

CASTLEIONS OF THE NORTH



AN ICY FRONTIER FOR

EXALTED



**BASTIONS
OF THE NORTH™**

BY KRAIG BLACKWELDER, GENEVIEVE COGMAN,
GEOFFREY C. GRABOWSKI AND ANDREW WATT



CREDITS

Authors: Kraig Blackwelder, Genevieve Cogman, Geoffrey C. Grabowski and Andrew Watt

Storyteller Game System Design: Mark Rein•Hagen

Developer: John Chambers

Editor: Scribendi Editorial Services

Art Direction: Brian Glass

Artists: Newton Ewell, Craig Grant, Andrew Hepworth, Aaron Nakahara, Melissa Uran, Team ColdFuZion, Andie Tong and UDON with Eric Kim and Chris Stevens

Cover Art: UDON with Chris Stevens and Espen Grundetjern

Book Design: Brian Glass



1554 LITTON DR
STONE MOUNTAIN, GA
30083
USA

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INTRODUCTION




*Day after day, throughout the winter,
We hardened ourselves to live by bluest reason
In a world of wind and frost . . .*
—Wallace Stevens, “Meditation Celestial & Terrestrial”

Creation is a fantastic place, full of wonders untold, but it is a world often as dangerous as it is fabulous. And there is no place where this truism is better illustrated than in the Far North. The Northern reaches of the **Exalted** world feature breathtaking vistas of white stretching as far as the eye can see, broken only by ranges of snow-capped peaks jutting high into the air like gnarled frozen fingers reaching desperately for the ever-distant

sun. And within the uniform Northern white, dangers loom, both the natural hazards of avalanche, blizzard and frozen fog and the more insidious threat of the Winter Folk, the Varajtul cannibals and the living dead.

Against these myriad dangers stand the **Bastions of the North**, strongholds of civilization standing firm against the forces of nature, the inhuman menaces and the culture of barbarity that



pervades the North. Of all the Northern states, three in particular stand as shining examples of the Northlanders' ingenuity, independence and indomitable will to make the best of what little their harsh land offers: Whitewall, Gethamane and the Haslanti League.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Bastions of the North offers players and Storytellers alike a trio of Northern nations in which to base a series. Each nation is a power worthy of Exalted interest (no matter what type of Exalt one might be), and, given the nature of the region, each nation's existence is a precarious one. It would not take much effort for a Circle of Exalts to make itself invaluable to any of these states — or to upset the delicate balance of forces that allow each state to survive in the Northern wastes. Will your characters play heroes or villains on the savage stage that is the Northern Threshold? And will being a hero to one state necessarily mean being a villain in another? Answering such questions may well be the heart of a Northern game.

The book is broken down as follows:

The **Introduction** is what you're currently perusing. It explains the book's contents and suggests how best to make use of the material within.

Chapter One: Whitewall, the Once-Holy City features the first of the North's bulwarks of civilization. Located squarely center in the Northern Threshold, the city is threatened on one side by the dead and on the other by the Winter Folk. However, the rulers of Whitewall, a triumvirate of powerful spirits known as the Syndics, have successfully negotiated a treaty that protects both the city proper and the road of imperishable stone that leads from the city's gates to the distant Inland Sea. However, it is a fragile peace. The people of Whitewall are safe only within the city's eponymous walls; an invitation made to the wrong stranger might well invite the denizens of the Underworld or the Wyld in to wreak havoc, so visitors are viewed with suspicion and no small amount of dread as harbingers of all the evil that lies just beyond the city walls.

Chapter Two: Gethamane, the City Under the Mountain, whose name means "sanctuary" in the ancient tongue of the Old Realm, is the

THE BULL OF THE NORTH

The threat of the Yurgen Kaneko, the so-called Bull of the North, and his icewalker army hangs above the Northern nations like a sword of Damocles, always threatening to fall. Though the Bull of the North's army makes no appearance in these pages, the prospect of invasion by an army of savages, supported by gods and demons and led by an entire Circle of Solar Anathema preys upon the hearts and minds of all the peoples of the region.

Until quite recently, the Bull of the North was considered a fairly minor threat, the latest in a long line of barbarian warlords attempting to unite the disparate icewalker tribes under one banner. There were rumors of his divine powers, to be sure, but it was believed by most that he was simply a God-Blood or perhaps even an outcaste Terrestrial Exalt who'd impressed a few tribal chieftains and thereby forged an underequipped, untrained "army" of sorts. It was assumed that this ragtag army would fold when it met its first real resistance, and the status quo would be restored.

Even after the Bull's first few victories, the Northern states' confidence was hardly shaken. Popular opinion still held that this barbarian rabble and its charismatic leader would be unceremoniously put down, especially when it became clear that the Realm had taken an interest.

Then came the Battle of Futile Blood, and the threat posed by Kaneko became clear. The Bull of the North was more than some petty God-Blood, more than even one of the Dragon-Bloods. He was an Anathema, one of The Forsaken, and he and his cohorts had laid waste to the military forces of Creation's greatest power and decimated the ranks of one of the Realm's Great Houses.

Now, fear grips the whole of the North. Though the Bull now concerns himself with conquering the Linowan with the aid of his new Haltan allies, there is no doubt that, at some point, Kaneko will lead his army of savages, gods and demons and Anathema back to the lands of his birth. And if the Bull wants to conquer them, it is feared by many that there is not one Northern state that can stand against him.

second of the North's great cities focused on in this supplement. Hewn from the living rock of a mountain at the height of the First Age, the so-called City of Temples is as mysterious as it is intriguing. None know the origin of the city — and none suspect the true magnitude of the horror that lies beneath it. Within Gethamane, farmers tend the city's fungi gardens, priests placate its inscrutable gods and guards patrol its well-lit corridors; while beneath it all lies the key to Gethamane's true origins — and possibly to its ultimate downfall.

Chapter Three: The Haslanti League, Nascent Empire The third great state of the North is, in fact, a confederation of nine city-states, the Haslanti League. Individually, none of the nine is powerful enough to match the other powers of the region, but, combined, these city-states are a force with which to be reckoned. The up-and-coming power of the North, the Haslanti are a people desperate to balance the benefits of civilization with their tribal roots. Whether this great experiment will succeed and become the true power of the region or fail and fall back to barbarity remains to be seen. Beneath the Haslanti city-state of Crystal, what is perhaps the greatest threat to the young League remains buried beneath a frozen glacier. Soon, this clever young nation's mettle will be tested, and it remains to be seen if the forerunners of Second Age innovation can stand against a threat dating back to the time of the Shogunate.

Appendix: Swar, the City of Formlessness Constrained, Which Men Call Old Crystal, and What Lies Within is an adventure that reveals the secret of what lies beneath the Haslanti city of Crystal. Suitable for all Exalted types, the mystery of Old Crystal presented here is a ready-made game that may be played as anything from a one-off adventure to an ongoing series.

LEXICON

What follows is a brief glossary of terms important to the three Northern metropoli covered in this book. It is included to provide readers with a handy resource to reference when reading the following chapters.

air boat: These Haslanti inventions are hot-air dirigibles powered by specially constructed sails and large pedal-driven propellers.

Archon: The Archon is the ceremonial head of state of the Haslanti, a roving goodwill ambassador who serves for a term of six years.

Bull of the North, the: Yurgen Kaneko, the so-called Bull of the North, is a Dawn Caste Solar Exalt who has forged many of the North's disparate icewalker tribes into an army capable of defeating even well-trained and -equipped Realm legions. His rather grandiose ambition is to overthrow the Scarlet Dynasty and found a new Solar empire in its place with him at the head.

Council of Oligarchs, the: The Council is an elected body of 12 Haslanti that acts as the national government of the League. Though it controls the military in times of war, it is chiefly a legislative body responsible for interpreting the League's laws and acting as the nation's high court, and does not wield executive power.

cthritae: This *Darkbrood* is common to the *underways* beneath Gethamane. Cthritae are man-sized centipedes seemingly made of black rock, whose clicking mandibles drip mercury. Their reproductive cycle demands they lay their eggs within the flesh of living warm-blooded prey, so the cthritae often maim those who wander into their clutches and deposit eggs within them that hatch within a few hours to devour the hosts.

Darkbrood: A Darkbrood is any species of inhuman monster native to Creation's *underways*.

Deft Hands: This political party of the Haslanti represents the interests of the Haslanti tribes and tribal rights.

Dole, the: The Dole is the ration of food from the fungus gardens a citizen of Gethamane receives for providing some form of service to the city.

Dreamseer: A Dreamseer is one of the national shamans of the Haslanti League. Storytellers and dream interpreters, Dreamseers are easily recognizable with their red conical hats and the tattoo of the rune for "dream" under the right eye.

emerald: An emerald is any area in the Haslanti League where arable land has been blown by the wind from a *greenfield* to be deposited elsewhere. Such fertile areas are actively preserved by the Haslanti and used as additional farmland.

Ennead: The Ennead are the nine gods of ice, dreams and fate worshiped by the Haslanti people.

Great Ice, the: The Great Ice is the Haslanti term for the ever-frozen region of ice that runs from Diamond Hearth in the Far North to Icehome and almost to the city of Gethamane that the League claims as its own.

Great Northern Road: see *Holy Road*

greenfield: A greenfield is an area of fertile land sheltered by high cliffs that was literally carved



from the granite of the frozen North by the powerful mechanisms of the First Age. Though many have been lost in the centuries since, the Haslanti League holds and maintains a number of them, the largest of which shelters its capital Icehome.

Holy City, the: see *Ondar Shambal*

Holy Road: Also known as the *Traveler's Road* and the *Great Northern Road*, this imperishable white-stone highway dates from the First Age and connects the city of Whitewall to the far distant Inland Sea to the south.

iceship: These are sailing ships built on steel runners so they may travel across the frozen ice of the White Sea as easily normal vessels traverse open water.

ice weasel: An enormous relative of the common weasel, the ice weasel is a fierce Northern predator famed for its cunning and tenacity. Ice weasels are sometimes domesticated by the Northlands' cruel fae and used as hunting hounds by them.

Janissary Vault, the: The Janissary Vault is the premier provider of hired muscle in the city of Gethamane. Though often employed by Guildsmen, the thugs of the Janissary Vault are not affiliated with the Guild and their services may be acquired by anyone for the right price.

kyzvoi: The kyzvoi were a race of creatures artificially created by First Age Solar sorcerers to pit against one another in gladiatorial matches. Kyzvoi combined features of both arachnid and mammalian predators and were bred to be more deadly with each generation.

Landless Party: This political party of the Haslanti represents those displaced by the League's Wyldfog Wars, who wish to go to war with the nearby icewalker and Tear Eater tribes in order to secure new farmland and hunting grounds.

Marama's Fell: This shadowland, located near Whitewall, grew out of a massive Shogunatera death camp built to exterminate the remnants of the Solar Exalted's sorcerously created artificial servitor races. Today, Marama's Fell is overrun with savage, inhuman ghosts and has thwarted even attempts by the Deathlords to tame it.

Master of Gethamane: This title is given to the hereditary ruler of Gethamane, a descendent of the city's God-Blooded founder Bethan Redeye.

Nine, the: see *Ennead*

Ondar Shambal: In the First Age, the city now known as Whitewall was known as Ondar Shambal, *the Holy City*. It was renown across Creation for as a center of religious study and contemplation, a

monastery-city dedicated to the worship of the Unconquered Sun.

Opal Spire: A First Age city founded in the Far North for the purpose of expanding the boundaries of Creation, Opal Spire fell during the Usurpation and was lost to history.

Outwall, the: The Outwall is the region of barren tundra inhabited by the Haslanti Hundred Tribes.

Profitable Men: This political party of the Haslanti represents those within the league who wish to accumulate more wealth and build a more civilized society.

resplendent chrysanthemum shrines: These shrines along *the Holy Road* are dedicated to various little gods dedicated to life, joy, springtime and renewal, and are used by *the Syndics* as a means of pushing back the edges of *Marama's Fell*.

summer exile: This is the more lenient of the two types of exile a criminal of Whitewall may suffer. Lesser crimes are punished with exile in either late spring or early summer, and those exiled are allowed to assemble a pack of food, clothes and money before they are sent away.

Syndics, the: These three identical spirits of ice and silver rule the city of Whitewall and have done so for the last 700 years.

Three Rules, the: These rules are the main source of Gethamane's law, forbidding "trespass on person, property or domain."

Traveler's Road: see *Holy Road*

underways, the: These are the myriad of tunnels that crisscross beneath the skin of Creation. Many First Age cities possess entrances to the underways, but none are so infamous — or so active — as those beneath Gethamane.

Vodak: Vodak is a hekatonkhire birthed from the blood of the first Primordial slain in the Primordial War. He now rests miles below Gethamane, though it is possible that the return of the hated Solar Exalted might coax him to rise again from the depths to bring quicksilver death to those who would give the Solars sanctuary.

Vorvin-Derlin: This brazen behemoth is a construct of the Primordial Isidiros, who designed it to defeat entire armies. After the Primordial War, the Solar Exalted defeated Vorvin-Derlin and banished him to Malfeas with his creator under the caveat that the creature might be summoned and commanded by the Exalted as if he were a Second Circle demon.

Wallport: *The Holy Road* running from Whitewall ends at the coast of the Inland Sea at this decrepit port town. Almost all cargo going to or

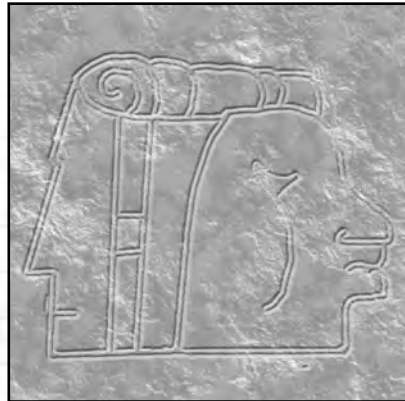
coming from Whitewall passes through the sea town of Wallport.

winter exile: This is the more severe of the two types of exile a criminal of Whitewall may suffer. Serious crimes are punished with exile at the height of the Northern winter., and those exiled forfeit everything they possess except the clothes on their backs. Given the circumstances,


this verdict is a veritable death penalty, as very few individuals can survive even a single night outside in such harsh conditions.

Winter Folk: The terrible Fair Folk of the North who prey upon those mortals unfortunate enough to fall into their ice-cold hands.

Zedakha: This tome is a compendium of dream symbols often consulted by *Dreamseers*.







CHAPTER ONE
**WHITEWALL, THE
 ONCE-HOLY CITY**



In the dark Second Age, a city with high white walls stands in the North, a beacon of stability and civilization in an increasingly savage region. The city stands proud, the largest city in that direction and one of a handful of bastions that choose, for whatever reasons, to endure the North's harsh climate, incursions by the Fair Folk and close proximity to shadowlands. The city's history, once glorious and inspirational, is now a curiosity known only to lore-masters and savants. While the city's modern inhabitants are thankful for the walls that surround them and the Traveler's Road that safely leads to the Inland Sea, the inhabitants have no idea where the walls or the road came from or whose effort built them or any hint of the true purpose of these structures.

HISTORICAL GLORY

Understanding the true significance of the great white walls that surround the city of Whitewall means understanding their origin. What the city is now is a far cry from what it was intended to be when it was created, but no one in the Second Age has cause to know that; though, if the history were discovered, the Chosen of the Sun might have a compelling new reason to take interest in the city — more, perhaps, than its current, comfort-driven residents would like.

ONDAR SHAMBAL

There has been a settlement of some sort in the place where Whitewall now stands since the end of the Primordial War. For most of the First Age, the area was a hermitage for the most pious adherents of the Unconquered Sun, monks and nuns who devoted their lives to service to their god. Between prayers, these faithful tilled the rich soil and grew food to nourish themselves for more prayer.

The foremost of these great monks was the Supreme Hierophant, Righteous Guide, an extraordinarily dedicated and powerful Solar priest of the Zenith Caste. Righteous Guide established the monastery-city of Ondar Shambal as an enormous community of agrarian monks toiling for the betterment of Creation and the glory of the Unconquered Sun.

Warrior nuns and monks who had dedicated their lives to the service of the Unconquered Sun built the Holy City as a place of meditation and retreat. They erected the city according to the most rigorous and exacting architecture and geomancy principles of the First Age. The city's buildings were constructed from a rare and beautiful snowy white granite found exclusively in the mountains to the north of the city, and, under the touch of the sun, the buildings seemed almost to glow. Most of these sturdy granite blocks were hand-carved by mortal stoneworkers



and then made perfect by the sanctifying touch of a Zenith Caste Solar Exalt, who then determined the most auspicious location for that particular block and placed it there personally. Construction was, clearly, very slow, but the city took shape around a Solar Manse in the center of a symmetrical design that extended radially.

Though the elegant arrangement of the city itself was intended to be a delight to the eye of the Unconquered Sun as he passed overhead, the architecture was dazzling when seen both from the ground and from above. From overhead, the city was an intricate mandala that appeared to coruscate and change as the nuns and monks went about their business in the streets, buildings and green spaces of the nascent city.

Once the monastery-city's buildings were complete, Righteous Guide directed the faithful to start work on a great circular wall. The yards-thick walls from which the modern city derives its name weren't intended to be massive, defensive structures for their own sake (although

they definitely are that). Rather, they were built as a powerful symbol representing the separation of secular space (the fields outside the city where the monks worked and practiced martial arts) and sacred space (the consecrated city within the walls where the residents fasted, prayed and meditated).

Three thousand faithful labored for 12 years to complete the Holy City, eschewing the use of most First Age technology in order to make a gift of their work to their god. It was, by far, the largest monastery in Creation, capable of housing over a million faithful within its shining walls. This sacred place was christened "Ondar Shambal," or "City of the Sun," and it was one of the spiritual wonders of the First Age. Prayer wheels dedicated to the Unconquered Sun spun day and night. Chants and hymns to the god, accompanied by flutes, bells and gongs, were amplified and focused toward the heavens by the city's spiritually active architecture. Any one of the city's three spiritual advantages — the geomantically innova-

tive and spiritually resonant architecture, the block-by-block blessing of the buildings or the mandala layout of the city — by itself would have enhanced the city's prayers significantly, thereby making them inherently more pleasurable to any deity to whom they were addressed. All three of these factors in concert resulted in a gestalt effect that amplified the power of prayers by orders of magnitude, and these potent entreaties could be heard throughout the city (and, sometimes, for miles beyond the massive walls) as a constant, comforting murmur.

Because Ondar Shambal had been dedicated to the Unconquered Sun from the laying of the city's first block and because the city was dedicated to this deity utterly, the Unconquered Sun was, and, technically speaking, still is, what savants of the Second Age have come to call the city father, or local god, of the city. This was widely known and celebrated in the First Age, although the powerful Zenith Caste Solars took care of all such business on the god's behalf.

For centuries, the fields outside were tended by a city of priests, monks and nuns. The faithful used the proceeds from their farming to maintain and fortify the monastery-city and to provide food and clothing for the monks within. When revenues exceeded expenditures, as often happened, the extra money was put away to prepare for less fortuitous days. All who felt called to the service of the Unconquered Sun, Exalted or otherwise, were welcome to take up residence in Ondar Shambal, so long as they were willing to tend the fields or otherwise make their lives a mission of service to the Unconquered Sun.

As a temple city dedicated to the mightiest of the gods, Ondar Shambal also benefited a great deal from the divine largesse of gods who sought the favor of the Unconquered Sun. In the First Age, Ondar Shambal was blessed with temperate weather. The fields around the city were green year-round, soft rains came mostly at night and snowfall was a rare occurrence.

The community as a whole was gifted by a number of gods and spirits. An earth elemental lord created an extensive series of safe, orderly caverns beneath the city for the storage of tools and foodstuffs, a god of architecture blessed the enormous white walls with strength and endurance, a goddess of hot springs established a pure and fragrant spring in the center of the city to provide hot water to the pious — and so it went. Various ministers in the Bureau of Seasons even ensured that the weather was as optimal as possible for farming the rich fields around Ondar Shambal. Unfortunately, while a certain degree of asceticism was practiced by Ondar Shambal's faithful, true asceticism became a challenge in the presence of all the divine gifts heaped upon the city.

Ancient crystal codices, now long lost or hidden, claim that the Unconquered Sun himself strode the halls of Whitewall on at least two occasions as he gave the

monastery-city and its Exalted priests his personal blessing. Such favor was largely due to the prayers of Righteous Guide, the foremost Zenith Caste Solar of his day. The Solar Exalted of Ondar Shambal called the Calibration Gate to the city regularly, and the city's Zenith priests were frequent visitors to the Celestial City of Yu-Shan. The white granite spires of Ondar Shambal became synonymous across Creation with devotion, piety and rightness of action. Even when things began going awry elsewhere in the Old Realm, a protective mantle of humility and stability appeared to protect the faithful of the Holy City.

THINGS FALL APART

After several centuries of serving as the monastery-city's chief priest, Righteous Guide left to create the Holy Road south to the sea as a private mission of service to the city and the Unconquered Sun. The other priests and many of the faithful begged to join Righteous Guide, but he refused them, claiming that his spiritual quest was to be a private devotion.

And, sometime shortly thereafter, things began to break down.

With Righteous Guide's departure, the hierarchy slowly, subtly began to stray from the founder's mission, nudged, unbeknownst to them, by the Primordial Curse. Doctrinal disputes soon arose and created factions within the governing body of priests. Initially, all factions went out to the road to ask Righteous Guide what they should do. His only answer — "Pray" — never seemed to provide the kind of guidance they were seeking. Some of the other priests, feeling that Righteous Guide was the favorite of the Unconquered Sun, grew bitter and resentful of the chief priest's status.

Over the decades that followed, the character of Ondar Shambal's religious community changed. Though the walls remained as stalwart as ever, they failed to maintain the boundaries between secular and sacred space. As Righteous Guide was consumed with the creation of the Holy Road, the culture of Ondar Shambal, slowly and in fits and starts, grew more worldly and less monastic. Lengthy prayers and fasting gave way to shorter prayers and small meals, and then gave way to sumptuous meals and no prayers at all. The prayer wheels fell silent. The hymns and chanted sutras grew faint before fading away entirely.

This change was due, in part, to the incredible wealth that flowed into the city — not only in revenues earned from the sale of produce but also in the form of donations from the pious who wanted to be mentioned in the prayers of Creation's holiest city. Money poured into the Holy City's coffers from across Creation. Solar kings and queens, too busy themselves to pray for their cities, sought the intercession of the faithful by making vast donations of wealth to Ondar Shambal. Those prayers were never



performed, but the residents of the Holy City were happy to grow fat on the tithe money anyway.

Finally, after 300 years of meditative labor, Righteous Guide completed the Holy Road to the south port; he returned to find, not a monastery, but a decadent farm city where the fields were haphazardly tended and fat, undisciplined citizens lived primarily on the donations of the gullible.

Righteous Guide snapped. In a state of deep spiritual despair, he assumed sole responsibility for the behavior of the wayward monks. In an attempt to atone — on their behalf — to the Unconquered Sun, he fell into a binge of penance that would have killed any mortal and many younger Exalts. In the city's central plaza, in front of horrified onlookers (who dared not approach him in his unstable state) the powerful Zenith flayed himself repeatedly with a barbed whip; such was his zeal that his blood splattered the walls of buildings 40 feet away. He wept his prayers to the Solar god, and his blood baptized the streets of the city. When he had lain bare the gleaming white bone of his ribcage, he would heal himself with Essence, only to begin the process all over again. After three weeks of this, Righteous Guide crawled into the Solar Manse to pray for guidance from the Unconquered Sun. A pall of shame hung over the city and its mortified residents. When he emerged a week later, Righteous Guide was physically healed, but deeply bitter. He personally drove the most errant “monks” and “nuns” from the city with blows of his mighty orichalcum staff.

And then, Righteous Guide left the city for Meru.

Through the use of his mighty powers of oration and persuasion, he made an impassioned, condemnatory speech to the Solar Deliberative proclaiming Ondar Shambal to be a city of the wayward, the weak and the venal. He enumerated the monastery-city's every fault and failing, named the sins of each apostate nun and monk and vituperatively mocked the city's pious reputation. Such was the power of his speech that many of the false faithful killed themselves out of shame before the oration was even complete. The news of Ondar Shambal's apostasy spread through the Old Realm like wildfire, and the (formerly) Holy City's mystique was shattered. Donations dried up instantly. The free ride for the falsely pious was over.

A NEW DAY DAWNS

For nearly two decades following Righteous Guide's devastating denunciation, Ondar Shambal was a shell of a city. Its architecture was still powerful and beautiful and spiritually attuned, but it was a temple without a congregation. The parasites had slunk away, leaving a few poor farmers and a handful of legitimate, if despondent, nuns and monks. A number of the fields were only tended some of the time. Squatters took up residence in the old cloisters. As a response to the deep sense of shame that permeated

the city, much of the old religious iconography was changed, removed or sold to collectors as the city slumped into its new, secular identity. It looked for a time as if Ondar Shambal was destined to become one enormous slum.

And then, a new Solar arrived.

Tenrae was a Twilight Caste sorceress of the Solar Circle, and her sworn husband was a powerful Lunar Exalt named Den'Rahin. Both were relatively young — neither had even been born yet when the war with the Primordials took place — but both were optimistic and ambitious, and they saw the plummeting fortunes of Ondar Shambal as an opportunity unparalleled anywhere else in Creation.

The reputation of Ondar Shambal had been so utterly ruined by Righteous Guide's oration that no one of any standing cared to have his name associated with the place; so when Tenrae and Den'Rahin proclaimed themselves rulers of the sparsely populated city, no one argued.

Tenrae and Den'Rahin reestablished the city as a successful farming community. Those who refused to work were forcefully invited to leave. Those who showed diligence and integrity were given more fields and, therefore, the opportunity to make more money.

Around this time, the city was renamed. The old name was held to be overly burdened with connotations of failure and decadence. The city was rechristened “Whitewall” after its most visible feature.

Tenrae and Den'Rahin also expanded the city's revenue sources by overseeing the creation of mines in the nearby mountains, which they had learned contained a myriad of rare ores and minerals (most notably blue and white jade) useful for various sorts of sorcery and engineering.

It was this last discovery that completed Whitewall's economic recovery. The additional money brought in by mining operations made the city unusually wealthy relative to the size of its population. Whitewall was a city of modest size by Old Realm standards; the city's population never did exceed a million, as most of the larger cities' did in the First Age, but Whitewall was considered a fortunate city — one where the quality of life was unusually high, and with good cause. The blessings the city had received when it was Ondar Shambal had never been revoked, and these sacred gifts contributed enormously to its quick recovery.

Tenrae and Den'Rahin, though young for Exalted rulers, were compassionate in their leadership and popular with the residents of their city. Their reputation and popularity were almost enough to gain them a reprieve from what was to follow.

THE SOLAR PURGE

The Solar Purge very nearly did not take place in Whitewall, and, without extraordinary effort on the part of the Sidereal Exalted, it wouldn't even have come close. Queen Tenrae, being far younger than most other Solar monarchs, had not fallen prey to the Primordials' Curse to



the extent that many of the older Solars had, and the people of the city, Dragon-Blooded and unExalted alike, did not feel unduly burdened by the rule of the queen or her consort Prince Den'Rahin. The worst that could be said of their reign was that they were, on occasion, benignly neglectful of their people as they went about their highly glamorous lives, but such was their charisma that the city's residents didn't care. The residents ran the city themselves without issue, perhaps out of some sense of redeeming the city from its past failure. If something truly pressing arose, the people knew they could petition their queen and expect her, or her consort, to act.

This left the Sidereal Exalted with a bit of a problem when it came time to purge Creation of the Solars. The Chosen of the Maidens lacked a base of support in Whitewall, as not even the Dragon-Blooded particularly wanted their rulers dead.

Another problem tied the hands of the Sidereals: Prince Den'Rahin refused to abandon his wife. He made it clear to early messengers that he, as her consort and battle-master, would die in her defense should any sort of action be taken against her. Prince Den'Rahin truly felt a bond of love with Tenrae, and he had no intention of selling her out to the Maidens' perfidious Chosen. While the Sidereals thought about twisting his love into something that more closely matched their goals, they were thinly stretched as it was, and Den'Rahin was clever and perceptive enough that he might well have sensed what they were doing.

As it happened, the Sidereals themselves were split in this instance — Queen Tenrae truly was leading in the way that the Solars were meant to lead — but the nascent Bronze Faction would not allow its decision (and, indirectly, its judgment) to be questioned: *all* of the Solars had to meet with destruction. A single countervailing instance could not be allowed to undermine the course chosen for the world by the Sidereals. And, they argued, whatever Tenrae might have been *then* had no bearing on the monster she was likely to become over time. (When they looked to the stars to get proof of this point, however, they weren't able to find it, but, as that didn't support their agenda, the Bronze Faction Sidereals glossed over the fact and moved ahead anyway.)

When Whitewall's Dragon-Blooded refused to abet the Sidereals, a group of 10 Chosen of Battles, Endings and Secrets were sent in to carry out the assassination of both Tenrae and Den'Rahin on the night of the Usurpation. Though the Sidereals were older and more experienced, several of them found their deaths in the sorcery of Tenrae and the claws of Den'Rahin. Only three of the Maidens' 10 Chosen survived the night. It was an unprecedented loss for the Sidereal Exalted.

By morning, the queen and her consort were dead. The battle and its consequences represented an enormous loss for the city. The ultimate tactics employed by both the

rulers and their assassins leveled large sections of the city, mostly in the vicinity of the city's enormous gate. Strong as the old buildings were, they could not withstand the stresses of such a battle. Whole neighborhoods were ground to dust, streets collapsed and the city's elegant and auspicious mandala pattern was effectively disrupted.

Over a span of many months, the structural damage suffered by the city was repaired, though the hasty rebuild never approached the structural or aesthetic perfection of the original.

Less amenable to repair was the spirit of the people. The citizens of Whitewall were plunged into shock by the death of their monarchs. The horror of what had happened — the fall of Queen Tenrae, the destruction of the presumably invulnerable Den'Rahin, the death of the Solars throughout Creation — was all almost more than the city could bear. There was a three-month period of mourning, but even as the period of mourning was observed, the city's elder Terrestrial Exalted were in meetings with the surviving Sidereals seeking rapprochement.

The Chosen of the Maidens were furious with the outcome in Whitewall. They had not foreseen the deaths of so many of their own, and they were enraged at the upstart Terrestrials for not following orders blindly. The Chosen of the Maidens dictated a severe — some alleged punitive — course of action for the Dragon-Blooded in Whitewall, demanding, under threat of death, that a smear campaign against the city's old rulers be started immediately. This path was to be the only one to reconciliation with the irate Sidereals — and the Terrestrials no longer had any recourse to a higher power. It was the Sidereals' wish that even if the queen and her consort were not seen as villains before their deaths, they most certainly would be *after* their deaths.

The Dragon-Blooded capitulated. Through the use of a broad range of propaganda tactics reinforced with Charms, the Terrestrial Exalted spread horrible, unfounded rumors about the secret behavior of the dead "Anathema" monarchs — the demonic worship, the human sacrifices, the sexual perversions — and the people of Whitewall slowly and grudgingly bought it. The change wasn't instantaneous, of course, but the Dragon-Blooded stayed rigorously on message, slandering the old rulers with lies that were too deliciously scandalous not to repeat and discuss.

It took nearly the first five years of the Shogunate before popular opinion finally, subtly, shifted against Queen Tenrae and Prince Den'Rahin, but it happened. Even then, however, a solid third of the city refused to believe the rumors and trusted their own memories of their rulers over the lies spread by the Dragon-Blooded.

THE SHOGUNATE

Whitewall was a nervous city during the Shogunate. The fall of Whitewall's popular monarchs, followed by

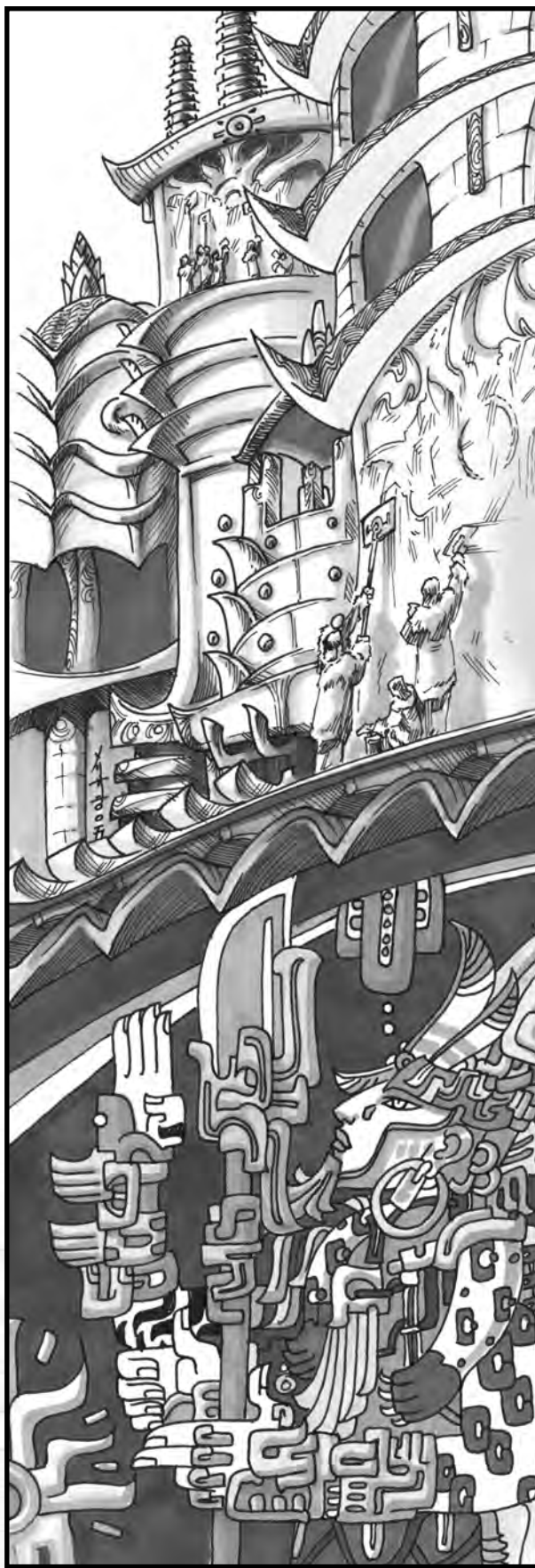


relentless slandering of their memory left the citizens of the city unsettled. They knew something was wrong with the events that had transpired; they just had no idea what it was. Over the years this sense of disease became permanent, evolving into what is now seen as the city's insular, paranoid character. The Shogunate was not a good time for Whitewall. Much of the city's standing in the Old Realm and many of the benefits of living there came directly from the presence of its Celestial Exalted rulers. Disillusionment with the Dragon-Blooded came to Whitewall much more quickly than elsewhere.

Whether the monarchs had been noble or vile (and everyone had their own opinions on the matter), daily life took a turn for the worse in Whitewall. The powerful spirits that had once blessed the fields surrounding Whitewall no longer felt obligated to serve the farmers of the city. Key pieces of equipment that kept the mines safe failed and could not be repaired or replaced. The first year after the death of Tenrae and her consort, nearly a quarter of the crops planted by Whitewall farmers failed, and one of the more lucrative blue jade mines suffered an explosion and a cave-in.

Resentment of the Dragon-Blooded was exacerbated when they began taking down or covering up works of art portraying the Unconquered Sun. Many of these remained from the days when Whitewall was Ondar Shambal, and the greatest of the art was seen as public treasure. In deference to a new religion sweeping the Shogunate that emphasized the Five Elemental Dragons, the Dragon-Blooded minimized the iconography of the Unconquered Sun as much as possible, even covering over architectural details with flags, banners, curtains and plaques. Still, even the Terrestrials were nervous about doing so — memory of the Celestial gods was not yet that distant — and the Dragon-Blooded opted to hide and cover such works rather than destroy them outright. Clay was used to fill in the carved symbols of the Unconquered Sun on the city's outside walls, which were then whitewashed to look like the white granite from which the city was built. (Although the whitewash never quite glowed in the sun the way the snowy white granite did.) Many ancient works of art remain immured in the most distant caverns beneath Whitewall, waiting to be rediscovered and viewed by the eyes of a new Age.

Unlike many First Age cities, Whitewall was not bound to the latest developments in Essence technology. The city's role as a farming and mining center made it comfortably wealthy but not as dependent on the grand works of the Solar priest-engineers as some cities. Consequently, the slow decay of the First Age's Essence technology took longer to hit Whitewall than many other more sophisticated or metropolitan cities. For Whitewall's citizens, the real disappointments of the Shogunate came not



in the form of failing technology but in disappointment with the Dragon-Blooded leadership.

While Tenrae and Den'Rahin were rigorously fair in their judgments, the biases of the Dragon-Blooded magistrates, on the other hand, were relatively blatant. The previous monarchs had brought glamour and charm to what was otherwise a simple farming city; the Dragon-Blooded seemed to embody banal corruption in all ways.

Tensions with the so-called Princes of the Earth grew, though at a glacial pace. Whitewall's citizens resented the Dragon-Blooded though the residents had never resented their Celestial Exalted leaders. The more the Terrestrials tightened their grip on the city, the more the city's residents acted out and undermined the efforts of the Dragon-Blooded. Had the Shogunate lasted longer, there's little doubt that Whitewall would have been the setting for an enormous rebellion. Every year that passed saw relations between Exalted and mortal worsen.

Making the situation worse was the steady growth of the shadowland southeast of the city. While the area had been declared off limits since immediately after the Usurpation, the shadowland's presence and, eventually, its sheer size became a serious nuisance and hazard to those living nearby and to anyone traveling through the area. The road to Cherak became totally impassable, and the ministers of the Shogunate appeared unable or unwilling to do anything about the problem.

When the rumors regarding what was *creating* the shadowland made their way back to Whitewall (see "Marama's Fell," below), public support for the Shogunate government eroded even further.

The Shogunate, as it turns out, did *not* last long enough for Whitewall's citizens to rebel, and the city's mortal populace remained under the thumb of the Terrestrial Exalted until the collapse of the First Age.

Although the Shogunate period was awful for the city of Whitewall, what followed was to be much worse.

THE FIRST AGE ENDS

The Great Contagion was slow to get to Whitewall — the disease did not fare well along the Holy Road leading to the city — but the Contagion did make it eventually. Whitewall was among the last cities to fall to the Great Contagion. Refugees from the countryside flocked to the perceived safety of the city's walls only to find that walls provided no protection against the Contagion.

One by one, the mines grew derelict, the fields were left weedy and untended and the city became a spectre-haunted husk surrounded by a haze of greasy corpse smoke.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE SYNDICS

The dazzling white walls surrounding the city provided Whitewall with at least the appearance of security in the chaos that followed the Great Contagion. Anyone

familiar with the city could hardly help but see Whitewall as the ideal place for the remnants of humanity to regroup.

In this case, "anyone" included three gods, all of whom arrived separately and all of whom had intended to claim the city's spiritually resonant architecture for themselves. Eventually, due to Yo-Ping's (see below) skill at negotiation, the three agreed to rule the city together. Although the motives of these gods were vaguely noble, they were also self-serving. None of the three wanted to see the Bureau of Humanity get folded wholesale into the Bureau of Heaven, which is exactly what would have happened had humanity disappeared from Creation. Those in the Bureau of Humanity didn't want the loss of seniority, and those in the Bureau of Heaven didn't want the competition.

Then there was the appeal of the walled city itself. Whitewall was a key piece of spiritual architecture and a great asset for any god residing there. The geomantic configuration and spiritually functional architecture of Whitewall (those portions of the city that survived the end of the First Age, anyway) amplified prayers significantly and produced a sense of euphoria in the deities to whom those prayers were addressed.

Three powerful spirits, then, nobly volunteered to help humankind regroup in the city of Whitewall. None wanted to share the position of authority with the other two, but they were clearly far more powerful together than separately, so they formulated a unified front for the mortal population.

After besting a handful of challengers, the gods announced their control of the city, and the citizens accepted them, eager to have at least the illusion of order and security once more. When the new rulers granted audiences to the demanding, faithful masses of Whitewall, these powerful gods assumed the group identity of "the Syndics" — three tall, identical entities made of scintillating ice crystal arranged over beautiful silver bones and wrapped in flowing white gossamer — as a means of hiding their violation of Celestial codes from the Censors.

WHITEWALL IN THE PRESENT

Whitewall is the largest city in the North, and with good reason. The city offers a quality of life that is missing from most of Creation. Whitewall is a polite, industrious and clean city. Whitewall was built around the concept of order, and order is emphasized in the daily life of the city's citizens. Sober, somber and strict are three words frequently applied to Whitewall, but these words fail to convey the city's appeal. Residents of Whitewall willingly — nay, happily — trade a modicum of freedom for great gains in comfort and security. In Whitewall, a woman can walk alone from one side of the city to another with no need to fear for her safety, which is more than can be said for nearly all others of Creation's cities in the Age of Sorrows. Whitewall's laws are put forth in a civil charter that all



residents are expected to memorize by age 12; failure to do so results in a substantial fine for the child's parents.

Whitewall's middle class vastly outnumbers the rich and the poor combined by a factor of several to one, but even the city's middle class enjoys a standard of living that the rich of many other cities would envy.

All this industry, all this *order* is the result of several centuries of effective social engineering by the city's powerful spirit patrons, the entities that brought Whitewall back from the brink of abandonment seven centuries ago, and that still guide Whitewall still today.

THE SYNDICS

The city of Whitewall is firmly, but compassionately, ruled by a strange trio of spirits called the Syndics: their identity is among Whitewall's most intriguing mysteries. While it is clear that the rulers are gods of extraordinary puissance, they have not been forthcoming about their specific identities or their respective spheres of influence, for a myriad of reasons, most of which have to do with diplomacy in Yu-Shan and staying beneath the notice of the Celestial Censors.

In their past, all three of these remarkable spirits were highly placed and well-connected gods in one of the major Celestial Bureaus. The gods' individual names remain unusually abstract for spirits who interact with the mortal population. This is a standard situation; as highly abstract entities, the spirits' personal names are especially closely connected to their pattern in the fabric of Creation and have less to do with euphony than natural spiritual laws.

The three Syndics did not originally resemble one another as they do now: they had to assume a new appearance when they began their alliance as "the Syndics." In the several centuries since the Syndics began their masquerade, more worshipers have come to know these gods in their new roles than in their old. The gods' shapes as "the Syndics" are now easier for them to hold than any other, even the ones they wore in the First Age.

This is useful for the gods, as they can appear together (as they usually do) or singly (if the others are attending to Celestial business outside of Whitewall), and no one takes much notice. Over the 700-plus years of sharing an identity as rulers of Whitewall, the Syndics have developed a shared consciousness. All three know what's happening in the others' minds at all times. If they continue on as they are now, there's a strong possibility that the Syndics will fuse into a single god: the guardian of Whitewall. Only their attention to their individual duties beyond the city walls has prevented this from happening already. As an extra measure of protection against this fate, thaumaturges in the Syndics' service summoned one of the angyalka from Malfeas. Bound in chains of orichalcum, this demon of the First Circle plays its haunting music in the chambers of the Syndics 24 hours a day. Contrary to common

wisdom, the angyalka isn't there to protect the Syndics (as the angyalkae really aren't especially fit combatants). She's there to remind them of their individual natures with her music, thereby enabling the Syndics to avoid merging into a single entity. (This is what the angyalkae do, see **Games of Divinity**, page 110.)

While the Syndics may be the city's *guardians*, they refuse to be called Whitewall's city fathers. In fact, doing so is a minor crime, though no one in Whitewall understands why. The Syndics understand their reasons acutely. The title of city father, even in the Second Age, rightfully belongs to another, whom they would not want to offend: the Unconquered Sun. As the Syndics see it, they are simply maintaining his temple city in his absence. Allowing themselves to be called the city fathers of Whitewall would be a political minefield were the greatest of gods ever to notice their effrontery.

The Syndics are gods who each took pity, for his own reasons, on the mortal world in the wake of the Great Contagion. More mercenarily, the Syndics realized that if they did not actively represent and bolster the concepts they represented, at least for the city they adopted, they might well end up as gods without worshipers. The Syndics never intended to become city fathers; the gods only wanted to fan the guttering flame of humanity temporarily after the Great Contagion. The spiritually resonant architecture of Whitewall provided the Syndics with such a strong surge from the city's assembled worshipers that all three of the gods have found excuses to stay and shepherd Whitewall, though they would never dream of calling the city their own.

Theirs or not, the Syndics receive prayers — enhanced by the spiritually resonant First Age architecture of the city — from nearly every resident of Whitewall. That gives the Syndics an automatic worshiper base of 700,000. They also receive prayers from those across Creation addressing them in their original Celestial positions. Technically, this is a Severity 3 offense in Yu-Shan, but the three gods composing the Syndics are popular in the Celestial City, especially with the gods in the Bureau of Humanity who tend to see the Syndics as paragons of their cause. Only Ruvia, the Captain of the Golden Barque (see **Exalted: The Sidereals**, page 57), truly dislikes the Syndics, and he's waiting until he can gain allies in his cause before he takes action.

The Syndics have not entirely abandoned their wider duties to their respective Celestial Bureaus, which is more than can be said for most gods in the Second Age, but it's clear that the rulers of Whitewall are putting in more time as "the Syndics" than they ought to be and their other functions could be suffering. While the Syndics keenly aware of this fact, the prayers they receive from Whitewall alone are far more satisfying than the prayers they get from the rest of Creation combined.

