes A fleshforged dreadnought is covered in handholds and footholds that make it easy to climb. Creatures of Medium or smaller size can Climb the dreadnought, sharing one of its spaces as they do so. The DC to Climb a fleshforged dreadnought is 15, and creatures move 5 more feet on a success and 10 more feet on a critical success, to a maximum of their Speed when Climbing the construct.

AC 42; **Fort** +35, **Ref** +28, **Will** +27

HP 300, regeneration 20 (deactivated by cold iron); **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, mental, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious; **Resistances** acid 20

Caustic Leak ◆ (acid, arcane, evocation) **Frequency** once per turn; **Trigger** The fleshforged dreadnought is damaged by a non-reach piercing or slashing melee Strike; **Effect** Corrosive fluid sprays the attacker, dealing 8d6 acid damage (DC 40 basic Reflex save).

Speed 30 feet

Melee ◆ battering ram +35 (reach 15 feet), **Damage** 7d8+10 bludgeoning plus Improved Push 15 feet

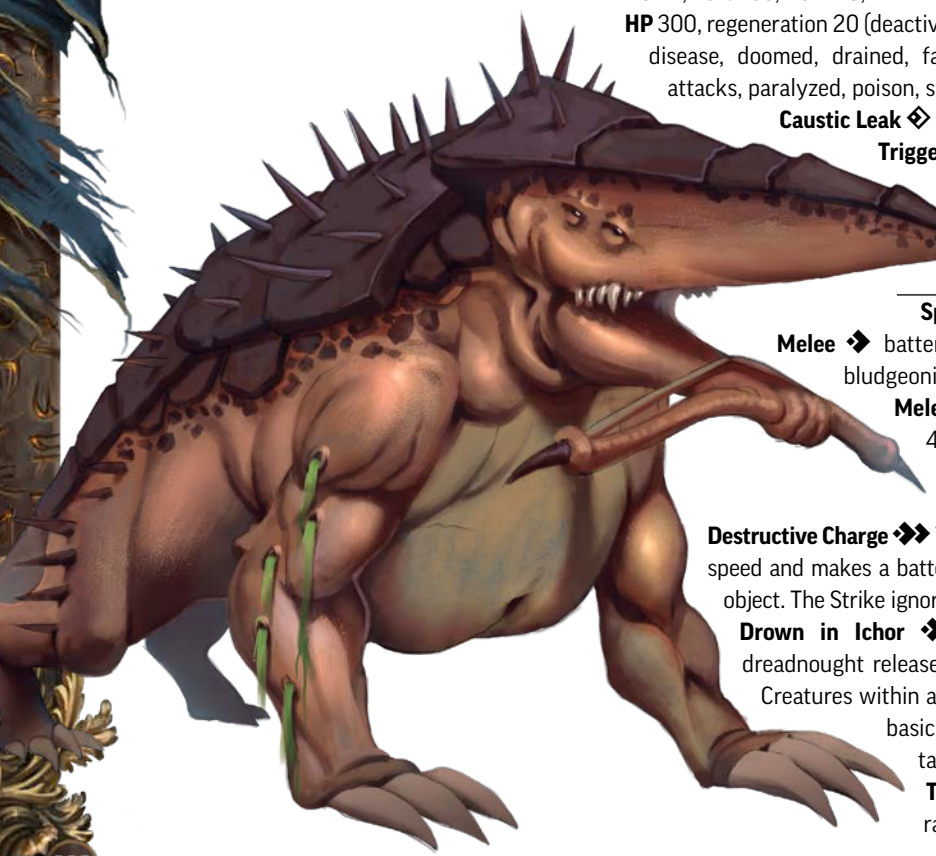
Melee ◆ claw +35 (agile, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 4d8+18 slashing

Ranged ◆ ballista +33 (range increment 120 feet), **Damage** 4d12+8 piercing

Destructive Charge ◆◆ The fleshforged dreadnought Strides up to twice its speed and makes a battering ram Strike against a structure or unattended object. The Strike ignores 20 points of the target's Hardness.

Drown in Ichor ◆◆ (acid, arcane, evocation) The fleshforged dreadnought releases a wave of caustic fluid from vents in its sides. Creatures within a 20-foot emanation take 8d6 acid damage (DC 40 basic Reflex save). Creatures who fail their saves also take 3d6 persistent acid damage.

Trample ◆◆◆ (attack) Huge or smaller, battering ram, DC 44



Fleshforged Skinskitter

These elusive oddments resemble discarded hides of butchered animals and fleshwarping experiments, floating like so much meaty detritus in the bloody filth of Ecanus's charnel-clogged sewers. Skinskitters, named for their fluid, erratic movements, scavenge the city for leavings of fleshy waste. They prefer discreet, non-violent ways of procuring these biological materials and shy from combat, seemingly possessed of a nervous temperament. Nexian fleshforgers quip this is entirely reasonable, as skinskitters are little more than nervous systems wrapped in dying skin. Nexian guards who actually have to hunt these fleshforged pests aren't quite as jocular; confronted by the oddly childlike pleas of these cornered puddles of flesh, hair, and eyes, many recruits simply choose to leave the city watch.

On occasion, curious scholars or soldiers have questioned why skinskitters pursue organic tissue, and whether this is a simple instinct or in pursuit of a grander purpose. Most fleshforgers assume that skinskitters consume organic matter to repair themselves in a process similar to eating, and give the matter no further thought, showing no more interest in the creatures than a smith might show in a bead of melted slag. The most paranoid Nexians claim that skinskitters are attempting to build something out of their collections of cast-off skin, perhaps even reconstructing themselves into fleshforged conformers. There is no recorded evidence of this ever occurring, however—if the creatures have any awareness at all, it's more likely that skinskitters are driven by the basest of instincts to better themselves through the same methods used in their creation but lack the understanding and self-direction to ever succeed.

Skinskitter — Creature 1

CN | Small | Aberration | Amphibious | Mindless

Perception +7; a taste for skin (imprecise) 60 feet

Skills Acrobatics +7, Athletics +5, Stealth +7 (+9 in blood or water)

Str +2, **Dex** +4, **Con** +1, **Int** –5, **Wis** +0, **Cha** –5

A Taste for Skin A skinskitter tastes skin (including leather), hair, claws, and nails within 60 feet.

AC 16; **Fort** +6, **Ref** +9, **Will** +5

HP 20; **Immunities** mental; **Weaknesses** cold iron 2

Shuddering Skitter ↷ **Frequency** once per day; **Trigger** The skinskitter is reduced to 0 HP; **Effect** The fear of death agitates the skinskitter, precipitating a sudden existential awakening of consciousness. The skinskitter is reduced to 1 HP, loses the mindless trait and immunity to mental effects for the next 24 hours, gains the ability to speak one language (typically Osiriani or Vudrani), and takes two of the following actions in any order: Hide, Sneak, Step, Stride, or Take Cover. In addition, the square occupied by the skinskitter before using Shuddering Skitter becomes difficult terrain, as they disgorge a shower of half-digested calluses, chewed nails, and entangled hair in their skittering wake.

