**Overview of the Thirteenth Meridian House**

**Current Binder Lord:** Voth Ikarian

**Founding Binder Lord:** Rexaney "Bramblethumb" Pelago

**{NPC's}:** Welri Haradya - Halfling Chief of Research

Zoop Keljik - Gnomish Lead Engineer

**House Interests**: Engineering and City Planning, Construction, Exploration, Cartography, Merc Work

**Word of Binding:** Incarnadine

Before Binding

Though life for the teen-aged Rexaney Bramblethumb was not altogether terrible, she was still a slave under the self-styled "General" Istvan Roscovius. Rosco's Rascals compromised the foolish, the greedy, and the societal dregs that had nothing left to lose. Rexaney was forced to dig trenches and lash palisades. Eventually she was singled out for her ability to deftly carry out orders on the field, to the point of anticipating her master's whims. This skill was cultivated through years of painfully learned self-preservation. At Roscovius' side, Rexaney picked up the odd bit of command and logistics, as well as a more precise collection of scars.

For all his bluster, when the Army of Thirteen sprung their trap on the mighty Tarrasque, Roscovius froze. Used to commanding from the rear, being this near the beast unnerved him. As the other 12 harpoons flew through the air and the Tarrasque's bellowed split the air, Roscovius' nerve and bowels emptied, and he ran screaming from the battlefield. This act of cowardice broke the already frayed moral of his troops. Pandemonium ensued.

Rexaney stood transfixed, staring at the final leg thrashing. If it was not pinned soon, the Tarrasque would find purchase enough to leverage itself out of its bindings and route the entire Army of Thirteen. In a daze, Rexaney took up the abandoned ballista and screamed out a plea, a command, a promise. Her well-aimed shot pierced the final leg, fully ensnaring the monster.

After Binding - Birth of House Pelago

Rexaney was almost wholly unprepared for leadership. She fell back into self-preservation and took the name Pelago to distance herself from her halfling roots. Loath to acknowledge her deeds and station, other factions begrudgingly came around to a dismissive respect as Rexaney and the remains of her work crews lead the fortification of their position. When the Shard Wars died down and the population and economy rebounded, she recruited heavily the eager dispossessed to her militia crews. The brightest and strongest would go on to form the House Guard Corp of Engineers.

Rexaney did her best to keep up with the politicking and machinations. She consolidated her power internally against sycophants and usurpers. Each new wave of refugees brought a housing boom that filled the Pelago coffers. She slowly lost sight of her past, caught up in deluded hedonism and what respect the other Binder Lords feigned. After many years of trying to conceive, a clerical augury declared her barren. This news, followed by the horror of the 12th Meridian Crisis, broke Rexaney. She cloisterd herself in the house tower, paralyzed with shame and regret that stemmed from the choices that abandoned those she could have helped. She marshaled her advisors to find someone willing to take up the mantle demanded by the command word she invoked more than two centuries prior. They found Voth Ikarian.

Voth Ikarian, Binder Lord of the 13th Meridian

After several years advising Rexaney, and following her death in AB 274, Voth went through ascension rights. He enacted sweeping changes to the house. Voth now oversees the Engineers and Explorers directly, to the point of laboring alongside the masses on a project. The engineers and tradesmen of House Pelago are well known for their innovative designs and superb craftsmanship. A client is just as likely to purchase designs exclusively, however, so they can secretly alter them before construction. Voth adjusts prices accordingly to encourage that his builders get a contract. The Explorers work to better understand the surrounding region. They map landmarks, note the movements of potential hostiles, and survey the changes and damage to the ecosystem wrought by the Tarrasque. Engineers then follow to gather any resources worth salvaging to supplement the House's bottom line. Voth has also bought out several of the largest mercenary guilds. These groups are contracted back out and can double as added muscle for the E&E. The 13th House district parties are a legendary reprieve for the lower classes, but his rare appearances at more aristocratic events always have a business tone.

A disheveled halo of sun-bleached hair stands out against Voth's ruddy brown skin. Shorter than average, wiry, and dressed with a simple elegance, most would dismiss Voth as unsalted until he opens his mouth. An easy smile molds a steady voice that demands attention. He knows when best to apply the truth or a lie, and avoids breaking promises if at all possible. Voth puts this to good use in periodic town halls where anyone can attend and petition or ask questions. This also gives Voth a ready audience to talk about philosophy, policy, and the wider world.

Voth enjoys playing the various factions off of each other. The low perceived threat of his house and strategic greasing of palms puts Voth in front of many potentially sympathetic ears. Voth moves between several meetings and projects throughout town daily with seemingly inexhaustible energy. His rhetoric poses simple questions, framed so that his audience can easily envision themselves as the hero or benefactor of any outcome. His primary targets are the fifth through twelfth houses, where he's slowly been seeding the idea that the first four have grown too powerful for their own good. Voth is currently trying to ally with the 7th House in a joint effort of unprecedented infrastructure revitalization.