The presence of the Syndics has served the people of Whitewall more than they even realize. The Syndics are entities with a particularly long view of events, and they play games in which a single move takes longer to complete than the average mortal lifespan. The Syndics have spent the last seven centuries pitting their enemies against one another, particularly the Fair Folk and the dead of Marama's Fell. Both of these enemies of Whitewall are fierce, but, in recent years, the ghosts and the fae have made more strikes against each other than against Whitewall. The Syndics expend a great deal of subtle effort to see that this remains the case but, since the disappearance of the Empress and the subsequent arrival of the Bull of the North, maintaining that balance has grown vastly more difficult.

THE BULL

The greatest threat to the Syndics' carefully cultivated web of countervailing forces is easily Yurgen Kaneko, the Bull of the North, whose meteoric rise to power has destabilized large portions of the North and the Northeast. From the Syndics' perspective, this famed Exalt represents not one but two egregious failures by the rulers of the walled city to attract Solar Exalted to Whitewall's service: Yurgen himself, who once camped outside the city's walls with the rest of his icewalker tribe, and Nalla Bloodaxe, a Solar of the Night Caste and one of the city's guardians until the Bull appealed to Nalla Bloodaxe's ego and sense of adventure and pulled him into his enormous military crusade. Though the Bull currently seems intent on conquest of the Scavenger Lands more than the North, the Syndics have informed their Solar diplomat and envoy that he will be their liaison to the Bull should Nalla Bloodaxe ever return to the land of his origin. The Syndics occasionally visit Nalla Bloodaxe in his dreams to remind him of the comfortable childhood and adolescence he enjoyed in Whitewall and to remind him how proud they are of his Exaltation. Even if these oneiric visitations don't persuade him to come back and join the city's guardians, the dreams might suffice to get him to use his influence with Yurgen to ignore or spare Whitewall (should it ever come down to that).

YO-PING, THE CELESTIAL MINISTER OF HARMONY

Just as there are five gods of war, one for each of Creation's poles, there are five gods of political stability who generally tend to the continuance of peace, justice and public contentment in the political domain. Overseeing all five of these powerful spirits is Yo-Ping, the Celestial

Minister of Harmony, a god of negotiation, political stability, diplomacy and harmony. As might be presumed, Yo-Ping is a quiet spirit with no tendency toward the bombast of Creation's assorted war gods. As the hierarchical equal (and spiritual antithesis) of E-Naluna, Creation's war queen (see **Houses of the Bull God**, pages 89–90), Yo-Ping often has much to discuss with both E-Naluna and the assorted regional gods of war, but this he does in his own mild (though direct) fashion.

In the First Age, Yo-Ping — a high ranking figure in the Bureau of Humanity — reported directly to the Unconquered Sun himself and enjoyed the privilege of being one of his favored advisors. Yo-Ping's duties changed after the Great Contagion, and in the Second Age, he reports to Taru-Han, the Shogun of the Department of Abstract Matters (see **Exalted: The Sidereals**, pages 41–42), and, to a lesser degree, to the Maiden of Serenity (see **Exalted: The Sidereals**, page 53). Given Taru-Han's minimal degree of involvement with Creation these days, Yo-Ping is inclined to comport himself as he feels the Unconquered Sun would wish him to and tune out Taru-Han altogether. Yo-Ping's relationship with Venus is cordial, if cool, although they work together well when circumstances dictate.

At the height of the First Age, Yo-Ping was a cherished and powerful god who worked to ensure the overall stability of the Old Realm. Once the Primordial War was over, most of humanity sent him prayers for the kind of stability over which he presides, and his name, as well as the shrines dedicated to him, was ubiquitous. Yo-Ping was a familiar figure in Yu-Shan, often meeting with the great Solar monarchs, and he was courted, flattered and occasionally bribed by those seeking his blessings upon their kingdoms. Yo-Ping was familiar with the Holy City of Ondar Shambal, as all gods were, and he envied the powerful prayers generated by the city's spiritually active architecture. In the wake of the Great Contagion, it was this covetous urge that made him settle in Whitewall.

Yo-Ping was placed highly enough before the Usurpation that he did not hesitate to quarrel with the Five Maidens about the mistake their Chosen were about to make in eliminating the Solar Exalted. While this quarrel incensed four of the Maidens, the Maiden of Serenity hesitantly broke ranks and supported Yo-Ping, as she was obligated to do by certain old agreements that defined both her core nature and his. While Venus could go along with a plot to destroy the Solars based on the promise of a more serene future, she could not take Yo-Ping to task for supporting the status quo, which, though not entirely pleasant, was *stable* until the Sidereals began hatching their plots.

Yo-Ping lost some strength in the transition to the Second Age, but not as much as many gods. Where there is war, there are those who pray for peace and stability. The wives, parents and children of those who fight in wars pray to Yo-Ping to prevent wars, to end wars once they've begun and, at the very least, to keep the surge of battle from





visiting *them*. All of these are duties that Yo-Ping negotiates with E-Naluna, the Queen of War.

In the Age of Sorrows, and, especially since the disappearance of the Scarlet Empress, prayers for peace and stability are growing more common by the week; Yo-Ping's power and ability to enhance stability within an area increasingly reflect that shift.

In Whitewall, Yo-Ping oversees the stability of the city and peace in the region. At the local level, he guards the stability of the city by fostering harmony within the community and by seeing that those with unrestrained violence in their natures are exiled or traded to the Fair Folk or the dead. It was Yo-Ping himself who negotiated the deal with both of those parties as a means of ridding the city of its more destabilizing citizens *and* lessening the danger from the city's foes. On a regional level, Yo-Ping has allowed the local war gods to ignite war in previously peaceful locales (Halta, for example) in exchange for steering clear of Whitewall (which has narrowly avoided a handful of enormous battles thanks to his subtle intervention).

LURANUME, THE MASTER OF FIVEFOLD LUCK, LORD OF AUSPICIOUS SURPRISES

Known as “the pattern that exists behind and between patterns,” Luranume is the God of Luck, overseeing coincidence and unforeseen events. He is the most myste-

rious of the Syndics, a god of things that happen unexpectedly or of their own accord, the events that fall between the strands of fate. As a god of the numinous and unpredictable facets of Creation, Luranume is one of Luna's lieutenants in the Celestial Hierarchy and the only god working for the Bureau of Destiny who does not report to one of the Maidens. Some (like the Maidens and a number of Sidereals) see Luranume as a chaotic force. Others see him as the deity who keeps Creation from becoming stagnant or overly bound to the will of the gods. Luna asked the Primordial Autochthon to create Luranume as a check on the power of the Maidens; he is a countervailing force to the stasis represented by the Loom of Fate, a random chance for anything to happen at any time. Accidents, coincidence and instances of pure serendipity are Luranume's purview.

Since joining the Syndics, he has regularly reassigned fortuitous events from elsewhere in Creation (mostly from the Blessed Isle) to Whitewall to improve the city's standing in the chaotic North.

UVANAVU, THE CHRYSANTHEMUM SHOGUN

A god of health, longevity and well-being who lost a great deal of standing (or at least credibility) during the Great Contagion, Uvanavu bears a deep grudge against the Deathlords. As a god of health, he knows full well where the Great Contagion came from, and he fervently

resents the Deathlords' tampering with Creation. Though he is *the* god of health and wellness in Creation, Uvanavu's best efforts were barely enough to prevent the eradication of the human race (and a few other races besides). Uvanavu would love to make some kind of strike, any kind of strike, against the Deathlords or any of their minions, but he's wise enough to know that direct action against them would only bring pain to the city. Instead, he's taking a deep delight in helping to shrink Marama's Fell through mortal agents; it was Uvanavu who instigated the practice of making pilgrimages to the resplendent chrysanthemum shrines (see pp. 37-38), and he sees to it that everyone who participates in that tradition benefits from a year and a day of exceptional health (+2 dice to all rolls for resisting disease). Still, he yearns to be entirely free of the influence of the Deathlords. Should a Solar Circle sorcerer ever visit Whitewall, Uvanavu will personally request that Marama's Fell be purged of its taint and reclaimed as healthy land. He possesses ancient texts containing both of the spells capable of revitalizing shadowlands, and he will gladly give the spells to any sorcerer able and willing to use them in exchange for having the deed done.

Because most mortals pray for health and well-being at some point, Uvanavu is individually the most powerful of the Syndics. It is Uvanavu who sees that disease is kept from Whitewall, and it is he who is responsible for many of the more stringent civil charter laws dealing with cleanliness and the management of garbage and waste.

AGENDA

The Syndics' short-term goal is the defense and stability of Whitewall. They've managed this much for centuries at this point, and the city's standing as the largest and most stable in the North attests to the Syndics' remarkable success in this regard. The stability they've provided the city thus far has been astonishing, particularly given Whitewall's precarious positioning near both a Wyld zone and a major shadowland. Whatever may take place outside the city's walls, however, the city itself is a place of surprising calm. While some of the arrangements the Syndics have made to protect the city (with the Scarlet Empress, the Deathlords and the Fair Folk, for example) are bitter pills for the Whitewall's rulers, the arrangements are necessary if the city is going to become what it has the potential to become.

In the longer term, the Syndics seek to return the city to its glorious past as the Holy City, Ondar Shambal. The rationale behind this agenda is relatively simple: they either want to be the ones to benefit from repairing the city's geomantic pattern (the mandala configuration and the First Age architecture), or they want to be the ones to turn the restored city over to the Unconquered Sun.

To accomplish this goal, the Syndics intend to repair the city's First Age buildings and restore the auspicious

mandala pattern once formed by Whitewall's streets and open spaces. While much of the spiritually attuned architecture of the old city was destroyed in the Usurpation, the portion that remains still works, and every repair optimizes the city's spiritual functionality that much more.

The Syndics have located the white granite quarry in the mountains north of the city from which the building blocks of Whitewall were first obtained, and the individual blocks have already been carved and are waiting. All the Syndics need now is a Zenith Caste Solar to bless each block and put it in place according to the ancient geomantic diagrams possessed by the Syndics.

When in Whitewall, the Syndics reside in the single largest block of the old city for a reason: it acts like a prayer lens. Entreaties made to the city's rulers there are more focused and resonate more pleasingly to them there than the prayers would anywhere else.

Like many of the gods associated with the Bureau of Humanity, the Syndics generally support the return of the Solar Exalted, but, given the Syndics' relationship with the Unconquered Sun and their hopes for Whitewall, the Syndics tend to be even more eager to support Solar Exalts than many other gods from that Bureau. With the Empress gone and the Realm in disarray, Whitewall is being relatively brazen in opening its doors to Solar Exalted, some of whom live and work openly as guardians. This doesn't endear them to Sidereals of the Bronze Faction, but the Gold Faction has identified Whitewall as an excellent site to establish a future base for the Cult of the Illuminated.

Within Whitewall, the Syndics are the ultimate power. They wrote the city's civil code, and they alone have the right to amend it. They appoint judges, guardians and inspectors, act as heads of state and champion the order for which Whitewall is known.

GOVERNMENT

The Syndics, and the civil charter they established, are the ordering principle around which the rest of Whitewall's government has oriented itself. The day isn't long enough for the Syndics to handle every aspect of city governance, so they delegate many of the responsibilities of rulership to other positions, most notably the city's judges (who oversee breaches of the civil charter and mete out justice), the guardians (who form the city's law enforcement forces) and the inspectors (who maintain the integrity of the civil charter by ferreting out corruption and more subtle violations of the civil charter). There is some overlap between the duties of the judges and the inspectors, but whereas judges administer justice when actual crimes have been committed, inspectors guard civil order and administer municipal policies in subtler areas (like making sure streets are kept clean, seeing that citizens maintain their homes in good repair and checking to see that trade agreements are honored).



JUDGES

Appointed by the Syndics themselves, judges are tasked with administering Whitewall's civil code. Judges hear cases, impose fines for lesser crimes, banish those deemed guilty of greater offenses and generally defend the public order for which Whitewall is known. Judges have a great deal of latitude to administer justice, but in difficult or unusual cases (usually those dealing with disputes between two guardians or spirits or Exalts of any kind), the judges may send the cases to the Syndics for their judgment.

SUMMER AND WINTER EXILE

Exile is the standard punishment for those who break the city's weightier laws, but there are degrees of banishment that color the gravity of the banishment considerably. Truly serious crimes — murder, rape, ownership of slaves or allowing dangerous entities into the city — are just cause for a winter exile, meaning that the criminal forfeits everything he owns except the clothes on his back and is sent from the city during the month of Ascending Water. Under nearly all circumstances, this verdict is a death penalty, as very few individuals can survive even a single night outside in the coldest month. Less malicious but still serious crimes — selling fake enchanted goods, lying to the Syndics, armed robbery or chronic theft of substantial goods or services — are punished with summer exile in either the month of Ascending or Resplendent Fire (late spring or early summer); those exiled are allowed to assemble a pack of food, clothes and money before they are sent away.

Individuals convicted of crimes punishable by exile are kept imprisoned in the caverns beneath the city until the month of their exile. Winter exiles are sent from the city at dusk, while summer exiles leave at dawn.

The worst of the city's criminals are not just exiled, but actually given away to the Fair Folk and representatives of the Deathlords. Twelve criminals a year are given to each of these forces. What happens to the criminals then is unknown except for one thing: not one of them has ever come back.

MILITIA

Whitewall has no standing army. There's no place to house an army within the walls, and the Syndics have ruled that a standing army is an unacceptable drain on the city's resources and a potential threat to public order. However, the city does have a large and well-trained militia, whose function is to defend the city should the need ever arise.

All citizens are given ample training in basic melee combat starting at the age of 12. The Whitewall philosophy of civil defense is simple: "If you can use a hoe or a pick, you can use a sword and a shield." The city's guardians teach martial arts that emphasize the use of farming and mining implements as melee weapons.

GUARDIANS

Other than the Syndics, the guardians are the most personally powerful citizens in Whitewall. The ranks of the guardians are drawn from the city's combat elite, and if the city could be considered to have an army, the guardians are it. The least of their number are (in game terms) accomplished heroic mortals outfitted with a myriad of talismans of luck and perfect enchanted weapons. Many guardians are outcaste Terrestrial Exalted, lesser gods, God-Blooded and so on. At least one guardian is a Solar Exalt; the Syndics would very much like to recruit more.

It is the task of the guardians to keep the citizens of Whitewall safe and secure, whether from Fair Folk incursion or crimes of passion committed by residents. Whitewall is an orderly city, and the guardians have little tolerance for thievery, dishonesty or predatory or malicious behavior. The city's reputation for stern justice was established by the guardians.

INSPECTORS

Those members of the city's government who check buildings for structural integrity, monitor accounts to see that proper taxes were paid and test enchanted items to see that they are truly enchanted are called inspectors. They consider themselves guardians of public safety, and they take their duties seriously. Attempting to bribe an inspector is grounds for a summer exile.

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

Whitewall is exceptionally diplomatic in its dealings with *everyone*, from Deathlords and Fair Folk to the Realm and Gethamane. A great deal of the stability and high quality of life for which Whitewall is known is a direct result of the walled city's cherished neutrality and the exceptional diplomacy of the Syndics (and their envoys). Less obviously, the Syndics are highly skilled at playing enemies against each other to Whitewall's advantage.

THE REALM

The Syndics never particularly took the Scarlet Empress seriously. While Whitewall made a few noises about loyalty to the Realm, the Syndics made it clear in pleasant, non-confrontational personal correspondence to the Empress that they were unwilling to pay tribute to the Realm and that, if she forced the issue, she would be biting off more than she could chew. (Uvanavu was prepared to reassign all health from the Realm to the Threshold if he



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had to, although that would have been grounds for a Celestial audit and, very likely, a substantial fine). Ultimately, it was Yo-Ping's divine negotiation skills that once again won out. The Empress conveyed that she was content with the appearance of fealty so long as trade with Whitewall was preserved, which it was.

The Realm and Whitewall both benefit from the cool neutrality between the two powers. The Realm pays handsomely for the high-quality blue and white jade from Whitewall's mines, and Whitewall imports food and some raw materials from the Realm.

GETHAMANE

Relations with Gethamane are cordial and, at times, quite amicable, but the two cities have little in common and interact far less often than their proximity might suggest.

As Whitewall's closest neighbor, Gethamane *should* be one of the walled city's biggest trading partners, but it's not. Popular wisdom in Whitewall holds Gethamane to be a cursed place, although that may have more to do with the ill-fortune that seems to plague trade convoys traveling between the two cities. Attacks by Fair Folk, the undead and less understood horrors are common threats to those traveling the road between Whitewall and Gethamane, and the cost of providing security to the caravans going between the two

cities eats away the profits of the endeavor, making goods prohibitively expensive. Nevertheless, Gethamane imports grain from Whitewall in exchange for some of the strange ores and gemstones produced in Gethamane, but the residents of Whitewall consider even these materials to be unlucky and usually trade them away to other trading partners. (The Realm, in particular, pays handsomely for Gethamane's violet diamonds). Importing anything grown in the fungus gardens of Gethamane is expressly forbidden and grounds for a summer exile.

CHERAK

Whitewall has only minimal dealings with Chera, which Whitewall sees as little more than an extension of the Realm. For its part, Chera sees trade with Whitewall as too much effort for too little payoff, especially when it's functioning as the trade nexus between the Realm and the Haslanti League.

Of more concern to the Syndics is the placement of the Pinnacle of the Eye of the Hunt, an old fortress northeast of Chera that is home to the foremost outpost of the Wyld Hunt in the North and East. The fortress' leader is known as a raging zealot, and it is unknown what actions he might take should he hear that Whitewall is guided by three powerful spirits — or that it is a veritable sanctuary for the Anathema.

THE ICEWALKERS

Of all the cities the icewalkers visit, Whitewall is their favorite, much to the dismay of the city's inhabitants, who see the nomads as a vaguely exotic nuisance. The kindest of Whitewall's citizens see the nomads as "rustic" or "noble savages," while most citizens commonly respond with thinly veiled disgust and contempt. Whitewall's entire view of the world is built on the pillars of comfort and order, and to residents of the walled city, the life of an icewalker seems unthinkable, and pointlessly, barbaric.

On the other hand, the icewalkers find the residents of Whitewall pampered and soft. Still, the nomads have no choice but to approach all dealings with the city from a position of weakness, as the nomads have little that the city needs; there's little they can do against the city in light of its enormous walls and superior numbers.

The icewalkers covet the high-quality metal weapons and gear produced in Whitewall, and at certain times of year (usually late spring, early fall and midwinter), they set up camp just beyond the city's fields (or just outside the walls in winter) to trade with the city. Unfortunately, except for meat, which they can only supply in modest quantities, and mammoth ivory, which gets used in jewelry and talismans, there's little that the icewalkers have that Whitewall's citizens need or want. The icewalkers have been known to act out of desperation at times, offering even First Age artifacts that they've found (or stolen or killed for) in exchange for enough grain (of even the worst quality) to last out the winter. Although such occurrences are rare, some farmers have taken to setting aside a portion of their winter crops with this in mind, as even a single artifact of orichalcum or moonsilver can help them retire in luxury in the city's Afton district (see below).

At times, the Syndics subsidize the citizens of Whitewall to trade goods to the icewalkers in exchange for the latter launching raids on either the undead or the Fair Folk (whichever group the Syndics feel is growing too powerful). The icewalkers hate this, as they are not interested in being the city's soldiers-for-hire — and such attacks inevitably result in reprisals. But there are times when the nomads desperately need something produced by Whitewall (usually grain for the winter or well-crafted metal weapons), and their desperation results in their doing nearly anything the city asks of them.

Some young Whitewallers see the icewalkers as "exotic" or at least see their existence as a sharp and intriguing contrast to the safe, boring life the young residents have in the city. Some Whitewallers grow bored with the safe life and actually leave the city voluntarily to travel with the icewalkers. The life expectancy of such adventure-prone souls is not usually very long, but some have made it back to the city once again to describe the myriad wonders, horrors and dangers of

the icewalker life, after which the adventurers happily return to their "boring" existence. This practice inspired the phrase "to run off with the icewalkers," which means to abandon one's proper responsibilities in order to do something wholly irresponsible or irrational.

The stories told by the icewalkers (and those who have traveled with them, however briefly) give the nomads a pronounced mystique, especially among the city's adolescents and young adults; it is these impressionable young citizens who are most likely to give in to the temptation to run off. The icewalkers would rather not take on a liability like a soft, spoiled Whitewall kid, but they let it happen, especially if the runaway comes well-equipped with nice armor, exceptional weapons and warm furs. It would, of course, be a shame if the kid died within the first year he was with the tribe (which happens about half the time), but at least he would leave the tribe with a respectable legacy.

LOOKSHY

Whitewall recognizes Lookshy as the last remaining vestige of the Shogunate and aggressively seeks out ways to improve relations with the city. Relations are cordial, but the distance between the two powers, both physically and philosophically, prevents the two from being more closely linked.

Lookshy is Whitewall's most distant regular trading partner. Every spring when the thaw facilitates travel, well-educated savant-traders arrive in Whitewall to look over the exotic ores pulled from the old mines and bid on those needed to maintain the Seventh Legion's aging military forces.

Lookshy pays handsomely for the resources traded by Whitewall. The miners and artisans of Whitewall would love to do an even greater volume of trade with the Seventh Legion, perhaps even importing some Shogunate Essence technology, but it is likely to take more diplomacy, and a lot more available ore and blue jade, before that comes to pass.

LIFE BEHIND THE WALL

At its core, Whitewall is a city that values comfort and stability, both of which it has managed to find a bit of and guards jealously. The burghers of Whitewall create within the city the kind of stability that the city itself, surrounded as it is by enemies and ice, lacks.

Public disorderliness, poor hygiene and blatant rudeness are all misdemeanors under Whitewall's civil charter, lumped together as "offenses against public civility,"; the city has gained a reputation for being stern and humorless for its aggressive enforcement of these laws. Residents of the city itself don't see these laws as either stern or humorless and appreciate the order and civility these laws provide.

The use of intoxicants is legal, but the substances themselves, especially alcohol, are taxed so heavily that their use is quite rare. Public intoxication is also heavily fined, so those who indulge had best do so in the privacy of their own homes.

It is expected that public life be highly formal and polite. All citizens are expected to be at least civil with one another, and anything less is grounds for a stiff fine. Hostile, strange or eccentric behavior in public is a short path to bankruptcy (from fines) and social ostracism.

Further strengthening the separation of the private and public worlds is the absolute discretion that Whitewall residents exhibit with regard to everything that happens in the privacy of the home. Nothing that takes place behind closed doors is discussed outside those doors, and there are no laws or social expectations whatsoever with regard to what takes place within the walls of one's home, unless an injured party makes a claim to the guardians or judges. The privacy of one's home is absolute so long as the city's defenses against its enemies are not compromised.

This lends a sense of gravity to any invitation to a private home. One neither goes to the home of anyone one does not trust implicitly nor does one invite others to one's home without knowing them very well beforehand. Much of the social life of Whitewall's residents, consequently, plays out in the city's many large teahouses.

Business, shared meals and social functions alike can take place in the teahouses (while trysts typically take place in the adult sections of the public baths). In fact, tea with milk and butter is the traditional drink of Whitewall. Those not from the city often find these additions somewhat unorthodox, and their surprise is one way to discern a native from a visitor, something every Whitewaller is very attentive to.


THE PUBLIC BATHS

The public baths of Whitewall are one of the city's noted treasures. A hot spring provides the city with a regular flow of both hot water and steam. This water is diverted into a large complex of bathing pools, where the city's residents gather to socialize and bathe themselves. Cleanliness is held in high esteem by residents of Whitewall, and frequent bathing is held to be a sign of good citizenship.

Though private, the baths fall under Whitewall's definition of public space. Children bathe in one section, adults of marrying age in another and elders in a third.

While residents of Whitewall are quite proper (some might say prudish) in what is seen as public space, nudity in the baths is expected. Friends, neighbors, co-workers and others, male and female, are accustomed to seeing one another without clothes, and the residents of the city accept that as a matter of fact.





Distant steam-drenched alcoves of the baths are often used as trysting spots for adolescents or young adults, but that is considered part of the standard courtship rituals of the city rather than acts of indecency. Though adults may wag their fingers, cluck their tongues and complain about the moral turpitude of the young, Whitewall's civil charter is concerned with maintaining civility and stability, not the prudish constraints of its self-appointed moral guardians. Truth be told, most of them likely had their first liaisons in those very same alcoves.

Adults often visit the public baths to steam, to bathe and to be anointed with perfumed oils. For a fee, a visitor to the baths can be scrubbed, shaved (if necessary), groomed and tended to in other ways.

POPULATION

The population of Whitewall varies, as so many things in the city do, according to the season. The population reaches its nadir of 700,000 citizens each winter, usually around Resplendent Water, after the winter's exiles have been sent out and the season has taken its toll on the infirm. Starting around Resplendent Earth and going until Resplendent Fire, caravans of traders begin showing up to bid on the best of the winter's accumulation of gems, ore, minerals, arms, armor, jewelry and talismans.

Usually sometime around Descending Earth or Ascending Wood, the first of the "Calibration babies" are born (so called because of the popular belief that making love during Calibration wards off evil forces), thereby launching the next cycle of births as children conceived in the long, cold months of winter finally make an appearance. At the peak of summer, the population of Whitewall is usually somewhere around 900,000 citizens.

KNOWLEDGE

Education is taken very seriously in Whitewall, and graduating from even the least of Whitewall's academies instills an ample understanding of language, mathematics and basic crafts that allows an individual to make her way in Creation quite handily. The literacy rate in Whitewall is just over 90 percent, which is unheard of in the Second Age. The city is also known for its five colleges, dedicated, respectively, to the study of mining and metallurgy, lapidary, architecture, agriculture and, at the Lotus Mind College of Thaumaturgical Sciences, thaumaturgy. This last institution is as close to the Heptagram as most mortals are likely to get.

COMMERCE

Whitewall is still known for its produce — what little the city can part with these days — but most of the city's financial clout comes from the mines, which are both more dangerous to work than the fields and more distant from the city. The city's output of blue and white jade alone eclipses

the revenues brought in through the sale of produce — and that's ignoring the money brought in by the odd ores sought after by the Lookshy and the Heptagram and the large quantities of iron and silver the city's mines produce.

In exchange for the goods it exports, Whitewall has to import tea, textiles, rice and most fruits and vegetables (except cherries and apples).

The city conducts trade on two major roads: the rocky, mountainous pass to Gethamane and the Traveler's Road due south. The Traveler's Road leads due south from the gates of Whitewall, where goods are either loaded onto ships or sent east along the coastal trade route to bypass Marama's Fell. Ninety percent of traffic to or from Whitewall goes via the Traveler's Road.

FARMERS

Farming was Whitewall's *raison d'être* in the late First Age; the topsoil shed by the nearby mountains, not to mention some moderately potent Wood- and Earth-aspected Manses in the region and some Essence effects from the Solar Manse at the center of the city, made for uncommonly fertile fields.

In the Age of Sorrows, those fields remain uncommonly fertile — in fact, they're *more* fertile now that they have to lie fallow for six months of the year than they were when they were farmed all year round — but the climate prevents them from being worked over half the year. Furthermore, the amount of work required to tend the fields is much greater than it was in the First Age when automata and spirits could be bound on a regular basis to help farmers; farmers now tend about half the acreage that their First Age predecessors did. Consequently, the fields that used to provide food for Whitewall and communities within a radius of nearly 500 miles now produce just enough for the citizens of Whitewall with a little left over for export.

Rice no longer grows around Whitewall. Wheat, rye, barley and oats account for half of the crops raised in the fields nearest the city, with potatoes, radishes, sugar beets, apples and cherries accounting for most of the rest. Alfalfa (hay) for animals is grown in the outer fields.

Cherries are the only produce Whitewall exports in quantity anymore, and they are held to be the sweetest in Creation and prized on the Blessed Isle.

MINERS

Mining is the hardest and most dangerous of the trades practiced in Whitewall. It is also the most lucrative. The demand for the ores in the mountains around Whitewall, especially blue and white jade, is rising slowly and steadily as demand for sturdy and more advanced weapons increases with the growing instability in the Time of Tumult.

Two kinds of mines are found outside the city: the old mines and the new mines.

The old mines were dug during the First Age under the direction of Queen Tenrae, and, to this day, they're safe, incredibly deep, sensibly laid out and well lighted. Owing to reconnaissance performed by earth elementals serving Whitewall's First Age rulers, most of these mines benefit from comprehensive three-dimensional subterranean maps showing all the ore within reach of each mine tunnel as well as the direction of veins of ore that haven't even been tapped yet. The problem with the old mines is that many of the exotic substances mined back when the mines were dug (with the exception of blue and white jade and a tiny amount of orichalcum) have no widespread use in the Age of Sorrows. Certain minerals held to be extremely valuable during the First Age have no widely known (or useful) properties in the current Age — or at least none that are understood by any but the greatest sorcerers of the Heptagram, the sorcerer-engineers of Lookshy or the Mountain Folk. Those three groups, however, have been known to pay truly astonishing fees to get some of those rare ores — enough, in fact, to make it worth the time to enter the old mines. While Lookshy pays more for these ores and minerals, the Heptagram is *much* closer, being just across the Inland Sea, and, therefore, is a much more reliable trading partner.

The new mines, on the other hand, are wholly a product of the Second Age. They are shallower and poorly lit, many of them seem unusually prone to cave-ins (aided, no doubt, by the efforts of the Fair Folk) and a handful have shown a tendency to explode. These are the mines from which iron, zinc, quartz and silver — as well as a myriad of semi-precious gems and a small quantity of exotic metals and jades — are extracted. These are the more common fruits of the earth that have established Whitewall as one of the key metallurgical cities in Creation. The enormous quantity of iron, in particular, is a boon to Whitewall because the iron supplies the city's armorers with crucial raw materials for making the iron weapons with which Whitewall defends itself against the Fair Folk.

The miners work through the winter, daring the dangers of the mines in anticipation of the long line of buyers that shows up every spring and into the fall to buy their ores, metals, minerals and gems. In some cases, getting to the mines, not working in the mines, presents miners with the greatest difficulty. The Fair Folk resent Whitewall's unending supply of iron and routinely target miners on their way to or from the mines for the fae's most devastating assaults.

ARTISANS AND ENCHANTERS

During the last century, Whitewall has become known for its finished goods as well as its raw ores. With ready access to many rare metals and minerals and with a notable discount on raw components, many artisans have found that buyers would rather leave Whitewall with a few panniers full of finished goods than a wagonload of ore.

ADVENTURE SEED

Target Character Type: Dragon-Blooded, God-Blooded, Heroic Mortals, Solars

Miners in the new mines are disappearing in record numbers and turning up horribly mutilated just as winter, the busy mining season, is coming on. All iron mining comes to a complete halt, and some residents of the city fear that the old mines will be the next to close down.

They needn't worry, as the old mines are perfectly safe. This might be the first clue to lead the characters to the truth of the matter: in their never-ending quest to destroy Whitewall's iron mines, the Fair Folk have brought in a behemoth composed of one part shadow and one part serpent, and set it free in the iron mines. This is not a fae creature susceptible to iron weapons, but a true behemoth captured in the undercity beneath Gethamane and brought down to disrupt Whitewall's iron production.

The characters may be guardians, or they may be mercenaries hired by the Syndics to rid the city of the beast that haunts the new mines. Either way, the characters are forced to fight a creature that no mortal should ever have to know about, much less combat.

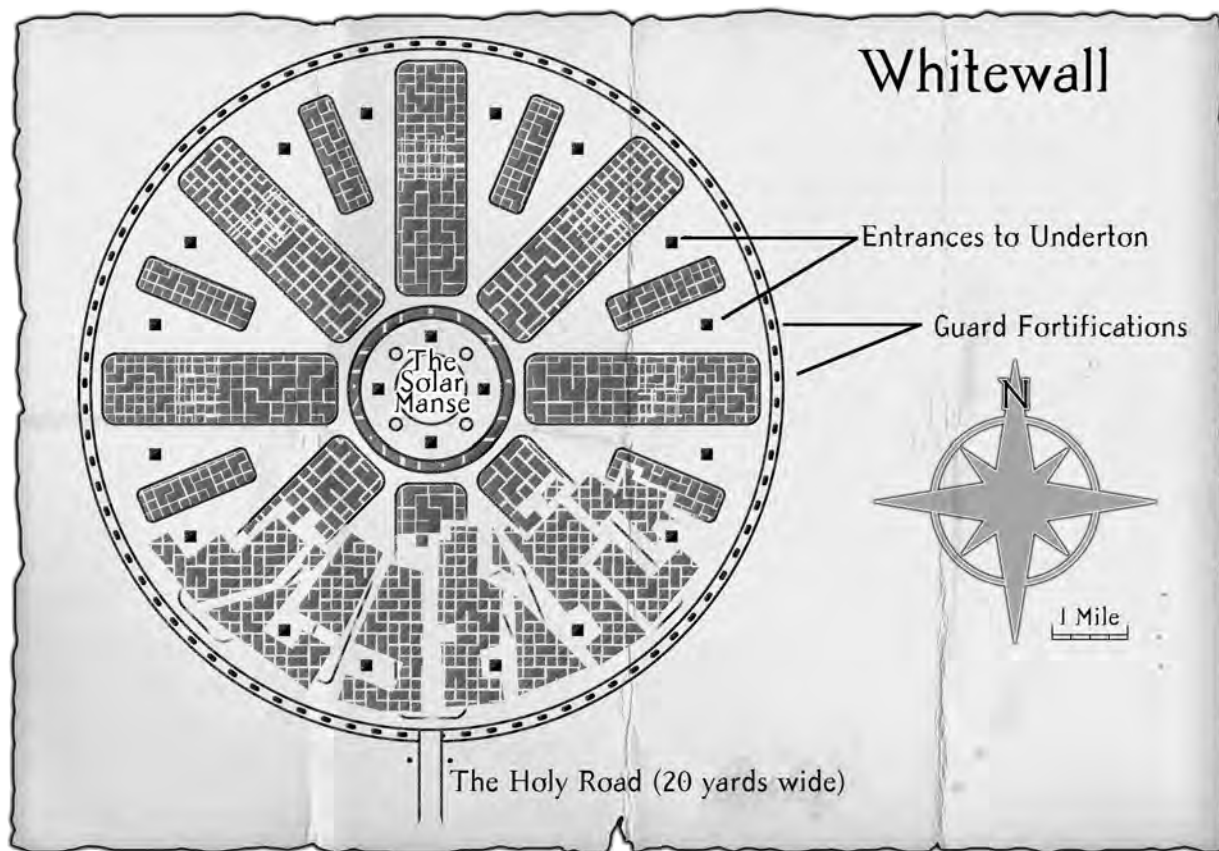
The artisans of Whitewall are known for both the spectacular weapons and armor produced there. The city's denizens take pride in their work and produce uncommonly sturdy armor and blades. The prevalence of thaumaturges allows the best goods to be made even better through Enchantment, which also benefits the city, since an artisan selling an enchanted blade is going to bring in more money to the city than a vendor of mundane weapons.

Jewelry is the last of the exports for which Whitewall is famed. Meticulous jewelers work in well-lighted shops for hours to create astonishingly detailed and beautiful items, many of which are subsequently enchanted with an array of protective and lucky properties (see the "Lucky Functions" sidebar on page 147 of the **Exalted Players Guide** for some typical enchantments). Air- and Earth-aspected Dragon-Blooded are known to pay exorbitant sums for jewelry made from Whitewall's blue and white jade.

LAYOUT

Whitewall is a round city ringed by tall stone walls. When it was first constructed, it was a radially symmetrical symbol of the Unconquered Sun. In the Second Age, the great circular wall still dazzles the eye with its brightness, but its associations with the Unconquered Sun have long since faded from memory.





Whitewall's inhabitants casually break down the city into four large generalized wards: Foretown, Midtown, Afton and Underton.

FORETOWN

Whitewall's most industrious neighborhood, Foretown is the section of the city nearest the city gates (i.e., the farthest south, since the gates of Whitewall open in that direction). This section of town has the fewest remnants of the old First Age architecture; most of the shops here have been built within the last five centuries. This is where the city's famed artisans, jewelers and craftspeople live and work, making the neighborhood relatively wealthy. The college of mining and metallurgy is also located in this section of town. The city's stables as well as most of its inns and many teahouses are located in Foretown, as this is the section of town where traders lodge when they're in Whitewall. Therefore, Foretown is the most cosmopolitan and "multicultural" district of the city.

During the summer, Foretown is a bustling, crowded bazaar full of stalls from which dealers buy, sell and trade all manner of weapons, armor, enchanted goods and other merchandise. From dawn to well past dusk, the streets are packed to capacity all summer long, and the aromas from the food kiosks mix with the earthier smells of livestock as the citizens of Whitewall trade what they have for what they need.

At the peak of the summer trading season, the Whitewall bazaar may even spill out beyond the city's gates, in which case a large contingent of armed guardians (and innumerable torches) keep the area relatively safe from the depredations of the Fair Folk and the dead once night falls and the gates are shut.

For obvious reasons, Foretown is also the section of the city most heavily patrolled by Whitewall's guardians.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS FOR FORETOWN

Warrior: Monster Hunter, Veteran Guardian

Holy Man: Icewalker Shaman, Immaculate Missionary

Savant: Enchanter-for-Hire, Visiting Sorcerer-Engineer

Criminal: Enchantment Counterfeiter, Thief

Entertainer: Icewalker Skald, Street Performer

Bureaucrat: Guild Representative, Incorruptible Customs Inspector

MIDTOWN

Midtown is the largest and most populous section of Whitewall and home to the city's burgeoning middle class. Farmers, teachers, bakers, mid-level merchants and younger miners make their homes here, as do many of those who make their money trading in Foretown but don't want to live there. The Jewelers College of Whitewall and the Whitewall College of Agriculture are located in this section

THAUMATURGY IN WHITEWALL

Per capita, more people practice the various forms of thaumaturgy in Whitewall than in most cities in Creation. In part, this is due to the city's extravagant literacy rate. Some of the thaumaturgical sciences, in fact, are taught in Whitewall's schools, most famously in the Lotus Mind College of Thaumaturgical Sciences.

The title of the college is somewhat misleading, as it teaches some Arts as well as Sciences, with a heavy emphasis on Warding, which is practiced nigh incessantly to ward the city's walls, fields and mines against incursion by ghosts and Fair Folk.

Enchantment is also widely practiced, and the artisans and armorers of Whitewall produce some of the finest and most sought-after enchanted items in Creation. Because of this auspicious renown (and the money it brings into the city) the Syndics take a particularly dim view of fraud where enchanted objects are concerned. Whitewall's inspectors perform regular Enchantment audits to make sure objects sold as enchanted really are enchanted. Those purchasing such items frequently rely on enchanted objects for their safety and livelihood. Passing off even the fanciest normal item as enchanted will, depending on the item, either earn the con artist a hefty fine (equal to a year's annual income), if there is no chance anyone could be hurt by the deception, or a summer exile, if the deception may result in injury or death.

of town. Except for small areas that show minimal damage, Midtown's First Age architecture is still intact here.

The tallest building in Whitewall, the large Solar Manse that sits at the exact center of the city, is located in Midtown, but the Manse plays little part, if any, in the day-to-day lives of Midtown's residents.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS FOR MIDTOWN

Warrior: Reserve Militiaman, Rookie Guardian
Holy Man: Illuminated Itinerant, Syndic Worshiper
Savant: Agricultural Geomancer, Lapidary
Criminal: Fence, Second-Story Man
Entertainer: Storyteller, Unemployed Actor
Bureaucrat: Ambassador to the Fair Folk or the Dead,

Town Crier

AFTON

Afton is the section of town farthest from the gates. It is home to the Syndics' hall as well as the richest of Whitewall's citizens, those who can afford the luxury of space and privacy. Non-Dynastic Dragon-Blooded and most of the city's "special" guardians (i.e., the God-Blooded

and minor gods) live here in tranquil splendor. Successful miners live in Afton, as do Whitewall's most skilled jewelers and armorers. Afton is also the site of the Whitewall College of Architecture and the Lotus Mind College of Thaumaturgical Sciences. Whitewall's First Age architecture is entirely intact throughout all of Afton. Therefore, the difficulty of all prayers made from this district of the city is dropped by 2.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS FOR AFTON

Warrior: Bodyguard, God-Blooded Guardian
Holy Man: Ancestor Cultist, Yozi Worshiper
Savant: First Age Scholar, Thaumaturgy Instructor
Criminal: Con Artist, Tea Drunkard
Entertainer: Tea Boy, Teahouse Musician
Bureaucrat: Corrupt Judge, Wealthy Burgher

UNDERTON

Pronounced "Unt'n," Underton is the city's smallest district, comprising the portion of Whitewall that lies underground. This is where a small system of orderly tunnels and caverns creates a modest undercity. A First Age lighting system keeps the area well lit with a warm, golden glow. While Underton is where Whitewall's small underclass lives, it's also where the public baths are, so it's constantly busy with foot traffic. Guardians patrol down here regularly to safeguard order and proper conduct. Being destitute in the Second Age is never easy, but as such things go, it's far better to be among the poor in Whitewall than in any other city in Creation: there's always a roof overhead, it's always warm because of the proximity to the hot spring and there's no reason not to bathe because the public baths are in the center of Underton and open to everyone. (Although the poor are expected to visit the baths late at night, after the residents of Foretown, Midtown and Afton have already bathed.)

CHARACTER CONCEPTS FOR UNDERTON

Warrior: Guardian on Furlough, Maimed Veteran
Holy Man: Crazy Prophet, Fortune Teller
Savant: Alchemist of Intoxicants, Scavenger Lord
Criminal: Drug Dealer, Mugger
Entertainer: Geisha of the Baths, Wyld Oddity
Bureaucrat: Inspector of the Baths, Slumming Official

THE SOLAR MANSE

At the center of Midtown in Whitewall is a grand Solar Manse. For centuries, the Manse was closed off; those living in the city were more comfortable ignoring it, despite the fact that it was the single largest building in the city.

During the Shogunate, the Dragon-Blooded forced their way into the Manse to check for any "threats planted by the Anathema." The Manse's defenses were initially overwhelmed, but the adaptive system quickly evolved to be able to keep the Terrestrials out. The first several years



of the Shogunate saw a string of battles between the Dragon-Blooded and Whitewall's Solar Manse. The Manse ultimately won, as no more Dragon Blooded were willing to die in the effort to wrest the building's secrets from it. To minimize the embarrassment of the Dragon-Blooded, the Manse was declared illegal and off-limits to everyone in the city and then was effectively abandoned, even though it stood in the center of the city's busiest district.

When the Syndics took possession of Whitewall, they wanted to preside over the city from its tallest building, which was the Manse. The three gods made a couple of tentative attempts to enter, but when the Manse rebuffed their efforts, they were perfectly willing to let the Manse remain abandoned, another sign that they are attempting to steward the city rather than take it over. Recently, the city's official diplomat, a Solar Exalted of the Eclipse Caste named Rune, entered the Manse with no difficulty whatsoever, and he has since taken possession of the building.

Anyone looking closely at the Essence flow around this Manse (Perception + Occult, difficulty 5) will realize that it's focusing some of the ambient Essence *out from* the Manse instead of directing the Essence into the Hearthstone chamber. This is the source of the extreme fertility of Whitewall's fields. Were all of the power of the local dragon lines channeled into the Manse, it would be a rating ●●●● structure. As it is, two dots of that rating have been given up and carefully shunted into the fields surrounding the city through sophisticated Essence engineering techniques that are beyond anything understood in Creation today except by the most skilled sorcerer-engineers.

BEYOND THE WALL

However orderly and comfortable Whitewall may be on the inside, the cold world outside the wall is a nightmare of the prowling dead and rapacious Fair Folk, especially between dusk and dawn. The constant depredations of these foes of the city only reinforce the paranoia and insularity of Whitewallers. Some of them opt never to leave the city for any reason. Others, like the city's traders and miners, don't have that luxury.

THE HOLY ROAD

While now most commonly called either "the Traveler's Road" or "the Great Northern Road," the road that links Whitewall to its distant port on the Inland Sea was called "the Holy Road" during the First Age. Built single-handedly by Righteous Guide as a private devotion to the Unconquered Sun, the road represents three *centuries'* spiritual labor on the part of that legendary Solar monk. As with the buildings of Whitewall, each paving stone was individually hand-carved from white granite, blessed by the builder and consecrated to the Unconquered Sun.