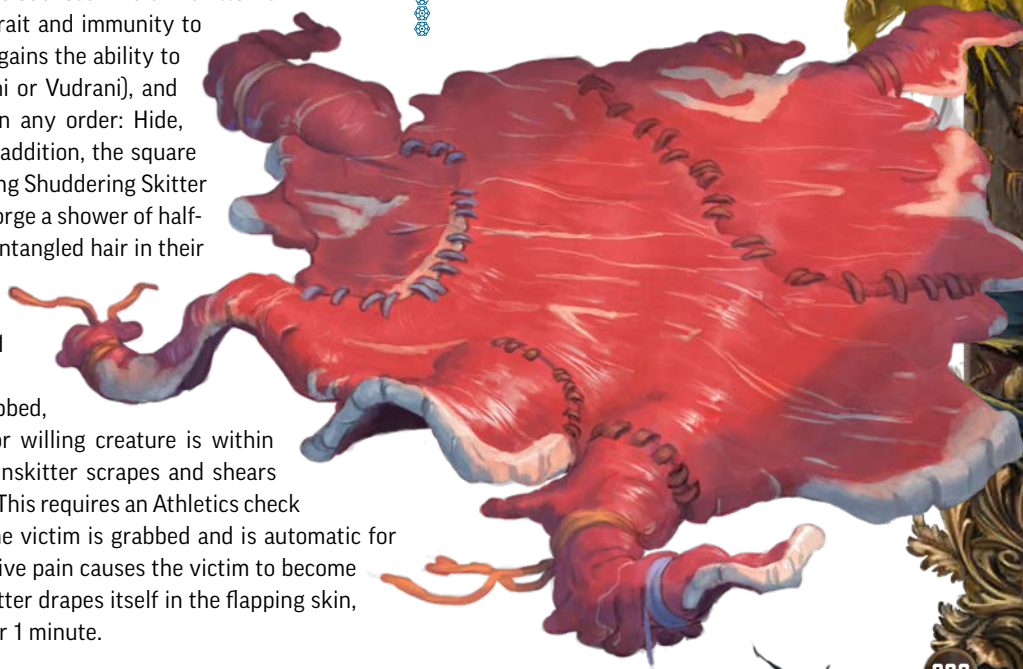
Speed 20 feet, swim 20 feet

Melee ❖ nail +9 (finesse), **Damage** 1d8+1 piercing plus Grab

Share the Skin ❖ **Requirements** A grabbed, paralyzed, restrained, unconscious, or willing creature is within the skinskitter's reach; **Effect** The skinskitter scrapes and shears away large sheets of the victim's skin. This requires an Athletics check against the victim's Fortitude DC if the victim is grabbed and is automatic for any of the other conditions. The massive pain causes the victim to become clumsy 1 for 1 minute, and the skinskitter drapes itself in the flapping skin, granting it 10 temporary Hit Points for 1 minute.

Mindless or Not?

A few truly twisted individuals have performed experiments on captive skinskitters, attempting to determine the extent of the creatures' intellectual capabilities. As skinskitters only show signs of consciousness when faced with imminent death, the research involved keeping the fleshforged dregs in constant states of mental and physical duress. Unsurprisingly, given the conditions of such research, the results of these studies are dubious at best.



Kasesh

In the ancient days, before humanity dwelled on Golarion, the Vault Builders had need of something smaller in scale than the great vault seeds so they could finish their worlds as they liked. They took a small gem and wrote a word of power upon it. They gave it eyes so it could see and legs so it could walk, and made it wise. These creatures are known as kaseshi by scholars who have encountered them, though their true name—the one that brought them into being—is likely considerably more powerful.

Each kasesh bears a single word of power on their emerald body, from which they draw their mind and their magic. A kasesh with the word "Steel" or "Flame" is a single-minded creature, though it encompasses all possible permutations of meaning that the word possesses. A kasesh named "Home" or "Sorrow" has a far more complex psyche, and rumor claims that Elder Architect Oblosk of Nex bears the word "Memory." Unsurprisingly, many scholars are highly interested in the words on the kaseshi; unlike Thassilonian rune magic, no one has managed to decode or make use of the language of the Vault Builders yet.

The kasesh in the stat block bears the word "Stone," but other kaseshi will have their own magics. Some alternative examples, "Darkness" and "Intricacy," follow below.

Darkness: This kasesh built the hidden places of the Vault Builders' worlds. The kasesh is 7th level, grants *shadow blast* and *shadow walk* to any gestalt they join, and has the following innate spells.

Primal Innate Spells 4th *darkness* (×2), *enervation*; **3rd** *blindness* (×2), *share lore*; **1st** *mindlink*; **Cantrips (4th)** *detect magic*, *telekinetic projectile*

Intricacy: This kasesh was a decorator and designer. They're 11th level, grant *hallucinatory terrain* and *illusory scene* to any gestalt they join, and have the following innate spells.

Primal Innate Spells 6th *phantasmal calamity*, *phantasmal killer* (×2); **5th** *cloak of colors*, *hallucination*, *share lore*; **1st** *mindlink*; **Cantrips (6th)** *detect magic*, *telekinetic projectile*

Kasesh Gestalts

Much as words combine to form sentences, so too when three or more kaseshi meet, their magic—and with it their very identities—combines and coalesces into something new. Most kaseshi find this process no less disconcerting than a human would, although some forge lifelong bonds in such a way.

There's no limit to how large a gestalt might grow. What a gestalt of a dozen kaseshi can accomplish, only the Vault Builders knew.

KASESH — CREATURE 3

UNCOMMON | LN | SMALL | EARTH | ELEMENTAL

Perception +10; darkvision, tremorsense (imprecise) 60 feet

Languages Common, Terran

Skills Arcana +11, Architectural Lore +13, Nature +10, Stealth +9

Str −1, **Dex** +2, **Con** +1, **Int** +4, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +2

AC 19; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +9, **Will** +10

HP 35; **Immunities** bleed, paralyzed, poison, sleep

Earth Block ↷ **Trigger** The kasesh takes physical damage while adjacent to stone or earth; **Effect** A rampart of stone or crystal emerges from a nearby surface, blocking the attack. The kasesh gains resistance physical 5 against the attack.

Speed 20 feet, burrow 20 feet; earth glide

Ranged ❖ earthen shard +9 (evocation, primal, range increment 60 feet, versatile B), **Damage** 1d10+2 piercing

Primal Innate Spells DC 20, attack +12; **2nd** *glitterdust*, *pummeling rubble* (×2); **1st** *mindlink*, *share lore*, *shockwave* (×2); **Cantrips (2nd)** *detect magic*, *telekinetic projectile*

Gestalt (mental, primal, transmutation) Two or more kaseshi can combine their scribed words to create something greater than either one alone. This has the effects of the Coven ability but no ritual is necessary, simply close proximity for 8 hours. All gestalts grant the following spells, which the gestalt can cast at any level up to 5th: *creation*, *strange geometry*, and *telekinetic haul*. Individual kaseshi also grant additional spells to any gestalt they join—this one grants *meld into stone* and *shape stone*.

Kashrishi

To some, kashrishi seem to be a quiet, passive people. Those with a deeper understanding know that there's plenty more nuance to interacting with kashrishi, who possess innate psychic abilities that greatly alter the way they communicate with the rest of the world. Unable to turn off their powers, these abilities add a complex dynamic to interpreting their surroundings. Without deeper understanding of a person, kashrishi are only able to get the most vague, general feelings from people around them. This becomes more refined as their relationships evolve; family and friends are often the easiest to engage in psychic communication, while strangers simply add to the amount of mental noise a kashrishi must process.

Kashrishi resemble rhinoceroses, with soft, textured skin that can range from light sandy hues to darker obsidian, or rarer jewel tones of deep sapphire or ruby. The size and number of their horns vary. Kashrishi communities are generally quite welcoming to others, enjoying the conversation and unique auras of every new stranger. However, chaotic environments can overwhelm and overstimulate kashrishi not yet adept at filtering psychic energies, leaving some with limited tolerance for extensive social interaction with strangers and requiring they take periods of time to refocus after socializing. In spite of this possible drawback, kashrishi are typically strong communicators, excelling at roles that require attention to detail.

Kashrishi Cuisine

Most Kashrishi are vegetarians. The lingering psychic energy they pick up from once-living creatures makes consuming them difficult. Their staple foods are spiced mixes of fruits, vegetables, nuts, and lentils. The extrasensory abilities of kashrishi have an additional gustatory effect, creating flavor profiles uniquely delicious to kashrishi and fascinatingly eccentric to other ancestries. Those with adventurous palettes often seek out kashrishi cuisine, filling many a kashrishi chef's coffers with gold.