13th House Manor and Militia

The tower is an expression of Rexaney at the pinnacle of her hedonism. Grand arched windows and expressive railways tease at the excesses inside. Baroque frescos line the walls. Voth moved the main room from the pinnacle to the ground floor to appear more accessible and a number of other renovations on the grounds are underway to walk back excess.

The militia is mostly comprised of salted emigrates. The only real requirements for enlistment are a strong back, a desire to learn, and a willingness to follow orders. They take their execution of the law very seriously, thought the punishments met out for those of lower class are often eased, when the militia can get away with it. The dual responsibilities of militia and engineer is taxing and brutal, and deaths are not uncommon. It is still a better opportunity then most would have otherwise. Success in work can lead to a more permeant position on the elite Engineer Corp that make up the House Guard. Workshops are set up to practice or teach masonry and carpentry. The barracks also have tastefully disguised warehouses for materials storage. Though still present, there are significantly fewer water dens and flesh pits than other House manors.

NPC's

Zoop Keljik the Gnome came to Salt in Wounds out of boredom. Looking for somewhere he could practice his more eccentric talents, he found a welcome home with Rexaney Pelago. Zoop's architectural design work was exquisite, so he could be forgiven if one occasionally exploded and maimed someone. Zoop was promoted to Lead Engineer after several decades of promising work. Several more decades later and Zoop grew bored again. This evaporated after being approached by a stranger with an interesting business proposition.

Welri Haradya was born in the middle off Rexaney's reign. Her diminutive stature made it difficult to participate in construction, but she took a shine to the more complex math behind them. Rexaney moved her off the line to apprentice under Zoop, who opened her mind to a wealth of knowledge. She later sought out and obtained membership with the Sage's Council at Rexaney's behest. She was in the middle of mutation experimentation when Voth came to power. Welri was reassigned to field research, leading teams into both the CapCaps and Heartsblood Marsh. Panic looms when danger is near, but she is astoundingly quick to overcome it if it accompanies potential for scientific insight.

Secrets

Voth is no outsider. When pressed, he brushes off questions of his lineage, stating that he had parents like anyone else who struggled to make ends meet. He heard of the great city of Salt in Wounds where anyone could make their fortune. Truthfully, Voth is a scion of the House of the 1st Meridian. As a child growing up, he was slow to learn his place in the social hierarchy. Voth constantly challenged his betters and questioned the status quo. His altruism was ridiculed and beaten out of him, though in fact, this only tempered the steel of his desire. Voth snuck out of Salt in Wounds in the back of a merchant caravan in his late teens, determined to find someplace to do good in the world. He was sorely disappointed. Voth rambled from city to city, staying long enough to become more disillusioned with his fruitless efforts. He began a different approach, cutting down those who were high instead of lifting those who were low. Voth began to see results. He didn't mind that his hands were bloody so long as someone else could smile. His own status increased as well, as Voth realized he could be a champion of the common man and pocket a fair bit along the way.

Voth's interest in the CapCaps is three-fold. He tasked his Corp to either find a new way to bring water into the city or a better way to dispose of the visceral slag of butchery. A cabal of Blood-Merchants believes that the underground spaces could be repurposed as housing, and Voth has sent engineers down to investigate. Ultimately, knowledge of the CapCap passages could be useful for orchestrating a coup down the road.

Voth is courting ties to the Sage's Council to partner in an exploration of the Heartsblood Marsh. He believes there could be untapped resources amongst the corruption that could rival the choicest butchered glands. There may also be solutions to clean the blood slag at the bottom of the aqueduct, giving Voth a legal loophole to take as much water as possible on the cheap. To that end, he has sent envoys to the Grippli in the swamp to establish rapport, thought several groups have not returned. Voth is also in conversation with the Marrow Miners to switch the Meridian contract out from under the God-Butchers.

In her final years Rexaney remembered why she spoke the word "incarnadine" as she fired the harpoon. It was a promise to her kin and kind that once the Tarrasque's final drops of blood washed the land, her oppressors would be next. Survival and then acclimation to a life of pleasure dulled this memory, until the Crisis. Rexaney sought out others who might feel similarly, and through great risk eventually made contact with other Enders. With the Binder Lord lacking an heir, the Enders saw an opportunity to name someone who could turn the tide of opinion back towards the 13 Armies' original purpose.

Though he doesn't know the full identities of his benefactors, Voth has no desire to release the Tarrasque. The potential resources are immeasurable. Voth is content to take his dark money while serving as a mouthpiece. His own plans to break the aristocracy run parallel to his handlers, and Voth serves to profit when the populace suggests that he steer the formation of a new government.

Zoop Keljik has been recruited as spy for the 1St House. Word reached [Binder Lord of the 1st House] that Voth was returning from his self-imposed exile. Whether he was brought home or made an example of, he would be useful. [Binder Lord of the 1st House] tracked Voth to the 13th House, and after pulling some strings, made Zoop a very generous offer. Voth was to be watched, reported on constantly, and if it came to it, removed. Suddenly, Zoop found he was no longer bored in the slightest.