The Traveler's Road is almost bizarrely wide by the standards of the Second Age, almost 20 yards from edge to

OTHER MANSES

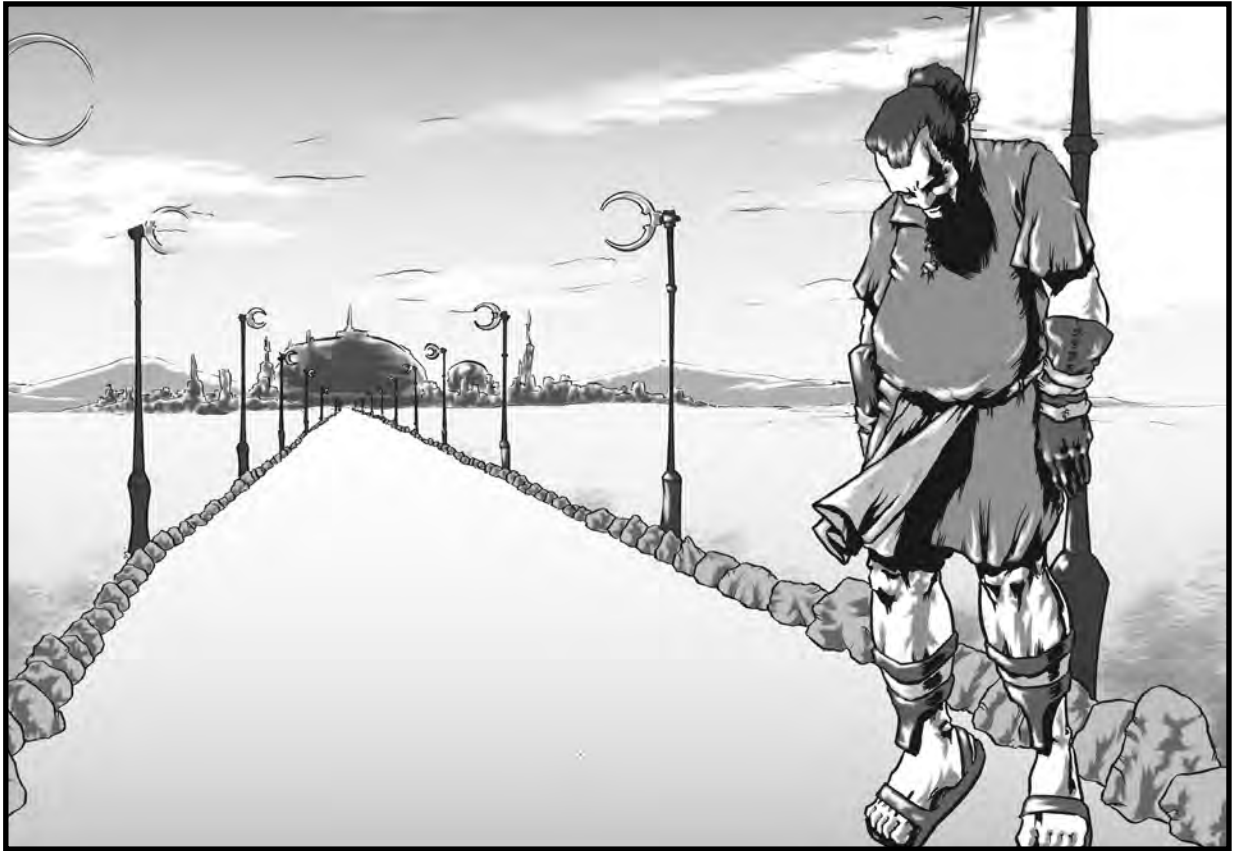
The Solar Manse in the center of the city is not the only Manse in the vicinity of Whitewall, though this Manse is the most powerful. Just to the east of the city, on the far edge of the easternmost cherry orchard is a Wood-pected Manse (rating ●●) on the side of a heavily wooded hill. The Syndics know about this Manse and have its Hearthstone, although the structure itself is carefully sealed with magic to keep the dead from tampering with it. The Syndics aren't currently using the Manse, and they could conceivably give the Manse as a gift (or a bribe) under the proper circumstances (i.e., in order to recruit a Solar Exalt to the city's guardians or to get a Solar Circle sorcerer to destroy the shadowland of Marama's Fell).

There is another Manse near the city that the Syndics do *not* know about. Twenty-five miles to the north is an underground Earth-pected Manse (rating ●●●) that has no current owner, though the Fair Folk are particularly thick in the area. The entirety of the Manse is underground, and its entrance is covered with brambles and snow. It would take a skilled geomancer (or other Essence wielder) a fair amount of effort to locate this Manse.

edge. The road has weathered the passing of the centuries well. Only the slight rounding of the road stones suggests that the road wasn't built longer than a year or two ago. Because of the road's enchantments, it stays warm, as though the sun were shining on it constantly, all day, all night, all year round. Neither snow nor ice ever builds up on the road, even during the fiercest blizzards.

One aspect of the Traveler's Road that is not common knowledge is that the souls of those who die along the road immediately fall into Lethe. No one who dies along the Holy Road need worry about becoming a ghost of any sort, even along the stretch that passes through shadowland.

More recently, the Syndics negotiated "the Thousand Year Pact" with the Fair Folk and the Deathlords at the beginning of the Second Age. This agreement was possible only because of the relative strength of the Syndics at the time, the inexperience of the Deathlords and the terrible defeat that the Fair Folk had just suffered. This agreement stipulates that no violence is allowed on the road by any party, mortal, fae or otherwise. Once all three parties agreed to it, the Syndics performed god magic to make fate itself enforce the pact. Those breaching the pact suffer each according to their natures. Mortals hang themselves from the columns of the road (or keep trying until they succeed), ghosts fall instantly into Lethe and Fair Folk are shunted into the Deep Wyld and barred from entering Creation ever



Wallport

again. It is unknown what would happen to a spirit, a god or an Exalt were one to break the Thousand Year Pact. Some have suggested that the violator would be sent to Malfeas, but it has never yet happened and, with luck, will not.

With just over 200 years left in the Pact, the Syndics are wondering whether they'll be able to negotiate as strong an agreement when it comes up for renewal. They can only hope that Creation, or at least Whitewall, will be stronger than it is now. Their city's trade (and, therefore, future) depends on it.

In the First Age, and even into the first centuries of the Age of Sorrows, the stone pillars that rise from the road in pairs every 40 yards used to glow with a warm, golden light that kept away the undead as per the spell *Light of Solar Cleansing* (see **The Book of Three Circles**, page 72). Although the lights on these columns haven't worked for over 500 years, the lights could be made to do so again by any Solar wishing to take the time and effort to repair them. (Even realizing that the columns used to illuminate the road requires three successes on an Intelligence + Lore roll, while repairing the lights along the road requires 10 successes and may be performed with an extended Intelligence + Lore or Intelligence + Craft roll.)

WALLPORT


At the southern terminus of the Traveler's Road is the town of Wallport. This port town is surrounded by walls

exactly like Whitewall's, only smaller. Also founded in the First Age, Wallport's sole function is to provide a place for the loading and unloading of ships conducting business with Whitewall.

Wallport is the filthy, stunted twin of Whitewall, lacking any of Whitewall's stability and seeming *at least* as dirty and chaotic as any other city in the Threshold and worse than most.

The population of Wallport is just under 2,000 people. Of these, about 1,800 are men making a living by loading and unloading the ships that come here to trade with Whitewall, though some are smugglers, port officials or prostitutes. The few women citizens of Wallport are officials, prostitutes, physicians, appraisers and a few hardened dock workers. It is a hive more than a city, a place where the lowest common denominator is well represented and vice is the favorite pastime.

The town of Wallport is located atop a long stretch of black basalt cliffs. Goods are brought up from the docks along the steep (and often slippery) stone stairs or via an elaborate block and tackle system to the warehouses in Wallport. In the First Age, even through the end of the Shogunate, goods were raised and lowered using Essence-fueled Artifacts. Though those Artifacts are still in place, they don't work, and no one in Wallport currently knows how to power, operate or repair them.



Wallport is largely populated by those who have fled Whitewall (or been exiled). They are the outcastes, the dropouts and the rejects who have fled the affluence of Whitewall for any number of reasons. Though Wallport has been a town in its own right since the First Age, this town perpetually has the feel of a frontier town. For its younger citizens, Wallport is a place for immaturity and excess, a place of lawlessness and criminal misadventures and, often, a place for those who can't imagine a future for themselves. For its older citizens, Wallport is a place of nihilism, despair and bottoming out. The population shrinks by several suicides every year as dock workers get too old and too tired to keep doing what they've spent their life doing but don't have anything to show for the scars, the fatigue and the interminable ache in their backs and shoulders. Life in Wallport is frequently made tolerable only through heavy use of alcohol and other intoxicants.

The local constabulary, while technically a garrison of Whitewall's guardians, tends to be so lazy (or "forgiving" as they put it) that all but the most extreme crimes go uninvestigated and unpunished. The one exception to this rule is theft. Anything that impairs, impedes or threatens trade with Whitewall is dealt with quickly and harshly by a garrison of five dissolute Dragon-Blooded guardians. Though they're lazy, they're well-trained, and they work together as a team. None of these Terrestrial Exalts is Fire-aspected, as the danger to the warehouses is considered too serious.

Much of the space within Wallport's walls is taken up with sturdy stone warehouses but built between, on top of and behind the warehouse buildings are wooden shacks that operate as bordellos, saloons, opium dens, flophouses and similar establishments.

Wallport would have grown more, and probably would have outstripped Whitewall long ago, if Wallport had a better harbor. The entire stretch of coastline located south of Whitewall is relatively hostile to any sort of large-scale port community. The harbor in Wallport is large enough for four good-sized boats to dock at any one time, or more vessels of a smaller size. During the busy spring and summer months, ships may have to anchor in the choppy, siaka-infested seas outside the harbor while boats are loaded and unloaded, and, depending on the cargo, that can take between two and 12 hours. Wallporters long ago stopped keeping track of the number of vessels that have sunk under such circumstances. As part of the trade agreement with Whitewall, the Realm navy sends in a contingent of Water-aspected Dragon-Blooded once or twice a year to bring up anything of value from these rotting hulks and cut down masts that could pose a threat to navigation.

There is one more reason Wallport hasn't grown larger than it has: it stinks. Enormous pipes run under the Traveler's Road from Whitewall to Wallport carrying away excess water from the hot spring and wastewater from the city's public baths, as well as all of Whitewall's sewage,

ADVENTURE SEED

Target Character Type: Dragon-Blooded, God-Blooded, Heroic Mortal

Many ships entering Wallport mention seeing either strange ships or figures moving under the water just outside the town's harbor.

When the characters investigate, it turns out that the Lintha family has learned that one of the vessels that went down in that graveyard of ships was carrying an imperishable First Age copy of *The Broken-Winged Crane*, a tome of demonic lore of incomparable value. The characters will have to catch up to the pirates by finding out what they know and somehow recover the book before the pirates do.

If the Lintha obtain the text, their understanding of (and alliance with) the Yozis will advance considerably. Should anyone else (i.e., the characters) get the tome first, however, they will unquestionably be stalked by the Lintha.

and spits them into the ocean in a noisome outpouring of filth just half a mile west of the harbor. When the wind blows in off the ocean (as it often does), the entire town of Wallport is awash with the stench of sewage. During the summer months in particular, the smell is overpowering. In the First Age, this outflow was transformed by Essence effects into pure, fragrant water over the course of its 700-mile journey south; where the water plunged into the ocean, the water resembled nothing so much as a beautiful waterfall. That hasn't been the case since the Great Contagion, unfortunately, and unless some crafty savant stumbles on a way to fix the filtration system, Wallport is destined to smell like a sewer for the rest of its days.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS FOR WALLPORT

Warrior: Imperial Marine, Mercenary

Holy Man: Ghost-Hunter, Wyld Hunt Advance Scout

Savant: Ship's Surgeon, Translator

Criminal: Gambler, Smuggler

Entertainer: Male Prostitute, Opium Dealer

Bureaucrat: Guild Member, Port Authority Commissioner

MARAMA'S FELL

Among the greatest dangers the citizens of Whitewall face is the shadowland called Marama's Fell, located not even 100 miles southeast of the walled city. The Fell is a haunted wasteland that teems with sickly cannibals by day and strange, twisted ghosts by night.

The presence of the shadowland complicates travel to the rest of the Threshold, forcing all traffic to pass north through Gethamane or south to Wallport and then east along the coast. The shadowland even extends over a short

segment of the Traveler's Road leading south to Wallport, and, while the road itself is safe, it presents a danger, especially for traders unfamiliar with the local terrain and the natural laws of shadowlands.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS FOR MARAMA'S FELL

Warrior: Nemissary Scout, Struggling Heroic Ghost

Holy Man: Disciple of the Shining Path, Ghost-Hunter

Savant: First Age Ghost, Foolhardy Scholar of First Age Lore

Criminal: Exile from Whitewall, Mortal Cannibal

Entertainer: Emaciated Innkeeper, Ghostly Chanteuse

Bureaucrat: Ambassador of Gradafes, Mayor of Besieged Town

THE DANGERS OF PASSING THROUGH

As is true of any shadowland, leaving Marama's Fell at night takes the traveler into the Underworld. The dock workers in Wallport are supposed to warn those heading to Whitewall not to leave (or even enter) the shadowland at night, but this is hardly proof against calamity. On occasion, the dock workers may get distracted and forget to mention the shadowland at all, or they may do so intentionally if a traveler is abusive or ill-tempered. Likewise, some travelers may be too distracted to listen or too ignorant to recognize the tell-tale signs of being in a shadowland in the first place. Signs are posted along the Traveler's Road indicating where the road passes into and out of the shadowland, but from time to time ghosts, vandals and other malicious types have been known to steal the signs.

As the Traveler's Road has been deemed a truly public thoroughfare, the practice of salting the side of the road to bar the dead is illegal (and *will* elicit repercussions from the inhabitants of the shadowland). The Traveler's Road itself is safe, however, even in the shadowland and the Underworld due to the agreement negotiated by the Syndics, but anyone leaving the shadowland by night will find herself in the Underworld and may not know how to find her way back to living Creation (by going back to the shadowland and leaving during the day).

Truly careless travelers may even find themselves entering the Underworld's dark reflection of Whitewall, a fate they're not likely to survive (as entering that city constitutes leaving the safety of the Traveler's Road). These poor souls' goods are often taken back to living Creation and traded — outside the city's walls, of course — to the party who was waiting for them, for money, favors, prayers or other goods and services.

MORTALS IN THE FELL

Not every danger that comes out of the shadowland is dead, undead or pledged to the powers of the Deathlords. The mortals living in Marama's Fell, plagued with cold weather, a short growing season *and* the effects of the shadowland upon their crops, have a well-deserved repu-

USING THE ENEMY

As much as the Syndics resent the dangers inherent in Whitewall's close proximity to a shadowland, the rulers are not blind to the strategic benefits the shadowland provides the city. The shadowland effectively protects the city from attack by the larger of the two Fair Folk tribes in the area and makes any sort of invasion from the east or southeast *much* less likely. During the reign of the Scarlet Empress, the Syndics had contingency plans in place to *expand* the portion of the shadowland that falls across the Traveler's Road *and* to exempt Realm troops from the road's protection. Now that the Empress is gone and the Realm appears to be imploding, the shadowland is no longer being treated as a potentially necessary evil or defensive barrier, and efforts to purge the road of all taint from the shadowland have been stepped up accordingly.

That said, the Syndics have long discussed the possibility of "sculpting" the shadowland, to gain more control over its defensive properties, through public-works projects and strategically placed executions (of serious criminals, of course). While the Syndics have long been implementing the public-works portion of that plan, the Syndics can't bring themselves to take any action that would expand the shadowland, and, barring any drastic unforeseen reversals to the city's fortunes, that is how the situation will remain.

tation for cannibalism. It's not that the people *want* to seek out other people for food, it's just that they don't have the luxury of seeing the distinction between other people and food animals.

Some of these blighted souls may even give the appearance of being pleasant, harmless individuals — a kindly old innkeeper, a beautiful woman beset by attackers and so on — in order to lure their prospective meals to their doom.

While some shadowlands are relatively hospitable toward the living, Marama's Fell is not one of them. The feral, vicious ghosts that haunt the region are particularly rapacious and do not hesitate to attack the living when the opportunity presents itself.

Under the aggressive predation of the vicious ghosts of Marama's Fell, mortal settlements are particularly rare, and those that remain are populated with a motley array of stunted, disfigured and mentally defective humanity. Any human with a lick of sense has long fled the Fell for Whitewall or one of the other bastions of the North. (For more on the lives of mortals living in shadowlands, see page 24 of **Exalted: The Abyssals**.)



HISTORY

The shadowland known as Marama's Fell blossomed slowly in the years following the Usurpation. At the Fell's center is a murder camp established by Shogunate officials for the eradication of sorcerously created races, servants, slaves, beastmen, demon servitors and the like spawned or summoned by the Solar and Lunar Exalted in the centuries leading up to the Usurpation. The Dragon-Blooded were so paranoid about the loyalties and possible capabilities of these races that the Terrestrials preferred to destroy these races wholesale rather than risk letting them live.

Named after Anjei Marama, the camp's commandant, "Marama's Fell" originally referred solely to the murder camp at the center of what became the shadowland. It was here that a forest of sorcerously enhanced singing trees was cut down to make room for the camp. (A fell is a section of forest that has been razed.) The trees were only the first to be put into the camp's enormous ovens. During the years following the Usurpation, entire *races* created by the Solar Exalted and any number of summoned entities (including a number of demons of the First Circle) were sent to Marama's Fell for destruction, decommissioning or banishment. Other allies of the Solar Exalted, including other "Anathema," were also sent here to die secretly if it was deemed likely that their public execution would cause problems. The ruins of the camp are still there, should anyone be so rash as to go looking for them, but they're located in the center of the shadowland where the strange, old and powerful ghosts swarm most thickly.

"CREATURES"

Some of the "creatures" sent to Marama's Fell for death weren't creatures at all, but golems or other automata of such sophisticated craftsmanship as to be indistinguishable from living (albeit artificial) beings. When such devices were discovered, they were deactivated, placed in stone containers and buried. Given the exquisite Solar workmanship of these devices, many might still be serviceable after the application of appropriate Charms or other magic.

Although Shogunate officials were perfectly aware that the area was becoming a shadowland, they fully intended to deal with the problem later through public-works projects. But, as the shadowland grew increasingly vast, and, in the absence of Solar Circle sorcery, the necessary public-works effort would have been enormous and costly. The Shogun and his government had more pressing things to deal with, and so, Marama's Fell, located in a distant wilderness area, was forgotten, a hazard marked on the maps of the day with an unexplained black smear.

By the time the Great Contagion struck, the camp had long been silent, but the plague stirred up the Underworld and all its denizens and roused the twisted ghosts that haunted the place.

The ghosts of artificially created races aren't always the same as the ghosts of common mortals. Some ghosts, being imperfect and artificial, have only the barest wisps of souls and make pale ghosts. Others, such as the ghosts of the Lunars' beastmen, are at least as fearsome as hungry ghosts and sometimes more powerful.

The tainted core of Marama's Fell is part necropolis, part menagerie — and all chaotic. There is little order here. The ghost villages and mirrors of living civilization do not exist in the Underworld near Marama's Fell, except perhaps in small enclaves.

INHUMAN GHOSTS

Many of the ghosts found in Marama's Fell are all that remain of several races known in the First Age. Some were twisted from the moment of their creation and kept by Solars as curiosities (albeit dangerous ones). Other ghosts have been twisted by centuries of death in the cold wasteland of the Fell.

The Storyteller is free to generate these creatures as she would any other ghost, then add additional exotic features as she sees fit. The list of Wyld mutations from **Exalted: The Lunars** (pages 212–222) provides a good base from which to work, but many of the races created in the First Age could be stranger still. Lastly, remember that a millennium is a long time to learn Arcanoi and that those ghosts that remain from the shadowland's inception are likely to be extraordinarily powerful.

When designing the ghost of such a creature, the Storyteller should keep in mind what it was created for: Was it a beast of burden? A courtesan? A fighting animal on which to wager? The Solars may have been decadent, but creating new creatures — or entirely new races — was often the result of a life's work (and a Solar's life at that).

SAMPLE FELL GHOST: THRICE-DREAD ACHIBA

Description: Among the other excesses of the First Age, some powerful Solar sorcerers created new forms of life solely to pit against one another in gladiatorial combat. Because the victorious combatant would win its creator great fame and prizes, competition to build the most fearsome beast was quite fierce. The kyzvoi were one such experimentally constructed race. Combining the most dangerous elements of several other species, including spiders and certain mammalian predators, the kyzvoi were bred to become more lethal with each passing generation. After the Usurpation, Shogunate functionaries deemed the kyzvoi to be dangerous and lacking any legitimate use (their short attention span and largely absent impulse control made them unusable as soldiers); they were among the first creatures eliminated in the great purges. Hundreds

of kyzvoi were taken from their holding pens and destroyed in the “cleansing center” of Marama’s Fell, but their strange artificial souls did not readily fall into Lethe, instead lingering in the nascent shadowland, one of many strange races that still haunt Marama’s Fell as ghosts in the Age of Sorrows.

Thrice-Dread Achiba is one of these ghostly kyzvoi. An accomplished gladiatorial combatant in life, he became a warlord among the ghosts of the Fell after his execution. A figure of fear even before the camp was closed, Thrice-Dread Achiba has used the subsequent centuries to hone his skills, warp his corpus and make himself a far more dangerous adversary than he ever was in the arenas of the First Age. Making him more dangerous yet is the fact that other ghosts, and even a few mortals who live in the Fell, direct prayers to him, elevating him yet further.

Worse, in recent years, Thrice-Dread Achiba has killed a number of well-armed warghost sent by the Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears and taken their weapons and armor for his favored lieutenants while keeping the best for himself.

Thrice-Dread Achiba commands a force just over 100 strong, including a large force of powerful human ghosts, a handful of other kyzvoi and several phantoms of even stranger nature. Some of the mortals in Marama’s Fell make offerings to Thrice-Dread Achiba, and these offerings have been known to include grave goods as well as information that has come from Whitewall.

Though quite massive (eight feet tall and solidly built, with a thick carapace over which his armor barely fits), Thrice-Dread Achiba otherwise looks like a regular human ghost, except for three characteristics: his lustrous black exoskeleton, his compound eyes and his arachnid mouthparts.

His great age alone makes Thrice-Dread Achiba a powerful ghost (though that’s true of many of the ancient, twisted ghosts who stalk this shadowland), but he has used his position in this most chaotic of shadowlands to estab-

lish cults among both the living and the dead. Whole villages within Marama’s Fell (small as they are) believe Thrice-Dread Achiba to be their founding patriarch and pay him homage. These mortals guard this powerful ghost’s main Fetters, the enormous hooked swords he fought with in the arenas of the First Age.

Thrice-Dread Achiba is only one of many such warlords who rule the dead of Marama’s Fell, and he epitomizes not only what the denizens of Whitewall have to defend against, but the kind of rebels with which the Deathlords will have to contend should they ever decide to use Marama’s Fell with any regularity.

Equipment:

Ghost-strengthening links with soulfire crystal (4 motes), reinforced soulsteel breastplate, repeating maggot-caster* with soulfire crystal (6 motes)

* Thrice-Dread Achiba can get more maggots for his caster, but since it involves dealing with a nephwrack who resides far to the north whom Thrice-Dread Achiba hates, he uses this weapon only when absolutely necessary.

Concept: Ancient ghostly warlord

Nature: Leader

ATTRIBUTES

Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 6, Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 6

VIRTUES

Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 3, Valor 5

ABILITIES

Athletics 4, Awareness 5 (Detect Ambushes +1), Brawl 5 (Natural Weaponry +3), Dodge 6, Endurance 3, Lore 2 (First Age +1), Martial Arts 5, Medicine 1, Melee 5, Occult 2, Perception 4, Presence 4, Resistance 4, Socialize 1, Survival 4 (Shadowlands +3), Thrown 3

BACKGROUNDS

Ancestor Cult 3, Artifact 5+, Followers 5, Influence 4, Underworld Cult 3



PASSIONS

Compassion: Guard those who protect his swords 2

Conviction: Defeat all other ghostly warlords in the Fell 4

Temperance: Gain knowledge of the world of the living 1, Understand the war techniques of the Deathlords' war ghosts 1

Valor: Defend Marama's Fell from all outsiders 5

FETTERS

The mass grave where his body was dumped 3; the swords he used in arena combat (now guarded by mortal tribesmen) 4

SPIRIT CHARMS

Details, Form Match, Hurry Home, Memory Mirror, Paralyze

ARCANOI

Common Arcanoi: Assassin's Subtle Escape, Scent of Sweet Blood, Two World Vision, Whispers of the Living

Essence-Measuring Thief Arts: Aura-Reading Technique, Blood-Drinking Thirst, Delicious Essence Scent, Essence-Devouring Ghost Touch, Ravening Life-Force Hunger

Savage Ghost Tamer Arts: All

Shifting Ghost-Clay Path: All

The Stringless Puppeteer Art: Spirit-Catching Eye Technique, Soul-Whispering Empathy Discipline

Terror-Spreading Art: All

Honored Ancestor Ways: Courier in Dreams

OTHER POWERS

Thrice-Dread Achiba's arachnid muscle structure grants him incredible speed (as Gazelle's Stride, see **Exalted: The Lunars**, page 213) and toughness (as per Body of Stone, see **Exalted: The Lunars**, page 218) that make him a fierce opponent even without his soulsteel artifacts. He is both poisonous like a spider and has the ability to spin webs (see "Toxin and Webbing," **Exalted: The Lunars**, page 214–215)

COMBAT STATISTICS

Base Initiative: 11

Attack:

Poisonous Bite: Speed 11 Accuracy 14 Damage 5L + poison* Defense 12

Chitinous Fist: Speed 11 Accuracy 14 Damage 6L Defense 15

Kick: Speed 8 Accuracy 12 Damage 6B Defense 10

Ghost-Strengthening Links: Speed 14 Accuracy 10 Damage 13B Defense 14

Repeating Maggot-Caster: Speed 1 Accuracy 7 Damage Special (Rate 2/turn, Range 50**)

* Poison is Difficulty 2, Success 2L, Failure 4L, Duration/Penalty 2 hours/-3.

** The maggot-caster has no range increments. This is its maximum range.

Dodge Pool: 11/10 **Soak:** 24L/26B (Reinforced soulsteel breastplate, 12L/11B; Body of Stone, 6L/6B;

ghost-strengthening links, 3L/3B, -1 mobility penalty, +1 difficulty to hit)

Willpower: 8 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/I

Essence: 5 **Essence Pool:** 93 (102)

Committed Essence: 9

EXALTED POWER COMBAT

Attack:

Poisonous Bite: Speed 11 Accuracy 14 Damage 5L + poison* Defense 12 Rate 4

Chitinous Fist: Speed 11 Accuracy 14 Damage 6L Defense 15 Rate 5

Kick: Speed 8 Accuracy 14 Damage 7B Defense 10 Rate 3

Ghost-Strengthening Links: Speed 14 Accuracy 10 Damage 13B Defense 14 Rate 6

* Poison is Difficulty 2, Success 2L, Failure 4L, Duration/Penalty 2 hours/-3.

Dodge Pool: 16/15

Hardness: 3

UNDERWORLD DÉTENTE

Two Deathlords technically lay claim to Marama's Fell, though neither one values it as highly as might be expected. There's a reason for this: as shadowlands go, Marama's Fell is a pit. Due to the means of its origins, the Fell is a place of constant violence and predation. The stately ancestor cults of elsewhere have yet to show any lasting power here — or even be capable of defending themselves against the predations of the bizarre ghosts that populate the Fell. No heroic ghost has yet shown the wherewithal to tame the hungry ghosts of this shadowland and make an opportunity out of what is currently a big, chaotic challenge.

Whitewall already views the shadowland as a key threat, although it's likely Whitewall would be forced to upgrade that threat were the shadowland to become an active, as opposed to a passive, threat. While Marama's Fell is a danger to every citizen of Whitewall, the Fell could be much, much worse if a Deathlord or a powerful deathknight were to take it over and begin launching strategic raids on those who follow the Traveler's Road or begin luring those on the road into the Underworld at night.

Whitewall benefits more than it realizes from the relative disinterest toward Marama's Fell taken by the two relevant Deathlords. While both make occasional use of the Fell, neither particularly values it.

The closer of the two Deathlords, Bishop of the Chalcedony Thurible, is so introspective and preoccupied with his own conspiratorial plotting that he has no interest in the Fell — nearly a thousand miles from the Hidden Tabernacle — at all. This is extraordinarily good news for Whitewall, because the Bishop of the Chalcedony Thurible has claimed that he knows Whitewall better than even the Syndics do for reasons that are now long lost to history.

The Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears, on the other hand, is modestly interested in Marama's Fell, as she is interested in all of Creation, and she would be *more* interested were Marama's Fell nearer to her Fortress of Red Ice or more governable. She has already made two attempts at establishing a military colony in the Fell, but both times the colony was been wiped out by the shadowland's native marauding ghosts. The next time she plans on dispensing with nemissaries and sending in an Abyssal Exalt to lead the effort. As it stands now, one of her deathknights, Mournful Aria, is particularly interested in Whitewall, and therefore in Marama's Fell — as it's the easiest way for her to get to the city.

ADVENTURE SEED

Target Character Type: Abyssals, Heroic Ghost

One of the Deathlords has finally taken sufficient interest in the strategic uses of Marama's Fell and has decided to move aggressively to take control of the entire shadowland, or at least its chaotic center. Unfortunately, this is not as simple as it may seem. Several talons of nemissaries have been sent under the command of two deathknights, but none of them sent any word back. The deathknights dispatched to bring order to the Fell disappeared without a trace. The Deathlord has now decided to send in a crack force to bring the fractious ghosts of the Fell under her thumb. If she is unwilling to endanger more deathknights, she may send in experienced and well-outfitted nemissaries, or she may decide that a real show of force is necessary and send in an entire Circle of Abyssals.

Whatever the case, the reinforcements had better be good. The twisted ghosts of Marama's Fell are a far cry from the restless dead the characters may have encountered before . . .

THE RESPLENDENT CHRYSANTHEMUM SHRINES

Marama's Fell, particularly that section of it that overlaps the Traveler's Road, is a thorn in the side of the city of Whitewall, and one the city would dearly love to rid itself of. To that end, the Syndics called for the establishment of shrines just outside the shadowland. These shrines are dedicated to various gods and spirits of life, joy, springtime and so on, and the shrines are repeatedly reconsecrated at the beginning of every spring. These shrines are the preferred settings for weddings, conceptions, births and birthdays. Throughout the spring, beginning on the first day of Ascending Earth, and going through summer, right up to the day before Calibration, the Syndics bestow blessings upon families that go south on the Traveler's

Road and observe these vital events at one of the resplendent chrysanthemum shrines.

The net effect is to push back the boundaries of the shadowland, and that has done at a respectable rate. When the resplendent chrysanthemum shrines were first built, the shadowland lay across more than 50 miles of the Traveler's Road and extended past the road nearly 100 miles to the west. Now, years later, only 20 miles of the Traveler's Road pass through the shadowland, which also pushes only 10 miles west of the road.

Since the initial establishment of the resplendent chrysanthemum shrines, they've had to be moved a number of times to keep grinding away at the shadowland's edges. Still, the shrines have moved neither as far nor as quickly as the Syndics and the people of Whitewall would like. That said, these pilgrimages have become some of the most popular traditions in the culture of Whitewall, an excuse to leave the fields, the mines and the walls around the city for a few days



when the weather is nice — and to get blessed with good health for doing so. With the last vestiges of the shadowland west of the road now forming a “peninsula,” the Syndics expect to be able to push the shadowland off the Traveler’s Road entirely within a few years, ending for good the threat of wandering into the Underworld inadvertently during the night.

When the shrines were initially built, they were desecrated and torn down by ghosts either every night or, at worst, by the end of the winter. Now, the citizens of Whitewall have taken to warding the shrines extensively against ghosts every spring when the wooden structures are rebuilt and reconsecrated, and they easily last through the summer (although they still rarely make it through the winter).

Neither of the Deathlords of the North, the Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears nor the Bishop of the Chalcedony Thurible, have noticed the changes to the far western boundary of Marama’s Fell. That shadowland is largely held to be a violent, ungovernable mess, and neither Deathlord has taken a personal interest in it. It’s unlikely that the shrinking shadowland would elicit much of a response from either Deathlord, as there is *so much* of Marama’s Fell that it’s hardly going to disappear any time soon. Should it even get close to that point, either Deathlord could easily stage a strategic massacre there to cause the shadowland to expand once again.

If the Syndics were to find a Solar Exalt capable of performing either Benediction of Archgenesis (see **Savant and Sorcerer**, page 139) or Cleansing Solar Flames (see **The Book of Bone and Ebony**, page 139), the city would pay an exorbitant fee to have the Traveler’s Road freed of the shadowland and even more if Marama’s Fell could be done away with entirely. There are few concerns weighing more heavily on the Syndics and the city’s guardians than the vulnerability associated with being so close to such a large shadowland.

THE WINTER FOLK

Technically speaking, Whitewall is within striking distance of two tribes of Fair Folk. Marama’s Fell, ironically, protects the city from direct strikes from the so-called Lions of the Snow, the larger of the two tribes of fae. Attacking Whitewall in a direct strike from their Freehold would require the Lions of the Snow to venture through the core of the shadowland, a feat they tried once and are unlikely to attempt again.

The closer, and by far the more dangerous, fae operate out of a Freehold only 50 miles west by northwest of Whitewall. They call themselves “The Winter Folk,” perhaps intending to sow confusion or else finding it amusing to refer to themselves by the name given them by mortals.

The Winter Folk do not amuse the mortals who know of them in any way. The Winter Folk are utterly alien, and the legends of their guile and cruelty are well-known throughout the North, especially in Whitewall. The bar-

gain struck in regard to the Traveler’s Road allows the Fair Folk to travel on the road, but the fact of the matter is that the Fair Folk don’t especially care to go anywhere the road goes. If they’re on the road, they’re unquestionably there to lure travelers away.

Three types of Winter Folk swarm out of the Wyld zone when they hunt: the coldly beautiful cataphractoi and two types of hobgoblins, those with wolfish features and those that look like jagged sculptures of misshapen children hammered out of ice. Their favorite hunting grounds are the road leading to Gethamane and the roads leading to the mines outside Whitewall. The Fair Folk would love nothing so much as to disrupt the flow of iron from those mines, but the citizens of Whitewall have seeded both sides of the road with iron caltrops and a number of other, even more ingenious, traps devised by Whitewall’s engineers.

The Winter Folk have domesticated two animals, reindeer and ice weasels, both of which allow the fae to hunt mortals with devastating efficiency. The reindeer allow the Fair Folk to travel without tiring, and they use ice weasels as malevolent hunting hounds. The Fair Folk themselves are perfectly dangerous enemies even without their beasts, however. The fae can walk across even freshly drifted snow as though it were solid ground, giving them a pronounced advantage when pursuing mortals through the Northlands.

Fortunately for the city of Whitewall, it is the source of much of the iron in the North. All of the arrows used by the guards atop the wall are iron-tipped, as are their melee weapons, armor and the shoes of their war horses.

HUNTING MONSTERS

Whitewall’s proximity to Marama’s Fell is hardly the only threat Whitewall faces. While few mortal armies would be able to successfully lay siege to the city, the Realm’s legions or other armies led by Exalts could potentially do so. The greatest risk of all, however, the one the Syndics fret about in their private moments, is an attack by a behemoth from the nearby Wyld zone. As creatures of chaos, often shaped by the will of Fair Folk, behemoths at times possess abilities that make them threats even to a city like Whitewall. (See **Exalted: The Fair Folk**, pages 209–211, for more on how the fae create these terrible beasts.) The wall of Whitewall, though ancient and supernaturally sturdy, could potentially fall before a substantial enough attack, and the First Age techniques that built the wall are not practical in the Second Age. Without the great wall to protect Whitewall, the city would be doomed.

The Fair Folk regularly launch new, strange behemoths against Creation’s cities. Whitewall, as one of the best protected and nearest to a significant Freehold, often gets the brunt of these bizarre attacks. To deal with the threat of behemoths, then, Whitewall keeps constant vigil against approaching monstrosities and sends its most powerful guardians out to intercept such beasts before they can even

ICE WEASEL

Starkly white (except for the eyes, which are small, black and full of feral cunning) and as vicious as their Fair Folk masters, full-grown ice weasels are three feet tall at the shoulder and nearly 10 feet long from nose to tail-tip. The creatures possess a malicious cunning, and they are extraordinary trackers even across vast expanses of snow. They are lethally quick and make powerful hunters. Two ice weasels working in tandem can take down a full-grown yeddin in under a minute. Once an ice weasel locks its jaws on a target, not even the creature's death will release the weasel's bite if it doesn't choose to let go. Only by breaking the jawbone (Strength + Athletics, difficulty 5, to break the jaw bare-handed) can an ice weasel's victim escape the bite.

On their own, ice weasels hunt alone or in pairs. The Winter Folk use them as hunting hounds. A pack may contain as many as 10 ice weasels, and a single Fair Folk hunting party may have as many as three packs.

The furs taken from ice weasels are particularly soft and warm and very effective at repelling water. For this reason, and because of their scarcity, ice weasel furs are among the most expensive in Creation (requiring Resources ••• to purchase in the North and Resources •••• elsewhere).

| Creature | Physical Att. Str/Dex/Sta | Will. | Health Levels | Attack Spd/Acc/Dmg | Dodge/Soak | Abilities |
|------------|------------------------------|-------|---------------|-------------------------------|------------|--|
| Ice Weasel | 4/6/4 | 5 | -0/-1x4/-4/1 | Bite: 6/9/6L (+ jaw lock*) | 12/6L/10B | Athletics 6, Awareness 3, Brawl 5 (Bite +2), Dodge 6, Stealth 4 (Snow +3), Survival 4 (Sense Traps +3) |

* When an ice weasel locks its jaw on an unarmored limb, the ice weasel automatically inflicts an additional level of lethal damage each turn until the creature accrues three health levels in this way, at which point it severs the limb.

reach the city. These parties are almost always composed of the Exalted. In recent years, they've been bands of outcaste Terrestrials led by the Solar Macha Pethisdotter, and they've slain over 10 behemoths, the closest only 100 yards from the city's gates. Most such attacks take place in the winter when patrolling is more difficult and the Fair Folk have a greater chance to catch the monster hunters once they've become bogged down in the snow.

In recent months, the Fair Folk's most accomplished sculptor of behemoths has been promising his people something truly spectacular, although he has yet to unleash it against Creation.

In Whitewall, monitoring the lands around the city are among the most serious duties a citizen can undertake. Guards mounted atop the city's wall scan the horizon in all directions watching for approaching enemies, particularly behemoths. An array of anti-siege weapons sits atop the city's wall, constantly maintained in a state of perfect readiness in case the alarm is ever sounded.

The ranks of the guardians change from time to time, and, at times, the city doesn't have enough sufficiently powerful guardians to protect the city from behemoths, at which point Whitewall resorts to hiring mercenaries, usually Terrestrial Exalted from Lookshy but, sometimes, even from the Realm (in which case, they keep Pethisdotter as far from the Dragon-Bloods as possible).

In the summer, Whitewall deploys guardian scouts around the perimeter of the city's farmland to repel attacks by Fair Folk, though summer is traditionally the season of fewest Fair Folk attacks.

THE GREAT LOST CITY

Far to the north of Whitewall, north of the White Sea, north and west even of the farthest flung cities known in the Age of Sorrows, lie the ruins of a vast Old Realm city. Half of this enormous city remains intact beneath 700 years of accumulated snow and ice, while the other half has been consumed — or catastrophically changed — by the Wyld bordermarch that marks the terminus of Creation.

In the First Age, the name of this city was Opal Spire — and those capable of reading Old Realm will be able to surmise that much with only a little effort.

At the very dawn of the First Age, immediately after the fall of the Primordials, Opal Spire was a terraforming outpost at the northern edge of Creation, the point from which artifact ships launched themselves into the Wyld to solidify the chaos and expand the world.

Centuries later, when hundreds of miles of new land had been annexed to Creation and the Pole of Air and Creation's edge had been pushed far to the north, Opal Spire was no longer the most efficient launch point for such operations in the Wyld. However, Opal Spire continued to be a powerful



MEANWHILE, UP NORTH . . .

The city of Opal Spire is presented here as a dangerous and exciting setting for experienced Exalted characters. It lies far to the north of any of the habitable cities detailed in this book and has been largely forgotten for centuries — for good reason. Characters should not even attempt to find Opal Spire if they don't have potent Charms that will allow them to survive the intense cold.

To find Opal Spire, an individual would have to trek over some of the highest mountains in Creation (or cross deadly Wyld-tinged ice shelves), brave the most bone-chilling cold known to man or Exalt and survive the freezing fog, ice hollows, ice weasels, Lunar barbarians and assorted other dangers. It's extremely unlikely anyone could ever learn of the existence of Opal Spire, but characters are unlikely individuals. Storytellers have a number of options for introducing the doomed city to characters. Solar characters might have a flashback to the First Age, Lunars could hear about the city through rumors as a place to seek fame (or death), a Sidereal could learn of Opal Spire from a mentor, Abyssals could learn about it from a Deathlord (who may have been there at its demise) and so on.

What you see here is the basic core of an adventure. Storytellers are invited to flesh out these bones, or not, as they see fit.

Additional elements that the Storyteller could add to this basic setting include the following:

- Two Lunar Exalted at war over the contents of the fallen city
- A mountaintop aerie of civilized Dragon Kings living much as they did in the First Age and taking what artifacts they can
 - A remote access node for the Realm's defense grid
 - A tomb built for a great Solar or Lunar ruler in the early First Age, carefully sealed against would-be plunderers
- A Fair Folk army massing in hopes of killing Vorvin-Derlin
- An enormous Manse in the shape of a pagoda built of ice located on the ice shelf nearly a mile out from land — and its guardian
- A complex full of large crystals that hold sleeping First Age citizens (though no Exalted) from the First Age

node in the integrated military force of the First Age. The city remained networked to the Realm's defense grid, and its enormous skyports and harbor were ready at a moment's notice to engage the Yozi or any other foe of the gods or

ADVENTURE SEED

Target Character Type: Fair Folk, Lunars, Sidereals, Solars

Many of the great terraforming engines of the First Age lie buried beneath the snow of Opal Spire, frozen but in perfect condition otherwise. A sorcerer with a sufficient understanding of the lore of the First Age could conceivably use the machines to drive back the Wyld and expand Creation. On one hand, this would push back the Wyld and move the Pole of Air farther north; characters could thereby create a kingdom all their own. On the other hand, the fae have no interest in Creation getting any bigger; such a move would certainly lead to renewed hostilities between Creation and the Fair Folk, with far-ranging repercussions on both sides.

Exalted. The city's vast war libraries contain more knowledge on the Primordials and the world of the First Age than any war libraries now extant, and, unlike any library elsewhere in Creation, none of the crystal codices of the Opal Spire library have been censored or touched in any way by Shogunate forces. Were the sorcerers of the Heptagram or Lookshy to learn of the existence of Opal Spire, they would spare no expense to plunder its secrets — and they would probably fall before its terrible guardian.

Older Sidereals know about Opal Spire. They may remember its libraries, its beautiful ports — or its terrifying last night. Those who know how the city met its end may also remember the horror that laid the city low, and they will likely believe that the incredible risks associated with entering the city far outweigh any good that might come from plundering Opal Spire. If the old city's dread destroyer, the behemoth/demon known as Vorvin-Derlin, Slayer of Armies, ever becomes active again and enters more populated regions of Creation, precious few forces could stop the demon. One phrase is uttered more often than any other when the Sidereals speak of Opal Spire: "What is forgotten is best left forgotten."

Unlike any other known First Age city, Opal Spire never experienced the slow deterioration of the Shogunate. Opal Spire's history came to an end on the night of the Usurpation when a Solar sorcerer unleashed something far larger than the Dragon-Blooded or their Sidereal masters could handle. The city, a vast trove of First Age knowledge and artifacts, was evacuated on the night the Solars were systematically assassinated. Had the Shogunate's government ever been able to address the difficulties of the deteriorating First Age, perhaps Opal Spire would have been a destination for enormous war parties and then, perhaps, archeologists. As it was, active attention to the city and the horror that lurked there was postponed indefinitely while more pressing matters were attended to, and with the

coming of the Great Contagion, Opal Spire was forgotten entirely as the edges of Creation collapsed back, leaving the proud, ancient city slumbering under its hoar blanket.

Opal Spire is now effectively synonymous with the Elemental Pole of Air. Creation goes no further north from here. The bordermarches of the Wyld begin almost at the old city's heart, and Creation itself fades away as one goes north. Only the southern half of the city remains intact. Anything north of that has been *changed* by centuries of Wyld corruption so as to be unrecognizable, although certain artifacts created from the Five Magical Materials have remained largely unchanged. This far north, the frozen fog does not creep or even roil. It lunges from place to place on violent, howling gusts. The snow and winds blast across the land with the force of an explosion. Sudden updrafts can instantly pluck a man from the surface, blow him hundreds of feet into the air and then, like a bored child, drop him.

Those without powerful protective magic to defend them from the elements (e.g., Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit or its equivalent) had best not even cross the White Sea, much less come to this most northerly point in Creation. The *average* temperature, in the absence of the frozen fog (which makes it colder), is -80° Fahrenheit (-65° Celsius). At such low temperatures, spit freezes solid before it can hit the ground, and all exposed skin suffers from frostbite within a few seconds. Without Essence-enhanced outerwear or many, many layers of high-quality mundane furs, an individual will take environmental damage every turn as if trapped in a supernatural ice storm (see **Exalted**, page 244).

At Opal Spire's peak in the First Age, the city was one of the largest of the Old Realm's vast cities with a population of nearly six million. In the Second Age, it is the biggest, coldest ghost town in Creation. In the First Age, Opal Spire's climate was very like that of Whitewall now. The skyport was on the northern edge of the city and now lost, the harbor was on the city's southern edge; while most of the ancient ships were taken in the evacuation of the city, two remain.