Kashrishi Evaluator — Creature 4

RARE LN SMALL KASHRISHI

Perception +13
Languages Common, Kashrishi
Skills Diplomacy +12, Nature +11, Occultism +10, Survival +9
Str +0, **Dex** +2, **Con** +0, **Int** +2, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +4
Items dagger

AC 20; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +10, **Will** +13
HP 50

Empathic Sense Kashrishi evaluators can get a vague sense of the current emotional state of all other creatures within 15 feet of them, as long as the kashrishi evaluator is aware of those creatures. This manifests as a general feeling of happiness, anger, or fear, without any specific details. Additionally, any creature who succeeds at masking or faking their emotions using Deception projects the deceptive emotions instead of their true feelings. For those that kashrishi have an emotional connection with, physical touch can heighten this sense to greater degrees of detail and understanding, increasing with the strength of their bond.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ❖ dagger +10 (agile, finesse, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+2 piercing

Occult Spontaneous Spells DC 21, attack +13; **2nd** *calm emotions*, *phantom pain*, *telekinetic maneuver*; **1st** *mindlink*, *phantom pain*, *soothe*; **Cantrips (2nd)** *daze*, *message*, *read aura*, *shield*, *telekinetic projectile*

Evaluate Discordance ❖❖ (emotion, enchantment, mental, occult) **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** The kashrishi evaluator assesses the disharmony between themself and a creature within 30 feet and then sparks the discordance, sending psychic energy to overwhelm the target's feelings. This deals 6d6 mental damage (DC 21 basic Will save). On a critical failure, the target also becomes stunned 1.

MANA WASTES MUTANT COMMUNITIES

Rumors circulate in Alkenstar of mutant settlements deep in the Mana Wastes. In these settlements, mutants have reportedly banded together for survival in the harsh environment, though accounts differ on whether such communities welcome and shelter lost travelers or eliminate non-mutants who stumble upon them.

ABERRANT, NOT ABLEIST!

The trope of the mutant is a common one in speculative fiction but often draws deeply on concepts that fear and mock anyone with an appearance that falls outside of a perceived norm. When creating a mutant, be careful to avoid any traits that might match real-world deformities or disabilities that people might have—a giant wolf mouth in the middle of a mutant's stomach is okay, but having a simple withered limb or a swollen face might be inappropriate for a mutant character.

Mana Wastes Mutant

The erratic magical energies of the Mana Wastes can warp and twist creatures foolish or unlucky enough to be trapped in them. The physiological effects of this exposure vary in scope from grotesque full-body transformations to more subtle changes to the skin or senses, and they're frequently accompanied by changes in disposition, motivation, or temperament.

MANA WASTES MUTANT ABILITIES

All Mana Wastes mutants gain darkvision (replacing low-light vision if the creature had it), and the DC to Recall Knowledge about a mutant increases by 2. The creature gains the mutant trait. They usually have one or two of the following abilities, or potentially three if the mutant is 9th level or higher. If you apply these abilities to an existing creature, either raise the level and adjust the statistics, or remove some of the creature's abilities to make room for the new abilities. More Mana Wastes mutant abilities and creatures are on pages 84–85 of *Pathfinder Adventure Path #179: Cradle of Quartz*.

MANA WASTES MUTANT ABILITIES

Select two of the following abilities, or potentially three if the Mana Wastes mutant is 9th level or higher. These abilities should relate to the manner that the base creature used magic in life or to the nature of the wild magic that caused their mutation. You can also create new abilities or adapt others from monsters or classes to fit the theme.

Caustic Pustules Whenever the mutant takes piercing or slashing damage, creatures adjacent to the mutant take 1d6 acid damage (basic Reflex save). The damage increases to 2d6 if the mutant is at least 8th level and 3d6 if the mutant is at least 15th level.

Chameleon Skin The mutant can change their coloration to match their surroundings. They don't need cover or concealment to attempt to Hide with a Stealth check.

Eldritch Attraction (enchantment, mental) A creature who casts a spell within 30 feet of the mutant must succeed at a Will save or spend its next action to Stride toward the mutant. It can't Delay or take any reactions until it has obeyed the compulsion.

Energy Blast ❖❖ (evocation, primal) Choose an energy type; this ability gains that energy type as a trait. The mutant gains some sort of physical alteration to their shape that suggests how they trigger their energy blast, be it numerous pustules on their body, an extra limb, or an additional opening in their throat to exhale the blast as a breath weapon. Choose whether the mutant creates a 60-foot line of energy or a 30-foot cone of energy when they activate this ability. The energy deals 1d6 damage per level with a basic Reflex save. The mutant can't use Energy Blast again for 1d4 rounds.

Energy Resistance The mutant has strangely colored skin or fur and gains resistance to a single type of energy damage. The amount of energy resistance gained depends on the mutant's level.

Mutant's Level	Energy Resistance
2 or lower	2
3–7	5
8–14	10
15+	15

Grasping Tentacle The mutant grows a writhing, serpentine appendage, granting them a tentacle Strike (an agile unarmed attack that deals bludgeoning damage), and the Grab ability with that Strike. If they had any agile attacks, the damage dealt by their tentacle should be roughly the same as the damage dealt by those attacks. If they had only non-agile attacks, their tentacle should deal three-quarters that damage.

Hulking Form Increase the mutant's size by one category. Decrease their AC by 1, increase their HP by 1/10 their normal maximum HP, and increase the reach of all their melee Strikes by 5 feet.

Hungry Maw A mouth full of razor-sharp teeth opens somewhere on the mutant's body. They gain a maw Strike (an unarmed attack that does piercing damage roughly the same as the damage dealt by their most damaging melee attack), and they gain the Vengeful Bite reaction.

Vengeful Bite ↷ **Trigger** A creature critically hits the mutant with a melee unarmed Strike or a non-reach melee Strike; **Effect** The mutant makes a maw Strike against the triggering creature.

Increased Speed The mutant's limbs change, or they grow new limbs to accommodate their mutation. Either one of their existing Speeds increases by 20 feet or they gain a new Speed (such as fly or swim) of 15 feet.

Magic Hunger The mutant gains the ability to detect the source of any magic within 30 feet as an imprecise sense.

Mirror Thing ❖ (arcane, concentrate, polymorph, transmutation) The mutant takes on the specific appearance of any Small or Medium humanoid they can currently see. This doesn't alter their statistics, but it might change the damage type of their Strikes.

Revolting Appearance (arcane, aura, visual) Details of the mutant's appearance are disturbing and unnatural in the extreme. A non-mutant living creature who begins their turn within 60 feet of the mutant must succeed at a Fortitude save or become sickened 2. A creature who succeeds at its save is then temporarily immune to the aura for 24 hours.

Sprouted Limb The mutant grows an extra leg, increasing their Speed by 10 feet.

Too Many Eyes Countless eyes sprout on the mutant's skin. They gain all-around vision.

OTHER MUTANTS

The Mana Wastes are notorious for the production of mutants, but the strange energies of the Spellscar Desert are far from the only phenomena that can transform a creature into a mutant. You can use the rules for creating a Mana Wastes mutant to create any sort of mutated creature, such as one that might result from exposure to otherworldly radiation in Numeria, succumbing to planar effects from a chaotic outer plane, imbibing a potent mutagen like the notorious milk of Lamashtu, or suffering potent side effects from a ritual gone catastrophically wrong.

MUTANT GNOLL HULK

Separated from their pack during a prolonged storm of wild magic, the Mana Wastes mutant gnoll hulk transformed into a gigantic, ravenous creature.

MUTANT GNOLL HULK

CREATURE 9

CE LARGE GNOLL HUMANOID MUTANT

Perception +17; magic hunger (imprecise) 30 feet
Languages Common, Gnoll
Skills Acrobatics +18, Athletics +21, Intimidation +16, Survival +15
Str +6, **Dex** +3, **Con** +4, **Int** +2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +3
Items *+1 striking battle axe*, composite longbow (20 arrows), leather armor

AC 26; **Fort** +21, **Ref** +18, **Will** +15
HP 195
Vengeful Bite ↷

Speed 25 feet
Melee ❖ *battle axe* +22 (magical, sweep, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d8+12 slashing
Melee ❖ maw +21 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d12+12 piercing
Ranged ❖ composite longbow +18 (deadly d10, volley 30 feet), **Damage** 1d8+9 piercing
Pack Attack A Mana Wastes mutant gnoll hulk deals 1d4 extra damage to any creature who's within reach of at least two of the Mana Wastes mutant gnoll hulk's allies.
Rugged Travel A gnoll ignores the first square of difficult terrain it moves into each time it Steps or Strides.

VOLATILE INGREDIENT

Sandrolus Steg, one of Alkenstar's most infamous crafters of alchemical ammunition, once tried to cultivate a pod of gunpowder oozes as an unlimited source of incendiary material. Luckily, his research notes were lost in the explosion that destroyed his lab.

Ooze, Gunpowder

Gunpowder oozes are explosive gunpowder given life. By necessity, crafters of explosives and firearms are a careful lot, but even the best safety habits can be thwarted by greed, distraction, or carelessness. The release of toxic byproducts from gunsmithing would be an environmental problem anywhere, but when volatile runoff seeps into the Mana Wastes, it can interact with wild magic, causing a living, explosive nightmare.

A gunpowder ooze is a pockmarked, charcoal gray mass that slithers across the blighted verge between Alkenstar and the Mana Wastes with the sound of sizzles and sudden pops. It pursues and consumes any sort of organic matter, firing bullet-like projectiles to bring down prey. The ooze instinctively avoids fire, so travelers forced to camp in known gunpowder ooze territory often light bonfires despite the danger of advertising their presence to the Mana Wastes' other residents. Suggestions that local populations of oozes be weaponized, periodically put forward by unwise Alkenstari and Mana Waste tacticians, are uniformly shot down by cooler heads; those who attempt to proceed anyway usually meet explosive ends.

GUNPOWDER OOZE — CREATURE 14

N LARGE MINDLESS OOZE

Perception +22; motion sense 120 feet, no vision

Skills Athletics +28

Str +8, **Dex** +3, **Con** +6, **Int** –5, **Wis** +2, **Cha** –5

Motion Sense A gunpowder ooze can sense nearby creatures through vibration and air or water movement.

AC 29; **Fort** +28, **Ref** +21, **Will** +24

HP 400; **Immunities** critical hits, mental, piercing, precision, slashing, unconscious, visual; **Weaknesses** fire 20

Combust Due to the volatile nature of its composition, the gunpowder ooze reacts explosively when exposed to open flame. Any time the gunpowder ooze takes fire damage from a source other than a gunpowder ooze's combust or gunpowder residue, it explodes, dealing 15d6 fire damage to creatures in a 15-foot emanation including itself (DC 34 basic Reflex save). When the gunpowder ooze combusts, it automatically splits as long as it has 10 or more HP.

Split When a gunpowder ooze that has 10 or more HP is hit by an attack that would deal slashing or piercing damage, it splits into two identical oozes, each with half the original's HP. One ooze is in the same space as the original, and the other is in an adjacent, unoccupied space. If no adjacent space is unoccupied, it automatically pushes creatures and objects out of the way to fill a space (the GM decides if an object or creature is too big or heavy to push).

Speed 20 feet, climb 20 feet

Melee ❖ pseudopod +29 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d12+14 bludgeoning plus gunpowder residue

Ranged ❖ blast +26 (propulsive, range increment 60 feet), **Damage** 3d8+10 bludgeoning plus 3d6 fire and gunpowder residue

Gunpowder Residue (fire) A creature hit by the gunpowder ooze's pseudopod or blast is coated in explosive material unless it succeeds at a DC 34 Reflex save. If a creature makes an attack with a firearm, takes fire damage, or uses an action, activity, or item with the fire trait while coated with the residue, the residue explodes, dealing 7d6 damage to the creature and all adjacent creatures (DC 34 basic Reflex save). The residue remains active for 24 hours, until it's ignited, or until it's scrubbed off (an activity that takes at least 10 minutes and requires soap and water). A creature can only be coated with one layer of gunpowder residue at a time.

Quantium Golem

The long war between Nex and Geb spawned many animate weapons, but while a citizen of Quantium might run screaming from any product of the fleshforges, they barely bat an eyelash at the ground-shaking stomp of the two titanic, deadly constructs that stride outside their city walls. Crafted by the wizard-king Nex ages ago after a devastating attack by Geb's undead forces, including the harrowing benthic reaver, the Quantium golems are meant to protect the capital in case of Nex's absence. These twin golems ceaselessly keep vigil over the city, ready to cut down any invaders that menace Quantium.

Twenty feet tall and crafted from a supernaturally smooth material, the two guardians are a matched set, one of crimson and one of emerald. Wielding swords the size of giants, the guardians relentlessly destroy anything that threatens the city, particularly any undead that might invade the country from Geb. With the mythic Crux of Nex as a power supply, the golems are inexhaustible and nearly indestructible.

QUANTIUM GOLEM — CREATURE 20

RARE | N | GARGANTUAN | CONSTRUCT | GOLEM | MINDLESS

Perception +36; darkvision, defender's link, lifesense 120 feet

Skills Athletics +38

Str +10, **Dex** +8, **Con** +7, **Int** −5, **Wis** +8, **Cha** −5

Items *+3 greater striking bastard sword*

Defender's Link Each Quantium golem automatically knows the Hit Points, conditions, afflictions, and location of the other.

AC 47; **Fort** +35, **Ref** +32, **Will** +32

HP 325; **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, fire, healing, magic (below), mental, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious; **Resistances** physical 20 (except adamantine)

Golem Antimagic harmed by sonic (9d10, 3d10 from area or persistent damage); healed by fire (area 3d10 HP); slowed by cold

Paired Reconstruction When reduced to 0 HP, the Quantium golem is destroyed; however, it magically reforms 24 hours later at full HP and free of all conditions and afflictions unless its twin golem is also destroyed.

Vulnerable to Banishment Casting a *banishment* spell on a Quantium golem disrupts its connection to the Crux of Nex. If targeted by such a spell, the golem is enfeebled 1 and slowed 1 for 1d4 rounds.

Speed 50 feet

Melee ❖ *bastard sword* +39 (magical, two-handed d12), **Damage** 3d8+18 slashing

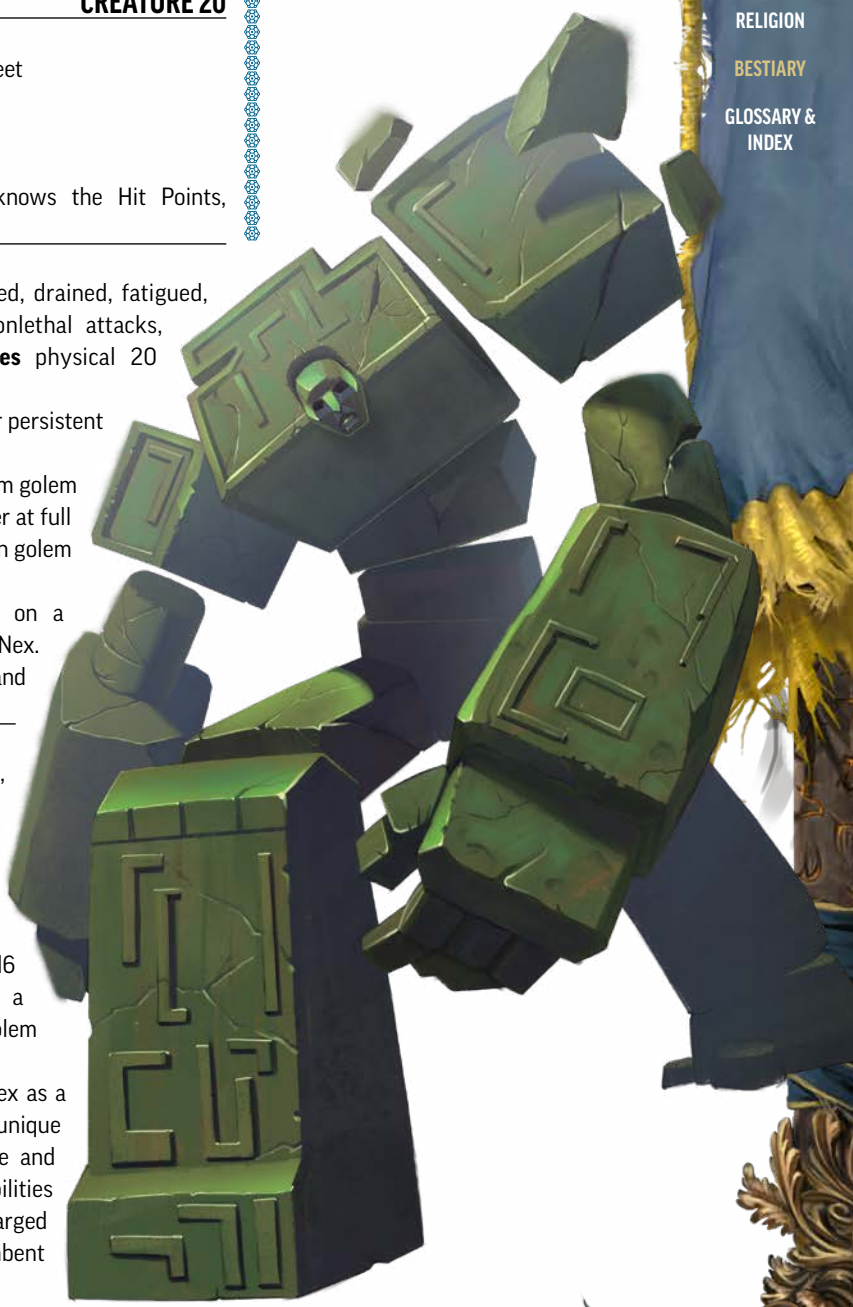
Ranged ❖ eye beam +36 (magical, range 120 feet), **Damage** 4d8 fire plus 4d8 energy (see Twin Defenders)