THE HARBOR

Now frozen over, Opal Spire's harbor was one of the largest of the First Age. Over two miles in diameter, the harbor accommodate even the largest First Age ships. In the center of the harbor is an island with a 40-foot-tall gold statue of the Unconquered Sun in all his glory, staring off toward the west.

In the intense cold, the harbor is covered with snow as thick as any other part of the city. Nothing breaks the smooth expanse of drifted snow. Beneath the ice, however, are the hulks of two First Age vessels, one flooded and beyond repair, the other watertight and waiting for a Solar captain.

A STALKER IN THE DRIFTS

Asleep in its icy tomb in the abandoned city lies a creature that has slain entire armies and waits only to be awakened from its slumber.

VORVIN-DERLIN, SLAYER OF ARMIES

Description: Vorvin-Derlin manifests in Creation as a hollow humanoid cage of tarnished brass filigree. Its metal form extrudes and retracts razor-sharp barbs from every surface like the palpi of an insect with the rhythms of a beating heart. The creature's hollow form moves in rhythmic, sinewy, almost hypnotic, undulation, and the pattern of its barbed filigree shifts constantly.

Although the behemoth can sculpt its protean form into a rough semblance of a humanoid body at will, the behemoth prefers to envelop a living host that it can use as a skeleton and a defense. While riding a host, Vorvin-Derlin looks like a cartilaginous brass exoskeleton constantly shifting the alignment of its barbed filigree segments. Baleful red flames smolder over the gouged abscesses of the vessel's eyes, their brightness proportional to the behemoth's anger. Wherever the behemoth goes in Creation, a fine patina of verdigris forms over every non-magical metal object within a mile.

Isidiros, the Black Boar That Twists the Skies, forged Vorvin-Derlin from severed clippings of his own immortal sinews and clotted veins in the primeval epoch of the world. The behemoth served its master as a policing weapon, designed to grow in accordance with the forces massed against it. The greater the army, the more surely Vorvin-Derlin would massacre it. In times of peace, the behemoth shriveled away in boredom until the bellow of Isidiros awoke its wrath anew.

During the Primordial War, Vorvin-Derlin fought savagely against the Exalted, but their singular might overwhelmed its strength as numbers alone could not. Time and again, the Chosen slew the behemoth, but its spilt blood sucked ore from the land like marrow and restored the behemoth to life. By the terms of Isidiros' exile within Malfegas, the Chosen demanded that Vorvin-Derlin follow its master into banishment, returning as if it were a Demon of the Second Circle to obey the Solar Exalted.

During the First Age, the sorcerer Oa-Té developed an Adamant Circle spell that allowed him to summon Vorvin-Derlin, bind it and then fuse it with his body for the span of a month. When the Usurpation came, the sorcerer brought forth the behemoth to enact this fusion, but the Dragon-Blooded and their retinues broke into the sorcerer's sanctum and interrupted the ritual. Drawing strength from the unbound behemoth's adversaries, it decimated the Dragon-Blooded, slew the weakened Oa-Té and necessitated the evacuation and abandonment of Opal Spire. Starved of battle as the rebellion raged elsewhere in Creation, Vorvin-Derlin lingered in the ruins of Opal Spire, waiting for the commands of Isidiros or the challenge of adversaries to give its existence power and purpose once more. It has waited ever since, lost when the borders of Creation collapsed back to their original size and buried the city in glacial cold.

Nature: Bravo

Attributes: Strength 5*, Dexterity 5*, Stamina 5*, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 0, Perception 3*, Intelligence 2*, Wits 5*





Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 2*, Temperance 1*, Valor 6

Abilities: Athletics 10, Awareness 5, Brawl 10*, Dodge 10*, Endurance 10*, Melee 10*, Presence 5 (Intimidation +5), Resistance 10*, Stealth 5*, Survival 5*, Thrown 10*

Backgrounds: Manse 5 (Conduit to Isidiros restores Essence like a level-5 Manse)

Charms: Gale of Barbs, Might of the Slaughterer, Primal Fusion, Turning Steel (see below)

Base Initiative: 10

Attack:

Punch: Speed 10 Accuracy 16 Damage 9L Defense 16

Kick: Speed 8 Accuracy 15 Damage 11L Defense 14

Barb Slash: Speed 16 Accuracy 17 Damage 10L Defense 15

Dodge Pool: 15 **Soak:** 15L*/15B* (Infernal brass body, 13L/10B)

Willpower: 8 **Health Levels:** -0*x5/-1*x6/-2*x7/-4/Quiescent

Essence: 6 **Essence Pool:** 120

Other Notes: Vorvin-Derlin's Valor is effectively perfect; the behemoth cannot ever fail Valor rolls, regardless of the difficulty. It often increases Traits marked with an asterisk by fusing with a host and can increase its Physical Attributes through the

unique Charm Might of the Slaughterer, requiring recalculation of derived statistics such as Dodge Pool and Initiative. Anyone striking the behemoth barehanded suffers 6L damage from the razor edges of its jagged body. As a behemoth, Vorvin-Derlin possesses immortality on the scale of the Primordials and rises anew from any demise after a period of quiescence lasting one year. The behemoth has a unique set of circumstances that can rip its soul into the Underworld as a hekatonkhire, but these are unknown and left to the Story-



teller to devise. The creature also heals preternaturally fast, mending one level of bashing damage every turn, one level of lethal damage every minute and one level of aggravated damage every day. The behemoth has perfect immunity to all disease and resists poison like an Exalt. Vorvin-Derlin is considered a Second Circle demon for the purposes of summoning, binding or banishing it through sorcery but not for any other purpose. The behemoth is a creature of darkness for purposes of magic.

EXALTED POWER COMBAT

Attack:

Punch: Speed 10 Accuracy 16 Damage 10L Defense 16 Rate 6

Kick: Speed 8 Accuracy 16 Damage 11L Defense 15 Rate 3

Barb Slash: Speed 22 Accuracy 17 Damage 14L Defense 18 Rate 3

Dodge Pool: 21

Hardness: 4

UNIQUE CHARMS

The following three Charms are unique expressions of Vorvin-Derlin's Primordial construction and may not be learned by Eclipse or Moonshadow Caste Exalted.

GALE OF BARBS

Cost: 15 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

With a contemptuous wave of a hand, Vorvin-Derlin can hurl a barrage of darts formed of the behemoth's own jagged flesh at its enemies. This attack duplicates the effects of the spell Death of Obsidian Butterflies (see Exalted, page 217), but the area of effect is only 30 feet wide and 10 feet high, the attack roll is Dexterity +

Thrown and the base damage is only 1L.

MIGHT OF THE SLAUGHTERER**Cost:** 5 motes**Duration:** One scene**Type:** Simple

Once this Charm has been activated, every time Vorvin-Derlin draws blood from an unwounded opponent (i.e., one whom the behemoth has not wounded in this scene), it gains an additional die each to Strength, Dexterity, Stamina and Brawl. At the end of the scene, Vorvin-Derlin must spend Essence to renew the Charm, or all additional dice are lost. Through the immense power of this Charm, the behemoth crushes armies, though individual Solar and Lunar Exalted are known to have defeated Vorvin-Derlin in single battle.

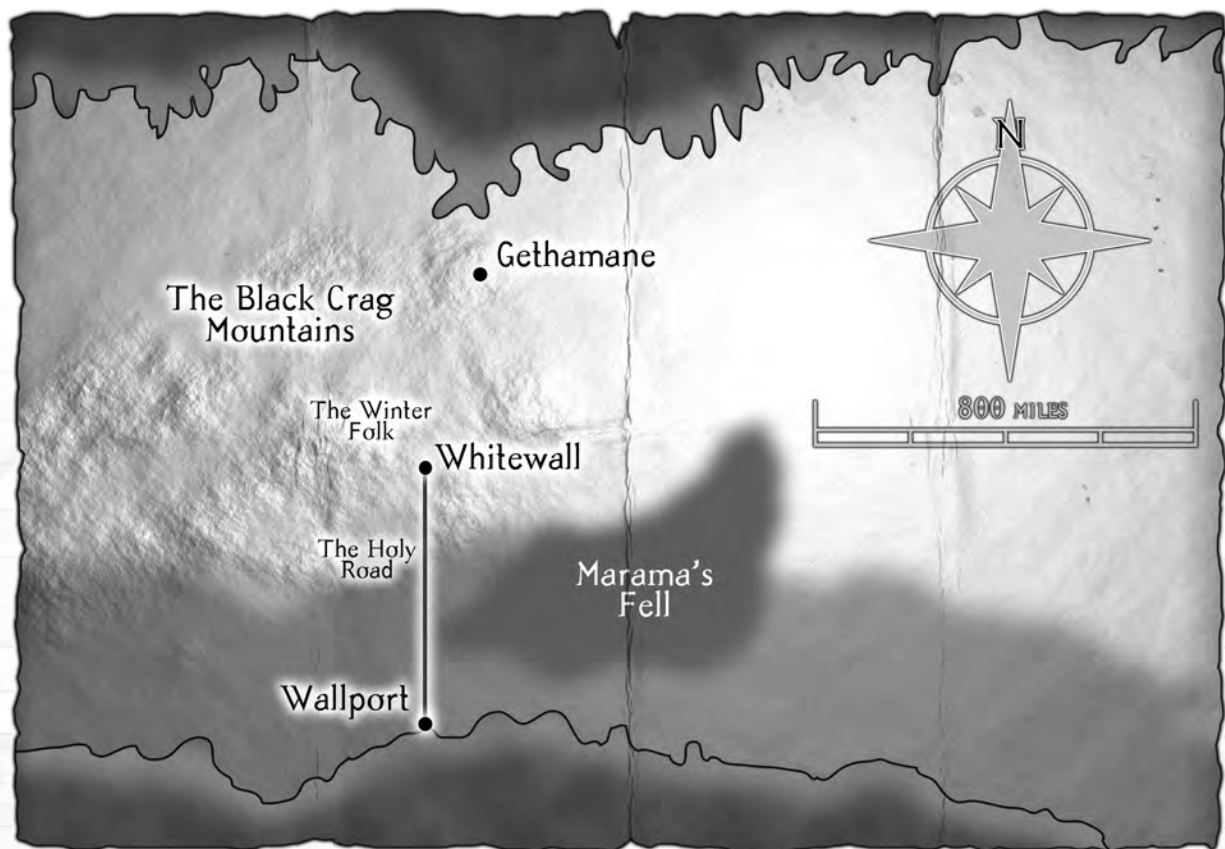
PRIMAL FUSION**Cost:** 20 motes**Duration:** Instant**Type:** Reflexive

After winning control of a clinch, Vorvin-Derlin can choose to activate this Charm to engulf a living victim in a mass of spiked filaments. Over the remainder of the turn, the body of the behemoth stretches and shapes itself into a second skin for the victim, rooting deep into bone and muscle. Essence 1 beings with no Essence pool have no way to resist this attack. Players of entities that have access to their Essence pool may make a Stamina + Resistance roll,

with only a single success needed for their characters to resist the behemoth's attempts to merge. The behemoth adds the host's rating in any Traits listed with an asterisk to its own for the duration of the fusion (Conviction and Temperance cap at 5; other Traits have no limits), but the victim is otherwise subsumed entirely into the creature's body and its other Traits no longer matter. Vorvin-Derlin can remember any facts or events that a current host knows but loses access to these experiences when the behemoth moves to a new host or abandons the current host (both requiring reapplication of this Charm). Former hosts of Vorvin-Derlin are blind and horribly scarred (Appearance 1, plus effects of maiming-induced blindness) but can live on unless the behemoth kills them (which it often does).

TURNING STEEL**Cost:** None**Duration:** Permanent**Type:** Special

Whenever Vorvin-Derlin obtains four or more net successes on a dodge roll over the attack roll of an opponent, the behemoth's inhuman agility maneuvers the attack to strike a desired target within five yards. Treat the attack as if it were aimed at the new target all along, though it may be dodged in turn or otherwise defended against normally. The behemoth cannot maneuver opponents into attacking themselves.





CHAPTER TWO

GETHAMANE, THE CITY UNDER THE MOUNTAIN



Gethamane was one of the jewels of the North in the First Age, a self-supporting city buried within one of the great Northern mountains, with a gate to Yu-Shan set beneath it. The Exalted would come to Gethamane to deal with the underdwellers and the mysterious Mountain Folk and to pass through the gate to consult with the gods. Now, Gethamane is in the possession of humans alone, a hub city for the Guild; the Mountain Folk are long fled, but an ancient evil haunts the deep tunnels below the city.

Gethamane is an enclosed society. Even though the Guild's presence ensures a constant stream of merchants passing through and even though hunters and gatherers go out during the short summer season to lay in stocks of any food that they can obtain, most of the city's inhabitants are born there, live there and die there. The shut-in corridors, the lit crystals, even the taste of the mushrooms that grow in the sunken Gardens, are things that become familiar to Gethamane's children; the outside wind and sky and sun are strange to them. There are many people inside the city who fear to leave it and who regard outsiders with a tolerant but indulgent eye, as strangers who cannot understand the proper way to live. Other inhabitants take strange drugs or torture and shed blood in private, in order to exercise tendencies that they cannot vent in any other way.

Inside the city, the gracious stone corridors and high-domed halls with their crystal lights that were once examples of First Age architecture have been furred over by the

detritus of human living. Tanned-leather partitions separate spacious halls into living spaces, and hammered-timber stalls stretch the length of wide corridors; byres and laundries and other petty necessities of normal living fill ancient rooms that might once have been meditation chambers or sorcerous workrooms.

The sunken Gardens that feed the city are its jewel and its most closely guarded treasure, and are as closely watched as the mysterious tunnels that lead below the city. While many seek treasure and lost secrets down below, only a few return. Meanwhile, the hereditary Master of Gethamane attempts to balance the needs of the city, the thinly veiled requirements of the Guild and the peril from the icewalkers outside and the darkness below. Gethamane is a society that stands on four pillars: the administration, the farmers, the Guard and the Guild trade. It may seem monolithic, but sufficient damage could bring the city down and shatter the structure that keeps it functioning.

HISTORY

THE BEGINNINGS

In the First Age, the City of the Mountain Gateway was founded by the Solar Exalted in order to stand above and guard one of the gates to Yu-Shan and to act as a convenient meeting-point for the Mountain Folk who dwelt by that gate. The Solars hollowed out the mountain

above the gate, created the sunken Gardens and set the crystal lights throughout the tunnels and rooms of the city so that humans could live there amid the frozen North in peace and comfort. While Gethamane was never one of the Solars' greatest or most beautiful feats of magic, it was nevertheless a lasting and permanent monument to the Solars' ability to create structure and transform inhospitable, uninhabitable lands into stable places in which to dwell. However, Gethamane was not a trade city or a tourist destination. It was a place for dealings with the Mountain Folk and a passage to Heaven, and as such, while the Celestial Exalted and some Dragon-Blooded knew of it, Gethamane was not a place that was discussed among humans or was featured in public records. The Mountain Folk walked in its underways, and the Dragon Kings nested in its high places.

When the Usurpation struck Creation, there were no Solars currently present in the City of the Mountain Gateway and only a few Dragon-Blooded. It was easy for the Terrestrial Exalted to keep the city peaceful and to issue general orders that the population should remain calm until matters were sorted out, while suppressing news from elsewhere about the bloody massacres and wars taking place. Unfortunately, this lack of news worked against the city in a more dangerous way.

At this time, an ancient hekatonkhire named Vodak had woken from its temporary somnolence. Vodak (see **Exalted: The Fair Folk**, pages 287–288) is a behemoth of Malfean Essence, created when the dying blood of the first Primordial to perish at the hands of the Exalted struck the Earth. The titan's last breath animated the flowing ichors with its own vitriolic hatred, transforming the mass into a nightmare of bubbling and writhing quicksilver. Now that the Dragon-Blooded have slaughtered their superiors and Solar blood has fallen on the thirsty soil like rain, Vodak moved in the depths of Creation and became hungry.

The Mountain Folk who dwelled beneath Creation were troubled by this, knowing that they would be among Vodak's earliest prey. They resolved to lure the hekatonkhire to a convenient location and trap it there. The City of the Mountain Gateway was perfect. It was near Vodak's current lair, and it was an enclosed area, with a population that would not be able to defend itself; the city was currently unobserved by any Celestial Exalted who might disapprove of the Mountain Folk sacrificing a whole city full of humans to save themselves. (While the Sidereal Exalted had grown aware that Vodak was stirring and were debating how to handle the matter, they were at that time too busy coordinating the massacre of the Solars to be able to spare any attention to Vodak itself.)



With a combination of tactics and using several kidnapped Golden Children as suitable bait, the Mountain Folk led Vodak to the City of the Mountain Gateway. The hekatonkhire's hunger awakened by the blood of the Solars' children, Vodak swelled up through the mountain in a great wave of bubbling famine and insanity, devouring everything organic it could find. The Dragon-Blooded led the humans in resistance for as long as they could, but ultimately, they had no chance. They were swallowed up, one and all, and Vodak washed through the chambers of the city like an insane silver ocean.

While Vodak was occupied, the Mountain Folk in the tunnels beneath set great wards around the mountain to prevent Vodak from escaping through the depths of the earth, however far down it might go. Then, they fled, leaving the mountain to Vodak and the ghosts of the dead. The hekatonkhire raged when it found it was trapped but could not escape. In the end, it sank as deeply as it could go and brooded there, digesting its huge meal. And the City of the Mountain Gateway stood empty in the middle of the Northern wilds.

THE NEWCOMERS

A hundred years after the Contagion, a group of humans, beset by hordes of furred, semi-human raiders, fled north from plague and starvation. Led by Bethan Redeye, a God-Blooded woman who was marked by her scarlet eyes and nails, the humans sought shelter but had already been driven away from the more habitable parts of the North and the villages there. Amid the snow and tundra, where no human habitation had ever existed, the group stumbled onto one of the ancient entrances into the mountain. Afraid of what might be inside, yet driven by the perils outside, the humans entered the mountain city and found that it was empty. They named it Gethamane, which was "Sanctuary" in the tongue of the Old Realm.

While the newcomers were able to sustain themselves for a while on the supplies that they had brought with them and the game that they trapped outside, it soon became evident that they would need more food. Bethan Redeye organized exploration of the city, and the people discovered the sunken Gardens at the base of the mountain. Fortunately for the travelers, the Solars who created the Gardens had had a low opinion of their human servants' intelligence and had carved pictoglyphs on the wall detailing how to work and harvest the Gardens. Within a few months, the Gardens were functioning again and producing mosses and fungi that were nourishing, if bland. Within a year, Bethan Redeye's people were comfortably established and able to think of things beside the pure necessities of life.

It quickly became obvious that adventuring into the lower tunnels was dangerous and frequently fatal. It was also obvious that the Gardens were vital to life inside the city. Bethan established a system whereby all inhabitants

LANGUAGE IN GETHAMANE

Bethan Redeye's people spoke Skytongue when they first came to Gethamane; this is still the most common language of the city. However, Bethan herself was one of the more educated of the group and carried hidden knowledge from her divine parent. She named Gethamane in the language of the Old Realm, hoping that calling the city "Sanctuary" would be a good omen for the future and a propitiation to any gods that might be listening.


of Gethamane had an automatic right to a daily share of the food from the Gardens. This right became known as the Dole. In the absence of money or trade, she also established a tithe from the hunters and food-gatherers who went outside and distributed it to the Guards and farmers who worked directly for the city. Everything else was a barter economy, and though the inhabited parts of the city were soon roughly furnished with leather and wood, the people simply lacked the resources to make anything better.

THE GUILD'S ARRIVAL

Matters changed again five years later when a wandering caravan from the Guild met some of the city's hunters and was invited back to Gethamane to trade and bring news. The Guild factor who led the caravan was instantly struck by the place's potential as a hub city, small as Gethamane currently was. He also recognized the inhabitants' urgent need for outside sources of food, clothing and luxury items. Bethan Redeye, still firmly established as the city's leader despite being in her 70s, kept the sunken Gardens a secret from the visitors but was able to trade immediate food supplies in return for cloth, spices, metal and other things. Thus began Gethamane's association with the Guild.

Seeing the potential problems ahead, and fearing that her few thousand people would be entirely absorbed by the Guild, Bethan established a social system that has continued to this day. Every inhabitant of Gethamane is registered in a set of records that are kept by the farmers, and every inhabitant receives a daily measure of the Dole in return for labor of some sort for the city. Anyone staying in Gethamane longer than a month must be temporarily adopted into a native family, must live in that family's district of the mountain and must be entered on the Dole/labor register on pain of being expelled from Gethamane. However, Bethan also made a law that adopted citizens could pay in goods or jade rather than in work. This informal tax system, combined with the fact that the inhabitants of Gethamane held the defenses and controlled the food supply, allowed Gethamane to remain moderately independent.





When Bethan died, at the age of 93, she was survived by two husbands and a dozen children. She had been the accepted Mistress of Gethamane for 48 years and had raised her children to assume her responsibilities as administrator and leader. She named her secondborn son Gerath, as her heir, thus establishing the tradition that the Master or Mistress of Gethamane choose an heir from among his or her assembled descendants, rather than automatically passing his or her position to the firstborn.

TO THE PRESENT DAY

Gethamane grew in importance as Guild traffic through the city increased. While the Masters of the city retained its social structure and customs, new traditions developed to handle the growing amount of jade and goods and the rising demand for food by travelers passing through. The Dole laws were strengthened so that only permanent residents (or adoptees into their families) had any right to the fungi produced in the sunken Gardens, and the City Guard was similarly improved in order to protect the Gardens and the food stores.

Relationships with other city-states in the North have varied from good to difficult, somewhat dependent on the Guild's relationships with those states. Gethamane's lack of a standing army or the ability to fund and furnish one means that the city pursues a generally pacifist line and has no inclination to invade other city-states or take over their resources. However, in cases such as the Guild's trade war with the Haslanti League in Realm Year 586, Gethamane found itself being drawn in and pressured by the Guild to refuse shelter to traders from that area or at least to tax them prohibitively. While Gethamane attempts to walk a middle path in such cases, the city frequently sides with the Guild and takes the extra tax money, then has to renegotiate trade pacts with the relevant city-states later.

Gethamane has never paid tribute to the Realm. This is, in part, because it would be an uneconomic conquest — the place is too easily defended and can support itself from the inside Gardens for decades, while besieging armies are left without food or shelter. It's simply not worth the Realm's time and trouble to conquer the city and impose a satrap. On the other hand, the Realm is aware that Gethamane is an individualistic self-supporting city with a strong interest in neutrality and stability. Although Gethamane could potentially serve as a base for a small strike force, the sunken Gardens couldn't support a full army. Bearing all these factors in mind, the Scarlet Empress left the city in peace, though she seeded Gethamane with the usual complement of spies in order to ensure that it didn't become a problem later.

With the recent disappearance of the Scarlet Empress and the rise of the Bull of the North, Gethamane has become nervous. The current Mistress of Gethamane, Katrin Jadehand, has drawn up several plans for possible disaster

scenarios, ranging from a serious assault by the Bull on Gethamane to an attempt by the Guild to take over. In the worst case, her planned strategy is to expel all foreigners while closing the city gates, place all adoptees under the direct guard of their adoptive families and sit tight and wait.

While the people of Gethamane are aware that dark creatures roam the tunnels below the city and devour anything that they can catch, the people are ignorant of the true horror that lies below. Those elders of the Mountain Folk who know that Vodak is bound beneath Gethamane are not going to reveal the matter. The Mountain Folk are aware that Vodak may rise and devour again but consider this comparatively unimportant, given that the hekatonkhire can't escape. The people of Gethamane are sitting on a potential disaster and have no idea how bad it is. They are also unaware of the Yu-Shan gate below the city, as the secret has been lost to antiquity. Only the Sidereals and a scattering of others are aware of the location of the gate.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Gethamane is a structure shaped by the necessity of organizing food distribution and defenses against the underways. Like much of the North, Gethamane is not a place where dissent against the established order can be tolerated. People either conform or leave. However, Gethamane accepts and even, to an extent, encourages a culture of leisure. Those people of the city who have done enough work to warrant their share of the Dole are welcome to do what they want with their spare time, experimenting with drugs or art or other, stranger things. While the more regular citizens disapprove of these past times, they are a recognized part of life in Gethamane, dating back to the days when Bethan Redeye realized that she needed to keep a viable breeding population in the city. She recognized that there would always be those who disliked the system she had established, and she felt it was better to offer a cultural escape for them, rather than simply drive them out of the mountain.

The four rough tiers of society are the Council, the moderately wealthy and respected (who mostly dwell in the Outer Ring), the poor (who dwell in the Upper Ring) and the truly homeless, poverty-stricken and family-less outcasts (who live anywhere they can). The upper classes adopt an attitude of generously appreciating the work of their lower-graded fellow citizens, while the lower classes openly scheme to raise their families' status, secure dwellings in the Outer Ring (or even near the Gardens) and, some day, possibly gain seats on the Council. These attitudes are viewed as perfectly normal in Gethamane, and many popular comedies showcase witty servants or lower-class Guards or artisans manipulating circumstances so that they come out ahead of the game — or even get formally adopted by the Master of Gethamane as a possible heir.

THE MASTER OF GETHAMANE

The Master (or Mistress) of Gethamane is the city's hereditary ruler, a descendant of Bethan Redeye. Each Master chooses his heir from among the ranks of the Bethanites and must always have an heir formally named, though the Master is at liberty to choose a different heir at any time if he so desires. In the event of no other members of the family being alive (which has happened once, during a poisoning attempt by Mineko Threebrand of the Guard, 270 years ago), the Master must formally adopt at least three adults, who are then entered in the records as his own offspring, and name one of them as heir.

The members of the Bethanite family are administrators, scribes, accountants and historians. While they are expected to be capable of using weapons and working on the farms, those are not their primary roles in life. The need to manage the Dole and work with the Guild forces Gethamane to have a capable administrator at the helm. While some of the family have been notable artists, swordsmen or sorcerers, all of them start off with slate and chalk, doing arithmetic at their tutors' knee.

THE MASTER'S INTELLIGENCERS

Unofficially, the Bethanites in general gather information for whomever is the current Master or Mistress. In practice, everyone in Gethamane knows about this — only the rawest and most ignorant newcomers from outside the mountain would be unaware. This means that, while the Bethanites make excellent analysts, they are generally poor agents. People know who they are. It's difficult even to be a "little-known" member of the family, as gossip is as common in Gethamane as it is in other cities, and the Master's family is always a popular topic for dissection and scandal.

This means that the Mistress of Gethamane has to look outside her family for operatives. Outsiders have potential, being theoretically unconnected to any goings-on inside Gethamane, but they have difficulty going about unnoticed. (While a Night Caste Solar would be the ideal answer to Mistress Katrin's wishes, none have as yet shown up, let alone been willing to take the position.) The Gethamane tradition of loyalty to family also makes it hard to recruit anyone as an unbiased agent who will be *primarily* loyal to the Mistress.

Shakan, the current Head Intelligencer — not that he holds such a rank openly, but anyone comparatively well-informed about the power structure in Gethamane is aware of his position — compensates with one of the oldest tricks in the book: blackmail. All of his agents are constantly on the watch for criminal behavior, and he uses that information to recruit new operatives, using their loyalty to their family by inspiring fear that their families will suffer for the agents' acts. And, of course, once the agents have been working for him for long enough, that in itself is another reason to fear exposure . . .



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Shakan has agents throughout society, except in the temples, as the priests are generally too preoccupied with their rituals to do anything significantly illegal. Although he has agents among the foreign merchants, he distrusts them and cannot be totally certain of their loyalty. He currently has no agents who are also Guild members but would like to gather some.

THE COUNCIL

The Council was established by Bethan Redeye in the second year of her rule, formalizing an arrangement that already existed. Originally, the Council consisted of 12 members: three from the City Guard, three farmers, three hunters and gatherers and three artisans. Shortly after the Guild's arrival, Bethan added three more from the nascent class of merchants who dealt with the Guild representatives, raising the total to 15, and it has remained at that number ever since.

The Council members are strictly advisors to the Master of Gethamane and have no direct power in their own right. However, being the recognized spokesmen for their particular factions gives them a great deal of influence. The Council meets regularly three times a month, and emergency meetings may be called at any time. While the situation of Master and Council could seem a possible recipe for tyranny, the actual realities of life mean that the Master usually pays attention to what the Council has to say and acts more as a mediator than as an autocrat.

A Council member holds her post until she dies, chooses to resign (often as a result of pressure by family or faction) or is relieved of her post by the Master of Gethamane. When a vacancy comes up on the Council, the other faction members present a list of possible candidates to the Master, who chooses the new Council member from that list. If all three faction posts fall vacant, the Master is free to choose new members from that faction as he wishes. Any Council post falling vacant is an excuse for urgent politicking behind the scenes, by the faction in question, by the other factions and by the Guild.

Current notable Council members include Mienna of the Dulsheft family, of the farmers, a notable isolationist who wants to shut the whole of Gethamane away and seal all the entrances if the Bull of the North comes anywhere near the city; Hanzyon of the Loshan family, of the City Guard, who wants to increase the Guard's numbers and forcibly conscript the Janissary Vault under military discipline; Solace of the Genthrex family (adopted from traveling merchants at the age of four), of the merchant faction, who wants to promote increased Guild ties and the establishment of a Guild mercenary outpost to aid in Gethamane's defense; Luthin of the Doment family, of the hunters and gatherers, who wants to bring in sorcerers and engineers to establish farms and orchards on the slopes outside the city; and Tammeth of the Sochire family, of the artisan faction, who wants to have a tax on Guild imports in order to protect his family's interests.

ADVENTURE SEED

Target Character Type: Any

A serial killer is targeting Council members, killing them in a way that fits their faction and occupation: a merchant is found with his stomach slit open and stuffed full of jade, while a farmer has been saturated with fungi and is blossoming in different varieties of mushroom. While overt evidence points at an unidentified Guild agent (and the Guild is certainly trying to seize the moment to gain concessions), the actual killer is a high-ranking Guard member whose mind has snapped and who worships the "Lord of the Underways." While the killer has no actual contact with the underways, the creatures there will certainly take the opportunity to launch sneak attacks if Guard patrols slack off. The killer's ultimate aim is to create widespread chaos — and his ultimate target is Mistress Katrin.

THE UNDERCLASS

People who don't belong to Gethamane's families and who, thus, aren't citizens of the city form the underclass, however well-born or rich or gifted they are. They simply aren't given the same consideration and respect that locals get. Shops overcharge them, the Guard treats them with distant curtness, they aren't allowed anywhere near the Gardens and, when found outside the Guild quarter or the temples, they are politely encouraged to go back there and reminded none-too-subtly of the laws prohibiting a stay of more than a month.

Most of the time, foreigners are fairly obvious. They don't wear the clothes of Gethamane, they don't have Gethamane accents and they don't have the dark eyes and pale skin of the inhabitants of Gethamane. Hunters and gatherers may have sun-touched skin and the carriage of those who go outside, but they have a native accent, and they give the proper nonverbal cues to other citizens. The people who really suffer are those outsiders who have been adopted and who *should* be treated like normal citizens but don't yet look or behave properly. To be fair, once local citizens are aware that the apparent foreigner they're talking to or dealing with has been properly adopted, they will give him fair and civil treatment.

Of course, the citizens of Gethamane have more sense than to overcharge or snub obviously dangerous foreigners or those who have the potential to be valuable contacts. The citizens will be polite, even flattering, and save their amusement and sneering jokes for when they are in private with their families. As one of the earlier Masters said, "Be like the mountain: snow and ice outside, so that none can take offence, but life within, where families can share the joke."

THE PEOPLE OF GETHAMANE

More than half the population of Gethamane never has to leave the city — and they don't. They live away from natural sunlight and wind, protected from the snow and storms of the North, in tunnels where it is never truly dark, where food will always be provided to those who behave “properly” and do their duty to the city and where true fear is unnamed and comes from below.

It is easy to differentiate between those members of the Guard and the hunters and gatherers who go outside and the rest of Gethamane. Those who go outside have genuine color in their cheeks or windburn and are capable of enduring the sun and natural weather without flinching, trembling or breaking down into fits of hysterics. Tasks often run in families, and the first time that a child from one of these families goes outside the walls of Gethamane is a major rite of passage for that child. Those citizens who never leave Gethamane have pale skins never touched by the sun and eyes adapted to shadows. They are used to listening for scrapes and whispers from dark corners and dress in deep colors or grays and blacks, rather than the bright shades that look attractive in sunlight.

Naturally, this has grown into a division in society, but it is more one of fashion than a genuine social rift. The Council knows that it needs members of the city who can function outside its walls and that the food brought in by the hunters and gatherers is a vital precaution against trade-blackmail by the Guild. The Guard treats the division as a matter of specialty: some of its members work better outside, and some work better in the deep tunnels. The farmers are the only major faction to genuinely look down on those who go outside, and that is mostly because they themselves count few travelers among their numbers. The farmers' tasks, by necessity, keep them working in the heart of the mountain throughout their lives.

Clothing worn inside Gethamane is lightweight, as opposed to the heavy furs and wool needed outside. Members of the Guard wear tunics and trousers of plain linen or cotton, with boiled leather or steel armor. Farmers wear simple robes of brown. Hunters and gatherers wear clothes adapted for the outside when they venture out there. All other citizens wear plain cotton or silk robes or tunics and trousers in shades of gray, black and white. Status and wealth are conveyed by the quality of the cloth and the elegance of the clothing, rather than by color or patterns. Brightly colored clothing is reserved for the bedchamber.

GENDER ROLES IN GETHAMANE

The relative social positions of men and women in Gethamane were permanently shaped by the fact that Bethan Redeye, their first leader, was female and that, during the refugees' travels through the wild North, they were in such danger and hardship that there was no room left for gender distinctions. Even today, Gethamane is

mostly gender-neutral, and women and men occupy a more or less equal social position. However, there are certain areas of society into which each gender tends to get shunted, barring particular talents or inclinations.

The Guard is approximately three-quarters male, while the farmers are approximately four-fifths female. While both social groups will take members of the other gender, girls are generally directed away from martial occupations, and boys are not encouraged to help tend the fungus trays. Both genders can freely work as craftsmen, as gatherers outside (though hunters are more usually male) and as merchants or negotiators. Formal marriage is between men and women, but lovers of the same gender are common. Quite often, a married couple will have a publicly acknowledged lover who shares both their beds.

FAMILIES AND DESCENT

Inside families, descent is matrilineal, but a woman's current husband is considered to be the father of all her children, whether or not she was married to him or to someone else at the time she bore the children. However, inter-family adoption is common, and, once adopted into a new family, the adoptee formally breaks all links with the old one. A woman can, therefore, bear a child to a man in another family, then give the child to be adopted by parents inside the other family (if she is married, this requires her husband's permission as well), at which point the child becomes, for all intents and purposes, a child of that family. It is considered very rude to pry into someone's past about something like this or to suggest that he might feel loyalty to any family other than his own, even if he is the physical child of that family.

The only incest taboo in Gethamane is against marrying one's own siblings, whether blood-kin or adoptive. The constant shuffling round of adoptions means that new blood gets into most of the families; there are few serious cases of inbreeding. Situations in which a youth falls in love with his adoptive sibling but is unable to marry her have inspired a number of tragic plays, which usually end with a socially improving moral about incestuous passions leading to murderous rampages and suicide or with a heroic choice of exile and virtuous separation.

A person is known either by his personal name and then his family name or by his personal name and “of the such-and-such family.” The first usage is more common these days, but the second usage is more old-fashioned and is still adhered to among the more important families.

LAW AND ORDER

Crime, in Gethamane, was defined by Bethan Redeye as “trespass on person, property or domain.” This was further codified by her grandson Senet into the Three Rules, which are the main source of Gethamane's law and have been clarified over the years by other Masters and Mistresses of Gethamane.



THE PROCESS OF ADOPTION

Inter-family adoption inside Gethamane is a comparatively simple thing, done to cement ties between families, to provide for orphans or children with uncertain parentage or, occasionally, to introduce new blood into excessively inbred families. The legal process of adopting outsiders into Gethamane families and making them citizens is rather more complex and carries more social difficulties.

Firstly, any given family can only adopt one outsider per year. (This law was codified by the second Master, Gerath, to prevent any family adopting large numbers of outsiders.) Secondly, important families don't necessarily *want* to adopt outsiders. These families have a strong civil position and don't want to adopt strangers who may bring disrepute on their position; in any case, the potential for adoption is an annual prize that the families don't necessarily want to use up. There are many middle-class or lower-class families in Gethamane who would be willing to adopt an outsider, particularly if a large payment in jade or goods was involved, but, again, they would want to be sure that their family wouldn't be at risk from the outsider's actions. Thirdly, while the only people who formally need to give assent to the adoption are the "father" and "mother" of the new adoptee, if the rest of the family is strongly opposed to this course of action, then pressure may be put on the married pair not to perform the adoption. Fatal accidents, such as falling into the underways never to be heard from again or tragic overdoses of common sleeping drugs have been known to occur in particularly awkward cases (especially ones involving Guild members being adopted.)

Sometimes, an outsider will do a Gethamane family such a definite favor that adoption in return is not only a feasible course of action, but the only commensurate favor that the family can provide in return. (After all, it is a high honor for someone from inside Gethamane to consent to bring an outsider into such a closed society.) In that case, adoption will be offered willingly, and the outsider is expected to understand exactly how large a favor is being done for him. If the outsider truly doesn't want to be adopted, then an accepted solution is for him to have a child of his blood (or, at worst, a deserving orphan) adopted by the family in his place.

It's impossible to perform an adoption without it going on the civil lists, the city records and, most importantly, the Dole. The Guild and the Realm can't smuggle in full agents this way without those agents being closely observed — while the members of the Council aren't going to go against the accepted law, they aren't stupid. The best that outside forces wanting to influence Gethamane can do is to arrange for future agents to be adopted as children and then to attempt to influence them once they reach the age of usefulness. Alternatively, it is possible to get an innocuous outsider adopted and then later substitute an agent for the adoptee, but this runs the risk of high embarrassment and social disgrace for the family concerned if it is discovered.



THE THREE RULES

1. Blood pays for blood, but it must serve the city: all crimes of personal assault shall be paid as debts to Gethamane, and Gethamane shall reimburse the victim in turn.
2. Jade pays for jade: all crimes of theft or other trespass on another's goods shall be repaid twofold, once to the victim and once to the city.
3. What we have, we hold: all crimes of trespass on another's domain shall be paid for by a gift of land in turn, or the Dole shall be remitted and the trespasser cast forth to starve.

The First Rule covers all cases of assault, from petty fights to rape or murder. Minor assault (up to the loss of an extremity) carries a fine of goods or service, of which Gethamane takes half and the victim takes half. Major assault or rape carries a penalty of a major fine, permanent hard labor, exile or a combination of the three. Actual murder is penalized by permanent hard labor, exile or execution. In all the above cases, if the victim is dead or incapable of receiving reimbursement, then her share is paid to her family. If self-defense or justifiable provocation can be proven, then the penalty is reduced but never totally remitted. Gethamane is a working society, and permanently depriving it of part of its workforce cannot be tolerated.

The Second Rule is straightforward and carried out precisely to the last grain of jade that can be measured. This law covers theft, fraud, giving short weight, charging outsiders less than citizens of Gethamane (this clause is extremely unpopular among outsiders) and damaging goods (including slaves).

The Third Rule is the most difficult to administer but is vitally necessary in an enclosed city such as Gethamane, where questions of trespass and personal privacy become important enough to lead to murder. In cases in which the two disputing parties share a boundary, the penalty usually consists of moving the boundary line by a foot or two in the appropriate direction. This can result in rooms being shared between two families, with screens set up to give both sides some semblance of privacy. (Citizens of Gethamane do not find this sort of situation amusing, and outsiders are advised not to make jokes about it publicly.) If the two parties don't share a boundary, then a complicated legal fiction arises. The city officially confiscates a part of the first family's territory, allows the family to "buy it back" and then pays the resulting jade to the second family.

Simply running through someone else's territory doesn't qualify for full punishment under the Third Rule, but is usually settled by a simple fine of jade or services. Children doing this aren't generally brought up in front of the court for it, as it is expected that a hint to their family will settle the problem. However, in the event of persistent misbehavior by older children, it has been known to occur. This is considered a significant disgrace for the family in question.

Trials take place weekly in front of three judges: one a Bethanite, one a senior member of the Guard and one a senior member of the farmers. (Lately, there has been a movement among the artisans, the merchants and the hunters and gatherers to permit other judges from *their* ranks, but it lacks support among the Guards and farmers.) Complainant and criminal must both state their cases in front of the judges. (If the complainant is unable to speak or otherwise present her case, then a family member or Guard may do so in her place.) The judges consider all the evidence, deliberate and then pronounce sentence. Information obtained through spells or bound demons are permissible evidence, though attempting to sorcerously influence a judge is considered a serious case of personal assault and garners the appropriate penalty.




ADVENTURE SEED

Target Character Type: Abyssal, Dragon-Blooded, God-Blooded, Heroic Mortal, Solar

Nellens Avanthé has long-term ambitions to bring Gethamane into the Realm. She sees the merchants of Gethamane as her most convenient tool in doing this, as they are the ones with the biggest interest in outside commerce and connections to other countries. Getting a merchant among the judges would establish a powerful precedent and serve to swing the axis of power in the merchants' direction. Several merchants would be even better. The only person with the authority to order this is the current Mistress, Katrin Jadehand. Avanthé has some hidden supplies of ghost-flower tea, and she knows about Katrin's frequent visits to the temples. All she needs to do is to dose Katrin's drinks with the tea on those occasions and then have someone who can command ghosts summon up a few of Katrin's ancestors and force them to command her to change the law.

A problem with this plan is that there aren't any local ghosts. Avanthé has assumed that this is simply because nobody's managed to summon them successfully, not that they just aren't there (see pp. 64-65 for why they aren't around). She has also failed to consider that she is making herself ridiculously vulnerable to blackmail or that a thaumaturge or Fair Folk could use illusions or glamours to produce fake ghosts. Worst of all, she is careless enough that it might be possible to trace all this back to her and to her Great House. This could be the wedge that causes Katrin to bar Gethamane to all Realm influence. If a Solar or Abyssal found out about this, would they take the opportunity to influence Katrin, or would they use Avanthé as a tool instead? And how would the priests react, if they found out how she planned to profane their temple?



Although execution is the ultimate sanction, the Council prefers a more demonstrative penalty for the most serious crimes. Those found guilty of violent murder, serious fraud or conspiracy to give outsiders access to Gethamane's Gardens are blinded, branded and set to labor for the rest of their lives in the fungus gardens. There, while doing heavy work that doesn't require sight or freedom, the criminals provide a salutary example for other citizens.

Exile is actually one of the milder penalties inflicted on criminals and is often inflicted by the judges in a spirit of mercy on those who clearly cannot live inside Gethamane and whose crimes are more byproducts of natural vigor or inclination than genuine malice. Exile may be for a set period of time (though usually at least five years) or perpetual. If it is for a given period, then the criminal may return to Gethamane after his time of exile has passed and reassume all privileges and duties as a member of his family and citizen of the city.

SLAVERY IN GETHAMANE

Slavery is not a legal punishment in Gethamane. Permanent hard labor is not considered by the inhabitants to be slavery, even if it does involve spending the rest of your life working, branded and blind, in the fungus gardens. Similarly, it is illegal for any permanent inhabitant of Gethamane to own slaves. Labor must be hired from within the city. (This was instituted by the second Master, Gerath, in order to prevent slave labor from causing rising unemployment inside Gethamane.) Some of the merchant class are currently agitating to change the law, but they have little support. However, not wanting to lose the associated Guild trade, Gethamane permits slave caravans to pass through the city.

Inside Gethamane, slaves are considered property, and are covered by the Second Rule. This means that the Guard can (and does) enforce some standards in slave-handling. If the Guards witness particularly unpleasant treatment of slaves, the Guards can arrest everyone in sight on charges of "damaging another person's property" until the actual legal owner of the slaves chooses to testify that he deliberately gave orders for the slave to be mistreated. In such a case, nobody gets penalized by law, but the general confusion and delay engendered by such charges does nothing for the slave caravan's smooth running or reputation.

RELIGION IN GETHAMANE

Most citizens of Gethamane are quite happy to leave the actual business of worship and propitiation to the chosen priests and only go to the three temples when they

have particularly urgent concerns or if they hope for prophetic dreams. While they would not deny any deity's powers, the gods of Gethamane seem to have made their demands quite simple, and the people of Gethamane acquiesce and leave well enough alone. Similarly, most people don't bother with luck charms or amulets. Citizens who have frequent commerce with outsiders sometimes buy luck charms from them, but this is often more of a political statement than an actual serious petition to external deities.

All temples to gods other than those of Gethamane must, by law, lie within the Guild District, and no Immaculate temples are permitted. Small portable travelers' shrines are politely ignored but can be used as an excuse for arrest if the Guard has some reason to harass the people involved. There are very few permanent temples in the Guild District, but there are several rooms that are available to passing caravans who want to arrange set worship for several days. Gethamane has no objection to travelers worshiping the Unconquered Sun, any more than the city would object to any other god. The only prohibition is against breaking any of the laws of Gethamane while so worshiping.