Lambent Beam ❖❖ (arcane, evocation) The Quantium golem's eyes take on a brilliant glow and it unleashes an arc of destruction dealing 10d6 fire damage and 10d6 energy damage (see Twin Defenders) to creatures in a 120-foot line (DC 42 basic Reflex save). The Quantium golem can't use Lambent Beam for 1d4 rounds.

Twin Defenders The Quantium golems were created by Nex as a matched set: one of crimson and one of emerald, each a unique entity. The crimson golem is imbued with blazing fire and crackling lightning; its eye beam and Lambent Beam abilities deal fire and electricity damage. The emerald golem is charged with caustic power and flame; its eye beam and Lambent Beam abilities deal acid and fire damage.

ETERNAL PATROL

The pair of golems remain within 1 mile of Quantium, walking a constant circuit counterclockwise around the city. The golems position themselves to remain at opposite ends of the city, and they only pause in their rounds if attacked or obstructed. The golems take the most direct approach to eliminating hindrances.



Ratajin

Most commonly found in Vudra and Jalmeray, ratajin aren't so much twisted by curses as they are molded by the lingering effects of curses inflicted on generations millennia past. The difference lies in understanding the original ratajin characteristics. No curse gave ratajin four eyes on a slender face, nor triple-jointed, hypermobile legs and multiple arms. Nor did curses provide ratajin with skin tones of all hues within the color spectrum. Instead, these residual curses have given each ratajin distinctive geometric markings all across their body. Every ratajin also experiences a cursed twist on their senses, altering how they view and interact with the world around them. Some ratajin visualize the world in shifted, indescribable color spectra. For others, sounds physically manifest as feelings on their skin. Haunting melodies of past actions might whisper in the wind behind one ratajin, while another can be awake only during hours devoid of sunlight.

While particular curse manifestations are passed along family lines, each ratajin's worldview can offer a unique perspective. Ratajin tend to be receptive to new ideas, making them well-suited to tackle complex situations. They often prefer to focus on difficult problems, working without rest until they reach a solution. What satisfies the definition of a worthy pursuit varies with individual ratajin, from tinkering with new applications of technology to uncovering secrets of centuries-old magical tomes. Their intellectual approach to problems can make ratajin especially useful in situations requiring delicate words, and their quick thinking serves them well as adventurers when the time comes for action. These same characteristics also make them capable merchants and scholars.

Earning a ratajin's trust can prove difficult. Their large-scale communities often collaborate to devise clever solutions that ensure equitable treatment among people, but each community varies greatly due to the different needs of the inhabitants. Outsiders who require too much help too quickly might cause a ratajin to withdraw, believing their guest incapable of adjusting to life's many hurdles. Poorly chosen words of pity or meaningless sympathy toward the nature of a ratajin's unique sensory experience can also cause lingering resentment.

A Peculiar Exception

Jalmeray's stigma toward curses and the cursed leads some outsiders to wonder why ratajins, who are supposedly marked by the aftereffects of such dire magic, are held in esteem. Most natives of Niswan find the question nonsensical, insisting ratajins aren't cursed, though the Curse Shepherds of the nation are known to be less discerning on the distinction when it comes to other peoples.

Ratajin Mastermind — Creature 2

RARE | CG | MEDIUM | HUMANOID | RATAJIN

Perception +7; low-light vision

Languages Common, Elvish, Gnome, Ratajin, Vudrani

Skills Acrobatics +7, Arcana +7, Crafting +7, Deception +8, Diplomacy +6, Occultism +7, Society +9, Stealth +7

Str +1, **Dex** +3, **Con** +0, **Int** +3, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +2

Items leather armor, rapier

AC 18; **Fort** +6, **Ref** +11, **Will** +7

HP 30

Outsmart ↷ **Trigger** A creature attacks while the ratajin mastermind is flat-footed; **Effect** Due to planning, the ratajin mastermind can react quickly to poor situations. The ratajin mastermind isn't treated as flat-footed to the attack, and the triggering creature is flat-footed to the next attack made before the end of the ratajin mastermind's next turn.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ❖ rapier +11 (deadly d8, disarm, finesse), **Damage** 1d6+4 piercing

Ranged ❖ shortbow +11 (deadly d10, range increment 60 feet, reload 0), **Damage** 1d6+3 piercing

Spellscar Fext

Spellscar fexts are spellcasters who were destroyed by wild magic or wellspring surges they tried—and failed—to control. The magical feedback that snuffed out their life warped and animated their flesh, twisting them into shambling undead. Spellscar fexts stand 6 feet tall with disproportionately long arms that end in clusters of waving magical tendrils.

Almost all who became spellscar fexts entered the Mana Wastes to harness the power of the area's wild magic. Once transformed, the desire for magical power becomes a spellscar fext's singular motivation. The creatures focus their attacks on magic users they encounter, attempting to kill them and strip their magic. Unfortunately for a spellscar fext, their transformation makes their entire being inimical to magic. They're unable to cast even the simplest of spells. They grasp destructively at magic they can never hold.

Difficult for the unprepared to destroy permanently, spellscar fexts harry trade routes known for shipping magical goods and repeatedly attack arcane workshops on the borders of the Mana Wastes. They're particularly dangerous to spellcasters traveling alone, as battling the creatures might trigger a wellspring surge that could destroy the lone magic user.

As the fext's vulnerability to glass weapons has become more well known, enterprising gunsmiths in Alkenstar have begun crafting glass ammunition, an uncommon item that costs the same as cold iron ammunition.

SPELLSCAR FEXT — CREATURE 7

UNCOMMON | CE | MEDIUM | UNDEAD

Perception +15; darkvision, magic sense (imprecise) 30 feet
Languages Common, Necril
Skills Acrobatics +13, Arcana +17, Athletics +17, Occultism +17
Str +6, **Dex** +2, **Con** +1, **Int** +4, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +2

Magic Sense (arcane) The spellscar fext detects the source and school of each source of magic within 30 feet as an imprecise sense.

AC 25; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +15, **Will** +17; +1 status versus magic
HP 100 (negative healing), regeneration 10 (deactivated by glass); **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Weaknesses** glass 10

Unstable Feedback ↻ **Trigger** A creature Casts a Spell on the spellscar fext, and the spellscar fext either succeeds at its saving throw versus the spell or the caster fails the spell attack roll against the spellscar fext; **Effect** The caster of the triggering spell undergoes a wellspring surge (*Secrets of Magic* 250). Even if several spellscar fexts use this reaction after succeeding at a save against the same spell, the spellcaster undergoes only one wellspring surge.

Speed 25 feet
Melee ❖ fist +18 (agile), **Damage** 2d8+8 bludgeoning

Grasp Power ❖ (abjuration, arcane) **Requirements** The spellscar fext's last action was a successful fist Strike; **Effect** The spellscar fext attempts a counteract check against a single spell affecting the creature (counteract level 4, counteract modifier +17). If the check is successful, the creature also takes 6d6 mental damage (DC 25 basic Will save).

SIMPLIFIED FEEDBACK

If you prefer to simplify the ability, creatures affected by the spellscar fext's Unstable Feedback ability are subject to an explosion of energy that deals 2d6 damage per spell level of the triggering spell in a 10-foot burst (basic Reflex save at the caster's spell DC). Since this ability is always bad for the caster, and some wellspring surges aren't as detrimental, it represents a power boost for the spellscar fext, so be careful about using it in especially challenging encounters with spellscar fexts.

MARCHING ORDERS

The Field of Maidens was once used as a landmark to clearly define the border between Geb and Holomog. It has become less and less reliable in recent years as the statues move slowly north, step by bloody step. Some believe the petrified warriors still follow their final orders to wage war on Geb. They're particularly vicious when fighting other undead, hacking them into unrecognizable pieces, as several Gebbite patrols have learned the hard way.

Stone Sister

Stone sisters are the tragic undead remains of an ancient Holoma army, petrified en masse by the necromancer Geb. The armies of Holomog were once a dominant force in the region, repelling several invasions from powerful rivals. However, when they sought to expand into the nation of Geb, their campaign quickly ended. Shortly after crossing Geb's southern border, the entire army was struck by a terrible curse that turned every warrior into a stone statue. Now known as the Field of Maidens, the statues have stood frozen for centuries, weapons in hand.

Yet some of these warriors possess a will even stronger than stone. When approached, there's a chance the spirits of the fallen will animate their statues and attack outsiders with the same deadly coordination they had in life.

STONE SISTER — CREATURE 6

RARE | N | MEDIUM | UNDEAD

Perception +11, darkvision

Languages Celestial, Drooni (can't speak)

Skills Athletics+17, Deception+14, Intimidation+14, Stealth +12

Str +5, **Dex** +2, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +4

Items scimitar

AC 24; **Fort** +17, **Ref** +11, **Will** +11

HP 75, negative healing, reconstitution, stone flesh; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Resistances** physical 5 (except adamantine)

Reconstitution Until Geb's curse is broken, any stone sister who's destroyed gradually reforms in her original shape. A stone sister who's reduced to 0 Hit Points will reform after 24 hours, while one reduced to rubble or dust might take a year or more to reform. Stone sisters who are removed from the Field of Maidens always attempt to return to it when they reconstitute.

Stone Flesh A stone sister is made of a bizarre stone that never stops bleeding from numerous cracks along her skin. She reacts to certain spells in unique ways, as listed below.

- Spells that alter earth, such as *shape stone,* either deal 3d10 points of damage or heal 3d10 Hit Points, as decided by the caster. If the spell is specifically harmful or beneficial to earth and stone, the GM might decide it can only harm the stone sister, or only heal her.
- *Stone to flesh* doesn't revert a stone sister to flesh and blood but instead weakens her. She loses her resistance to physical damage for 1 minute. If she's reduced to 0 Hit Points during this time, she's permanently destroyed and can't reform.

Attack of Opportunity ↷

Speed 25 feet

Melee ❖ scimitar +17 (earth, forceful, sweep), **Damage** 1d6+8 slashing plus 1d6 bludgeoning and curse of stone

Melee ❖ fist +17 (agile, earth), **Damage** 2d6+8 bludgeoning plus curse of stone

Curse of Stone (curse) The creature must succeed at a DC 21 Fortitude save or become clumsy 2 (clumsy 3 on a critical failure) and gain a +1 status bonus to AC as their skin hardens to stone. The clumsy condition can be temporarily relieved for 24 hours by casting *stone to flesh* on the cursed creature but can't be removed or reduced by any other means short of removing the curse; during this time, the cursed creature also no longer receives the status bonus to AC.

Statue ❖ (concentrate) Until the next time she acts, the stone sister appears to be a statue. She has an automatic result of 34 on Deception checks and DCs to pass as a statue. Since the Field of Maidens is filled with thousands of statues just like her, most of which aren't stone sisters, it's incredibly difficult to recognize her true nature.

Ugvashi

These razor-plated pangolins—about the size of small ponies—are the traditional pack animals of halflings from Casmaron, though the ugvashi's serrated plates and tendency to curl up make them ill-suited as mounts. Ugvashi first arrived in the Impossible Lands onboard the Thousand and One ships of Maharajah Khiben-Sald, alongside peafowl, giant squirrels, and other fauna from Vudra. In the modern day, ugvashi are such a recognized sight that many people forget they aren't a native species. Though some feral populations exist, mainly on the island of Jalmeray, the hostile environs of Nex and the Mana Wastes mean ugvashi mainly appear in domestic settings, usually as working beasts among the Nearic halflings of western Nex.

Though ugvashi are mostly harmless, they're somewhat more dangerous than their smaller cousins, causing a stir when reckless citizens attempt to pet the creatures. Ugvashi scales are razor sharp, and their large and blunted digging claws can be deadly due to their size. People who attempt to steal the animals or ride them without training often receive moderate cuts for their trouble. However, ugvashi are generally curious and very friendly, and more than one visitor or wilderness explorer has found a baby ugvashi toddling after them and pawing at their boots.

Nearic halflings also paint their ugvashi with distinctive warding patterns and sigils, some of which are actually effective and provide a surprise for opportunistic thieves or predators. Though due consideration is spent on protecting an ugvashi's cargo, the animals themselves have proven to be tempting targets as well, especially for their meat. With blighted landscapes making animal husbandry impractical and magical pollution leaving local seafood with a distinct aftertaste, a number of Nexian and Mana Wastes peoples have developed a taste for ugvashi. Since the animals lack an aggressive temperament, it often falls to their caretakers to discourage such predations through whatever means necessary.

Ugvashi shed their scales each winter, allowing for the plates to be collected safely and turned into quality armor and other pieces of craftwork. Nearic halflings rarely trade or sell these items, however, out of fear that they might lead to more people trying to steal their ugvashi.

Ugvashi — Creature 3

N Medium Animal

Perception +8

Skills Athletics +11, Survival +8

Str +4, **Dex** +1, **Con** +4, **Int** −3, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +1

AC 19; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +6, **Will** +8

HP 40

Speed 20 feet

Melee ❖ body +12, **Damage** 1d12+4 bludgeoning plus serrated plates

Melee ❖ claw +12 (agile), **Damage** 1d10+4 slashing

Defensive Curl ❖ The ugvashi coils into a ball to defend itself. It gains a +2 circumstance bonus to AC. Any creatures who make unarmed attacks against the ugvashi while it's in its Defensive Curl are exposed to its serrated plates, as if they'd taken damage from the ugvashi's body. The ugvashi can't move while in its Defensive Curl, but it can unfurl as an action.

Serrated Plates Creatures who take damage from an ugvashi's body must attempt a DC 17 Reflex save or take 1d4 persistent bleed damage (2d4 on a critical failure).

Pest Control

Ugvashi have a strong fondness for termites as well as the ability to seek them out to feast on them. Their tongues can extend up to 5 feet in length and flatten to almost nothing, allowing them to harvest insects embedded in the deepest parts of a wooden building's infrastructure. After Nearic merchants offload their supplies, they often rent out their docile ugvashi to architects and builders to assist with vermin infestations. This practice has led to a solid relationship between the rare traveling halflings and the artisans of nearby villages. A halfling caravan coming through the gate is an encouraging sight for everyone.

GLOSSARY & INDEX

This appendix contains brief explanations and page references for the content presented in this book, including new rules, locations, deities, organizations, and so on. New rules content is marked with an asterisk (*).