There is a small mystery cult among the farmers to the gods of fungus and mushrooms, but the worship is something that stays strictly within the Gardens and is only practiced among the more senior farmers. While the Mistress and a number of other powerful citizens are aware of the cult's existence, they refrain from getting involved and don't ask too many questions about the odd "accidental death" of a condemned convict who somehow gets bled dry and emasculated before his body is discovered.

The hot springs located throughout Gethamane are used as public baths and are considered social as well as hygienic locations. The hot springs were all declared to be city property in the early days of the city and remain such. Even the wealthiest families must either come to the public baths or heat basins of water in their own homes. The hot springs were clearly used by the previous inhabitants, as the caves in which the springs are situated were laid out for bathing, with some small pools to one side for private use and other large pools for general use.

DEATH IN GETHAMANE

The dead of Gethamane are cremated in the three temples by the priesthood, and their ashes are either kept by the families or scattered outside on the mountain slopes. It is illegal to dispose of dead bodies in any other way. However, there are some inhabitants of the city (most notably Ellewan Dassen of the Outer Circle) who have training in embalming — and even taxidermy. There are families throughout Gethamane, not wishing to be parted from those they love, who manage to conceal the preserved corpses of their ancestors in hidden rooms and private quarters. The occasional discovery of an embalmed body provokes an immediate search of the area by the

ANATHEMA IN GETHAMANE

While the current citizens of Gethamane are descended from those who fled there during the Usurpation, the lack of constant Realm influence or Immaculate presence has left them with no particular hatred toward Solars, Lunars or any other Exalted. The citizens' attitude toward beings of great power who command mighty Charms and spells and wield ancient weapons is merely one of sensible distrust and caution. Any obvious Solar who enters the city will be noted at the gates, directed to the Guild District as a visitor and watched by the Guard (within reason); a sigh of relief will be generally breathed when she leaves the city. She will not be unduly persecuted, however, or have people trying to lead mobs against her. Individual action by visiting Dragon-Blooded or Immaculates is possible, but in that case, the Guard will primarily blame the aggressors rather than the Solar and will appreciate any attempts made to avoid significant property damage.

The Mistress of Gethamane is interested in employing Exalted to try to clear out portions of the underways but otherwise has no real need for them — that she knows of. She is also very much aware of the power of the Solars and Abyssals and knows that a number of them are currently looking for defensible bases. (The Bull of the North is a powerful reminder to the whole North that the Solars are *dangerous*.) While the Mistress of Gethamane has no wish to anger any of the Celestial Exalted, she would really rather they stay out of Gethamane — and that, while in Gethamane, they behave according to the city's laws.

Guard and the arrest of everyone involved. However, nobody realizes the full scale of this practice, especially among the rich families, who have the space to hide preserved corpses and the jade to pay for the process.

LEISURE IN GETHAMANE

Pastimes in Gethamane range from the sedately virtuous to the quietly degenerate. Proper-thinking citizens (as they describe themselves) like to fill their leisure hours with uplifting, self-improving pursuits, ranging from quiet exercise and productive crafts (carving imported driftwood is currently very fashionable) to watching morality plays and writing epic poetry modeled on barbarian sagas that celebrates honor and virtue. Music is also popular, but wind instruments are more generally used than string instruments, and drums are never played for recreation, as they are reserved for the Guard's use.

People who revolt at such rigid ideas of pleasure indulge themselves in more creative ways. Scarification — undertaken under drugs that amplify each sensation — is in vogue at the moment, but general use of drugs, casual sex, private sessions of torture between consenting individuals (or ones who are well paid to endure or inflict it) and vicious sessions of gossip and destroying reputations are all common. The important thing is that the hobby shouldn't be visible afterward. People never have scars or marks from torture where it will *show* — even the young who want to shock their parents. It's important to be able to maintain a placid, pale, untouched face to the rest of Gethamane before vanishing again into the private rooms to do those things that are only done in private.

This is all in accordance with tradition. People don't make a fuss or get noticed or disturb the quiet functioning of the city. If they must do strange things in order to release their tensions in private, that's their own business, and it's the height of bad manners to suggest that your next-door neighbor copulates with imported goats in his silk-hung bedroom. Unless, of course, it should be audible through the walls — in which case, it becomes a matter for public discussion, and the general condemnation of your neighbor will be on the grounds of his incompetence for not keeping the sound down.

FEAR IN GETHAMANE

Gethamane has food, shelter, warmth, a working economy, a functioning social system with room for upward mobility, viable trade links and heavy defenses. The people who dwell there can enjoy sophisticated leisure pursuits, lenient deities and the knowledge that, even if the world outside the mountain should collapse, they can just close their doors and be safe. At a casual glance, they have everything they could reasonably ask for.

But what they also have is permanent, constant fear.

Everyone in Gethamane knows someone (or knows someone who has a friend who knows someone) who's seen the *things* that come up from the underways. Everyone's heard the stories. Everyone's walked near an underways entrance and felt the cold touch of damp air against skin. Everyone in Gethamane, even the babies in cribs listening to cradle songs, is aware that they are living above the caves of monsters. It's the price they pay for living inside the mountain, in the beautiful carven city with so many amenities and such convenient food and warmth.

It's not quite comparable to living in a constant state of siege. After all, the Guard has always managed to beat back any incursions from below, sooner or later. It's not even an overmastering threat. Centuries of living here undisturbed have convinced the citizens that the creatures below are never going to stage a really major attack. It's just the knowledge that beneath your feet, separated from you by only a layer of stone, are inhuman creatures who want to drag you into the darkness and *kill* you.



GEOGRAPHY

In Gethamane, social rank goes along with depth in the mountain. The closer a person is to ground level, where the sunken Gardens are, the higher-ranked she is. There are two great gates to the city, one on either side of the mountain at north and south, and a number of higher passages that lead to the outside, all well-concealed and easily closed, that the gatherers and hunters use when going out to collect food and hunt.

Near the top of the mountain are the city's three temples, large open rooms decorated with jewel-encrusted carvings of mountains and enormous flying creatures. At the base of the mountain, in its heart, lie the long sunken Gardens. Next to them are important civic buildings such as the Courthouse, the Dole distribution center, the Master's quarters and the Guardhall. Roughly above these, but far lower down than the temples, are the large rooms that have been given over for Guild and market use, where the Guild may stable and house its caravans, trade with the people of the city and maintain a permanent market. Farther out, toward the sides of the mountain, lie the tunnels and rooms that have been claimed as territory by the various families, and are used for accommodation, crafting and storage.

DAY AND NIGHT

The light crystals set into Gethamane's ceilings and walls fluctuate with the time of day, being brighter during what is day in the outside world and darker during the night. However, even in the crystals' subdued state, they are still bright enough to enable craftsmen to work at all but the most demanding tasks, farmers to labor, Guards to patrol and merchants to bargain. Gethamane is alive and busy all round the clock, with citizens working during the "day" or "night" depending on their personal preferences. Outsiders quickly learn to adjust their sleep cycles in order to take advantage of this.

THE OUTER SLOPES

Gethamane's hunters and gatherers travel the slopes of the mountain and the surrounding tundra under all conditions short of howling blizzards. The appalling winter weather and marauding icewalkers makes it impossible to maintain stable farms during the winter, but hardy orchards and perennial crops mean that there is some cultivated food to harvest in the brief summer and autumn. Otherwise, there are mosses and ferns to gather and local wildlife to hunt down.

THE STRUCTURE

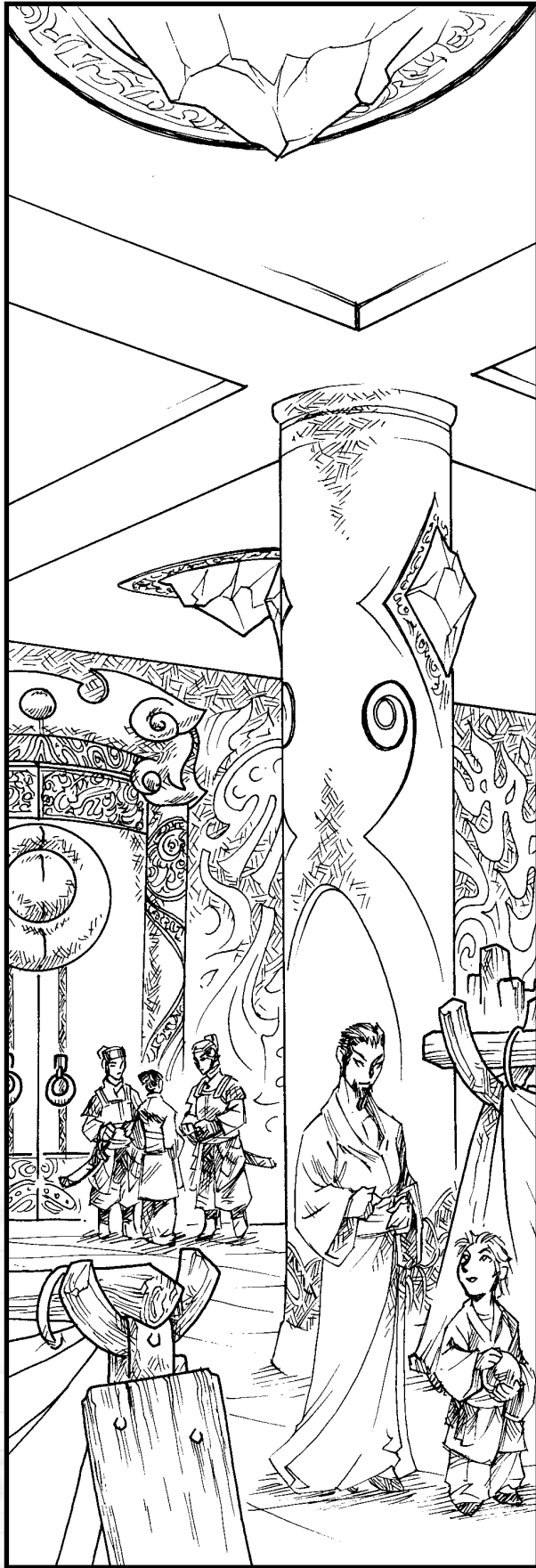
The passages of Gethamane are square shaped, their walls and ceilings dark gray and slightly rough. While the smaller rooms are generally plain and of much the same structure as the passageways, the larger rooms and halls are covered in intricate and beautiful carvings. Some rooms have stone doors, while others have newer doors of timber or stretched hide. Timber and hide are also frequently used to erect partitions across rooms or passageways or to mark the limits of a family's territory. The older or wealthier families have heavier, metal-nailed bulwarks or elaborately painted screens, while poorer families must make do with roughly tanned leather, pieces of wood cannibalized from merchants' carts and other temporary makeshifts.

Pale crystals set in the ceiling and walls glow bright during the day and more gently during the night. There is little true darkness in the city of Gethamane, unless the crystals in a room or passage are deliberately covered or broken. This results in an increased fear of the underways and their total darkness. Many of Gethamane's citizens are mildly phobic about true darkness, since they so rarely have to experience it, and, as a result, the tunnels beneath the city are given yet another reason to be a place of nightmare.

The underways themselves are quite different in structure from the upper city. The stone from which the underways are carved is black, rounded and faintly slick to the touch. There are several dozen known entrances to the lower tunnels from the city, and the Guard watches them all and keeps records of all activity passing through the entrances in either direction.

It is a crime against the Second Law of Gethamane (trespass on another's goods) to damage the structure of the city or to damage or break one of the glowing crystals that illuminate it. (It requires three levels of aggravated damage to weaken a crystal and reduce the light by half and six levels of aggravated damage to break one.) The usual penalty is a heavy fine in jade or goods and enforced service to the city in a menial capacity. The Masters of Gethamane have always wanted to discourage such behavior by example.

There are wells sunk throughout the city, though far more on the lower levels than the upper ones. The laws of Gethamane forbid anyone to restrict or bar the use of a well "save at the will of the City in time of trouble" and consider any damage or pollution to a well to be another crime against the Second Law, garnering similar penalties as damage to the light crystals.



The dozen exits that the hunters and gatherers use are all positioned high up on the mountain, spaced in a loose circle around the peak, nearly a day's downhill travel from the main entrances. The hunters' exits are stone gateways sufficiently wide for five men to walk abreast through them and 10 feet high. Stone passages (trapped by the Guard to enable collapse if necessary) 20 feet long lead back inside to large rooms that the hunters and gatherers use to store their equipment and hunting weapons. These entrances were originally built to allow the flying race of Dragon Kings to enter and leave Gethamane easily, during the First Age and the days of their greatness. Nobody in Gethamane now realizes this or can translate the ancient script carved in the tongue of the Dragon Kings around the entrances.

The hunters and gatherers also act as scouts, bringing information on local movements back to Gethamane. The Guard even pays a small bounty for useful reports. In general, the Mistress of Gethamane is aware of what's going on for a couple of days' journey around the mountain — farther if good weather allows for farther observation from the mountain's heights.

THE ENTRANCES

The two great gates of Gethamane are carved from stone and reinforced with jade and have heavy enchantments of warding and defense laid on them. The First Age Twilight Caste who raised the gates intended for the mountain to be a possible refuge against the Fair Folk as well as the barbarians of the North, and, so, made the gates firm and strong. A tunnel 50 yards long and 10 yards high and wide leads from each gate to a large antechamber, which has heavy crystal portcullises at each end and serves as a Guard post. Each antechamber also holds the keys to a set of explosives and sorceries set into the 50-yard tunnel leading to it, which should (it has never been tested) collapse the tunnel when activated. This is a last-ditch defense, to be used if the outer gate falls.

The Commander of the Northern Gate is Gavne Wheelwright, who was trained by his family as a craftsman. He went into the City Guard after the death of his wife at the age of 25 at the hands of underdwellers and rose through the ranks on a tidal wave of driven purpose and natural talent. His drive to be revenged on the underdwellers is obvious to anyone who brings up the subject with him. Golden Stag, the Captain of the Guard, has placed Gavne in this position to prevent his obsession from causing his own death or resulting in unacceptable Guard losses. For the moment, Gavne makes no complaint.

The Commander of the Southern Gate is Mindros Yarni, a career soldier who's been in the Guard since his teens. He is practical, competent and uninspired, but he does an excellent and reliable job of commanding and organizing his men. He is also notorious not only for refusing bribes from merchants or the Guild but for actively reporting the attempts





ADVENTURE SEED

Target Character Type: Abyssal, God-Blooded, Heroic Dead, Heroic Mortal

Gavne's obsession leaves the Northern Gate in danger. He's begun reading the works of the Bishop of the Chalcedony Thurible, dreaming of saving the bodies of Gethamane's dead (Gavne fails to realize how many are already illegally embalmed), raising them as zombies and marching them down into the underways to destroy every living creature there. If one of the Bishop's deathknights learns (from the merchant who sold Gavne the books, for instance) that a commander of Gethamane's Guard is vulnerable to his master's words, then Gavne will certainly be sought out and offered a bargain of some sort. Equally, a deathknight serving another master might want to prevent such a coup by the Bishop's forces. At the moment, this can still be stopped by heroic mortals or ghosts who can discover Gavne's pain and clear his troubled mind. It won't remain so for much longer.

at bribery and getting the merchants in question fined. Having been converted by a traveling Immaculate monk, Mindros is actually a devotee of the Immaculate Order and is quietly gathering support to have an Immaculate temple set up in one of the upper rooms of the mountain. This is being resisted on religious grounds by the current priests of Gethamane's temples and by Mistress Katrin and other Bethanites who have enough political savvy to realize the opening that such a temple would give to the Realm.

Gavne and Mindros each command a squadron of 60 of the Guard, who serve in eight-hour shifts, 20 of them on duty at any time at each gate. While bribery of the Guard is forbidden by Gethamane's law, it is generally understood that small presents (such as food, cloth or cheap items) given to the Guard in return for an explanation of local geography and laws don't count as bribes but are considered tokens of gratitude for assistance beyond the call of duty.

In the event of serious trouble, a runner is always on duty to contact the Guardhall, and more Guards can be mobilized at a moment's notice. The Guard tends toward firmness and severity. The constant awareness of the horrors lurking in Gethamane's underways leaves the Guard on edge. Any minor brawl or scuffle in the gate passages or antechambers will be dealt with brusquely and effectively.

All those entering Gethamane have their names taken down, together with a brief physical description, usually no more than "black-haired woman" or "man with limp." Particularly noticeable characters, such as Solars traveling openly, are likely to have more details noted down. There is

a standard fee of one dinar of silver for every person who enters Gethamane (half an dinar per slave, by special concession of the Council) that is paid by the leader of the group. In the case of a cash shortage, the Guard is willing to take down the character's name and details and either take the payment in goods or allow the character to make the payment later by doing civic work for Gethamane, with the amount to be adjudicated by one of the Bethanites. (While this work is usually menial but necessary, particularly dangerous but penniless adventurers may be asked to undertake an expedition into the underways, with promises of significant extra recompense if they succeed.) Masters of slave caravans often arrange for their slaves to work off the fee in labor while staying in the city, rather than pay.

THE OUTER RING

Farther in from the antechamber, the tunnels branch out and become more complex, going up and down as well as to left and right. Traveling upward but directly ahead leads to the Guild area. The direct passage is well-marked, with Guard posts along the way, officially to prevent merchants from getting lost but unofficially to keep an eye on anyone leaving the main passages. Farther out to the side lie the dwellings of the middle classes of Gethamane — long-established Guard and farming families, respected artisans and hunters and prospectors who have done well from expeditions into the underways.

These sets of rooms have usually been in the hands of a single family for generations. The rooms grow cluttered with the family's heirlooms and detritus and are frequently crowded, if the family has grown and not married or adopted its children out to another family. Rooms in this area are seldom free and only become so if an entire family should perish without willing its property to anyone else or if some crime against the city should result in a family being exiled, slain or enslaved. In such a case, ownership of the rooms reverts to the Council, and the Master of Gethamane chooses to whom they are awarded. (The Guild has been trying to get its hands on some of these rooms for centuries now, but previous Masters have avoided deeding these rooms to anyone connected with the Guild, however high a bribe is offered.)

This is also the area that contains public buildings that aren't important enough to be in the central area with the Gardens and the Council buildings, but are useful to Gethamane as a whole. Craft halls, minor associations, schools and similar establishments can be found in this area. Either they are set up in rooms that are rented to them by particular families, or a major family from the organization owns the rooms and charges a small fee to all the other members. It is very difficult indeed for a new organization to get itself territory in this area. To do so would require a debt of gratitude by, or the major blackmail of, one of the families who could rent the organization a room.

Naturally, not every single room is occupied or claimed. However, the few rooms that are left are far to the edges of the Outer Ring and have often been used as dumping grounds for rubbish for centuries or are close enough to a family's territory that the family could make a plausible case before Gethamane's judges for owning the room. Some thieves in the area use such rooms as lairs, building nests in the years of collected litter and detritus.

While the beauty of Gethamane's structure is evident, so is the clutter of centuries of inhabitation. Families react to the buildup of their own rubbish by shifting it into other people's areas or dumping it in public places — while trying not to get caught doing so, of course. The people who own property in this area consider themselves the pillars of Gethamane, the ones who actually get the work of the city done. While they are courteous to visitors (especially wealthy ones), they will call the Guard to chase away beggars, lowlifes, bravos or other undesirables.

Several acting and entertainer families own properties in this area and use them to present performances. While these families are not considered high society, or even upper middle class, the Gardens and the Outer Ring both tolerate them rather than drive them into the Upper Ring. After all, if these families should be based there among the poor, it would be that much harder for the rich to visit them and enjoy their performances.

Some of the more notable locations in this area follow.

THE JANISSARY VAULT

Not all of Gethamane's fighters go into the Guard — or manage to stay there. Those who were expelled from the Guard or were unable to endure its discipline or those who have entered Gethamane from outside and been adopted by a local family are all welcome to join the Janissary Vault. This organization has been operating for 50 years now (previous Masters discouraged the formation of any such organization) and provides hired bodyguards, warriors and general thugs.

While the Janissary Vault publicly proclaims that it abides by the laws of Gethamane and would never even consider doing anything remotely illegal, in practice, a sufficiently intelligent and discreet hirer can buy services up to — though usually not including — murder. (The current Vaultmaster doesn't want to give the Council any excuse for a crackdown.) Being in the Janissary Vault is not considered genuine service to the City, so members only get the basic Dole. As a result, they are constantly on the lookout for potential work.

Despite the close similarity of functions, the Janissary Vault has no actual connection with the Guild itself, though the Guild would be delighted to absorb it as an affiliate. Should this happen, Mistress Katrin would have to take urgent action of some sort, ranging from declaring the Janissary Vault illegal to requiring close observation and registration of all the Vault's jobs and actions.

HIDDEN FIRE MANSE

The Janissary Vault doesn't realize that there is an old Fire-pected Manse (Manse ••) located directly above the set of caves in which they're based. Concealed by hidden doors and by careful design of the surrounding passages, the Manse was originally used as a private laboratory by a Twilight Caste Solar who visited Gethamane frequently before the Usurpation. The fact that the Manse is safely capped has stopped random flares of Essence or other possibly dangerous manifestations, but even so, something of the temperament and nature of fire leaks out into the vicinity, fanning local flames of aggression and igniting passions. The Manse itself is a small set of rooms, furnished with expensive but old wooden furniture and with a few sorcerous texts (mostly standard reference works) left behind by the previous owner. The Manse was sealed and empty of human life when Vodak struck, and the hekatonkhire never entered it.



THE PHILOSOPHY CELL

The Philosophy Cell is a haven for would-be sorcerers, religious ascetics, devotees of self-created religions, drug addicts and amateur historians attempting to discover the true history of Gethamane. Members are generally young people from the middle and upper classes, possessed of more money and spare time than sense and with ambitions that soar beyond the mundane matters of fungus farming and guarding the entrances to the underways. The Philosophy Cell has spread from a single-room debating society to encompass several rooms that are officially listed as public meeting places. The current occupants aren't actually breaking any laws, but the Guard could easily move in and clear the place out if they wanted to.

Even though this is a hangout for the young and frivolous, serious research does take place here, and a number of the regulars are professional and capable in their respective fields. Notable members include Damaithe Yarni (a thaumaturge and secret demonologist), Serret of the Bethanites (a painstaking but reliable historian — who is, of course, reporting everything that he observes) Tazar Pellan (a cold-blooded alchemist testing out some of his concoctions on those wanting mystical experiences) and Arik Varken, who is willing to try anything that will shock his family.

THE RATS' NEST

This abandoned storehouse and junkyard far to the east of the Outer Ring serves as home to Jaxar, a Guild agent, and her group of child-thieves. Jaxar is 40 years old,

but she is a dwarf with a preternaturally young face and, from a distance, can easily pass as a child. She was dropped off here by the Guild five years ago to build up a base for action and to pass on regular reports on Gethamane. Since then, she has deftly managed to avoid registration for the Dole. She is a simultaneous den mother, admired leader and scary outsider to her agents.

Jaxar's agents are all children of 14 years or less, mostly from the middle or upper classes, who regard the whole "Society of Thieves" as a huge game. The children regularly execute pranks or petty thefts for her or pass on gossip that she can send in to the Guild. As of yet, considering what might happen if she chooses to pass information about the children's crimes to the Guard, none of the children have realized how deeply they are in her power. Jaxar is a capable blackmailer and good practical psychologist. Once those children grow to maturity, they will sink all the deeper into her power and, quite possibly, become permanent agents for the Guild.

TIMBER HALL

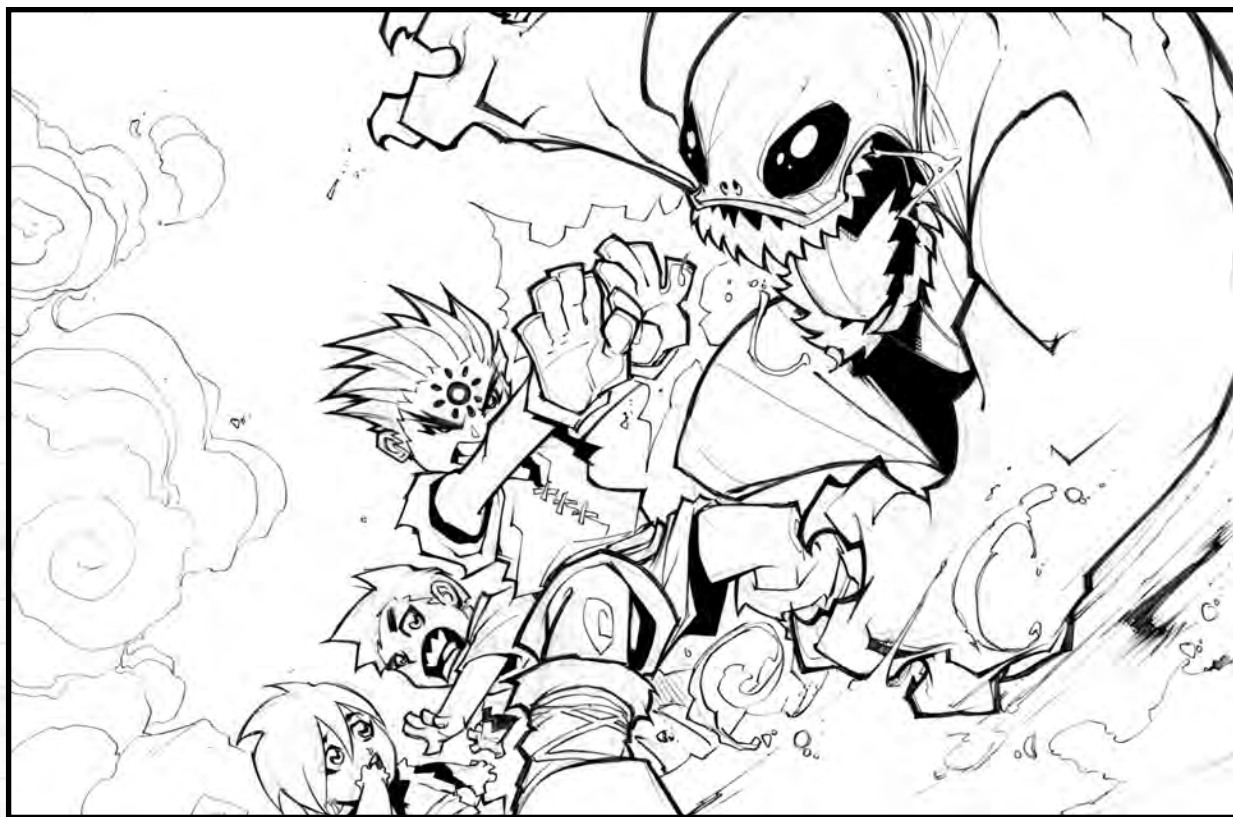
This large room is surrounded by several small ones and is the center of work for most of the local carpenters, woodcarvers, furniture makers and other woodworkers. Wood collected by the gatherers outside or brought in by the Guild and purchased by local merchants is carried here to be crafted by its owners or resold. The actual owners of the rooms, the Ragith family, make a handsome profit out

ADVENTURE SEED

Target Character Type: Any

While engaging in a game of "go near the underways gate and then run away," one of Jaxar's child-agents is attacked by dark creatures from the depths and Exalts as a Dawn Caste Solar to defend himself and his friends. Jaxar knows the signs of Solar Exaltation and is currently "sheltering" the child, while sending an urgent message for Guild help to smuggle him out and indoctrinate him properly to serve Guild interests. The boy's parents (well-off artisans) and family suspect that the child was killed by the monsters, but there is no proof of his death, and the other children who were there are traumatized and refuse to talk about it. (Jaxar has also sent round word that nobody is to talk about the fight or "bad things will happen.")

While a Guild caravan is scheduled to arrive here within a week, the caravan master won't want to leave immediately with the boy, as the master wants to do his usual trading. Equally, the boy doesn't want to leave. Jaxar is working to convince him that his parents will hate him now that he's become Anathema and that only "her friends" can help, but he's only 12 years old and wants to try out his new powers. Finally, the Guard has increased its vigilance and is making life unpleasant for all the local lowlife scum and the Janissary Vault.



of charging a very low toll fee to everyone who enters and a higher fee to those who want to rent one of the small rooms for a long-term project or a private meeting.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS FOR THE OUTER RING

Warrior: Janissary Vault Member, Guard

Holy Man: Temple Priest, Philosophy Cell Member

Savant: Philosophy Cell Member, Historian

Criminal: Petty Thief, Merchant Preying On Newcomers

Entertainer: Actor, Flautist

Bureaucrat: Dole Checker, Gate Clerk, Timber Hall Accountant

THE UPPER RING

This section is where the poorer citizens of Gethamane dwell. It covers the area from above the Outer Ring and over the Guild District, up to and around the temples. While the main thoroughfares are kept clear and patrolled by the Guard, the back passages can go unseen by official eyes for months. The area as a whole ranges from clean-but-shabby, in the better and more aspiring parts of the district and along the main passages, to filthy, cramped and utter squalor. A lot of the inhabitants keep livestock (goats, chickens or pigs) and can't be bothered to drag dung and waste all the way to one of the small gatherers' gates to dump it or even to sell it to one of the dung collectors who cart it down for fertilizer in the Gardens.

The trip to collect the Dole can take one to three hours just to reach the Gardens, not to mention the wait at the Gardens to sign off on the Registers. In the remoter parts of the Upper Ring, it's common for family representatives to be ambushed for the food they're carrying while on their way back. As a result, groups from a particular set of caves often travel together, for mutual security. There are a number of gangs in the area, ranging from just a few members to several dozen in size. The Guard cracks down on any large gang that it can find and press criminal charges against, but a few gangs slip through the nets.

Such an environment breeds disease and encourages scavengers. Despite the use of small charms and the burning of certain poisonous herbs, rats lurk in the garbage, lice and worms infest the poorest inhabitants and it is rumored that certain dark creatures from the underways have escaped the Guard and now hide in the remotest passageways and caves, emerging to prey on those citizens nearby. Disease is also common, most commonly pneumonia or influenza or minor diarrhea and vomiting. Another breed of scavenger found in the Upper Circle is the amateur treasure-hunter and scroll-searcher, who believe that the accumulated trash of generations and the unexplored nature of some of the less pleasant passages may hide the secrets of Gethamane. (Occasional interesting finds have happened, but purse-slitting, unpleasant diseases and general social condemnation are more common.) Tunnel preachers also wander these corridors, talking wildly about apocalyptic "end times" or

claiming to represent the *true* gods, as opposed to the "false gods" worshiped in the temples.

Ten of the 12 small portals used by hunters and gatherers to collect food outside of Gethamane branch off the Upper Circle. These portals are kept well clear and guarded, and the families who live nearby and who practice this as their occupation are among the better-off dwellers in the area. These families are prosperous and so well-regarded that they even manage to adopt or marry into Outer Circle or Garden District families from time to time. The best known of these families, the Otist family, even holds a seat on the Council.

Few in this district can afford expensive instruments or other gear for entertaining. Singing, however, is common, and some paupers with truly incredible voices have been adopted into better families or have made careers for themselves in the Outer Circle or the Guild District. Another major leisure activity here is cooking. Even the poorest family has a set of recipes for preparing Dole fungi and any scrapings that they can get their hands on, and small stalls offering to season and cook a meal on the spot line some of the better thoroughfares.

THE JADE HOSPICE

Founded near the temples in the early days of Gethamane, this hospice is the biggest and most overworked in the city. The hospice is staffed partly by priests, partly by trained healers and partly by citizens who are working off legal penalties or have chosen this way of repaying their Dole. While it is not necessarily the best-staffed or most highly skilled hospice in Gethamane, the Jade Hospice is kept busy dealing with the Upper Circle's constant stream of injuries, illnesses and assault victims. The courts regularly sentence mild offenders to serve as unskilled labor or nursing staff here, and the staff is constantly coming and going. The Director of the Hospice, matronly Enath Daur of a prosperous farmer family, holds one of the farmer seats on the Council. She was elected at the time because the faction couldn't agree on any other candidate, and she has since used her position to make sure that the Upper Ring is not further marginalized.

SEVENTH HALL

This set of caves toward the outer edge of the Upper Ring is officially owned by the Rasri family, whose members have a long history of jobs such as dung-carriers, garbage-pickers, cleaners and general menial work. Seventh Hall has lately become the gathering-spot for a conspiracy of lower-class citizens of Gethamane who are angry with the current administration and see the Guild as the solution to all Gethamane's problems. These conspirators believe that unlicensed free trade and the introduction of slavery will not only free them from the current burden of drudgery, but will also make Gethamane the mightiest city in the North. Yftar Rasri, the bitter but cowardly



patriarch of the family, is also the de facto leader of the conspiracy. While the conspirators haven't yet managed to make credible contact with a Guild representative — a previous attempt was rejected by the Guildsman in question as “an obvious case of entrapment to give the Mistress more ammunition against us” — it's only a matter of time.

THE WAREHOUSES

When the hunters and gatherers bring in game and food from outside, they can't necessarily haul it down to the main food stocks in the Garden District, nor do they want to keep the game in their own homes — it's too great an invitation to thievery. So, they bring the food and game here.

These large sets of caves are owned by the city and may be used by citizens to store food on payment of a tithe of approximately one-twentieth of the food's value (or of the food itself) to the city. There are five of these warehouses, set roughly in a circle round the district and each one close to two of the gathering entrances. The warehouses are heavily patrolled by the Guard and are manned by junior Bethanites who are judged by their elders to need seasoning. The corridors around the warehouses are constantly hustling with merchants, beggars, hunters and gatherers and people trying to strike a quick bargain over suspiciously overripe deer haunches or similar dubious goods.

Incidentally, the poorer caves near here have some of the worst rates of dysentery in all Gethamane. The families buy their food cheap, and, sadly for them, they get what they pay for.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS FOR THE OUTER RING

Warrior: Gang Member, Guard

Holy Man: Temple Priest, Apocalyptic Tunnel Preacher

Savant: Archaeologist, Unethical Experimenter

Criminal: Con Artist, Dole Fraud, Food Hijacker, Rebel

Entertainer: Cook, Street Singer

Bureaucrat: Hospital Staff, Warehouse Manager

THE TEMPLES

The city's three temples are all large, open rooms located near the top of the mountain and distinguished from other chambers by jewel-encrusted carvings of mountains and enormous flying creatures. (The decorations also include traces of orichalcum, moonsilver, starmetal and jade, though in such small quantities that it would take days of very public work to extract a useful amount.) Almost everyone entering these rooms is struck by an eerie sense of presence and watchfulness.

Those who spend the night sleeping in a temple report being haunted by vivid, confusing dreams. Most dreamers remember only fragments of these dreams, though memories of frantic searching or desperate flight are common. Many dreamers then spend the next few nights in sleepless dread or eager anticipation, and some find new answers to

ADVENTURE SEED

Target Character Type: Dragon-Blooded, Heroic Mortal, Sidereal, Solar

A serious disease has struck the Upper Circle. Symptoms consist of bluish blotches on the skin, a high fever, headaches and severe weakness. While not always fatal, this “blue pox” has caused over 100 deaths already and is spreading through human contact and shared water supplies.

Blue pox was actually caused by the magical experiments of a thaumaturge in the Outer Circle below, who was testing his work on some garbage-pickers from the Upper Circle whom he thought would not be missed. He has realized that his experiments caused the pox and is now lying low, but his notes and work may provide vital information in creating a cure for the disease.

In the meantime, the Council and the Mistress of Gethamane are discussing possible remedies. The most drastic solution proposed so far is to wall off particularly hard-hit neighborhoods of the Upper Circle and leave the people shut away to die or recover, as the gods will. The sudden influx of ghosts has also begun to draw Vodak's attention and may even serve to attract him upward.

problems that were troubling them. A very few who sleep in a temple feel called to serve as priests afterward.

In the first days of the city, several loners who chose the temples as their base were the first to be called to serve as priests and respectfully informed Bethan Redeye that they could no longer work in any other capacity, as they felt it was their duty to tend the temples and perform rites of propitiation. Bethan and her people were not particularly surprised to find that the unknown gods of the city demanded some form of worship and were, in fact, quite relieved to find it was something so minor and easily performed. The Mistress not only gave leave for the few chosen ones to remain as priests, but established that any citizen choosing to become a priest, and accepted by the other acolytes as such, should receive a portion of the Dole similar to medium-level Guards or farmers, as the priests were doing vital work for Gethamane.

Priests who have been called to service leave their previous lives behind and work at the temple. They keep the temples clean and well polished and make offerings of flowers and animal blood upon the altars. Late at night, the priests also perform odd ceremonies during which they cover the floors of the temples with elaborate patterns drawn in ink, colored sand and, sometimes, their own blood. Chanting in unknown tongues, the acolytes sometimes disturb the sleep of those who live nearby. The

priests assiduously clean up the patterns afterward, and, if interrupted during this cleaning, they become extremely agitated and beg leave to finish their task.

Occasionally, someone who sleeps in a temple is driven mad and flees from Gethamane, never to return. Attempts to restrain these unfortunates have proven extremely difficult. If bound or locked up within Gethamane, they invariably injure themselves in their raving attempts to escape. They are unable to give details of why they are so terrified or why they must leave, but struggle in an inarticulate frenzy, screaming and thrashing as they attempt to break their restraints. Those lunatics who do not perish in the wastes outside quickly return to sanity once out of sight of the mountain city but consistently refuse to return to or speak of Gethamane again.

Savants and wise men alike have come to study the patterns that the priests make on the floor, but the researchers have been unable to deduce anything from the patterns. One visiting scavenger lord suggested that the markings bore some resemblance to certain diagrams that he'd seen on a scroll that came from the Mountain Folk within the Realm, but, unfortunately, he was unable to

pursue his theories further, as he went to investigate the underways and never returned.

There is no clear hierarchy among the acolytes. While there is technically a High Priest, the title goes to a priest chosen by the Mistress of Gethamane, so that the Council will have someone with whom it can interact and who can discuss matters such as organization, provision of the Dole and exorcisms or warding prayers. The current High Priest is Chilitos, who belonged to the Varenne family (notable for its poverty, bad hunters and worse gatherers) before leaving to join the priesthood. All other priests are referred to as Father or Mother, however old they may be.

In cases of demonic activity, strange phenomena or anything that might be seen as requiring divine intervention, the priests are willing to come to any part of Gethamane and perform rites and services to banish evil influences. While the gods of Gethamane are little help, the priesthood does contain a few genuine thaumaturges trained in the Arts of Warding and in rituals (see the **Exalted Players Guide**, pages 130–135 and pages 148–150), which have been passed down through the centuries. The most expert of these priests is Mother Sansen, a gentle



THE GODS OF GETHAMANE

When Gethamane was first hollowed out from the depths of the mountain, the Solars realized that they would need some way to circulate air throughout the mountain. They called on three small gods who were worshiped by local tribes, gods of air and sky and flight: Tribbua of the Outward Breath, Reshan of the Inward Breath and Methesis of the Still Sky. The Solars promised these three gods temples and worship inside Gethamane, if only the gods would ensure that air kept circulating throughout the mountain. The gods agreed, and even when the petty barbarian tribes who had worshiped them previously died, the gods themselves survived and grew stronger, supported by constant prayers and ritual.

When Vodak swept through Gethamane and devoured everything and everyone within, the three little gods were not strong enough to stop him. They could only watch, aghast, as their worshipers were swallowed up before their eyes, screaming for help. The gods sought assistance in Yu-Shan, but all the other gods were preoccupied by the Great Usurpation or the peril of their own worshipers, and nobody would help them. Left alone and half-insane in an empty mountain, they sat in their empty temples and kept the winds moving through Gethamane, still ensuring that there was fresh air, even if there was nobody left alive to breathe it.

When humans returned to Gethamane, some of them slept in the empty temples, and the three gods attempted to contact them in their dreams. A few of these mortals were touched by the deities' insanity (and still are when they are chosen to this day), and became their priests, tending the temples and worshiping as best they could. A very few are seized with memories of Vodak's attack on Gethamane and relive it in their minds constantly. They become desperate to escape the city, screaming in terror while lost in panic, and, if restrained, often injure themselves in their desperate attempts to flee. If they manage to leave the city, the memories slip from their minds together with the touch of the gods, leaving the sufferers with nothing more than nightmares and a deeply rooted terror of Gethamane.

The three gods' mansions in Yu-Shan have stood empty since the Usurpation. Few have bothered to investigate, however, since those gods had reported directly to the Solars after the building of Gethamane and all those Solars died in the Usurpation. Indeed, those deities whose portfolios were related to Tribbua, Reshan and Methesis were all too happy to ignore their absence, as it allowed those deities more scope in which to expand. It would take a significant audit in Yu-Shan's bureaucracy to discover the existence of these small gods in Gethamane and to trace what happened to them.



old woman always willing to believe the best of everyone, whose skill at warding is far more a matter of natural talent than an urge to battle evil influences.

The three temples themselves are surrounded by a net of smaller rooms and passages. These are used by the priests for accommodation, for private confession and counseling and for storing items for their ceremonies. The passages from the temples through the Upper Ring and down to the Outer Ring and the Garden and Guild Districts are kept well clear by the Guards and are regularly patrolled, as there have been times when particularly poor or desperate Upper Ring inhabitants have assaulted or robbed rich citizens on their way to the temples. A ceremonial 15-Guard group (three for each temple) is always in attendance, though this is correctly viewed as a soft assignment and is used as a minor reward for Guards who need a restful job for a few weeks.

GHOSTS IN GETHAMANE

The religion of Gethamane leaves few of its citizens rising as ghosts. Some inhabitants say that this is due to the profoundly materialistic outlook of most of the citizens — they leave the religion to the priests, who are vastly divorced from the practical world around them and spend their time being rationally afraid of the monsters beneath their feet. Those citizens who do rise as ghosts do not survive to flee the city.

ADVENTURE SEED

Target Character Type: Abyssal, Solar

A Solar or Abyssal Exalt passing through happens to possess the shard of one of the Exalted who raised Gethamane and bargained with the city's three gods. The three deities are roused from their half-insane slumber and order their priests (through dreams and hallucinatory visions) to bring the Exalt to their temples so that they can speak with him. The gods also begin to neglect their usual duties, resulting in areas of bad air rising in the farther parts of Gethamane and people dying or crowding into other areas (and causing major legal disruptions over the Second Rule) in order to find breathable air. The deities must be reassured and persuaded to continue in their function if Gethamane is to remain habitable. However, the gods are embittered by the loss of their prestige and power in Yu-Shan and wish to have this issue addressed. They can also warn the Exalt about Vodak — and explain that the hekatonkhire is still there.

Vodak is a hekatonkhire, a creature of death, and it and its spawn hunt the Gethamane of the Underworld. There are no patrols or Guards there to drive the monsters back into the deeper passages, and they raven freely in the lightless tunnels. Rumors of treasure or a shadowland within the hollow mountain draw the occasional foolish ghost from outside, but very few of them, no matter how well prepared, return.

THE GUILD DISTRICT

This district is one of the busiest parts of Gethamane. Guild caravans and other merchants move in and out, citizens of Gethamane visit to do business and the Guard is always checking for any breaches of the city's laws. There are Guard checkpoints at each of the 20 passageways leading to this area, although some of the checkpoints are only manned by a couple of the Guard at any given time.

The central three large chambers of this district hold the main markets. One is the Food Market, one is the Metal Market and one is the Wood Market. Surrounding rooms serve as storage, while rooms farther out are used for accommodation, both for travelers, merchants and slaves. Slave caravans passing through Gethamane are required to register every single slave when they enter the city. All the stalls are made from wood, though some have been in their current location for decades, passed between allied trading groups when one leaves the city and another enters. Truly old stalls are a sign of prestige, and the stallholders can command respect from all the nearby merchants.

Instead of trying to regulate stall space and locations, the government of Gethamane allows the merchants themselves — and primarily the Guild — to sort things out. Naturally, this means that Guild members get preference, while non-Guild merchants get shunted to any small leftover areas. Naturally, this also means that bribery is frequent and heavy. The Guard move in if a situation descends into open brawling or destruction of property, but stay out of things otherwise.

The current ranking Guildmaster in the district is Master Tengis the Vintner, a specialist in trading alcohol of all kinds but also well-versed in drugs and exotic foods. He has visited Gethamane a dozen times in the past and has a good working relationship with the Mistress and the Council. At the moment, he presides over several ambitious juniors who are longing for a chance to prove themselves to the Guild. These include Master Samirel of Gem (who trades in gemstones and ornamental carvings and who is trying to get adopted by an upper-class Gethamane family), the journeyman Gentriss from the Haslanti League, with a good eye for furs and hides, (who deserted family and home to join the Guild but still has many contacts there) and the journeyman Alatheia from distant An-Teng in the West (who is well-informed about all sorts of cloth and fabric but is also a secret Yozi-worshiper and has plans to form a cult inside Gethamane).

ADVENTURE SEED

Target Character Type: Dragon-Blooded, Heroic Mortal, Lunar, Sidereal, Solar

Rathven, an ambitious and ruthless Guild journeyman, for the last few months has been arranging to import stocks of chemicals into the city (hidden inside casks of wine or bales of food) that, when mixed in the proper quantities, form explosive compounds. He arranged for his own arrival into the city to coincide with the last shipment of chemicals and is now producing the explosives and preparing to set them. He intends to cause enough physical damage and general uproar that it will become impossible for the Guard to be able to keep outsiders confined to the Guild District and the city will need to ask the Guild for help. What he doesn't realize is that some of his plotting is known to agents of Samea, the ally of the Bull of the North, who is prepared to have the Bull's armies move against Gethamane if the city is considerably weakened.

THE THREE MARKETS

The Food Market is used for selling all sorts of food, raw or prepared, and some enterprising citizens from the Upper Circle have cooking stalls there too. The room has a pungent tang to the air, from centuries of food being exposed and sold here. Experts can even sniff the air from 100 yards down the corridors and recognize that new shipments of cheese or pork or other foodstuffs have arrived. The large stalls selling raw or preserved foods are at the center of the cave, while the smaller ones farther out or around the edge provide luxury foods or cooking services. This cave is also the venue for those selling drugs and medicaments, which can be found at the northern end of the room. These merchants often hire local citizens to serve as security and prevent petty theft from their stalls. The biggest stall in the Food Market, however, is owned by the city of Gethamane itself and sells food from the fungal gardens at a standard low price, undercutting most of the other food stalls present.

The Metal Market provides metal and stone goods. The primary trade is, unsurprisingly, in weapons and in the iron and steel necessary to produce them. This market is the noisiest of the three, as perhaps a quarter of the stallholders offer smithing services and have brought in their own anvils and other equipment in order to be able to work onsite. As with the Food Market, some smithy stalls are passed between traders as one group enters and another leaves. This practice is more common here, as it allows merchants to avoid having to move all the equipment. Many merchants here are very willing to buy anything that can be recovered from the underways,



and treasure-seekers who proclaim their discoveries too loudly are likely to be besieged by Guildsmen and other traders offering them prices for whatever found.

The Wood Market also handles trade in cloth and services, as well as in all forms of wood. This market something of a catchall, as this room handles everything that isn't covered in the other two markets. Space is at a premium, and the Guard is frequently called to break up squabbles or stop brawls. Petty thaumaturges and charm-makers as well as diviners, exorcists and others who claim to possess occult knowledge or hidden wisdom come here to sell their services. This market also covers the buying and selling of books, maps and information, and there are always at least a dozen people offering to sell "true and verifiable" maps to the underways. The Guard doesn't bother cracking down on the sellers, as the common wisdom is that anyone stupid enough to buy such a thing deserves whatever happens to him.

TRIBUNAL CAVE

This room is reserved for high-level consultation among visiting Guildmasters and merchants who are wealthy or powerful enough to have earned the Guild's respect. Tribunal Cave is located directly above the Courthouse, though there are several layers of rock and passageways in between. By far the best-appointed room in the Guild section, Tribunal Cave has chairs and divans made from wood imported from the distant South, silks brought from the Far East and West, jade that could grace the Blessed Isle itself . . . Tribunal Cave is, in short, designed and decorated to impress. One cabinet holds a selection of alcohol and drugs that, though not actually illegal, would certainly draw the Guard's attention. Guildmasters and high-ranking merchants hold meetings here every five days to discuss the current trade situation in the North.

This room is also where Guildmasters receive any local visitors who want to discuss matters of law or trade. These receptions can be in a formal setting or in the context of a wild, abandoned party, with alcohol, courtesans and other suitable adjuncts to favorable business dealings.

Guild mercenaries always stand guard outside Tribunal Cave. The Guild doesn't trust the Guard anywhere near the room. There have been several occasions when Guard representatives took advantage of criminal charges and evidence of lawbreaking elsewhere to search the place for incriminating documents; indeed, the Guard will take any opportunity to investigate private Guild quarters, on the "guilty till proven innocent" principle.

THE DWELLINGS

In principle, accommodation in the Guild District is available for whoever wants it. In practice, people who've arrived move into any rooms that are vacant, often squatting in warehouse space or even the corridors if nothing

better is available. The Guild itself partitions and arranges the caves it controls so that any visiting members have somewhere to sleep and put their goods, even if it's just a corner of a shared cave or a small pocket of a room near the edge of the district. Other merchants can either pay the Guild or owe the Guild members a significant favor or scramble for space in the area that's left, often forming temporary coalitions to secure themselves some room. If this degenerates to open fighting, the Guard moves in to restore order, arresting everyone. (A few of the Guard take bribes, but not many.)

RIOTS IN THE GUILD DISTRICT

There are many possible causes for riots in this area: arguments over space, accusations of theft, claustrophobia and culture shock from the surroundings . . . It's very easy for a crowded group of people to become a screaming mob. When this happens, any important merchants present barricade themselves in, and the Guildmasters themselves retreat to Tribunal Cave, while sending in mercenaries to crack heads and disperse the crowd. The Guard may intervene if it thinks it'll be easy to break the riot up in the early stages, or the Guard may just close off the Guild District and wait for things to die down. Any surviving rioters are liable to be tried on charges of breaking all three of the Rules and are likely to be fined for everything they possess.

The citizens of Gethamane don't care if most of the foreigners in the Guild District kill each other. There will always be more outsiders, coming to trade or to explore the underways in the hopes of finding treasure. However, locals flee the Guild District themselves if they know a riot's starting and are (from experience) quite good at spotting the tell-tale signs of rising aggression. This generally alerts the Guard, which moves to break things up or shut the district down.

High-ranking Guild members and rich merchants get dwelling areas close to the markets, while poorer Guild members and merchants are situated nearer to the passageways coming up from the gates. Truly poor merchants or travelers find themselves left to struggle for living space in the areas to the far east and west, distant from both the gate passages and the markets. Of course, the one-month residency rule keeps people rotating in and out at a fairly rapid pace, but the basic principles of who lives where remain constant.

The Guard uses its records at each gate to keep track of who are due to leave Gethamane at the end of their

month's stay. Guard patrols make daily sweeps through the Guild District to locate and remove people who have overstayed their month and to remind those who only have a day or two left that they should be preparing to leave the city. There are always a few fugitives hiding in the Guild District, overdue to leave and trying to avoid the Guard. Guild mercenaries (unless ordered otherwise) cooperate with the Guard in locating these targets — particularly if the person in question is an independent merchant or otherwise antithetical to Guild interests.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS FOR THE GUILD DISTRICT

Warrior: Cheap Thug, Guild Mercenary, Traveling Weaponsmaster

Holy Man: Devout Missionary, Visiting Immaculate

Savant: Archaeologist, Realm Dilettante, Scavenging Treasure-Hunter

Criminal: Con Man, Map-Seller, Pickpocket, Scam Merchant

Entertainer: Actor, Courtesan, Minstrel

Bureaucrat: Administrator, Guard Clerk, Guild Accountant

THE GARDEN DISTRICT

This area is the heart of Gethamane, containing its food sources, its government, its records and its laws. The truly rich families have small cave complexes here, and the Guardhall is located next to the Gardens themselves. Any outsiders seen in this area are likely to be questioned by passing Guards as to where they're going and what they're doing — doubly so if they seem poor or shabby. The Gardens themselves are the most heavily guarded area in all Gethamane, even more so than the Council Chambers.

The Garden District lies directly below the Guild District, with the Outer Ring equidistant from the pair. This district also holds most of the known entrances down into the underways. These are all protected by groups of six to ten Guards, and each group carries a drum to signal the alarm in the event of any incursions from below.

THE ADMINISTRATION

The Council Chambers, the Courthouse, the Hall of Records, the Hall of Maps and the City Library are all clustered into one large cave complex, which backs onto Guardhall. This area is where the courts try cases, where citizens can come to check on property records and maps of Gethamane (outsiders must pay a small fee to check the maps), where the city keeps the Dole lists and records of visiting outsiders and where children go to receive any education beyond the most basic reading and writing. Bethanites provide much of the staffing and organization here, but there is a healthy leavening of citizens from other families.

These caves are incredibly busy round the clock, with clerical and administrative staff taking advantage of

Gethamane's lighting system to keep on working throughout the day, simply changing desks with their replacements when the next shift comes in. Likewise, children are schooled and drilled in shifts, resulting in mobs pelting through the tunnels at each shift change. The only group that doesn't work round the clock is the Council, though it may spend several days in constant session debating a particularly knotty problem.

Katrin Jadehand, Mistress of Gethamane, has her rooms and offices at the heart of this group of caves. These rooms are the hereditary quarters and workrooms of the Master of Gethamane, and it is a matter of pride to change as little as possible from Bethan Redeye's original sparse furniture and belongings (or at least to rebuild and replace in the same style). Katrin is in her 50s and has been Mistress for 10 years now, having been both the previous Master's choice and a popular favorite. Her primary concern is Gethamane's survival and stability, and she is prepared to ally with a stronger force if absolutely necessary. Katrin is a tall, statuesque woman, who served in the Guard in her youth before going into the administration; she frequently uses that fact in the Council to help get the Guard on her side for votes. She is a good politician and a very pragmatic woman, recently widowed due to her husband's death by a creature from the underways, and has a 15-year-old son currently training with the Guard.

THE GARDENS

This complex of long, dark caves lacks the lighting of the rest of the city. A few light crystals burn in the entrances, enough to make it easy for people to enter and leave, but most of the space is shadowy, lit only by faint glimmers of luminescence from particular fungi that mark the boundaries of the caves or the edges of growing fields. Long trays of black obsidian set along the floor brim with varieties of fungi in varying shades, but the Gardens are otherwise spotlessly clean, scrubbed and swept daily with ritual precision.

Some of the obsidian trays have been cracked or damaged, but most are still whole, great dark mirrors blotched by the fungi growing across them. Narrow paths between the fungi allow the farmers to care for and collect the vegetation, piling it into barrows as they pass. The rooms themselves are quiet, with the farmers only breaking their silence to make necessary conversation and the distant seeping of water from the springs that feed the caves whispering in the background. The walls are composed of the same substance as the rest of Gethamane but traced with ancient writings and diagrams. Centuries ago, Bethan Redeye's people managed to deduce the basic functioning of the Gardens from these diagrams and, with a lot of trial and error, first grew the fungi that now feed the city. These days, no farmer would dare tamper with the ancient procedures or do anything that might risk the regular crops.





OTHER FOOD

The previous inhabitants of Gethamane managed to grow a wide variety of vegetables in the Gardens. However, this process required specific spells, treatments, densities of light, particular handling and other things that Bethan's people could not possibly translate from the instructions on the walls. Bethan's people were lucky to be able to grow mushrooms from the pitiful stock of food that they had left. Fortunately, mushrooms were some of the easiest foodstuffs for the Gardens to reproduce. A Twilight Caste with appropriate lore in sorcerous bioengineering and First Age architecture might be able to translate the inscriptions, understand the instructions and arrange the Gardens so that other vegetables and fruits could be produced. However, it would take a miracle for the citizens of Gethamane to allow anyone other than the farmers or other highly trusted citizens inside the Gardens.

At the opening of this set of caves is a side passage to a set of warehouses that store most of the city's fungus supplies. (Small caves elsewhere in Gethamane hold separate emergency caches, in case of sabotage or disaster.) This is where the Dole is issued, and a detachment of the Guard is always on duty there together with several of the administration to check the identity of each citizen and issue her with the supplies for herself and her family. This area and the corridors leading to it are always busy and often full of citizens queuing and entertainers (flautists or actors) and cooks diverting the citizens' attention.

The current acknowledged leader of the farmers is Mienna of the Dulsheft family, a stiff-backed woman in her 60s who needs a cane to walk and requires regular medical treatment for her arthritis. She is an isolationist, and any hints of trouble cause her to vote to close Gethamane to all outsiders until matters calm down. Her acknowledged heir is her niece Lessa from the same family, a young woman who is apparently all that could be desired in terms of ability, manners and respect for her elders. However, Lessa is also a member of a secretive farmer cult that slaughters living creatures (animals or even sentenced convicts) in order to bring fertility to the Gardens, and recently, she has been contacted by a whispering voice that offers her sorcery and power in return for more blood and more human sacrifices.

THE GUARDHALL

This set of caves is the central headquarters for the City Guard of Gethamane, combining the functions of training area, staging depot, holding cells and emergency marshaling point. Although much of the rest of the city lacks color, the entrances to the Guardhall are clearly marked by bright

THE FUNGUS DEMESNE

Hidden in a knot of caves at the center of the Gardens is a field of undulating fungi, ivory sheets of mushrooms and yellow tendrils that curve inward toward a dark pedestal at the center. This is where the cultist farmers come to sacrifice their victims, unaware that it is actually the center of a broken Manse (Earth-aspected, currently Demesne ●●●●). It was shattered by Vodak's emergence and has never been repaired, but the energies that the Demesne emits have made it easier for the farmers to keep the Gardens flourishing. This Demesne is one of the greatest secrets of Gethamane: only the inner circle of farmers, the Mistress and her Head Intelligencer know. Even though they don't know that it is a Demesne, they do know that it is a place of power. A restoration program costing Resources ●●●●, organized by an expert of Lore ●●●● or higher, could recap the Demesne, restoring it to Manse ●●●●.

red pennants and the doors are all high-quality iron or iron-studded wood. Driven by the need to combat the creatures from the underways, Guards are much better physically trained than most of the rest of the city and have the statistics of elite troops (see **Exalted**, page 278).

The Guard always wants to recruit thaumaturges. They are not necessarily trusted, but their use in combating the creatures of the underways is undeniable. However, few in Gethamane have the talent, and fewer of those have the education. If any thaumaturge from outside Gethamane shows an interest in joining the Guard and seems of reasonable character — or at least, doesn't sacrifice small animals in public — then a rapid adoption into one of the more Guard-centric families of Gethamane can be arranged to make him a citizen. Dragon-Blooded outcastes are similarly welcome. Deathknights and necromancers are not, however, as even the most enlightened member of the Guard finds them too uncomfortably close to the creatures of the underways.

There are approximately 5,000 Guards in Gethamane. Despite the high death rate in times of incursion from below, a career in the Guard is considered very prestigious, and a Guard gets a high ration of the Dole. However, the main temptation that lures children into training for the Guard is the chance to interact with (and get bribes from) outsiders. Although Guards don't accept large bribes — and are arrested if they do, on a charge of "injury to the city" — small gifts or tokens of appreciation from outsiders are common. The Captain of the Guard, Golden Stag, is aware of this and takes care to rotate his soldiers between duties regularly so that everyone gets a fair share.



Golden Stag

Golden Stag himself is a child from an icewalker tribe (and clearly recognizable as such by his facial features), abandoned when very young due to ill omens, who was picked up by a passing caravan and then adopted by a poor Gethamane family. He has worked his way up from the ranks and mentions this every second sentence. Although he is in his 50s, he views this as the prime of his life and is unsympathetic to any suggestions that he should be training a successor. Golden Stag is a good leader of men, and the Guard respects him. He has a high level of sympathy with the hunters and gatherers, owing to his ancestry, and, often, the Guard and the hunters and gatherers form a voting bloc in the Council.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS FOR THE GARDEN DISTRICT

Warrior: Council Bodyguard, Guard, Guild Assassin

Holy Man: Cultist Farmer, Priest Adopted Into Guard

Savant: Librarian, Mapmaker, Teacher

Criminal: Dole Thief, Garden Saboteur, Spy

Entertainer: Actor, Flautist, Poet

Bureaucrat: Administrator, Court Assistant, Records Savant

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUTSIDERS


Gethamane has built enough links with the world outside that the city has to pay attention to what's going on in the North. Even the most insular farmer will ac-

knowledge that it's useful to be able to obtain trade goods, and the Guard who are so busy keeping outsiders out still appreciate the steel that is brought in for their weapons. Previous Masters have fluctuated in how much they try to interact with regional politics or deal with icewalkers and the like, but only the most isolationist of Masters have totally ignored the outside world.

Currently, under Mistress Katrin, Gethamane is pursuing a policy of cautious but proactive friendship with almost everyone. The Mistress can see the threat of the Bull of the North looming on the horizon, and she doesn't want to be an isolated target if — or when — he arrives with his army. The only faction not receiving this friendly treatment is the Realm. Mistress Katrin has consistently refused to consider its requests to use Gethamane as a staging-post for the legions and doesn't want to ally with any one Great House at the moment, given the potential for civil war.

THE REALM

Gethamane doesn't want to be part of the Realm (and certainly doesn't want to pay it tribute), but the city has never wanted to be a Targeted Example of Stamped-Out Rebellion either. While Gethamane's defenses and self-supply are legendary, the city has never actually had to stand up to a sustained assault by Terrestrial Exalted, let alone Celestial ones, and would rather not find out any



weaknesses the hard way. The city, and its previous Masters and Mistresses, have preferred to maintain a dignified independence while at the same time not attacking any of the Realm's tributaries, or, indeed, attracting the Realm's notice. Noble declarations of never having paid tribute sound very well to similarly independent powers and help to increase Gethamane's reputation, but, all in all, Gethamane would prefer not to ever be in the position in which the Realm *asks* for tribute.

The Scarlet Empress viewed Gethamane with a lenient eye. As far as she was concerned, while it would have been preferable to have the city as yet another satrapy for the Realm, Gethamane wasn't harboring rebels or fostering anti-Realm sentiments and would have been more trouble to take than it was worth. Besides, the Guild's constant commerce with Gethamane left the city vulnerable. If she had wanted to attack it, she could have found a way to cut off Guild supplies to weaken the place or smuggled in spies and agents under the cover of merchant caravans.

In the last few years, with the Scarlet Empress vanished and the Great Houses contending for power, a number of Dragon-Blooded have planned to boost their houses' prestige and their own fame by conquering or otherwise controlling Gethamane and making it a tributary of the Realm. So far, their plans have ranged from the wild and woolly to the ineffective, but a couple of the better planners are prepared to spend decades building up spy networks, agents and influence. Like the Guild, these Dragon-Blooded have realized that Gethamane depends on its sunken Gardens, and, like the Guild, these Dragon-Blooded are faced with the problem of how to enfeeble Gethamane without destroying the Gardens and causing the city's ruin.

THE GUILD

The Guild *wants* Gethamane. Having it as a hub city is all very well, but actively controlling it would be far more profitable. There might even be ways to replicate the fungus gardens elsewhere in the North, not to mention the raised tariffs for all non-Guild traffic passing through Gethamane . . . It's the sort of thing that any Guildsman with half a mind can daydream about. Unfortunately for the Guild, Gethamane is very much aware of what the Guild wants.

As a result, the Guild and Gethamane have a cordial but extremely guarded relationship. Gethamane can, if necessary, throw the Guild out and keep it out for years—the city produces the bare necessities of life and has enough luxuries now (cloth, wood, metal) to be able to hold out for decades, if not very comfortably. Similarly, the Guild could completely stop supplying Gethamane but would suffer from the loss of the convenient point on the trade routes, especially the slave trade. For the moment, both

ADVENTURE SEED

Target Character Type: Dragon-Blooded

One of Gethamane's secrets is that a nest of Iselsi hides there. Their progenitors took shelter in Gethamane when the Empress destroyed their Great House, entering as part of a group of merchants and being adopted by the Loshan family. The Iselsi hold a degree of influence in the Guard and sent regular reports to the All-Seeing Eye and, thus, to the Empress herself—which was one of the reasons she didn't consider Gethamane to be a serious concern. A couple of the bloodline have Exalted and were hastily smuggled out of the city and into formal training elsewhere, but most of the bloodline is patrician. Unfortunately, Mnemon has managed to trace the bloodline while investigating the All-Seeing Eye elsewhere in Creation and intends to blackmail the Iselsi into helping her gain control of Gethamane. A young but trusted representative of House Mnemon will be arriving at the city shortly, seemingly part of a trading caravan. He is a trained sorcerer and warrior. Should the Iselsi be revealed, the revelation will shake public confidence in the Loshan family and in the Guard as a whole.

parties continue cooperating, and they are both aware that the other could enact sanctions if matters go too far.

The Guild, therefore, watches and takes any opportunities it can to sink its tentacles deeper into Gethamane, while refraining from trying anything too obvious. Caravan masters helpfully try to make slave-owning legal inside Gethamane, in order to destabilize the labor economy. Luxury goods are imported in the hopes of establishing a need that can later be used to exert pressure. Spies attempt to penetrate the fungus gardens to find out how they work—and to sabotage them so the Guild can establish economic dominance through food imports. And citizens of Gethamane are cultivated or blackmailed to serve as Guild agents. A quiet, bitter war goes on in the shadows, with Gethamane struggling to maintain its independence.

WHITEWALL

While Gethamane is glad of the trade from Whitewall, particularly the minerals and ores for which Whitewall is famous, there is little in the way of diplomacy between the two cities. Both have adopted a strategy of remaining snug within their walls and barring themselves against the world outside, and both are content with the current state of affairs. Some in Gethamane hold Whitewall up as an example of weak-minded feebleness (alliances with the Realm, the fey and the undead) and praise Gethamane's

DRUGS IN GETHAMANE

One of the Guild's classic ways of exerting pressure on a potential target is to introduce a drug into the area and then use the need for the drug as leverage, once a sufficiently high proportion of the population is addicted. Previous Masters of Gethamane have made it clear to Guild representatives that anything stronger than marijuana or mild narcotics sold in Gethamane will cause the city to take severe anti-Guild reprisals. Of course, there have been Guildsmen who've tried, followed by Gethamane refusing to accept slave caravans for several months, followed by the Guild cutting off other items of trade in reprisal — but eventually, the matter usually settles down, and trade resumes its normal course. It's been about seven decades since the last attempt to introduce crack cocaine to the population. Any year now, the Guild is due to try again.

own independence, but most citizens of Gethamane are willing to acknowledge that Whitewall gets along as best it can and does better than most. Whitewall miners have prospected the mountains around Gethamane more than once but have yet to find any significant mineral deposits.

ADVENTURE SEED

Target Character Type: Any

During a recent prospecting attempt, a miner from Whitewall discovered deposits of jade and silver a couple of days' journey from Gethamane. If word of this discovery gets out, there will be a rush to exploit the deposits. Gethamane doesn't have the mining equipment on hand, but it's the nearest city, and it has the food sources that any significant mining camp will need. Whitewall or the Haslanti could theoretically send a strike force the site to set up a camp and mine as much as they can, if those cities could conceal the mining from Gethamane. Even the Bull himself might encamp the area and obtain miners to harvest the jade, should he find out. The deposits could, in fact, be the flashpoint that touches off a general war in the region.

THE BULL OF THE NORTH

Gethamane is not blind or dead, even if it is buried underground. The Mistress and Council know about the Bull's rise and are debating on which course of action to take if he approaches Gethamane. Sooner or later, the

Bull will want Gethamane, either as an ally or a tributary — or to serve as a public example. The easiest option is to close off the mountain and maintain a state of siege. While Gethamane could probably sustain this longer than the Bull could, all trade would be disrupted (or worse, the Guild might ally with the Bull) and there is always the dire possibility that the Anathematic powers that the Bull and his allies command could crack Gethamane open like an egg.

The second option is to ally formally with the Bull and pay tribute, in the time-honored tradition of cities, to icewalkers. Given recent events in Halta, more Council members are inclining to this point of view. While this course of action would compromise Gethamane's independence, paying tribute would preserve the city and its inhabitants.

Nobody even considers suggesting outright defying the Bull and attacking him or allying with anyone else who has such plans. Gethamane as a whole is biased toward survival, not suicide.

THE UNDERWAYS

The delvings that extend deep underground are black, rounded and faintly slick to the touch. To those who know of the Mountain Folk, the delvings bear the unmistakable stamp of Mountain Folk work. There are no regular light sources in the underways: while occasional troves of jewels down here include such rarities as glowstones (and random patches of luminous moss or burning pockets of gas may offer light to the passing traveler), these cannot be depended upon.

There is no actual law in Gethamane forbidding people to go down into the underways. However, all the inhabitants know that dangerous horrors emerge from the tunnels, and the citizens are not so blatantly and recklessly stupid as to go throwing themselves down a monster's gullet. Early Masters of Gethamane realized that it was impractical to prevent outsiders from trying to go below, however. It was simpler to warn them of the dangers and then collect a share of any findings if they should actually emerge alive.

INCURSION PROCEDURE

There is a specific Guard alarm, given by drumbeat (or thumped out on the side of the wall or on the floor) — which everyone in Gethamane knows from childhood — that signals an incursion from the underways. Any citizens of Gethamane who hear the signal will retire to the nearest defensible spot, taking all noncombatants or those who cannot defend themselves with them, and arm themselves for battle. Any Guard who hears the drumbeat will immediately head for the area, forming up into squads there and preparing for battle. Those Guards who carry drums will repeat the drumbeat, adding the signifier, which makes it



GETHAMANE'S SHARE

Certainly, Gethamane doesn't impose an outright tax on anything brought out of the underways. That would simply cause the searchers to find new ways to hide their findings or to kill any Guards who saw them carrying treasure, not to mention sully the good name of the city. Besides, anyone who's capable of going down into the underways and surviving will certainly be capable of bilking any tax collectors sitting at the entrance.

What does happen is that the Guard is instructed to take careful note of any valuables (or mysterious large sacks, for instance) being carried by treasure-seekers who come out of the underways alive. A high-ranking Bethanite (with a Guard escort) then visits the treasure-seekers later, after they've had the chance to relax, and suggests politely that a contribution toward Gethamane's upkeep would be wise. Failure to make a generous donation of some sort can lead to the individuals in question being escorted out of Gethamane, without the chance to collect supplies — whatever the current weather conditions outside may be — with a permanent prohibition against returning. This reasonable approach usually results in Gethamane getting some sort of contribution — especially if the treasure-seekers want to dare the tunnels again in the future.

Citizens of Gethamane who bring treasure up from the underways are expected to contribute a third (or an equal value in goods or service) to the city's treasury. Failure to pay results in their Dole being cancelled in forfeit. The valuation on the artifacts brought up from below is as fair and as well-judged as possible. Citizens capable of surviving the underways are a resource that the government of Gethamane likes to cultivate.

clear which underways' entrance the alarm refers to. The Guardhall goes on full alert, the Gardens and Council are shut off and the wards raised and any outsider combatants in the vicinity who owe service to Gethamane — particularly thaumaturges or Exalted — are asked to lend their assistance. This is never treated as a drill or taken lightly; the people of Gethamane are *terrified* of the things that live beneath.

Once the incursion has been dealt with, the all clear is given, again by drum signal. Any monster corpses are taken to the Courthouse for investigation, while wounded Guards and civilians alike are taken to the Guardhall for treatment and observation. (There have been cases in the

past in which citizens who were wounded by creatures from the underways later turned out to be under the creatures' mental control and tried to sabotage areas of the city, assault Guards watching the entrances or just go on killing sprees.) The Guard on that particular entrance is doubled for the next half-month, in case of more incursions. All dead human bodies are taken to the temples for immediate funeral rites and incineration by the priests in order to prevent them possibly rising as undead. The procedures have been honed by practice, and both Guards and citizens alike know what they are expected to do.

THE YU-SHAN GATE

In the underways, perhaps half an hour's journey from the entrances into Gethamane, lies a gate to Yu-Shan. The gate has no guardian on the Gethamane side, but is watched on the other side by three Celestial lions. The Sidereals know about the gate, as do some of the Lunars and Deathlords. While the elders of the Mountain Folk know of the gate's location, they also know that Vodak is down there, so no Mountain Folk would ever go near Gethamane — unless, of course, the situation was desperate. Anyone investigating the gate's location would find it surprisingly clean and well-tended, showing the marks of occasional use.

CREATURES OF THE UNDERWAYS

The primary denizen of the Gethamane underways is Vodak and his simulacra. Other creatures enter the dark passages from time to time, and some even last long enough to establish small societies or develop plans to prey on the dwellers above. Sooner or later, however, the creatures end up as food for Vodak's endless hunger or flee the tunnels for safer territory. Those beings that burst up from the underways into Gethamane proper are sometimes attempting to escape being food rather than seeking the city out — not that they would discuss the situation with the Guard.

As Vodak may produce simulacra of any creature he has devoured, and as he has by now devoured creatures from many different underground races, any sort of creature or race may appear in the caves beneath Gethamane — whether genuinely alive or merely a simulacra created by Vodak that does not realize its true nature. Vodak sometimes amuses itself by creating small tribes of such creatures without letting them realize what they are and then allowing them to play out dramas of life and death, to interact with each other, to attack visiting humans and so on. Eventually, however, Vodak absorbs them again. Combined with the other creatures living in the underways at any given time, this produces a constantly changing society and struggle for territory, resulting in frequent irruptions into upper Gethamane in search of food and living space.

ADVENTURE SEED

Target Character Type: Any

In a chamber in the underways of Gethamane lie several ancient Dragon Kings, sealed in centuries-long slumber. Spells of concealment and warding protect the entrance to their chamber, which is why Vodak and others have never yet discovered them. However, the ancient sorcery is weakening, and soon, the Dragon Kings will awake to emerge into the underways and possibly even ascend into Gethamane itself. They have no knowledge of the modern world, however, and the current citizens of Gethamane will assume that they are the worst sort of monster from below. The Dragon Kings know a great deal about Gethamane and also know about the Yu-Shan gate in the underways. They do not, however, know about Vodak.

then force their eggs down their prey's throat. The eggs hatch within a few hours, and the infant cthritae grow to full size within a day. If entering an area with plentiful breeding stock (human or animal), cthritae automatically enter into a breed-and-hatch cycle that continues until they have used up all available hosts in the vicinity. The resulting packs then split up to hunt in different directions. Cthritae can actively chew through normal rock at a speed of one foot per hour but would need to know that there was a reason to do so, such as breeding hosts. (So, they would not start suddenly digging up toward Gethamane but might start chewing through a door if they had seen prey vanish behind it and close it in their faces.)

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 2, Temperance 2, Valor 1

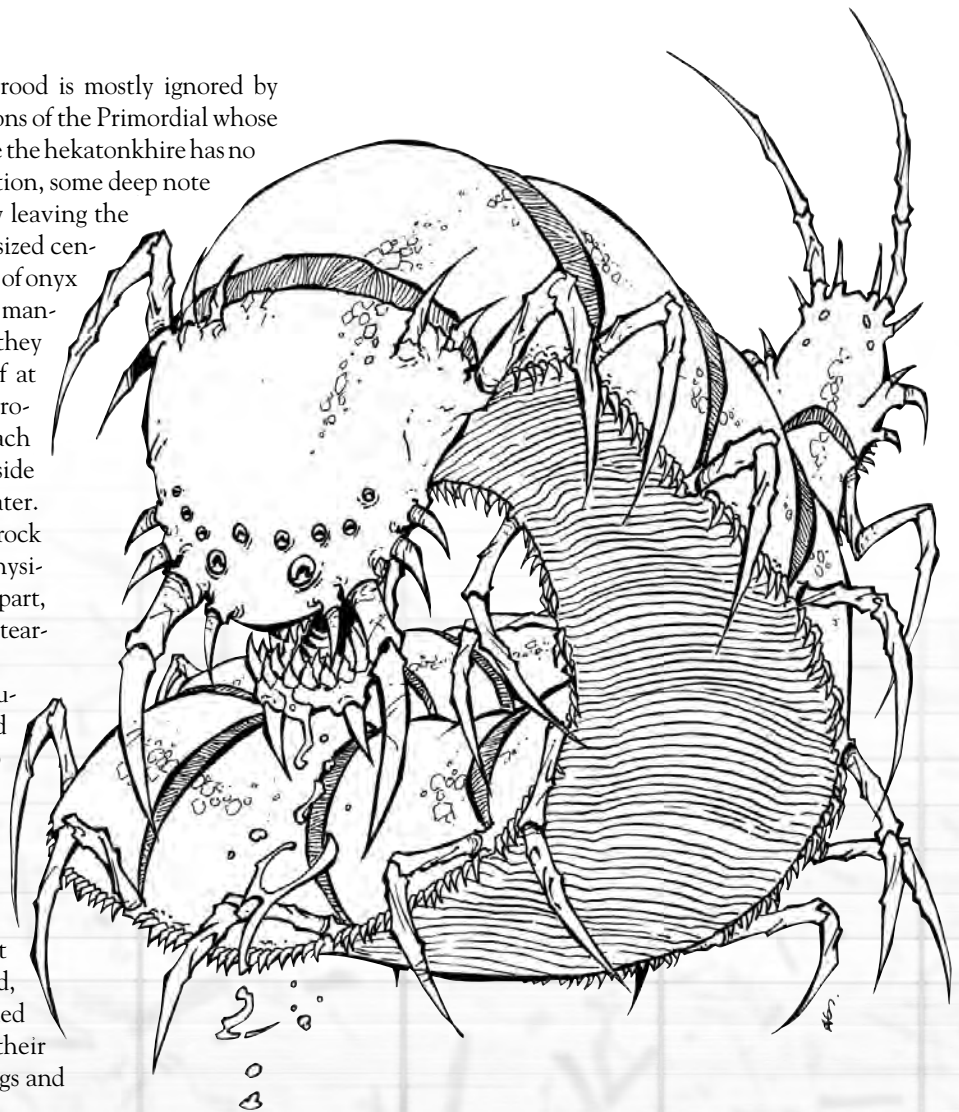
Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Melee 2, Survival 1 (Underground +2)

Cthritae

CTHRITAE

Description: This Darkbrood is mostly ignored by Vodak, as they were the creations of the Primordial whose blood formed Vodak, and while the hekatonkhire has no such thing as empathy or affection, some deep note in its personality is satisfied by leaving the cthritae alone. They are man-sized centipedes apparently chiseled out of onyx and black opal, with grinding mandibles that drip mercury when they salivate. They run in packs of at least a dozen and are hermaphroditic, being able to mate with each other and leave their eggs inside suitable food sources to hatch later. While the cthritae only require rock and water to live on, they physically enjoy ripping living flesh apart, rolling themselves in blood and tearing open human guts.

The cthritae exude a natural adhesive from their insectoid legs that allows them to run up vertical surfaces or cling to the ceiling for up to an hour. They lack human intelligence but are successful carnivores and proficient in the art of stalking prey. Normally, they only hunt to kill, but if they wish to breed, they will seek out warm-blooded creatures, sever the tendons in their arms and legs, mate and lay eggs and



Backgrounds: Allies 5 (other Cthritae)
Powers: Night Vision (can see in pitch darkness)
Base Initiative: 5
Attack:
 Bite: Speed 5 Accuracy 4 Damage 6L Defense 4
Dodge Pool: 5 **Soak:** 4L/8B (Stony chitinous hide, 3L, 6B)
Willpower: 3 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 1

Other Notes: While cthritae are not killed by sunlight, they dislike it and also dislike unroofed spaces such as the open air. They are considered creatures of darkness for the purposes of Solar Charms and anima powers, fleeing from the anima powers of both the Zenith and the Dawn Caste.

EXALTED POWER COMBAT

Attack:
 Bite: Speed 5 Accuracy 4 Damage 5L Defense 4 Rate 4
Dodge Pool: 6

VODAK

Description: A force of incalculable malice and insatiable hunger dwells in the silent crevices under Gethamane. The Mountain Folk call it Vodak in the language of a long-extinct race, a name they dare only whisper in dread and hushed awe. Every utterance of its name is a warning and a horrified prayer. Few know its nature or appearance, as all Mountain Folk flee before ever Vodak could come into sight, but they know it is inescapable death to all who behold it.

Vodak is a hekatonkhire, a behemoth of Malfean Essence. When the first Primordial perished at the hands of the Exalted, its dying blood seeped into the earth. The titan's last breath animated the flowing ichors with its own vitriolic hatred, transforming the mass into a nightmare of bubbling and writhing quicksilver. At first, it flowed mindlessly, devouring all life it could find. The tortured and half-digested ghosts of its absorbed prey swelled its mass and cunning, gradually expanding Vodak into an undulating lake of necrotic power. In addition to its nearly indestructible form, the hekatonkhire can extrude congealed masses of its Essence to replicate any living being it has

ever absorbed. These simulacra are corporeal beings with the semblance, the Traits and even the memories of their former selves up to their deaths. They almost indistinguishably mimic the original beings, save that they remain helplessly enthralled to their hideous maker and instantly dissolve into silver ash if they are slain or touched by sunlight (or if Vodak withdraws the committed Essence sustaining their existence). These copies have no Essence pool and none of the replicated beings' non-physical supernatural powers (if any), but the copies can easily mistake themselves for the beings they emulate if Vodak gives them that illusion. The hekatonkhire uses its slaves as bait and hunters, luring prey into its glittering depths. It is possible that other Primordials spawned similar monsters throughout Creation when they died, though no such beings have ever made themselves known in the Ages since.



Storytellers should keep in mind that a being of Vodak's age and power does not necessarily need statistics, nor should the following information provide anything more than a rough guideline. In most cases, this being will function as an alien evil in the background, never entering scenes except through enslaved proxies. Vodak is currently mostly inert beneath Gethamane, choosing to merely lure prey with its proxies or devour other creatures wandering the underways. If the hekatonkhire rises, or if the wards that keep it under Gethamane are broken, it may mean the destruction of all Gethamane for a second time or the freeing of Vodak to travel throughout the depths of Creation.

Attributes: Strength 30, Dexterity 3, Stamina Immeasurable, Charisma 1, Manipulation 4, Appearance 0, Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 5, Temperance 1, Valor 2

Abilities: Awareness 5 (Sense Life +3), Brawl 5, Lore 4, Occult 3, Presence 8

Backgrounds: Cult 5 (Darkbroods), Followers 5+ (Simulacra)

Powers: Control Simulacra (For a reflexive cost of 1 mote, Vodak can issue a telepathic order to one of its simulacra, regardless of distance. Such commands are absolute, dictating orders or memories without the possibility of resistance. Alternately, Vodak can spend a mote to usurp the voice of its slave and/or undetectably share the simulacrum's senses for a minute.), Create Simulacra (With an Essence roll at standard difficulty, Vodak can excrete a copy of any being it has previously consumed. Only one copy of the same being can exist at one time. This costs 2 motes for every health level the original being had. These motes are committed till the simulacrum dies.), Devour Essence (Whenever Vodak touches a living being at the moment of death, Vodak regains a number of motes equal to the prey's Stamina + Essence. The souls of the departed become part of Vodak, lingering in half-aware pain for eternity.), Immortal (Vodak takes no damage from non-magical sources and can only be destroyed if cast into the Mouth of Oblivion. Any lesser "demise" merely forces Vodak into quiescence for a century until the hekatonkhire can reform in the Labyrinth. This would be one way of freeing Vodak from beneath Gethamane, but Vodak has not realized this.), Telepathy (Vodak can project its thoughts to any sentient being in line of sight as a discordant cacophony of Vodak's previous victims' voices. Targets can respond telepathically or not, as they choose, but the hekatonkhire cannot forcibly read thoughts or control minds. Blocking out Vodak's voice for a scene requires a successful Willpower roll at difficulty 4.)

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Pseudopods: Speed 6 Accuracy 8 Damage 30L*

* Any organic matter touching Vodak suffers damage as if exposed to an acid bath (see **Exalted**, page 244). This corrosion bypasses all non-magical armor and occurs whenever a being comes in contact with the hekatonkhire. Apply this damage separately following impact trauma from a successful pseudopod attack.

Dodge Pool: None **Soak:** 30L/60B (Protean body)

Willpower: 10 **Health Levels:** -0 x 200/Quiescent

Essence: 8 **Essence Pool:** 800

Other Notes: Vodak does not suffer the usual progression of dice penalties for taking multiple actions. Instead, it cumulatively loses one die for every non-reflexive action performed in a turn after the first. Sunlight inflicts one level of aggravated damage every turn to Vodak, vaporizing its tainted plasm. Vodak can take no actions under sunlight except to retreat from the charring rays. The hekatonkhire and its simulacra are creatures of darkness.

EXALTED POWER COMBAT

Attack:

Pseudopods: Speed 6 Accuracy 8 Damage 30L* Rate unlimited

* Any organic matter touching Vodak suffers damage as if exposed to an acid bath (see **Exalted**, page 244). This corrosion bypasses all non-magical armor and occurs whenever a being comes in contact with the hekatonkhire. Apply this damage separately following impact trauma from a successful pseudopod attack.

Dodge Pool: None

ADVENTURE SEED

Target Character Type: Any

A particular Deathlord has decided to slay Vodak in order to forge the hekatonkhire into the plating known as Oblivion's Panoply (see **The Book of Bone and Ebony**, page 101), and sends his trusted agents into the tunnels below Gethamane in order to assault Vodak. Unless they are stopped, Gethamane itself will be dragged into the battle, and soon . . .

THE GODS OF GETHAMANE

Description: The three little gods of Gethamane are Tribbua of the Outward Breath, Reshan of the Inward Breath and Methesis of the Still Sky. While their mansions in Yu-Shan stand empty, the gods themselves are still present in Gethamane and continue their daily work of moving air through the mountain. Their statistics are



effectively the same, but their personalities differ. They hold their priests in common and are worshiped equally by the priesthood, though the mortals don't know their true names or the differences between them.

Tribbua is expansionist, wanting to spread outward, to fill Gethamane with life and to have a constant stream of trade flowing through it. She was the first to take the Solars' bargain in the distant past and is the most eager to make contact with Solars again and restore the glories of the past. From time to time, she takes mortal form as a female human and copulates with her priests in their dreams, bearing little elemental wind spirits that she releases on the mountainside.

Reshan is full of guilt, blaming herself for the deaths of the citizens of Gethamane in Vodak's massacre. She constantly weeps as she sucks in the air around Gethamane, and her tears are black with corruption. It is her memories that drive some of those who sleep in the temples from Gethamane, never to return. Sometimes, she takes the form of an old woman and walks through the underways, leaving wet footprints on the dark stone. She fears that Vodak will rise again but has abandoned all hope of stopping it and would rather see all humans leave Gethamane while they still can.

Metheris is paralyzed by indecision. Once the middle point who held the balance between the other two, he is now the one who is terrified to do anything in either direction, for fear of bringing further disaster down on Gethamane. He would rather arrange for Exalted to be kept out of the city than risk them entering it, in case they somehow provoke Vodak into rising again. Metheris manifests as a young boy and sometimes sits at the top of the mountain on windless days, looking up at the sky and dreaming of Yu-Shan.

Sanctum: The three gods' sanctums all exist within the bejeweled carvings in their individual temples.

Nature: Paragon (Tribbua), Caregiver (Reshan), Critic (Metheris)

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3, Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 4, Conviction 3, Temperance 4, Valor 3

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Brawl 5, Dodge 3, Endurance 4, Investigation 3, Lore 4 (Gethamane +3), Medicine 3, Melee 4, Occult 3, Performance 4, Presence 3, Resistance 4, Socialize 3, Stealth 3

Backgrounds: Allies 3 (The Other Gods of Gethamane), Cult 3, Influence 2

Charms: All listed Charms

Cost To Materialize: 40

Base Initiative: 7

Attacks:

Punch: Speed 7 Accuracy 9 Damage 3B Defense 9

Kick: Speed 4 Accuracy 8 Damage 5B Defense 8

Maul: Speed 10 Accuracy 10 Damage 15L Defense 12

Dodge Pool: 7 **Soak:** 10L/15B (Spirit robes, 8L/11B)

Willpower: 8 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 5

Essence Pool: 80

Other Notes: Each of the gods can, at will, summon a large stone maul out of thin air and use it to defend him- or herself.

EXALTED POWER COMBAT

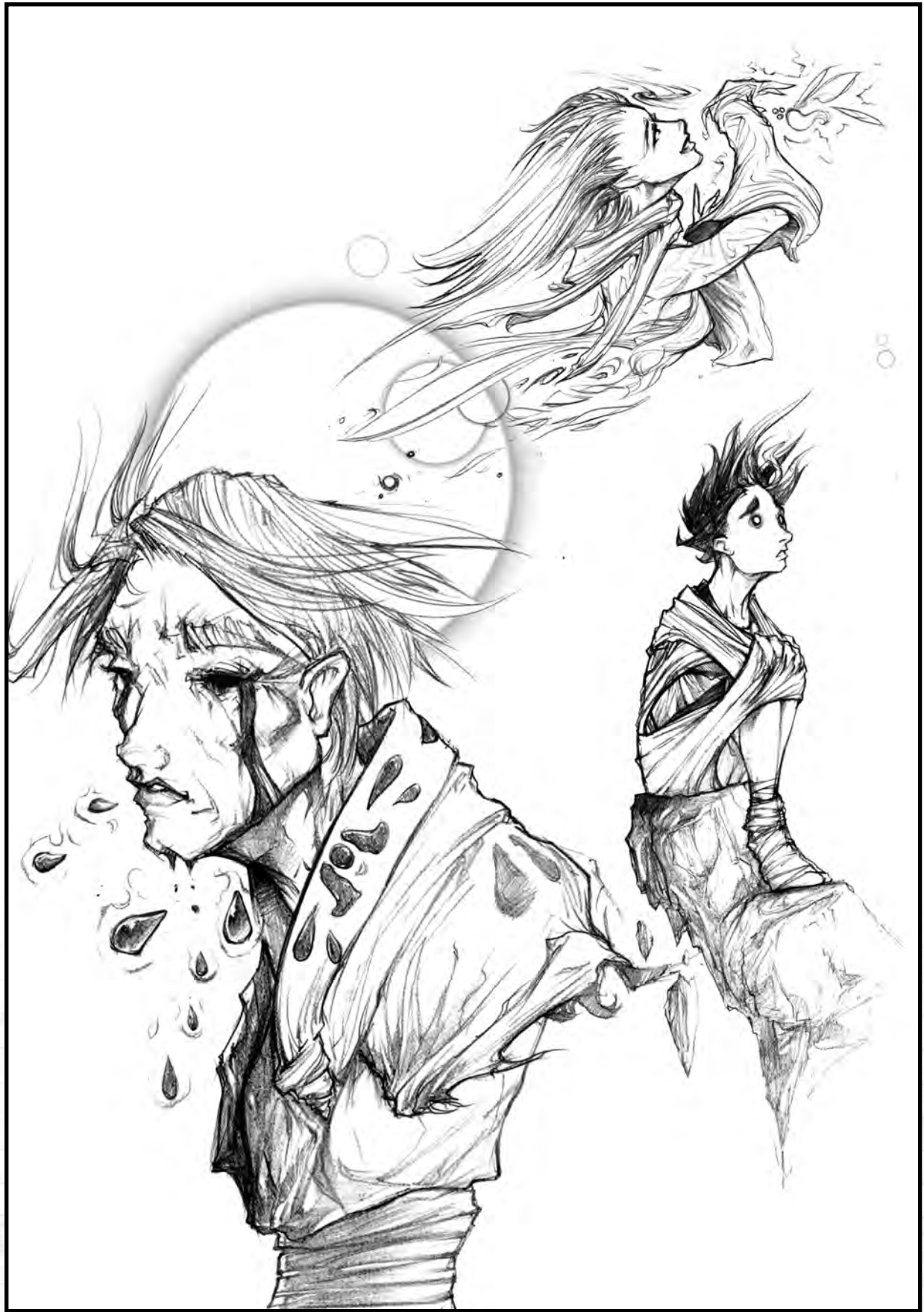
Attack:

Punch: Speed 7 Accuracy 10 Damage 3B Defense 11 Rate 5

Kick: Speed 4 Accuracy 10 Damage 6B Defense 6 Rate 3


Maul: Speed 10 Accuracy 10 Damage 15L Defense 2 Rate 4

Dodge Pool: 12



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CHAPTER THREE

THE HASLANTI LEAGUE, NASCENT EMPIRE



The Haslanti League is a loose confederacy of nine city-states and approximately 150 semi-nomadic tribes. Each city-state runs its own affairs, but League members cooperate on matters of economic development, foreign policy and military operations. In the North's harsh environment, where wind and cold are constant presences, to live independently is to die. Yet, to live one's life in service to a nation is to be a slave, a death sentence in itself. A necessary balance exists between cooperation and independence, between personal rights and responsibility to society. In essence, the Haslanti seek a balance between civilized society and tribal ways. It is not an easy balancing act, yet for almost 200 years now the League has tottered, crawled and limped along. Finally, the Haslanti seem to be getting to their feet.