Aakriti Neutral god of discovery, life, ooze, and potential. Known as the Evershifting. 310

aasimar A planar scion descended from a celestial. *Advanced Player's Guide* 34–36

Abadar Lawful neutral god of cities, law, and wealth. Known as the Master of the First Vault. *Gods & Magic* 12–13

Abaddon A vast wasteland plane that's the source of the River Styx and home to the fiends known as daemons. The plane is neutral evil. *Gamemastery Guide* 142

Absalom The largest city in the Inner Sea region, Absalom was founded by Aroden and is located on Starstone Isle. *Absalom, City of Lost Omens*

Absalom Reckoning The most commonly used calendar in Avistan and Garund, consisting of 52 weeks across 12 months. The current year is 4722 AR.

Abyss An endlessly winding, chaotic evil plane full of dangerous chasms. Home to the fiends known as demons. *Gamemastery Guide* 142

agathion A group of celestials with bestial features, born of the enlightened souls of good mortals. Agathions are native to Nirvana. *Bestiary 3* 10–13

Age of Destiny The age ranging from –3470 AR to 1 AR during which many of Golarion's civilizations became well-established and flourished. *World Guide* 7

Age of Lost Omens The age brought about by the death of Aroden, ranging from 4606 AR to the modern day. *World Guide* 8–9

Age of Serpents The age in which the first mortals came to be on Golarion, taking place sometime after the Age of Creation. Characterized by the serpentfolk empire, the first of Golarion's great empires. *World Guide* 6

alchemical items* 106, 306

Alkenstar A city-state located in the central Mana Wastes. The duchy is known for unique technologies, including firearms. 64–69

Alkenstar City The capital of the nation of Alkenstar. 70–87

amurrun See catfolk. *Advanced Player's Guide* 8–11

ancestry feats* 126–128

animal companion* 107

Arazni Neutral evil god of the abused, dignity, and unwilling undeath. Known as the Unyielding. 311, Gods & Magic 54

armor* 106

Arundhat Neutral good god of blossoms, diplomacy, and scent. Known as the Sacred Perfume. 312

Aspis Consortium A prominent trade organization that spans the Inner Sea region and often opposes the Pathfinder Society. Known for its unscrupulous practices. *Character Guide* 65

Astral Plane A transitive plane through which all souls pass on their way to their final judgment. *Gamemastery Guide* 140

asura Lawful evil extraplanar creatures born from the gods' mistakes, who seek to destroy the gods' creations. They primarily reside in Hell. *Bestiary 3* 22–25

avatar forms* 310–319

Avistan One of Golarion's continents. Comprises the northern half of the Inner Sea region. *World Guide* 7

Azlanti The athletic humans of the ancient empire of Azlant. Previously thought lost during Earthfall. *Character Guide* 10

Barrier Wall A large mountain range spanning across southern Osirion, Rahadoum, and Thuvia. *Mwangi Expanse* 152–153, *World Guide* 50–51

beastkin Humanoids that can partially or fully transform into animal forms. *Ancestry Guide* 78–81

Bekyar This major Mwangi ethnic subgroup originated in southwestern Garund. *The Mwangi Expanse* 24

Besmara Chaotic neutral god of piracy, sea monsters, and strife. Also known as the Pirate Queen. *Gods & Magic* 55

bestiary* 323–339

Bhopan A small island located within the Obari Ocean with strong connections to the First World. 110–125

Biloko Crocodile-snouted fey that are particularly violent and hunt in the southern reaches of the Mwangi Expanse. *The Mwangi Expanse* 126, 294–295

Bleaching A process brought on by ennui that decolors and ages a gnome, typically culminating in the gnome's death.

Bonuwat A major Mwangi ethnic subgroup living along Garund's western coast. *The Mwangi Expanse* 25

Brigh Neutral god of clockwork, invention, and time. Known as the Whisper in Bronze. *Gods & Magic* 56

Casmaron One of Golarion's continents, located immediately east of the Inner Sea region. *World Guide* 7

catfolk Humanoids with feline features and a love of discovery. *Advanced Player's Guide* 8–11

Chamidu Neutral good of children, fertility, and wild beasts. Known as the Roar of the Storm. 313

changeling The offspring of a hag and a member of some other humanoid ancestry. *Advanced Player's Guide* 30–31

Cheliax A nation in southwest Avistan, known for its ties to diabolic rule. *World Guide* 98–100

class feats* 108, 126, 128–129

curses* 176–177

Darklands The immense area of caverns, vaults, and passages beneath the surface of Golarion. *World Guide* 7–8

dhampir The mortal offspring of a vampire and a member of another ancestry. *Advanced Player's Guide* 32–33

Diomazul Lawful evil god of austerity, retribution, and war. Known as the Serpent of Eighty Blades. 314

Dongun Hold A dwarven Sky Citadel located in the central Mana Wastes and part of the Grand Duchy of Alkenstar. 88–105
Draconic The ancient language of dragons.
drow Descendants of ancient elves who live within the Darklands.
duskwalker A planar scion infused with the supernatural energy of psychopomps. *Advanced Player's Guide* 37–38
Earthfall A cataclysmic event in –5293 AR in which a swarm of meteorites fell upon Golarion and caused massive destruction, ending the Age of Legends and starting the Age of Darkness.
Ecanus A large city in southern Nex that serves as the nation's seat of military power. 268–285
equipment* 106
Ergaksen One of three major dwarven groups. Ergaksen live on the surface of Golarion. *Character Guide* 17
Ethereal Plane A transitive plane that overlaps with the planes of the Inner Sphere. It allows for travel within the Inner Planes. *Gamemastery Guide* 141
familiar* 220
fetchling A humanoid ancestry that fled to and has been shaped by the Shadow Plane. Typically refer to themselves as kayals. *Ancestry Guide* 82–87
First World A plane that overlaps the Material Plane and is said to be a "rough draft" of existence. It is home to vibrant landscapes and fey. *Gamemastery Guide* 141
fleshwarp* A humanoid transformed so completely by outside forces that they are now a unique ancestry. 28–29, *Ancestry Guide* 88–93
Galt A nation in eastern Avistan, known as a land of constant political upheaval and revolution. *World Guide* 126
Garund One of Golarion's continents. Its northern portion makes up the southern half of the Inner Sea region. *World Guide* 8
Geb A nation in eastern Garund that's a haven for undead. 130–139
geniekin* An umbrella term for planar scions descended from beings from the Elemental Planes. 30–31, *Ancestry Guide* 98–119
ghoran* An intelligent plant ancestry that maintain long lives by rejuvenating themselves from seeds. 34–39
gnoll Gnolls are humanoids that resemble hyenas. *The Mwangi Expanse* 110–113
Golarion Golarion is the most important world in the Lost Omens campaign setting. *World Guide* 6–9
Golden Road This region in northern Garund and part of southeastern Avistan includes Katapesh, Osirion, Qadira, Rahadoum, and Thuvia. *World Guide* 48–59
Green Faith A neutral philosophy that proclaims natural forces are worthy of attention and respect. *Gods & Magic* 96
grippli Gripplis are a family of frog-like humanoids. *The Mwangi Expanse* 118–121
Grondaksen One of the three major dwarven ethnicities. They typically live underground. *Character Guide* 17
gunslinger way* 107–108
hazards* 230–232
Hellknights A set of knightly orders with a strict focus on enforcing law and order. *Character Guide* 76–85
Hoba Dukuza The capital of the island of Bhopan. 119–125
hobgoblin Hobgoblins are a sturdy, clever people with a propensity for militaristic order. *Character Guide* 48–51
Holtaksen One of the three major dwarven ethnicities. Commonly live atop mountains and along their slopes. *Character Guide* 18–19
Houses of Perfection Martial arts schools in Jalmeray that emphasize techniques tied to the elements. 196–197
ifrit A type of geniekin descended from a being from the Plane of Fire. *Ancestry Guide* 100–103
Inner Sea region The collective name for the area surrounding the Inner Sea, consisting of Avistan and the northern part of Garund.
Inner Sea The sea cradled between Avistan and Garund, created by the reshaping of the region during Earthfall.
Jalmeray An island nation off the eastern coast of Garund that's home to immigrants from the distant region of Vudra. 180–185
Jalmeri heavenseeker archetype* 224–225
Jaric A halfling ethnic group that mostly dwells in the Barrier Wall mountains of Garund. *Character Guide* 41
Jotun The language of giants and related creatures.
kashrishi* A stout ancestry bearing distinctive crystal horns and inherent psychic abilities. 40–45
Katapesh A nation located on the northeastern coast of Garund and known for its markets. *World Guide* 51–52
Keleshite A human ethnicity in the Inner Sea region, common among the nations of the Golden Road. *Character Guide* 6–7
Kulenett These underground dwarves live primarily beneath the mountains of Geb. 136–138
Lastwall A now-destroyed nation initially founded to watch over Gallowspire, the former prison of the lich Tar-Baphon. *World Guide* 40–41
leshy An ancestry of living plants animated by primal magic. *Character Guide* 52–55
Likha Neutral god of history, sound, and truth. Known as the Teller. 315
Lion Blades A secretive group of spies, the Lion Blades defend Taldor and its interests from enemies. *Character Guide* 65
lizardfolk An ancestry of reptilian humanoids. Also known as iruxi, they are extremely adaptable and patient. *Character Guide* 56–59
Maelstrom The collective term for the uncharted and chaotic areas on the metaphysical borders of the planes of the Outer Sphere. Home to the monitors known as proteans. The plane is chaotic neutral. *Gamemastery Guide* 144
Magaambya The oldest academy of arcane learning in the Inner Sea region. Located in the city of Nantambu. *Character Guide* 96–105
magic items* 178–179, 234–235, 304–305
Mahathallah Lawful evil god of death, fate, and vanity. Known as the Dowager of Illusions. 316
Mana Wastes A region located in eastern Garund known for its areas of dead and wild magic. *World Guide* 79–80
Material Plane The plane located with the Inner Sphere that encompasses the known universe, including Golarion and its solar system. *Gamemastery Guide* 138–139
Mechitar The capital of the nation of Geb. 140–157