ENVIRONMENT

The Haslanti confront some of the worst weather in all Creation. In winter, breath freezes in beards, and snowfall in the high country piles up drifts 50 feet high. In summer, labor in dry air can cause people to sweat to death, and landslides and flash floods bury the unwary.

The natural fauna of the region also threaten human activities. In summer, pestilent black-fly swarms represent a deadly threat when they bear sunken cheeks plague into sheep flocks. Stinging locusts can actually bite a man to death. Wheat mites can devour a year's worth of food


supplies in just a few hours. Frost bears attack reindeer and even well-armed humans.

And life is not any safer at sea or in the air. Whales break ships, and the ice opens beneath travelers' feet. Northern gales are a constant companion: whether roaring or whispering, the wind speaks in the ears of the Haslanti.

Given such a harsh environment, it is not surprising that the residents live in a variety of conditions and landscapes, which affect their thinking and experiences. The Haslanti name their four distinct regions *greenfields*, *emeralds*, *the Outwall* and *the Great Ice*.

THE GREENFIELDS

In the First Age, titanic engines and powerful Charms were deployed in the North to increase agricultural productivity and enlarge herds, but the land rarely gave forth abundance. Thus, the region's underlying granite was cleft with powerful tools — weapons, almost — and the broad valleys created were sown with soil, seed and trees below their steep granite cliffs. Lakes fed miniature rivers flowing through each vale, and mines and quarries pierced the rock walls. Thirty-two such vales survive in the Age of Sorrows. The largest is Icehome Greenfield, which runs for not quite 100 miles inland and holds the League's capital, the city of Icehome itself. The smallest, Sunset Greenfield, is only two and a half miles long, cutting inland 70 miles from the foothills around Gethamane.



For modern inhabitants, these steep-walled and sheltered greenfields along the White Sea are peaceful islands in a hostile world. Narrow at the sea and wide toward the south or east, the valleys collect heat in summer and disperse it over the coldest months. Trees, grain crops, cattle, sheep and reindeer flourish. Sixteen vales lie between Icehome and Gethamane, another nine lie between Icehome and Malice Bay and seven dig into the coast between Malice Bay and Crystal.

Greenfields tend to be five to 10 degrees warmer than the surrounding high country and tundra. Hemmed in by high cliffs, greenfields stay sheltered from the worst Northern winds. Most greenfields are farm and pasture land, though orchards and vineyards are common. The wealthy keep gardens. Large stands of cultivated trees help to hold down soil in more exposed areas and provide wood for building iceships and air boats. Through hard experience, the Haslanti have learned that the wind is capable of blowing away soil and leaving bare rock behind.

The Haslanti who live in greenfields tend to view the outside world with more tenderness and less suspicion than others. While the lives of those who dwell in greenfields are not exactly soft, these Haslanti have access to more luxuries and foreign goods, and they live closer to their neighbors. As a result, these Haslanti view foreigners with greater goodwill. Sheltered within both city walls and the greenfields' natural boundaries, the inhabitants view outside threats with equanimity.

Most greenfields hold only a town or two and a few villages. The town is usually situated on a hill or a cliff overlooking both the valley and the main beach that also serves as the local shipyard and port. Few towns have elaborate harbor facilities. The town is walled in stone; sometimes, as in the case of the town of Kaet's Landing, east of Icehome, the town is actually cut into the rockface of one of the valley cliffs. Town populations tend to swell in wintertime, as villagers crowd into winter quarters for protection against barbarian raids and the Wyld.

The five largest greenfields together support six of the major city-states of the League. Icehome Greenfield, the largest greenfield and home to the largest city, is 96 miles long and usually about 35 miles wide. Two hundred miles to the east is Ironfall Greenfield, 68 miles long and eight miles wide. In the northeast, Windcreche Greenfield lies almost exactly on the line between Crystal and Icehome, driving 43 miles inland and 10 miles wide for most of its length. Three hundred miles south of Windcreche is Shield Greenfield. Fort Bear Greenfield cleaves the earth another 200 miles south of Shield. Finally, Tuskstad Greenfield, the principal port for mammoth hunters, lies 150 miles west of Icehome. The greenfield runs 38 miles inland and averages 11 miles wide.

ADVENTURE SEED

Target Character Type: Dragon-Blooded, Fair Folk, Heroic Dead, Heroic Mortal, Sidereal, Solar

Something or someone has shifted the wind early in autumn, so the prevailing gales are now blowing sand, grit and storms right into a greenfield at a swift rate. Fragile soil is being swept away, crops are being damaged or destroyed and farms are being buried under early snows before their inhabitants have a chance to bring in their animals or harvest. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people will starve this winter if the wind does not change.

The cause of the change in the wind could be a strong Abyssal and his minions who are trying to increase the extent of a nearby shadowland. The cause could be a pack of Lunars who are trying to recover territory from the grasp of encroaching civilization. The cause could be a group of Fair Folk playing with their intended victims or simply experimenting with a nearby pocket of the Wyld. The cause could also be a shaman or two from a roving barbarian tribe. And, of course, the cause could be a god who has been offended by the local population.

A solution could include killing or negotiating with the power responsible, who, in most cases, is doing what she is doing for good reasons. Other possibilities involve searching out First Age artifacts to shift the wind or to erect a wind-shield, reshaping the cliffs around the greenfield to defend against the wind-shift or trying to evacuate the population to another location.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS FOR GREENFIELDS

Warrior: Cliffguard Sentry, Road Patrolwoman, Boxing Champion, Harpoon-Man, Reindeer Rider

Holy Man: Dream Interpreter, Fate-Speaker, Master Embalmer

Savant: Orchard Caretaker, Soil Manager, Mine Engineer, Weather Watcher

Criminal: House-Breaker, Dice-Tosser, Highwaywoman

Entertainer: Skald, Tumbler, Juggler, Courtesan, Two-Bit Boy

Bureaucrat: City Magistrate, Town Councilor, Generalist, Arbitrator

Agricultural: Farmer, Shepherd, Arborist, Orchard Man, Migrant Laborer

Mercantile: Woolens Merchant, Pack Trader, Banker, Shopkeeper

SCATTERED EMERALDS

The wreckage of dozens of greenfields lie scattered all over the North. When wind blows away soil from a greenfield, that fertile earth sometimes lands in a pocket or sheltered place in the outlying countryside, creating what the Haslanti call an emerald. Many of the emeralds are quite small, capable of supporting only one or two small homesteads. Other emeralds are much larger, supporting a small walled village and, in a few cases, a town. An emerald is a fleeting thing, however. Many last just a few decades, though a few have been carefully managed for 100 years. Without husbandry, gales pick up the soil and dump it somewhere else, leaving behind bare rock.

When an emerald is discovered, the first order of business is to transplant a number of trees from a greenfield to the emerald and establish a windbreak before winter arrives. This is delicate work, but it must be done speedily, and it must be followed with the construction of a house and a protective wall for the inhabitants. New homesteads must be defended from animals, barbarians and even Fair Folk, so that crops and a small herd of sheep or reindeer can be introduced. Settling an emerald is precarious: too many people and animals can overuse the plot; then the wind will blow away the unanchored soil. Too few animals and people, and the plot cannot be protected against incursions.

ADVENTURE SEED

Target Character Type: Dragon-Blooded, Lunar, Heroic Dead, Heroic Mortal, Sidereal, Solar

A “lucky” wind has deposited a vast band of soil in the hollows along one side of a ridge of hills, and the characters have a chance to establish several hundred families in these pockets, which would relieve the population pressures on a nearby greenfield. Several hurdles must be overcome, however: The people must be convinced to leave the shelter of the greenfield and its relative luxury. Enough trees must be found to secure the emerald’s soil in place. The emerald must be seeded with proper grasses and plants. The emerald must be held against bandits, barbarians, Fair Folk and Lunars. Finally, a community must be built from a group of people used to doing things their own way.

Obstacles to these goals could include a local Lunar-led tribe desirous of putting their own stamp on this little paradise. Part of the emeralds might lie within a shadowland. A god might come looking for the soil that was robbed from his own stretch of territory and seek to become the new master of the land. Critical resources such as fresh water, building stone and metal would need to be located. Dangerous animals might have lairs in the area.



Most emeralds support a dozen families; a particularly large one feeds the city of Fair Isle. This greenery in the tundra serves much the same purpose as oases in the deep South: the emeralds form stopping points on trade routes, fortresses against nomadic barbarians and places of retreat from the bustle of the League's towns and cities.

Life in the emeralds is hardscrabble. Gales may pick up your father and grandfather's work and hurl it a thousand miles away. Changes in weather can dry out the land. Spring thaws replace fertile soil with mud. Taxes paid to the League for protection can leave your family with almost nothing. And, in winter, residents are largely isolated.

And yet, emeralds are critical to the League's survival. Greenfields contain limited land and resources — foodstuffs and property cannot be endlessly divided in each succeeding generation. Emeralds provide an escape valve for restless younger sons and daughters who want land and wealth.

Two unusual professions exist in the emeralds. Green men are professional ecosystem managers. Traveling between different communities, they collect and distribute insects, mosses, lichens, plants and small animals to help each emerald become a more complete and biologically diverse world. Soil-stealers make a living out of raiding smaller emeralds to enslave people and cart away fertile earth and useful animals. Tales of large emeralds used as bandit camps abound in Haslanti stories and literature.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS FOR EMERALDS

Warrior: Reindeer Rider, League Militia Captain, Wolf or Bear Hunter

Holy Man: Dream Interpreter, Fate-Speaker, Hermit

Savant: Weather Watcher, Green Man

Criminal: Bandit, Soil-Stealer

Entertainer: Skald, Drum-Singer

Bureaucrat: Tax Collector, Census Woman, Arbitrator

THE OUTWALL

Beyond greenfields and emeralds is the region called the Outwall by the Haslanti. At least, those Haslanti who are primarily sedentary and agricultural call it the Outwall. Pastoralists who herd reindeer on the steppes and tundra know enough to divide it a little more carefully.

To town-dwellers, the Outwall seems an inhospitable and uninhabited place. Beyond an emerald or greenfield's tight confines, few trees grow taller than 10 feet. Instead, thick brambles and hardy grass are the norm, stunted by wind and short growing seasons. And what's soft, muddy ground in summer becomes hard and frozen in winter.

To the herdfolk who move with the reindeer and elk herds, the Outwall is alive with possibility. Sedge grass is very nearly the perfect food for their herds, and the wilder mammoths do not eat it. Predators have a hard time stalking on the treeless tundra, and, therefore, the herdfolk's falcons and hawks have an easier time hunting small game.

READING THE OUTWALL

To the herdfolk, the lands of the Outwall are not all alike. While town-dwellers would have a hard time telling the difference, the herdfolk are capable of telling at a glance what sort of place they are in.

Herd grounds are the best land in the Outwall. Here, sedge grass is more plentiful than other grasses or inedible brambles. Such land may feed hundreds of elk or reindeer for several weeks. The bear-men and wolf-men of the tribes of the Outwall decide which tribes use which ground each year and wander the tundra examining herd grounds to decide use rights. Herd grounds must be watched carefully, for they are easily depleted. If a herd ground is used more than two or three times in five years, it usually becomes a fellfield or even spoil-ground. Sedge grass becomes depleted. Larger animals such as wild yeddim and mammoth must be chased away to ensure enough fodder for elk and reindeer. About two-twelfths of the Outwall is considered herd ground.

Fellfields are the next best grazing grounds for herdfolk. Enough sedge and secondary grass exists to feed large herds, but the land is second-rate. Nearby stands of trees hide predators, Wyld lands shelter Lunars or Fair Folk and glacier-covered hills are home to icewalker tribes. Some fellfields lie on the borders of Haslanti territory where independent tribes raid the herds. About four-twelfths of the Outwall is considered fellfield.

Once a region is overgrazed, it becomes **spoil-ground**. Bramble replaces sedge grass, and the more inedible grasses flourish. Some plants here are poisonous and can kill whole herds. Also, mammoths eat edible spoil-ground plants, so these fields are often lost to other large animals herded by more independent tribes or by icewalkers. More spoil-grounds mean that icewalkers and other barbarians get closer to emeralds and greenfields, risking the heartland of the League. Six-twelfths of the Haslanti Outwall is now spoil-ground, yet it must still be patrolled and guarded against icewalker incursions.

Muddy ground is easy on their animals' feet, and the herdfolk believe strong wind to be purifying.

Some wonder why the Hundred Tribes joined the League. Dwelling in no fixed place but moving with their herds, they live in round tents of reindeer bone and hides called *aghar*. Herdfolk seem as unlike their town-dwelling kin as possible. Yet, without an alliance between greenfielders, emerald-dwellers and herdfolk, the Haslanti League would wither. If the sedentary Haslanti are the nation's body, then the roving herdfolk are its blood.

Simple economics dictate union. The sheep, goats and cattle of the greenfields, combined with the fish and whale from the White Sea, do not provide enough protein to feed everyone. Outwall herds make up the difference: they provide another source of milk, cheese and butter essential to the good health of the Haslanti. Thus, the reindeer is a universal symbol of prosperity. Herdfolk also act as the League's transport network, moving bulk goods, which cannot be easily moved by air boat or iceship, back and forth between the emeralds and the greenfields.

Moreover, herdfolk serve as a barrier against the other Northern barbarians. Roaming in both winter and summer looking for food for their animals, the Hundred Tribes are the League's early warning system and first line of defense. In return for the food that herdfolk put on Haslanti tables, greenfielders provide them with iron tools, weapons, fish, whale oil, ivory, honey, bread, wool and linen.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS FOR THE OUTWALL

Warrior: Elk Rider, League Militia Scout, Bear-Seeker

Holy Man: Fate-Speaker, Reindeer Shaman, Elk Shaman, Mammoth Shaman

Savant: Elk-Healer, Reindeer-Healer, Ivory Shaker

Criminal: Heat-Thief, Elk-Bleeder, Bone Gnawer

Entertainer: Drum-Singer, Ancestor Voice

Bureaucrat: Wolf-Man, Bear-Man, Arbitrator

ADVENTURE SEED

Target Character Type: Dragon-Blooded, Heroic Dead, Heroic Mortal, Sidereal, Solar

A new disease appears among the elk herds of the Outwall. Numerous animals die, more have to be killed and the disease keeps spreading despite the precautions of Outwall tribes. Without meat, milk and cheese to offer to town-dwellers, trade slows down, and some militia and scouting teams from the League are withdrawing to emeralds and greenfields. There is talk among the Hundred Tribes of withdrawing from the Haslanti and going over to the icewalkers — perhaps even joining the Bull of the North and his armies.

Possible causes of the disease include an angry or insulted god, an Abyssal spreading death and destruction or an icewalker shaman eager to purify the herdfolk and remove the taint of their association with soft city-folk. It is even possible that Samea of the Blackwater Mammoth Tribe herself is the source of the plague — whether knowingly or unknowingly is up to the Storyteller.

THE GREAT ICE

The League's territorial claims include the Great Ice. From Diamond Hearth in the Far North and southward to Icehome's shores and Gethamane, a coat of ice

and snow ranging from a few feet to more than 50 feet thick lies over mountains, coastline, islands and open sea. Outsiders are amazed that anyone bothers to claim the area at all, thinking it must be barren and useless. They are not far wrong, for the Great Ice has little of value to anyone not prepared to work extremely hard.

And yet, wealth can be gained from the Great Ice for those prepared to labor exhaustively. Beneath the White Sea's frozen surface are schools of fish and pods of whales. Ice crews set massive cracking machines built of strong timbers and tension bands of mammoth guts on the open ice, to open broad crevasses in the surface. The light and air draws walruses, seals, whales and fish to sudden plankton blooms exposed to the Unconquered Sun. Even treeless rocks hold colonies of shellfish that can be harvested for oysters and mussels. Shipped farther south in brine barrels, they are a delicacy in the East and South. Some oyster beds hold fabulous riches in pearls, as well, and where the Wyld has touched, miners sometimes discover abalone growing diamonds and opals instead of pearls.

LIFE ON THE ICE

For iceship captains, the Great Ice is constantly in flux. Crevasses and sinkholes appear and disappear in the ice with great frequency; places frozen for a thousand years open suddenly in warm weather. Tidal forces and mortal hands shatter icebergs out of the Great Ice, and, when these ice boulders turn over, mountains and hills appear that must be avoided as if they were islands. Charts must be constantly updated.

Crevasses in the ice can catch silt and wind-blown seeds, forming an emerald. These oases become refuges for those working on the snow plains. Green men find and cultivate these plots and hollow house-caves out of the snow for hunters tracking frost bears, ice cats, black walruses and snowy seals, as well as for prospectors.

Mining and fishing are the major occupations on the Great Ice. Rocky islets in the White Sea yield amethyst, topaz, amber, turquoise and diamond. The largest diamond deposits are near Diamond Hearth, where miners risk their lives by going 20 feet below the snowcap and half a mile beneath the earth to dig for the brilliant crystals. Sometimes these mines connect with the shadowland surrounding the First Age city of Tzatli, which adds to the risk but also to the fabulous prices commanded by these stones.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS FOR THE GREAT ICE

Warrior: Iceship Captain, Whale Hunter, Walrus-Man

Holy Man: Half-Mad Hermit, Ship's Chaplain

Savant: Gemologist, Ice-Cracker, Mine Engineer

Criminal: Heat-Thief, Claim-Jumper

Entertainer: Flute-Man, Ancestor Voice, Dinar Girl

Bureaucrat: League Excise Woman, Revenue Man, Ivory Counter, Arbitrator



ADVENTURE SEED: ADRIFT ON THE GREAT ICE

Target Character Type: Dragon-Blooded, Heroic Dead, Heroic Mortal, Solar

At a series of locations on the White Sea, several ice-cracking engines are set off simultaneously, fissuring the ice and shattering several sections into giant icebergs. Dozens of iceholts and hundreds of persons are missing and presumed lost, while numerous fishing stations are stranded and perhaps damaged or destroyed. Thousands of talents worth of valuable iceships and their more valuable cargoes are in peril. Vital trade routes are disrupted for several months while the ice refreezes and new paths are found.

Causes could range from a particularly tragic industrial accident to deliberate sabotage by agents from Gethamane, Whitewall or the armies of the Bull of the North. A Wyld taint, either from the Fair Folk or from Lunars who wish to see the use of the White Sea restricted, could also be at fault. The accident could also be the work of an Abyssal who wished to form a shadowsea, the oceanic equivalent of a shadowland.

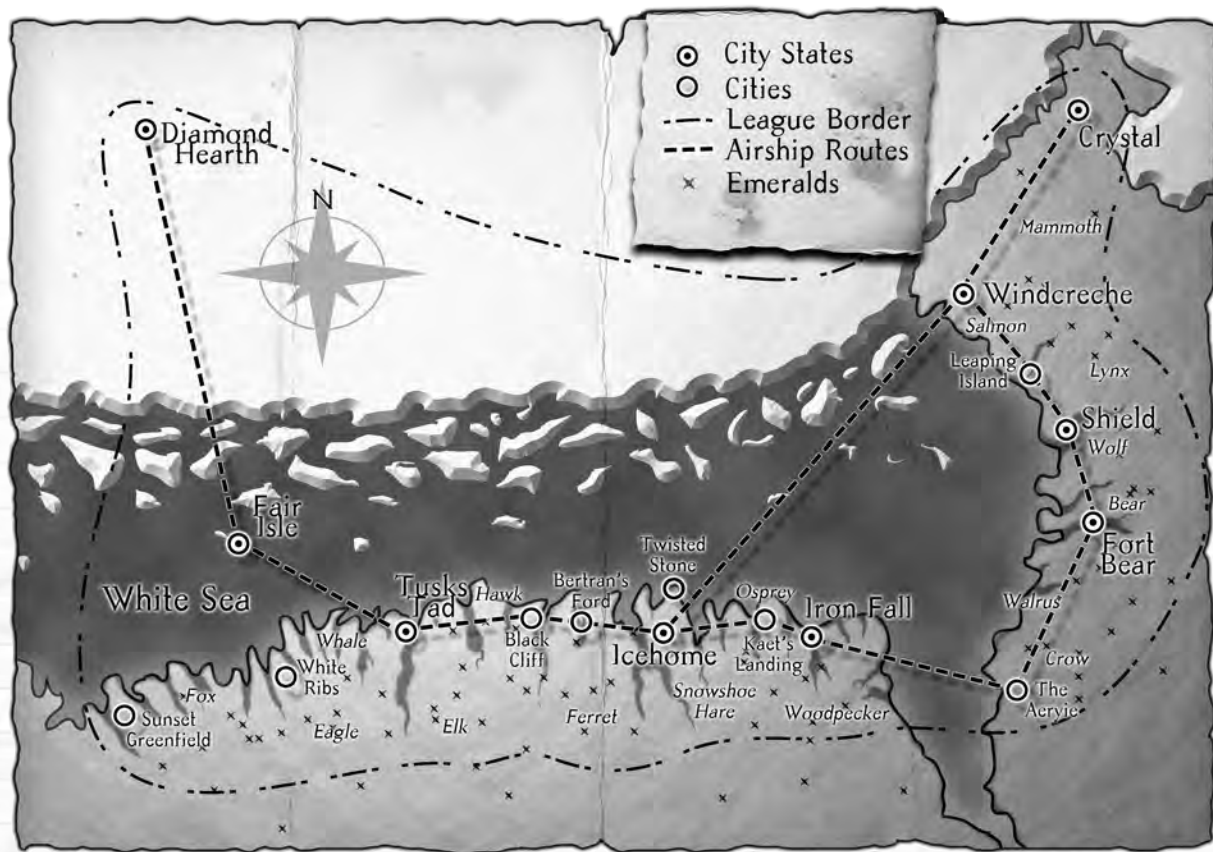
Characters will have to investigate the accident, determine the causes and see if it is likely to occur again. The characters will also have to engage in a series of rescue missions to find and recover missing iceships and iceholts. They may have to defeat or negotiate with the originator of the event, to prevent it from occurring again.

THE HISTORY OF THE LEAGUE

About 400 years ago, the southern and eastern shores of the White Sea were home to perhaps 200 tribes of loosely linked herding peoples. In the extreme northeast, the Haslanesh were hunter-gatherers following wild mammoth herds. In the south, the tribes were divided between the Haslanahsa, who herded domesticated reindeer, and the Haslanosha, who herded domesticated elk. The three peoples

spoke a common language, and they shared many cultural norms including shamanistic practices, several common songlines and, of course, several important totems.

The Haslanesh, the Haslanahsa and the Haslanosha also shared a common story. They were exiles from one of the northernmost cities of the First Age — Tzatli — and the territories around it. When the city fell, people who were able marched out into the wilderness. Thousands upon thousands died in the snow, from the attacks of



predatory animals, from exposure and from simple despair. Only the strongest survived the horrors of those frozen marches. Yet, among the many soft-bodied and soft-hearted First Age citizens were some who challenged themselves physically and mentally against the cold, on skis and snowshoes, with rock-climbing gear and gliders. These few taught survival skills to the others, and so, the native ingenuity of the tribes came to be.

BEAR WOMAN

Among the most powerful of their gods was a Lunar Exalt of the First Age, Arvida of the Crescent Eye. From the time of exile onward, Arvida acted as a terrible, wild patron to all three Haslan tribes and claimed all their territory as her own. Ascribed in their legends with 99 forms, the Haslan called her Bear Woman and regarded her with terrified awe; they acceded to her requests not to build cities or town, but to live in harmony with the wilderness.

Immaculate monks killed Arvida in the spring of RY 412 after a long hunt lasting almost eight years. The tribes were traumatized. News of her passing spread swiftly, coupled with disbelief. Many of the tribes refused to accept the truth, while others despaired and fell into compacts with the Fair Folk or succumbed to the Wyld, which was terrible and strong in those days. Madness gripped the Haslan peoples for more than 100 years. The shamans went through a long period of obsession with the Wyld, with spirits and with other Exalts. Chiefs and whole tribes went through berserk phases in which they attacked and raided each other for decades. Whole families and kinship lines were wiped out to the last man.

THE FOUR CAMPS

Over the next 150 years, many of the tribes began to slip back and forth over the line dividing hunter-gatherers from settled peoples. The climate grew warmer, and it was possible to camp in one place for extended periods of time, even with thousands of elk or reindeer to tend. While those tribes who depended upon mammoths for food and other necessities continued to move about following their herds, the Haslanosha and the Haslanahsa were able to settle down to some degree. The artisans among these tribes — makers of tents and tools, shapers of bone and stone and ivory, weavers and shamans — began to settle in the greenfields where food was plentiful and relatively easy to collect. Others colonized the emeralds, and acted as go-betweens for their roving kinsfolk.

Four of these semi-permanent camps became particularly important as trade centers, religious precincts and meeting places for chiefs. The Four Camps, as they were known in order to avoid the stigmas associated with towns in tribal culture, eventually grew into Tuskstad, Windcreche, Icehome and Fort Bear. These centers became important trade posts for the Haslan tribes and

became meeting places for foreign traders. The Guild first approached the tribes around RY 500.

GUILD DOMINANCE

For about the next 50 years, the Guild dominated the tribes. By providing iron tools, weapons and other luxury goods, while maintaining a strong military presence, the Guild proceeded to strip the Haslan tribes of a substantial variety of resources and wealth. The Four Camps became larger, more prosperous and more permanent, and the lands around them were colonized for agriculture and pastureland. As a further insult, the Guild introduced slaves to the region as miners and began demanding tribute in ivory, amber, woolen cloth and leather.

The tribes resented both the presence and the arrogance of the Guild merchant princes. For their part, Guild officials bribed and corrupted tribal leaders to advance their own agendas and tried to wrangle concessions from whole regions simultaneously. The Guild officials also encouraged intertribal warfare as a way to increase the slave population. Increasingly, the tribes felt limited in their choices.

At the same time, the Guild's expeditions delved deeply into the Great Ice in search of the First Age city from which the Haslan had come. In doing so, the Guild encountered a harsh and dangerous environment but one that contained potentially great rewards. Although the Guild did not find the First Age wealth it sought, their Haslan porters and guides discovered a world they had only imagined. The Great Ice was so dangerous and devoid of wealth that civilization could never come to it. But, at the same time, the harsh environment offered numerous opportunities for mortals to prove their valor in the face of the worst weather in Creation.

Some of the Haslan tribes chose to head north when they were pushed out of the best lands along the southern coasts of the White Sea — venturing out onto the Great Ice rather than turning south — in search of valor and new opportunities. Guild officials would show up at a summer encampment in search of tribute to find the tribe gone, the reindeer scattered or given to other herds and no tribute to be had.

A traditional Haslan tale of this time period sheds some light on how the tribes turned to the White Sea: a shaman came back from a dream quest with the news that a formerly forbidden cave on the shores of the sea was now open to the tribe. Upon visiting it, the elders discovered the funeral ship of a great chief from hundreds of years before. Instead of being laid out in a traditional boat, the dead chief lay in a ship built of First Age materials, with outriggers fitted with steel blades for skating over the ice. Taking this find as a sign of destiny, the tribe copied the ship's designs and left their herds behind. A similar version of this story is told about the building of the first air boats, but few outsiders credit these tales.





MEETING AT TWISTED STONE

Active and passive resistance to Guild arrogance and heavy taxation increased, until, by RY 580, the Guild was confined to the Four Camps and a few minor trading centers along the coast. The whole Haslan nation was in revolt, and it was not safe for a Guildsman to go anywhere unescorted.

Matters came to a head when chiefs and shamans of 40 different tribes were summoned to a lonely point east of Icehome, where an ancient and broken beacon of the First Age stood overlooking the White Sea. Tribal leaders came on horses and reindeer and elk and by iceship, wondering at their summons, but eager to learn what might be done. To their surprise, a god awaited them at the Lighthouse of Twisted Stone.

The Lunar Exalt called Gerd Marrow-Eater, who belonged to the No Moon Caste, had summoned them all. Youthful but strong, he seemed to them as Arvida reborn, able to take the shape of the eagle, the wolf, the whale, the bear, the elk and the reindeer. All day, he fought the bravest champions of the gathered Haslans; yet, he killed none of them, though he took the smallest finger of each warrior's left hand.

Gerd Marrow-Eater demanded the tribes take council together. The Guild was pushing them too hard, making them take on civilized ways — it enslaved people who ought to be free. Yet, the Haslanahsa and the Haslanosha were 100 times more numerous than the Guild: the land was theirs. Once the tribes were united, neither Guild nor Realm nor any power of the Inland Sea would be able to take the North from them. A covenant of mortals, merging the best of civilization and barbarism, might well hold the North forever.

The chiefs appealed to Gerd to lead them to victory over the Guild and its mercenaries. The Lunar consented to lead them three times. After that, he would advise and guide them and send them others to help them. Yet, Gerd said the best victory would be that triumph that the Haslan tribes won for themselves. For three days, the two Haslan peoples argued amongst themselves, setting out a covenant between them that might endure for ages. Haslanahsa and Haslanosha merged to form the Haslanti League.

THE LEAGUE

The new-formed Haslanti immediately went to war.

In RY 583, Gerd did as he promised. With greater and greater audacity, he led them three times against targets the chiefs chose. Each campaign ended with the taking of one of the Four Camps. Tuskstad fell first, followed by Fort Bear and Windcreche. Chiefs and shamans begged Gerd to stay by them, but the Lunar refused. He had other matters with which to deal, and if a god helped the Haslanti to victory, then the Haslanti territory would not be a land suited to mortals. Instead, he gave direction to the horde he had assembled on how to take Icehome and set three chiefs, one from each region where the Haslanti lived, to direct the attack.

After 12 days of fighting, the tribes took the city. The chiefs who had led the first assault had died. Others had taken their places and were slain in turn. Three more

chiefs fell in the battles for the streets. Other tribes might have given up at this point, but a god had commanded them, so the Haslanti pressed on. The fourth set of successors ascended to the Citadel at dawn on the 12th day: Sunning Walrus led the tribes from the White Sea, Blooded Antlers led the tribes from the tundra and Halgun led the tribes who had become farmers and herdsman near the Four Camps. Gerd awaited them atop the hill. The Lunar stretched out a hand, pointing out the White Sea, the green farmland and the tundra beyond.

“You lost 12 chiefs, so your nation will always have 12 chiefs to sit in council and judgment. As long as you talk your difficulties out first, before you fight, everything you can see from here, and more, shall belong to the League of the Haslanti forever.”

The Lunar then vanished. Few claim to have seen him since then, though a secret society exists within the League whose members have all seen the Exalt. Gerd’s speech gave shape to the Council of Oligarchs and governs arbitration in the League to this day.

WAR AND PEACE

The League’s powerful emergence in the North greatly alarmed Gethamane, Whitewall and even the Realm’s client nations all the way south to the Inland Sea. Rightly judging that the landscape and people would be hostile to the legions and difficult to conquer, the Scarlet Empress sent a large delegation of the Immaculate Order north. She believed the League’s appearance was the result of the manipulations of gods or spirits and that it would be best to put down the divinities responsible.

For its part, the Guild responded by pressuring Gethamane to close itself to products from the League or shipped by native merchants. In this way, the Guild hoped to force the Haslanti into accepting them as middlemen for Northern trade. Sijan and Cherak were also enlisted in the boycott of Northern goods.

Both efforts met with difficulties, however. The Immaculate Order never succeeded in hunting down Gerd, but it did succeed in humbling a number of predatory spirits and small gods, as well as Fair Folk. Many tribes, suddenly released from difficult chiminage, petitioned to join the League, thus actually strengthening the confederacy. The Haslanti, for their part, could not crack the fortress of Gethamane, but they could interdict the Guild from transporting any goods through the warehouses there. The League developed its modern military during the Gethamane War and copied First Age gliders and air boats using human-powered Second Age technology. Eventually, Gethamane relented, and the Guild was forced to accept limited trading privileges in Haslanti lands in exchange for acknowledging the League’s political and economic independence.

THE WYLDFOG

In RY 674, Wyldfog began to blow through Haslanti territory, continuing on and off for the next 50 years.

Whether by the action of the Fair Folk or simply the weakening of Creation’s borders, several large and oncesustainable pockets of the Wyld drifted around Haslanti territory, driven by the wind. Everything changed where they passed: Small islands appeared in the White Sea. Wind lifted the farmlands of the North and dropped them hundreds of miles away. Tundra bloomed with trees and plants not seen in centuries. New predators suddenly stalked the land. Dozens of tribes simply vanished.

A pack of the Lunar Exalted came to the League’s aid. The Lunars hated Wyldfog and the Fair Folk as much as the League did. Wyldfog was as capable of destroying the Lunars’ hunting grounds as those of the Haslanti. The Lunars also felt the Haslanti made decent neighbors. They were worth protecting and guarding, if only so that there might be friends to hand in the future.

So, Lunars entered several large Wyldfogs and dissipated them; two more Wyldfogs ceased moving shortly afterward, perhaps because of a truce. Several other pockets of the Wyld stayed the same size or grew smaller. The Lunar called Flintbeak Nightingale dispersed one such cloud in RY 726, only five miles from Icehome.

RECENT EVENTS

Since the close of the Wyldfog War, the League has lived a very human-centered existence. The songlines began to lose some of their traditional dread; following ancient songlines backward led explorers to the buried city of Tzatli in RY 731. Similar adventurers recently uncovered another such First Age city near Crystal.

A new spirit of innovation and personal success is taking hold among the Haslanti. Unlike other peoples, the majority of the Haslanti’s First Age equipment are not weapons or mighty engines, but toys and tools that are easily copied or adapted to Second Age technology. The League has few God-Bloods or Exalts among its leaders because it has little need for the wielders of Essence. The laws of the land forbid enslavement of the Haslanti themselves (though other peoples can be bought and sold) and insist on at least a modicum of conversation and mediation before an honor duel. Thus, it is possible to work things out before having to face a sharp knife in the gut or an axe to the skull. In addition, both isolation and the relative poverty of the land help to guard it from outsiders.

At the same time, the Haslanti are deeply aware of their barbarian roots. Even fourth-generation farmers are likely to close up their houses and give their fields into another’s care for a few weeks each year to go live in tents on the tundra or to walk the songlines across the Great Ice or the greenfields. When redhatted Dreamseers walk through the marketplaces, people fall silent and watch them pass. The Haslanti — alternately pulled between civilized and savage life — are deeply aware of the tensions of their existence. The Bull of the North, with his talk of pulling down every city and overthrowing every nation, makes the League uneasily consider its own fate.



HASLANTI GOVERNMENT

The government of the Haslanti League owes its inception to the Twisted Stone Covenant formed under the direction of Gerd Marrow-Eater. In form, the League is a confederacy nominally led by a ceremonial head of state, the Archon. Real power lies with the elected Council of Oligarchs. The Archon, a retired Oligarch who serves for six years, acts as a roving goodwill ambassador, traveling around the League for much of the year, visiting towns, Outwall tribes and iceholts alike. She also presides over many of the annual assemblies and carries legislation affecting the whole League from assembly to assembly for consideration and approval. She is not permitted to speak in favor of or in opposition to any proposed laws, but she is able to call attention to various items by choosing the time and place when presenting the proposed law for consideration. The current Archon, Whispering Gale, is nearing the end of her six-year term.

THE CITY-STATES

The League's power and territory is subdivided into nine "city-states": Icehome, Ironfall, Windcreche, Crystal, Diamond Hearth, Fort Bear, Tuskstad, Fair Isle and Shield. Outsiders think the notion of city-states ridiculous, since the territories of each of the city-states are outsized and only vaguely defined, and in fact, the oversized town at the heart

of each state is hardly worth calling a city. However, each city-state is, in fact, a carefully managed region, containing within itself a collection of resources and peoples necessary to survival. Every city oversees some greenfields, some emeralds, some of the Outwall and some of the Great Ice. Each city thus retains access and rights to agriculture, metal ores and herding grounds — and so retains a connection to the other parts of the League. The territories of each state are also usually close to one another but not geographically unified. The borders between one city-state and another are wavy lines, carving up strange parcels to ensure everyone gets some access to various resources as diverse as mussel beds and diamond mines.

Each city-state makes its own laws and elects its own tribal leaders. The degree of power these local leaders has is considerable within their territories, and these individuals command great prestige throughout the League. However, they are not obeyed outside their own regions, though their opinions may be sought and considered.

The most critical part of each city-state's duty to the League is to sponsor four district assemblies within their territory. "One for the city, one for the sea and two for the Outwall" is the traditional formula, meaning one assembly meets in the city, one is held among the communities of the Great Ice and two are held for the emerald-dwellers and the herdfolk. The traditional formula is not followed everywhere, however. It is these assemblies that form the consultative and legislative body of the Haslanti.



THE ASSEMBLIES

The 36 district assemblies conduct all legislative business for the League as a whole. When present at a specific assembly, the Archon acts as the presider and moderator; she usually attends 18 to 20 a year. The other assemblies choose presidents from their own number. All citizens of the district are entitled to attend and to speak. The first two days of each assembly are devoted to League matters, while the remaining days are given over to local matters, unless there are pressing issues.

Consensus is the standard rule at an assembly. New laws wind up affecting both iceholts and herdfolk so the League moves very slowly in adding new laws. What is good for a greenfield is often not so good for a roving iceholt in search of whales. Majority vote remains the rule on local matters, and the League's districts act as a vast laboratory for new laws. If a law works for several years in one district, it may be forwarded to other districts of the same type or to the League as a whole.

THE COUNCIL OF OLIGARCHS

The Council of Oligarchs acts as the interpreter of the League's laws and functions as the high court for all the districts, towns and tribes of the Haslanti. Many outsiders mistake the Council as an executive body, since the military is under its control in times of war. Yet, from a constitutional stance, the Council's duty is merely to

record and interpret the laws of the League. Again, consensus is supposed to drive the decisions of the Council, leading to a degree of deadlock in debates.


To be an Oligarch, one must be over the age of 45, native-born to the League and have served as an arbitrator in a minimum of 10 disputes, each worth at least one talent of silver. An Oligarch candidate must then be nominated by her home district to a council seat and elected by acclaim at the relevant assemblies. Oligarchs serve for 18 years or until they retire, and no one may serve two terms as an Oligarch. The number of Oligarchs from the city-states is based on population. Icehome and Ironfall each have two seats, and Fair Isle, Diamond Hearth, Crystal, Tuskstad, Windcreche, Shield and Fort Bear each get one.

The last of the 12 Oligarchs serves as the President of the Council. He or she comes from a list of seven nominees submitted to a meeting of Dreamseers who gather at Twisted Stone. The Dreamseers give the names to the gods, who then select the President of the Council. Few mortals know that the gods in this instance are a conclave of Lunar Exalted, the Haslanti Ennead and a number of totem animal avatars.

THE OLIGARCHS

The present membership of the Council is strangely divided three ways between the faction called the *Deft Hands*, their one-time allies the *Profitable Men* and the vocal and obstinate *Landless Party*.





The Deft Hands represent the interests of the tribes and tribal rights. This faction stands for community and collective responsibility and the nurturing of peace within the League. In opposition is the Landless Party, which believes that the League should go to war with the icewalker and Tear Eater tribes — as well as the Haslanti's cousins, the Haslanesh — in order to secure new farming and hunting grounds. Between them are the Profitable Men, who seek a broader role for individuals seeking to accumulate wealth and build a more civilized society in the North. Until recently, the Profitable Men have stood against war, but changes in Council membership have shifted the balance of power.

The members of the Council of Oligarchs are as follows:

Ivory Smile, an elderly woman of 86, is the current President of the Council, chosen by the gods. With bright, black eyes shining from a wrinkled brown face framed by straight dark hair, she smells of seal meat and cinnamon. The leader of the Deft Hands, she was chosen two years ago after her own people rejected her. Ivory Smile's policy has been to avoid war with the outside world while persuading the richest landholders in the League to share their wealth with the descendants of the refugees from the Wyldfog Wars. Since she is a cunning judge of character and a strong mediator, many on the Council wish she were gone.

Representing Icehome, **Jurgan Einersson** was a successful merchant when he was elected 10 years ago. The leader of the Profitable Men is trying to make sure the rich stay rich and the League stays out of war. He dislikes Ivory Smile, but he fears Greya Thold's fanaticism even more. Jurgan has pale skin and thin, balding hair.

Silvered Antler comes from Icehome's Outwall district. About 50, she has the same skin and hair as Ivory Smile, but her eyes are green, betraying a greenfield ancestor in her past. She subscribes to the Landless Party's position and, alone of the present Oligarchs, has actually fought the Tear Eaters in battle.

Chosen from Ironfall is **Glittering Pyrite**, of the Deft Hands. Elected eight years ago on the strength of a miners' strike, he is a rough-hewn man with a bald pate and a stubbled chin. He is in awe of Ivory Smile and follows her lead in most matters.

Greya Thold, age 46, represents Crystal, where the refugee problem is most severe, and leads the Landless Party. Her glittering eyes miss little, and while her short hair and lean face are not attractive, she has a soft and persuasive voice. She wants the League to turn its military forces on the Tear Eater tribes and to clear land to the East for the landless Haslanti to settle.

Yidigal's salt-thickened hands and numerous scars mark him as a former whaler and walrus hunter. He was elected from Fort Bear on the strength of his working-class origins and stands with the Deft Hands.

Huredath represents Fair Isle, where he was a prosperous salt-fish merchant. Despite his upper-class background, he supports the Deft Hands, believing that only the division of wealth can prevent the collapse of Haslanti society. To that end, he brought a number of landless families in as shareholders in his business. In his late 40s, he smiles often and has lost considerable weight since he gave up most of his fortune.

Magada, a woman in her 50s with one blind eye and a withered hand, is a Dreamseer from the iceholts of Shield. She champions the Deft Hand position and regards Yidigal as a personal friend for his positions on the rights of roving fisherfolk. She nominated Ivory Smile to the Twelfth Seat.

Snowy Elk comes from the Outwall near Tuskstad. A young-looking 45, he has short black hair, dark skin and blue eyes. Having lost a leg in a mammoth hunt, he was nominated by his tribe to join the council. Though he publicly supports the Deft Hands, from time to time he votes with the Profitable Men or the Landless Party. He does not support their views, but he is somewhat weak-minded and easily persuaded by honeyed words and strong drink.

Leaping Doe is the junior Oligarch from Ironfall. In her early 70s, she finds Snowy Elk's weakness exasperating and berates him regularly for siding with the Profitable Men. She votes the Deft Hands line consistently.

Shimmering Snowflake represents Diamond Hearth, and everyone knows her uncle bought the election for her. A widow four times, she is one of the wealthiest women in the North and votes mostly with the Profitable Men but sometimes with the Landless Party. Barely past the age requirement for the council, she is fair-haired and cruel, and her arbitrations have renewed the penalty of enslavement for debt on the Great Ice, which has brought huge profits to her family.

Ilgadai Fraljofsdotter comes from Windcreche and sides with the Landless Party. In her late 50s, she has a lean, hard face and long blond hair streaked with gray. From her perspective, war for expansion suits the League. It would solve the incursions of Gethamane, give warning to the Bull of the North not to trifle with the Haslanti and push back the Tear Eaters in the East. When the reports of the Night Caste Solar, Elias Tremalion, make her courage falter, she votes with the Deft Hands.