Milani The chaotic good god of devotion, hope, and uprisings. Also known as the Everbloom. *Gods & Magic* 66

Mualijae The collective term for the three elven peoples located within the Mwangi Expanse. *World Guide* 92–93

Mwangi Expanse The area of northern central Garund consisting of most of the regions in and around the Mwangi Jungle, including the nation of Vidrian. *The Mwangi Expanse*

nagaji* A traditionalist ancestry with reptilian features and serpentine heads. 46–51

Nantambu A city-state located on the western edge of the Mwangi Jungle. *The Mwangi Expanse* 232–245

Necril The language of ghouls and other intelligent undead.

Negative Energy Plane A plane located within the center of the Shadow Plane and filled with destructive energy. Also known as the Void. *Gamemastery Guide* 139

Nex A nation located on the eastern coast of Garund, famous and notorious as a center for arcane study. 244–249

Nidal A nation along the southwest coast of Avistan watched over by the evil god Zon-Kuthon. *World Guide* 102–103

Nirvana A peaceful plane filled with idyllic landscapes and home to the celestials known as agathions and angels. The plane is neutral good. *Gamemastery Guide* 144

Niswan The capital of the island nation of Jalmeray. 186–203

Numeria A nation in northeast Avistan known for its unique and powerful technology, originally salvaged from a fallen starship. *World Guide* 29–30

Obari Ocean One of Golarion's oceans. Located between Casmaron and Garund. *World Guide* 9

Oenopion A large city in central Nex that's home to the nation's alchemical production. 286–303

Old-Mage Jatembe The great wizard who founded the Magaambya and helped rekindle the art of magic during the Age of Anguish. *Legends* 62–65

oread A type of geniekin descended from a being from the Plane of Earth. *Ancestry Guide* 104–107

Osirion A nation in northeastern Garund that boasts countless tombs and temples from the time of the empire of Ancient Osirion. *World Guide* 53–54

Pathfinder Society A globe-trotting organization dedicated to exploration and the reclamation of lost relics. *Pathfinder Society Guide*

planar scion A blanket term for a group of versatile heritages representing people descended from a distant planar ancestor or with a strong tie to another plane.

Plane of Water An Elemental Plane saturated with endless oceans, bogs of mud and silt, and clouds of steam. *Gamemastery Guide* 140

Prada Hanam A city on Jalmeray's eastern coast. Home to a mysterious structure known as the Murmur Dome. 204–219

Qadira A nation located in southeast Avistan. Also the westernmost satrapy of the great Padishah Empire of Kelesh. *World Guide* 54–55

Quantium The capital of the nation of Nex. 250–267

Ragdya Neutral god of humor, lessons, and monkeys. Known as the Sage on the Mountain. 317

Rahadoum A nation located in northwest Garund, known for its prohibition of all religious practice. *World Guide* 55–56

ratfolk An enterprising humanoid ancestry who resemble rats. They commonly refer to themselves as ysoki. *Advanced Player's Guide* 20–23

Ravithra Lawful neutral god of judgment, karma, law, and vengeance. Known as the Chalice-Bearer. 318

Red Mantis A group of assassins who serve the mantis god Achaekek and reside on Mediogalti Island. *World Guide* 65–66

River Styx A vast river that originates in Abaddon, traverses the Outer Sphere, and ends at the base of Pharasma's Spire in the Boneyard.

serpentfolk Serpentfolk are a family of serpentine humanoids. Also known as sekmins. *The Mwangi Expanse* 129, *Bestiary 2* 236–249

Shackles A collection of islands off the western coast of Garund, known for rampant piracy. *World Guide* 67–68

Shadow Plane A plane located on the far side of the Ethereal Plane that's a twisted reflection of the Material Plane. *Gamemastery Guide* 141

Shadowtongue A language common among creatures from the Shadow Plane as well as Nidalese people.

shieldmarshal archetype* 108–109

Sodden Lands A region on the northwest coast of Garund ravaged by the Eye of Abendego. *The Mwangi Expanse* 178–181

spell catalysts* 177–178

spells* 306–307

student of perfection feats* 222–224

suli A geniekin who embodies a mixture of elements and is typically descended from jann. *Ancestry Guide* 108–111

sylph A type of geniekin descended from a being from the Plane of Air. *Ancestry Guide* 112–115

Taldor A nation located in southeast Avistan. This empire in decline seeks to reclaim former glory. *World Guide* 128–129

Tar-Baphon A necromancer killed by Aroden, Tar-Baphon rose again as the lich king known as the Whispering Tyrant; he threatened the Inner Sea region for centuries before being imprisoned. In 4719 AR, he broke free to terrorize the region once more. *Legends* 104–105

tattoo (trait) A type of item that's drawn or cut into a creature's skin, usually in the form of images or symbols. *Secrets of Magic* 164–165

tattoos* 305–306

tengu Humanoids who resemble crows. *Advanced Player's Guide* 24–27

Thassilonian The language of the people of Thassilon and New Thassilon.

Thuvia A nation located in north-central Garund, known for its production of the sun orchid elixir. *World Guide* 56–57

Tian A group of human ethnicities originally hailing from the nations of Tian Xia, now common along major Avistani trade routes, including the Crown of the World. *Character Guide* 8–9

Tian Xia One of Golarion's continents. Located far to the east of the Inner Sea region, past Casmaron. *World Guide* 9

tiefling* A planar scion descended from or influenced by a fiend. 32–33, *Advanced Player's Guide* 39–41

Ulfen A human ethnicity common in the northern reaches of Avistan. *Character Guide* 9

undine A type of geniekin descended from a being from the Plane of Water. *Ancestry Guide* 116–119
Urgir Unofficial capital of the Hold of Belkzen.
Usaro A city of evil beings in the central Mwangi Jungle. *The Mwangi Expanse* 266–273
Ustalav A nation located in northern central Avistan that's threatened by countless terrors living and undead. *World Guide* 45
vanara* An inquisitive ancestry with primate-like features and prehensile tails. 52–57
velstrac A family of fiends from the Shadow Plane that are associated with pain and agony. All velstracs possess some form of disturbing gaze. *Bestiary 2* 280–285
Vineshvakhi Lawful neutral god of guardians, locks, sacrifice, and vaults. Known as the Pain of Purity. 319
vishkanya* An ancestry with snake-like features and powerful venom. 58–63
weapons* 107–108, 220–221
wild magic* 232–234
Yled The largest city in the nation of Geb. 158–175

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