HASLANTI RELIGION AND CULTURE

Most outsiders think of the Haslanti religion as heresy, when they bother to think of it at all. Described as small divinities of fate, ice and dreams, the League's gods are mocked in other nations and their worship regarded as a variant on the Hundred Gods Heresy that the Immaculate Order has successfully wiped out elsewhere. The League's turn for this treatment, they believe, will come as well.

This all-too-common opinion is wrong. In fact, the Immaculate Order has visited Haslanti territories four times in the last 100 years in order to stamp out worship of these small gods, most recently in RY 721. Part of the reason for the Immaculate Order's failure has to do with native suspicion of the Realm's interference in Haslanti affairs (and the Order's heavy-handed approach did not help).

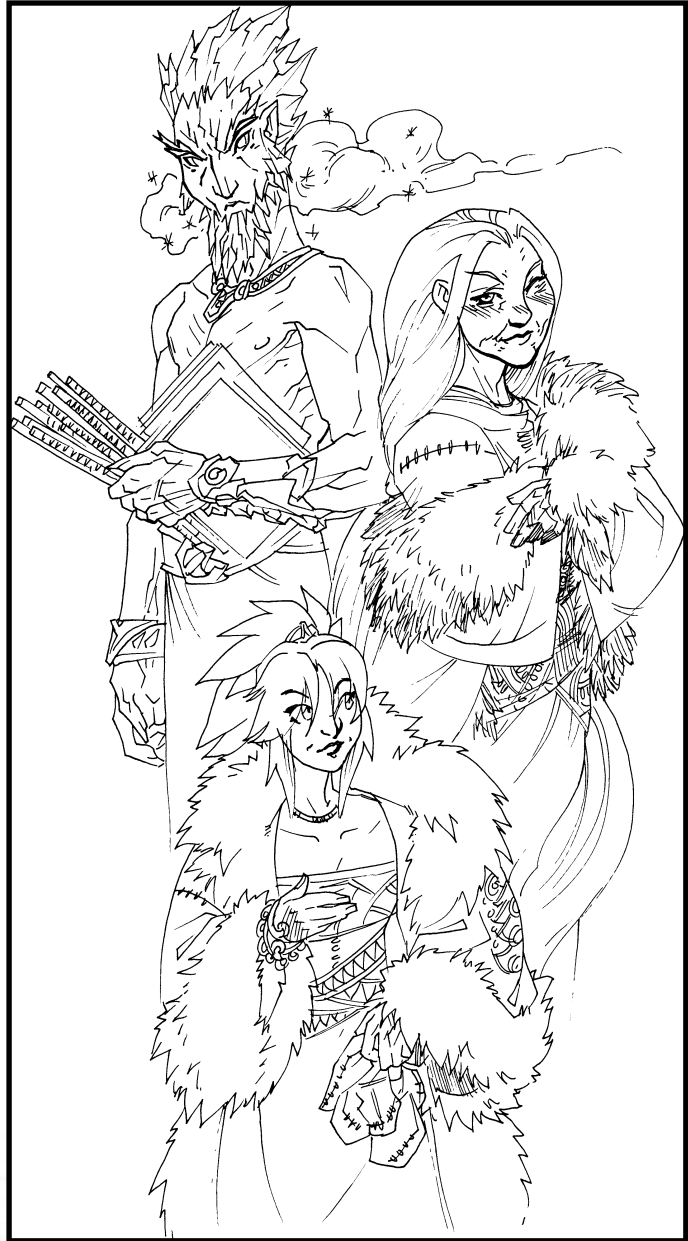
However, the greater reason has to do with the gods themselves. When the Immaculate Order first appeared to the Haslanti, its methods were somewhat rough and ill-considered. Its monks would burn the temple or sacred grove, wait for the small god to appear and then beat the local divinity up until it surrendered and promised to follow the Immaculate Philosophy. The Haslanti lost most of their major gods to this purge — gods of war and agriculture, gods of elk herding and ice fishing — all gave way and bowed before the Order's carefully directed violence. The gods did not disappear from people's lives, but it is nearly impossible to respect a divinity's demands for worship and sacrifice, after all, when the eldest in a tribe still remember him begging and pleading on the ground at the feet of an Exalt.

In the face of this, Haslanti continued to honor the old gods in a genial but disappointed fashion, as if they were old, deaf uncles who had done great things in youth but now sat around bragging about Ages-old victories. Instead, the Haslanti's thoughts turned to other gods who had once been unimportant and yet had avoided the strife and turmoil of the Immaculate purges — either by being unimportant and unassuming or by cleverly avoiding combat with the monks. An Ennead of respected small gods has thus emerged who remain the principal gods of the Haslanti for the moment.

GODS OF ICE

The Triad of Ice is in fact, not obsessively concerned with ice and snow, as many outsiders believe. Instead, the three gods of the Triad of Ice oversee three major forces that are part of the lives of every Haslanti. The first of these forces is winter and storm, which are capable of burying and destroying the League far more assuredly than any foreign rival. The second of these forces is community, which draws people together even as winter pulls them apart. The third force is unexpected opportunity or luck, which gives mortals chances to change their lives suddenly and without warning.

Master Winter is the oldest-looking of the Triad. With a beard of icicles and breath of frost, he walks over the land with his tally-sticks and record-books, laying



down ice and snow. In the summer, he labors at the cold-forge, making snowflakes with hammer and chisel. In the revived Haslanti pantheon, he is the stern, unforgiving master who completes his labors on time and does not forgive those who shirk their duties. Master Winter is the god of preparedness and settled accounts. If you are not ready by his coming, he will exact the price of your failure to your sorrow. The Haslanti seek his aid at harvests and plantings, and speak his name at births and deaths and in wartime.

Lady Chimney Draft is somewhat younger, with white-blond hair and a grandmother's wrinkles. She is usually shown hand in hand with Master Winter, but winking and showing a kindly eye to her supplicants. As the goddess of the slight



chill when guests enter a house, she watches over host-guest relationships, friendship between neighbors and rules of hospitality. Haslanti pray to her for aid at harvest time, when bringing in a catch, when starting a new fire or when celebrating a marriage.

Autumn Frost is the trickster of the Haslanti pantheon. A young person of varying gender, dressed in warm layers but with coat open and gloves off, he/she is shown dashing off on some adventure. The spirit represents risks with great rewards but also the costly dangers of bad luck. Autumn Frost represents luck and opportunity but also missed chances and risky gambles. The Haslanti pray for his/her help during dice games, travel and romantic adventures but also name him/her as the cause of much mischief.

GODS OF DREAMS

The Triad of Dreams is also not well understood by outsiders. To the Haslanti, the three dream-spirits are not exclusively gods of sleep and daydreams, but watch over both fears and aspirations. The first of these divinities

watches over those willing to work for their dreams and seek out their destinies. The second is a god of worry and dismay, who feeds on the worst nightmares. The third is a wild creature who reminds the dreamers that they have a part to play in fulfilling or avoiding both their dreams and their nightmares.

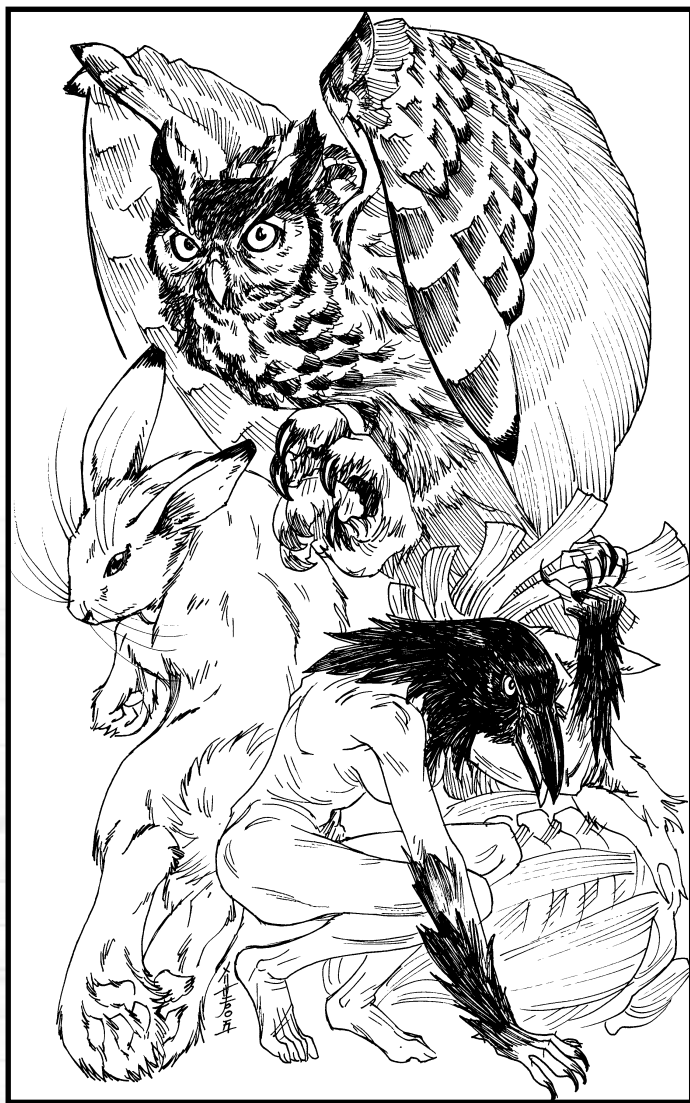
Owl From Out of the East is a great horned owl of enormous size, with a wingspan of eight or nine feet. In ancient times, Owl was an attendant upon a god of law among the Outwall tribes. Now, he is a power in his own right, as the spirit who watches over following through. He rewards individuals who take it upon themselves to heed their dreams, committing time and effort to achieve them. The Haslanti see him as a divinity of prosperity and call on him to aid them in business, in law and in their social life.

Carrion Crow is an old, pale, naked woman with the head of a crow and black feathers sprouting from her wrists. She is often found feasting on dead elk or reindeer crawling with maggots. She is charged with the sending of nightmares and winter terrors, and both disease and famine are in her charge. As Master Winter's daughter, she is regarded as a spring goddess, when the winter is over but when new food is not yet available and stored food becomes old. She watches over old resentments, nursed grudges and domestic violence. Some soldiers seek her protection in battle.

Snowshoe Hare Among Brambles is a large, white rabbit with enormous feet and gigantic ears, standing alone in a thicket. Though once regarded as only an Outwall spirit of very minor ability, he is now thought of as the principal dream-god of the Haslanti. His very form represents a desirable thing in a difficult place, yet one that can hear your approach and slip away without difficulty. The keeping of a dream journal is a sacred act for worshipers of Snowshoe Hare, and the discussion of dreams over breakfast are like prayers to him. The spirit is a god of good sleep, sweet dreams and flights of fancy. Thus, while not exactly a trickster, Snowshoe Hare Among Brambles is a god of possibility separate from reality. The dreams he sends *can* come true, but they cannot be counted upon.

GODDESSES OF FATE

The Haslanti usually have the hardest time explaining their three fate goddesses to foreigners. Fate, to outsiders, suggests both an inescapable destiny that must come to pass and a terrible ending that has been foreseen from some predetermined beginning. Both the Haslanti and the goddesses themselves (those who are in a position to ask the three ladies their opinion) insist this is not the case. For one, such claims would contra-





dict the policies of the Bureau of Destiny in Yu-Shan. For another, the three divinities serve a much different purpose in Haslanti culture than expected. Instead of functioning as arbiters, the Triad of Fate work as mediators to help the Haslanti understand the sometimes-harsh workings of fate.

Kidilos is often named *the Lady Who Comforts the Living at the Bedside of the Dying*, and this is the essence of her

function. Rather than deciding where and when a given person is going to die, Kidilos works upon the hearts and minds of those at the bedside and helps them to understand the process of cause and effect that brought their loved ones to this point. By helping open the living to the processes of fate, Kidilos lessens grief and suffering and helps individuals to make peace with each other before death, so that there need be no unnecessary mourning or tremendous displays of grief. Kidilos wears the foul-weather gear of a worker on the Great Ice, dressed in layers and layers of leather and greased wool, with a furred parka and snow goggles covering her face. In a harsh environment where free time is a luxury, Kidilos works to make sure that suffering and grief do not waste much time or labor. Haslanti have things to do, and Kidilos makes sure they get to that work without bemoaning the fate of their loved ones and friends too much.

Ivriainen is the *Lady Who Finds Good Partners and Shuts the Door of Infatuation*. In a harsh land with much to do to ensure survival, Ivriainen is the grandmotherly matchmaker from the greenfields in a long blue robe. Just as the Haslanti have little time to grieve, so too do they have little time to find partners, marry and bear children. Winter is long, and every farm, iceholt and herd needs extra hands. The Lady Who Finds Good Partners helps weave the Tapestry of Fate in such a way that men and women who are productive and work well together find each other and recognize each other's good qualities early. She also finds ways to draw apart young people who are attracted to each other yet would be no good either for themselves or their community. Given that she works solely on potentials near the start of life, Ivriainen sometimes helps women trapped beneath the influence of Carrion Crow later in life. Most of her work, however, is concerned with men and women of marriageable age.

Spring Snowfall is the *Lady Who Reminds Us We Are Alive and Should Laugh at Ourselves*. Life in the League is harsh and unforgiving, and it is easy to become caught in the rote routine of rising in the dark of winter, feeding the elk, riding patrol, huddling over a fire in a cold tent and sleeping in

damp furs while the wind howls. Such a life can drive men to suicide or sink women into the cold and lonely sorrow of abandonment and ruin. The Lady Who Reminds Us We Are Alive appears as a motherly woman dressed in the furs and leathers of the Outwall, and she sends the mouse eating all the best cheese in the pantry, the frost bear who almost kills a good man but doesn't quite, the hailstorm that shatters every third tree in the orchard and the guest



who overstays his welcome yet saves his best stories for the night before he leaves. Spring Snowfall reminds the men and women of the League to wake up! Life is passing and will not come this way again, she warns them. This is your chance to live as you never have before.

SHRINES AND RELIGIOUS LIFE

Most communities in the League have a shrine or a full-sized temple. This contains an outer porch to keep snow out, an inner porch for dropping boots and coats, a hearth room for warming up and speaking to the spirits and a godhome, which can be anything from a small niche in the wall to a full-sized room containing statues or tokens of the Ennead and the community's ancestral spirits. In the greenfields, temples are constructed of stone and wood, while in the emeralds the shrine is usually a cupboard in the main room of the largest house. On an iceholt, the shrine is usually located near the middle of the main deck, making it the warmest chamber on the vessel. In the Outwall, the temple is usually a large tent of elk or reindeer bones put up near an unusual natural feature.

Greenfielders gather for religious ceremonies at specified times, usually at the quarters of the moon, to give thanks to all the Nine. These temple celebrations are usually formal, with the same words repeated over and over from week to week, and, except for special celebrations in honor of Spring Snowfall, are not particularly inspiring. These ceremonies are usually followed by community feasts or celebrations, though, which are full of laughter and conversation.

Religious ceremonies on the Great Ice and in the emeralds are both shorter and more fluid, with each god of the Ennead named in turn and members of the community speaking their personal prayers silently or aloud. The feasts are usually separated from the ceremonies in some way, since workers on the Great Ice prefer to eat their largest meal after the day's labors are over.

The Outwall practices the most fluid and least formal rituals of all, and the tribes of the Outwall tend to note the presence of the gods most often, recognizing them and thanking them for their presence wherever they should happen to make themselves known in truth or through omens.

RELATIONS WITH YU-SHAN

There is a significant bit of turmoil in Heaven between the numerous old Haslanti small gods and the relatively new Ennead of ice, dreams and fate. The core of the dispute lies in the tremendous quantities of Essence that the new spirits are collecting from worship by the League. Old gods have brought lawsuits against the Ennead in the Courts of Yu-Shan for failure to pay tribute to them or to honor the old gods' promises to the Immaculate monks. The Ennead, for

THE DREAMSEERS

The Dreamseers are the national shamans of the Haslanti League. Though not exactly an organized priesthood with a formal collection of doctrine, neither are they exclusively tribal shamans. In service to the League as a whole, as well as to its individual tribes, they are storytellers and interpreters of dreams. The mark of membership in this very public secret society is the rune for "dream" tattooed under the right eye and a tall, conical red hat that resembles certain mushrooms from the tundra.

The Dreamseers are chiminage-type shamans who all follow the same basic set of taboos, which are as follows: They may not eat milk, fish and meat together at the same meal. They may not wear leather, wool and silk together. They may not ride an animal, sail in a boat and fly in a glider all on the same day. They may not bury the dead, bless the newborn and fight with weapons on the same day. Many of the taboos of the higher-ranked Dreamseers are of the same type, and their requirements always involve triads — giving honor to the divinities of ice, dreams and fate simultaneously.

its part, insists that the old gods depart Yu-Shan and give the district reserved to the Haslanti spirits to them, since they clearly command the attention and loyalty of the people at this time.

The matter came to the courts' attention approximately 80 years ago, after the first purge of the region by the Immaculate Order, and it has continued in fits and starts each time the monks parade through the region. The case might have been settled decades ago if the old gods did not share some of the same characteristics as their former worshipers. Living in a hard and dangerous world, the Haslanti gods saved and hoarded Essence over the centuries. Thus, they still have enough power to maintain their standing as divinities worthy of Yu-Shan.

For their part, the nine new gods have clubbed some of their resources for the time being, in order to build a sanctum for their pantheon. The House of the Nine Hearths of Emerald and Silver, near the 29th Celestial Gate, is the residence in Creation for the current gods of the Haslanti League and the principal earthly residence for the spirit courts that govern and oversee the lands and seas around the League. While the bureaucrats of Heaven sputter and fume about the improprieties of such an act and scream about proper authorizations (and suitable bribes) the House of Nine Hearths has already become an easier method of resolving disputes in Creation than taking an argument to Yu-Shan.

ANCESTOR WORSHIP

The Ennead function as national gods of the whole Haslanti confederacy, but nearly every district and community has its own ancestor spirits who are venerated or worshiped with varying degrees of attention and devotion. In some Outwall communities, this consists of pouring out a little milk or flour for them. On the Great Ice, the first fish or the first whale oil of the season is often reserved for them.

The present stresses upon the League, in the form of the Tear Eaters in the east and the Bull to the south, have caused many more people to turn to their ancestors than previously. The results have sometimes been useful, but elsewhere, ancestral worship is twisting itself to the purposes of the Deathlords and their Abyssal servants. Outwall communities in the east have sacrificed babies, and the elderly have been abandoned on the Great Ice in the west. The Grandmothers are aware of this problem, as are many of the Dreamseers, but it is hard to curb these abuses from a distance or to make the dangers known to the people who practice them.

LIFE IN THE LEAGUE

In North's harsh environment, cooperation and competition go hand-in-glove. Since the winters are so harsh, most people cannot get by easily. No one greenfield is able to make all that it needs in order to survive and prosper in the North. The League survives based on this recognition. However, competition drives relationships between greenfields, dependent emeralds and allied Outwall tribes. Each city-state strives to acquire in both reputation and truth the most livable and excellent part of the League — the attendant prestige and dignity ensure a degree of favor in negotiations over the balance of trade, fishing and herding rights and control of emeralds in contested border areas.

FAMILY LIFE

Haslanti yeomen usually have a summer residence for food production and resource gathering and a smaller winter house in a town or city for a social life and keeping warm. These outlying steadings sit on marginal greenfield land, while emerald and tundra households work sheep or goat ranches, fruit orchards or host summer elk herds. Other families hunt walrus and whale, managing operations from a summer iceholt, a collection of buildings on an ice barge parked on the Great Ice near a hole or crack in the ice. Fishing stations — clusters of huts on rocky islets jutting out of the Great Ice — host fisherfolk during the annual runs of salmon, tuna and other large fish. Though

Outwall tribes live on the tundra all year herding elk and reindeer, they lack raw manpower to mine metals needed for weapons and tools. They also lack garden space or time to grow vegetables, herbs and roots.

Thus, no Haslanti can draw sufficient resources from land, sea and ice to provide an adequate diet or a comfortable life. Through ties of kinship, marriage and business partnerships, families diversify their economic and social portfolios. A Haslanti's numerous children will be apprenticed or fostered out at the early age of five or six — some to live with elk herders, others to dwell in greenfields to become farmers, artisans, orchardists and traders. Others go to miners, to fisherfolk and to whale hunters. Thus, a reindeer-woman may have brothers in fishing, cousins in mines, nephews in the orchards and an artisan aunt.

Lifelong ties exist between all of the necessary components of Haslanti life. A family's storerooms fill up before winter comes with ingots of iron and rounds of cheese, pouches of diamonds and casks of salt fish, flasks of whale oil and barrels of apples, jars of preserved goat's milk and iceship sails. Such provisions last through the Air and Water months when overland travel is difficult and provide trade goods for the Earth months when trade routes open again.

In winter, average Haslanti families converge on the family house. Fostered children come home from summer stations, bearing wages in the form of food and trade goods of various sorts. Summer steadings and fishing stations are closed up, and iceholts anchor in protected coves out of the worst weather. People move into townhouses, near friends and business colleagues.

Winter visiting and hosting is a major form of attaining social prestige in the Haslanti League. Weddings, funeral rites, baby namings and other important occasions are often postponed until winter, in order to ensure maximum attendance. Most towns have at least one "assembly room" for rent, where dances, parties, epic song-cycles and plays can be performed for guests. To say that a person had a summer wedding is to say that their families disapproved, and a spring funeral means the deceased was despised.

FEASTING

For all Haslanti, whether in the Outwall or in Icehome, the word *party* is synonymous with *food*. While outsiders insist little can be done with elk meat, the Haslanti consume it raw as tartar, marinated in fish sauce, fried in rendered whale oil and battered with beer and oats. Tables curve beneath the weight of the food at even small celebrations. In addition to elk and reindeer, feasts serve cheese (the League produces over 80 varieties from cattle, sheep, goats, elk and reindeer), milk, yogurt, bread (29 traditional types from flat bread to honeyed puffballs), fish and fish sauce, seal, apples, pears, walnuts, honey, potatoes, carrots, beets, porridge (eight major kinds, seasoned with everything from local herbs to exotic spices) and spicy cabbage.



COMPETITION AND DISSENSION

The League has two major political fault lines, dividing the confederacy into three major identities. An event on one of the fault lines tends to have drastic repercussions that shake the whole of Haslanti society.

The first division lies between greenfields and emeralds on one side and the Outwall tribes on the other. Radical differences separate town-dwellers in green vales from herdfolk of the open tundra who live in tents of bone and hide. The second division lies between those who dwell on land and those who work on the Great Ice. Solid ground does not crack and yawn wide enough to swallow ships and towns. Great Ice wildcatters demand good pay, superior food, better equipment and regular air boat and iceship patrols past fishing stations and iceholts.

For Haslanti town-dwellers, the demands of Outwall and Great Ice communities seem preposterous. Great Ice work crews come into port to drink *kirsa* and *hodolos* and fight with respectable townsfolk or follow their own lewd comments with sexual assault. Herdfolk don't bathe and pretend not to know the value of silver, yet demand duels whenever they feel cheated in a deal.

In this climate, small incidents quickly grow out of proportion and become sources of recrimination. Outwall and Great Ice towns often join forces against greenfields and demonstrate their political clout. However, just as often, Outwall and Great Ice towns fight over real and imagined rivalries. Two years ago, sailors from an iceship on shore leave made a pass at a statuesque Outwall woman on a trade mission; later that night, a gang of greenfield ruffians disguised as Outwall herders jumped the crew, murdering two. Anger, lawsuits, arbitration attempts and revenge killings still have not calmed down. Meanwhile, seal steak and elk rib prices both dropped, resulting in profits for several greenfielder families.

CULTURE

Being a confederation, the League has very little unified culture. The individual cities each have their own government, and customs differ widely. Nonetheless, certain generalizations can be made. All Haslanti practice cautious hospitality. Strangers are always given access to food and shelter, though not a huge feast or the best bed. Haslanti all believe in hard work – able hands should not remain long idle. A sick woman of an iceholt is given yarn and knitting needles, while a man gets ivory and carving tools. Even a stranger with little experience of the North can haul nets or drive the buzzards from a rack of drying elk meat.

The second most important piece of common culture is the sharing of dreams. Breakfast is usually prolonged by the discussion of dreams and the interpretation of dream symbols. Consensus usually decides whose dream is of most interest, and competing theories are offered as to a nightmare's meaning. Dreamseers regularly consult the

Zedakha, a compendium of over 10,000 dream symbols interpreted according to the teachings of seven major Dreamseers. Interesting or symbol-rich dreams are often repeated by itinerant dream-speakers. Some Outwall communities paint dreams on tent walls and ceilings, and many houses in the towns and fishing stations are also painted. Most Haslanti have at least one tattoo to remind them of a clear or focused dream.

DUELING

The third common component of Haslanti culture is the custom of dueling. The Haslanti themselves say they are going for a walk by the stream — a walk from which they may or may not return. Most legal issues in Haslanti society are settled through compromise and mediation. Elders sit in judgment in legal cases, and a combination of witnesses and arbitrators keep these informal court proceedings from getting out of hand.

However, when mediation or arbitration fails, any aggrieved person may choose violence as a means to settle a quarrel. Duels are always hand to hand, usually with bladed weapons, and arbitrators chosen by lot from the local assembly serve as seconds and guardians of the proceedings. Duels used to take place in lonely locations. Now, they occur quite openly in designated places. Some Haslanti fight for honor, meaning until the surrender of one party or the other. A few quarrels, however, can only be settled by death. The duel's participants usually set the conditions, but honor is usually enough.

Dueling custom is rigorous and formal. The aggrieved party issues a challenge, and the challenged may back down immediately and apologize or accept. Each then finds an arbitrator and registers the intention to duel. The arbitrators settle upon a location and time, to take place no more than four days after the challenge was issued. The challenger is responsible for the basic funeral expenses, paid in advance. Also, if the victim is the chief breadwinner of a household, the challenger becomes financially responsible for taking care of the victim's immediate family and kin. This can involve taking the family into her household or making a lump-sum payment in silver.

Killing outside of the formal rules of challenge is murder. A murderer is an outlaw and may be killed out of hand by the victim's family, by bounty hunters or by anyone else with a grudge against the killer.

THE LEAGUE MILITARY

Each city-state of the League maintains its own small force for protecting against raids from barbarians and for responding in the first instance to attack from foreign powers such as Gethamane and Whitewall. Among Outwall tribes, this usually amounts to 100 reindeer or elk riders conducting patrol and harassment missions part-time and perhaps a dozen adventurous young men and women as a



scout force with gliders at their disposal. For greenfielders, local defense forces are 1,000 or more full-time soldiers backed up with several dozen gliders, half a dozen iceships to secure the approaches to the main port and several thousand part-time militia troops. An iceholt might only have 20 or 30 young people with pikes to repel boarders during a pirate action.

In contrast, the League itself maintains lines of defense through monetary contributions from each district. Being a member of the local force is a dignified-enough career; being a member of the League military, answerable to the Council of Oligarchs alone, is prestigious. Some wits complain that the military does little besides collect its pay, since the army also collects the annual levies assessed on each district. Much of the League's effort is divided between drill and police work, but there is always the chance for a real engagement against the forces of Gethamane, the Bull of the North, the Fair Folk or barbarian raiders.

THE WIND FLEET

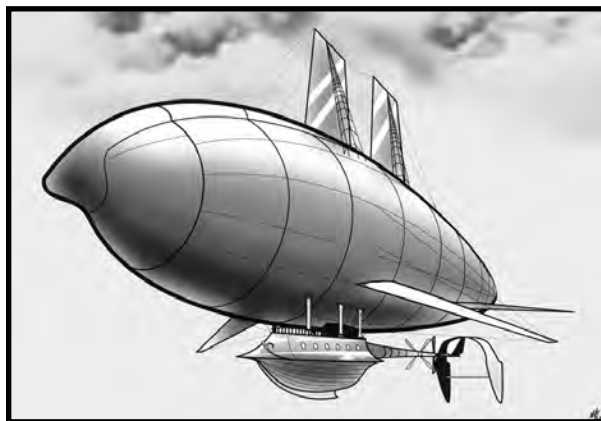
The core of the Haslanti armed forces is the Wind Fleet. Composed of 112 air boats of the first class and an additional 150 of the second class, the Wind Fleet is the pride of the Haslanti League and a demonstration of the North's ingenuity. Where the Sky Guard of the Seventh Legion relies upon Hearthstones and Essence, the Haslanti air boats rely on nothing more than rendered whale oil or kerosene and the skills of pilot and crew.

TWENTY-ONE KESTRELS

The Wind Fleet is nominally under the command of Twenty-One Kestrels, a slender and agile woman of 43. She reports about the state of the fleet directly to the Oligarchs and is responsible for maintaining the fleet and its hangars in good repair. The granddaughter of the man who first designed the air boats for the League, Twenty-One Kestrels regards service to the Wind Fleet as a family occupation. She joined up partly to please her father and partly because she loved to fly. Of late, however, much of her time is spent on the ground, seeing to maintenance and the construction of new air boats and instructing crews in techniques and tactics. The Wind Admiral is bored.

Most of her captains are so busy that she hardly ever gets to check in with them. The fleet is stretched to the limits of what it can do right now, with a third of the first class vessels doing the Icehome–Diamond Hearth run, a third performing the Icehome–Crystal run and the last third under repair. She dreads the day when a major accident at one of her resupply stations or a serious storm front causes a delay in the food shipments to the two northernmost cities of the League. She understands better than anyone else that the League needs even larger air boats than it currently has in order to keep up with the

growing demands of the air-trade and that the Haslanti are currently at risk of not having the ships they need when a crisis arises.



AIR BOAT SECOND CLASS

The more common type of air boat in the League consists of a rigid, sausage-shaped balloon of silk treated with refined grease from the black walrus, approximately 300 feet long. A wicker and bamboo frame within the bag keeps the structure rigid and inflated. Below the frame hangs the passenger compartment, an aerodynamic tube perhaps 80 feet long of wood, wicker and bamboo, with portholes of oilcloth to reduce weight. From this frame extend six masts — two above the gasbag and two to each side, capable of deploying eight triangular sails from the sides and two square sails above. A pair of large propellers sits near the tail end, driven by the action of a gear train and the pedaling feet of the crew. Built for speed rather than battle, each of the second-class air boats carries a crew of 18 and up to 20 passengers, along with up to two tons of cargo.

The greatest weakness of the air boats is the large tanks of whale oil they must carry and burn to stay afloat. Several of the second-class vessels have been modified, so that, instead of carrying a heavy tank of fuel, they carry an inflated whale's stomach, specially treated. This doubles the range of the air boat to 1,600 miles when lightly laden, but it also increases the risk of a leak or an accident. Whale stomach-bladders are easily punctured, whereas a wicker tank smeared with tar to make it waterproof is not. Moreover, such air boats are no more maneuverable or speedy — they gain only distance, not additional speed, for the sacrifice of a heavier tank for the vehicle's fuel.

Speed: 2

Maneuver: -2

Endurance: 800 miles lightly laden; 300 miles fully laden

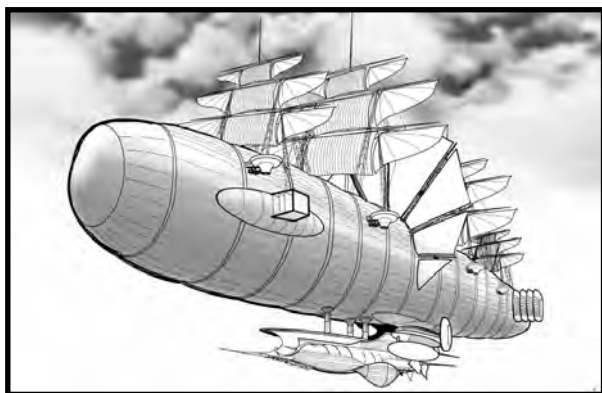
Armor: (basket) 3L/5B, (gasbag) unarmored

Armament: None normally

Health Levels: 10 (basket), 8 (gasbag)

Repair: 2





AIR BOAT FIRST CLASS

The heavy cruisers of the Wind Fleet are the 112 first-class air boats. With a 450-foot-long gasbag constructed out of layers of silk, dozens of individual bladders of whale intestine and laminated wicker, such an air boat could easily be mistaken for a cloud, were it not that an air boat is painted in bright colors, to emphasize the League's achievement — and to aid in finding the cruiser when storms or arrow fire bring it down.

This larger air boat looks like an oversized version of the second-class vessel, but in addition, the first-class air boat possesses a semi-circular sail mounted at the midship point, spreading perpendicular to the main keel of the vessel in a fan-shaped array. Six pedal-powered propellers constructed of bamboo serve as the main motive force against the wind. The passenger and crew compartment contains three decks, with the upper deck being exposed to the wind and weather for most of its length. This highest deck serves as a launching platform for the six gliders that the air boat first class carries as part of its standard complement.

The air boat first class has a crew of 20, including the captain. Each vessel can carry up to 10 tons of cargo and six dozen soldiers and their gear or 20 tons of cargo alone. Most of these air boats are involved in the regular patrol runs between the southernmost Haslanti cities and farms and the more northern cities such as Diamond Hearth and Crystal. The journey can take several days in each direction, especially fully laden with cargo or crew.

Speed: 2

Maneuver: 1

Endurance: 1,200 miles lightly laden; 500 miles fully laden

Armor: (basket) 3L/5B, (gasbag) unarmored

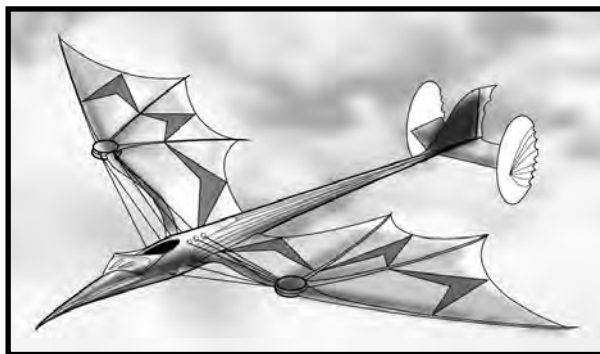
Armament: None normally

Health Levels: 18

Repair: 3

GLIDERS

Gliders are part of the standard equipment on all the ships of the Wind Fleet. Second-class vessels usually



only carry one or two, while the first-class vessels carry at least six.

Gliders are constructed of feather steel, laminated wood and woven spider silk. Unlike the rarer folding gliders, true gliders are complex pieces of equipment and take 16 turns to assemble. The finished glider has a wingspan of almost 40 feet, and there are a series of control wires that come to the pilot's hands. In an additional turn, the pilot can strap in and be ready to launch. Launching requires a cliff, precipice or flight deck of an air boat at least five yards high. (Most glider rolls, including launching, are difficulty 1.) These larger gliders can accommodate one passenger in addition to the pilot. A Haslanti with two or more dots in Ride knows how to pilot a glider. People from other regions must have a dot in Ride and purchase a specialty in "Glider" to learn to use one. Folding or disassembling a glider requires 10 turns. (Resources ••, ••• outside the North)

The more advanced Folding Gliders used by Haslanti rangers and operatives for the Ears of the North are described on page 78 of **Caste Book: Night**.

Speed: 3

Maneuver: 3

Endurance: Pilot's endurance (also subject to wind conditions)

Armor: 3L/5B

Armament: None

Health Levels: 10

Repair: 2

AERIAL TACTICS

Although the air boats themselves are relatively fragile, their roles in the tactical plans of the League are critical. First, the second-class air boats rush over an advancing army from a height and drop grenades on the approaching forces. These bombs are sometimes firedust incendiaries, but the high cost of firedust forced the League to find new solutions. More often these days, the Wind Fleet uses a potent mixture of pine resins, phosphorous-saturated honey, whale oil and specially refined salts. The result is a sticky substance that, once set alight, burns even when doused with water. This material can be packed into thin clay jars (which burst on contact with hard surfaces)

WIND FLEET WEAPONRY

| Name | Accuracy | Damage | Rate | Range | Resources |
|-----------------------|----------|--------|------|-------|-----------|
| Haslanti Fire Grenade | -2 | 3L | 2 | 20/60 | •• |
| Fire Mines | -3 | 6L | 1 | 5/80 | ••• |
| Caltrops | +1 | 1L | 100 | 2/200 | ••• |

Notes: Fire grenades can be thrown horizontally, but have a short range, only 10 yards. However, when dropped from an air boat, they have an accurate falling range of 60 yards. Fire mines, being larger, can only be hurled about five yards but can survive falls of 80 yards or more when dropped without going off. Caltrops can be scattered over a wide territory and easily survive falls of 200 yards or more.

or sheep stomachs, (which burst on individuals and animals). This material can even (with the addition of certain fish oils) be sprayed out of a special pump with a nozzle hose. The resulting panic and spreading flame often discourages a barbarian army before it even reaches sight of the walls of a city.

Following up the fire attack, air boats first class arrive on the battlefield, dropping three 25-man scales by glider and parachute into areas where the defenders are at a disadvantage. The first-class vessels then continue bombing convenient ground targets, especially obvious banners or command groups.

In battles where Haslanti forces are engaged with invaders already, the air boats can also litter the ground with caltrops and pressure-sensitive Haslanti fire mines. These spring-loaded metal jars contain a small sparking device and a quantity of Haslanti fire. Sometimes they burst on contact with the ground, but they are designed to pop open and spray their contents on barbarians too berserk to recognize the mines as traps.

THE ICE SQUADRON

The second major instrument for projecting the League's power across the Great Ice is the Ice Squadron. Currently containing 45 first-rate ships, with another 12 in production, the Ice Squadron is a series of sea-worthy hulls equipped with broad outriggers that hold long steel runners.

BLUE DRAGONFISH

The Ice Squadron reports to the Oligarchs directly, through its admiral, Blue Dragonfish. A "lost egg" Air-aspected Dragon-Blood, 92 years of age, the Admiral remains a servant of the League despite several offers from the Realm and several suggestions from his own officers to institute one-man rule among the Haslanti city-states. As long as he is out on the ice, with the wind in his mane of curly gray locks and frost in his beard, he is happy.

Blue Dragonfish's happiness is the principal reason why the Ice Squadron remains so small. The Admiral has little time to devote to paperwork and spends no time willingly on budget wrangling or arguing with the Oligarchs. With several thousand square miles of ice to

ADVENTURE SEED

Target Character Type: Abyssal, Dragon-Blooded, Fair Folk, Heroic Dead, Heroic Mortal, Lunar, Sidereal, Solar

Twenty-One Kestrels has had it in mind for about a decade now to try to make the voyage to the stronghold of Vanileth, the God of Artificial Flight, in one of her air boats. Her grandfather put off the effort after a 100-man expedition went down with two first-class and three second-class air boats. Her father attempted to design a heavier air boat for the purposes of the expedition but died before he completed it. The vast distance between the nearest base and the stronghold puts her off, but she thinks she can accomplish the project, if she can build a gasbag just 80 feet longer than the largest ones she has now. At a minimum, she believes she needs the stomach of a cachalot whale and most of its intestines, which will need to be preserved and prepared according to her grandfather's formula within a few hours of the whale's death.

She has the interest of the Oligarchs, who have provided seed money for the project. Among other things, the Oligarchs hope to secure Vanileth's interest in their Second Age technologies. The old god is wrapped up in the Essence-powered methodologies of the First Age, but if he can be *shown* the capabilities of other forms of flight, he might be persuaded to come out of retirement and help develop new flying tools.

However, at the moment, the League is too concerned with maintaining the air boats they presently use to worry much about a major experiment such as this endeavor. Any interested parties would have to provide some funding of their own, as well as bear the lion's share of the risks of the actual voyage.

patrol, Blue Dragonfish hopes to do and see it all; only grudgingly has he allowed another 50-odd captains and their crews to join him in the League's service. Even so,



the Ice Squadron is dangerously overstretched when it comes to military matters.

Fortunately, Blue Dragonfish has no qualms about permitting merchant marine vessels on the Great Ice. Every city-state maintains a small fleet of trading coasters and long-distance merchantmen equipped with ice-outriggers. The presence of these extra ships gives the Oligarchs some comfort, but, at the moment, they have no direct control over them, and they can only call upon the services of these small fleets in a significant emergency.

ICE SAILING

Ice sailing is not like ocean sailing. Most of the White Sea is relatively flat, but there are numerous hazards and particular dangers to be observed and avoided. A skilled captain must be aware of her environment at all times and make major adjustments to course and speed on a regular basis in order to avoid the major navigational hazards of the White Sea.

A **reef** is a raised line of rocks that protrudes from the surface of the Ice. Reefs are usually easily spotted; most of them are black rock, and many of them have either fishing stations, light houses or both. More than 500 reefs are charted. Most of them are only a few miles from shore, but a few break the surface even in the depths of the White Sea.

Crevasses are significant breaks in the surface of the Ice, which nevertheless remain closed at the bottom, not revealing open water. A crevasse is white and rarely shows up except to the eyes of a trained and experienced lookout. The surrounding ice is usually flat, and stable crevasse range from four to 20 feet across and can run several miles long. If an outrigger or part of the hull catches the edge of one, the coaster or cruiser can be dismantled by the force of the sudden stop.

Like reefs, **rifts** tend to be obvious. These are cracks in the surface of the Ice, usually 50 to 100 feet wide, and reveal open water at the bottom. They tend to appear blue or black from a distance, and they can run 40 or 50 miles long. Some rifts are artificial, created by cracking machines and firedust charges, while others are natural, the result of tidal forces. Iceholts and fishing coasters tend to cluster around them to take advantage of the open water.

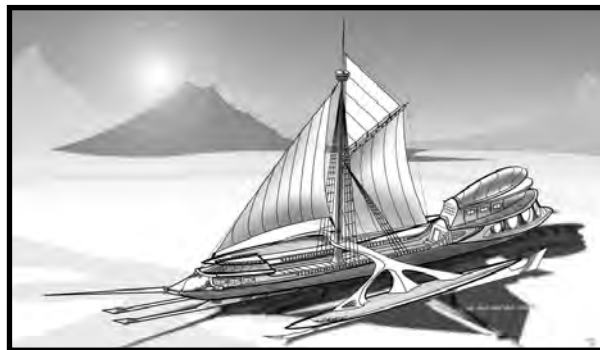
Pressure ridges result when tidal forces or deliberate cracking in one region result in large plates of ice thrusting hard against one another. Instead of a wide crack, a massive upwelling of ice and snow creates a ridge of broken ice hills, 20 to 100 feet high and often 10 or 15 miles long. Pressure ridges usually appear in combination with other features, such as rifts and crevasse. Most merchant vessels maintain a safe distance.

Shatterzones are regions where the main surface of the Ice has become broken into a series of individual plates and bergs. A coaster can sometimes ship its outriggers and use a combination of sailing and rowing to maneuver through a shatterzone. Larger cruisers must go around.

Bergs are mountains of glacier-born ice that have entered the White Sea and have become jammed into the surrounding ice. Bergs have a tendency to turn over suddenly, creating shatterzones, pressure ridges, rifts and crevasse for dozens of miles around. The League has lost two coasters in such turnovers and an unknown number of mercantile vessels, as well.

Snowdrifts form when wind and other factors pile up blown snow on an otherwise navigable surface. A snowdrift of wet snow will change the temperature of the runner of an iceship and slow it considerably, sometimes spinning the ship out of control. Snowdrifts are usually small patches in low-lying areas on the surface of the White Sea.

Slushpools form in the summertime, when the sun and balmer temperatures melt a small region of ice relative to the surrounding surface. A slushpool will usually slow down an iceship to the point where it breaks off an outrigger completely. The ship then careens off on a skittering, treacherous course for 200 yards or more. Slushpools often occur in conjunction with other hazards and are likely to be found around both reefs and shatterzones.



ICESHIP COASTER

Role(s): Icegoing merchant vessel/troop carrier

Length: 85 feet (hull); 100 feet (outriggers)

Beam: 12 feet

Draft: 4 feet between iceriggers and hull

Rig Type/Closest Tack: Imperial with foresail/ 3 points
Speed: ●●●

Maneuverability: -4

Standard/Minimum Crew: 22/8

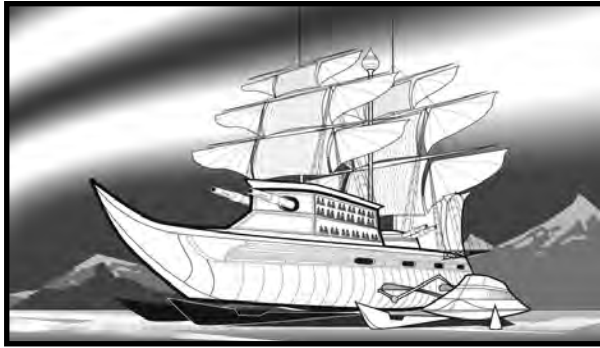
Soak: 6L

Health Levels: 12/24

Description: Coasters are the passenger and cargo vessels of the White Sea. Their outriggers can be hauled inboard, and they can operate in open water as well as on the ice. The ship's hull is broadly rounded, with a flat stern, and the rudder is, in fact, a long steel spike on a lever, which can be jammed into the ice. At high speeds, harpoons with tow cables must be used to change direction quickly. This tactic requires considerable cooperation between steerswoman and crew. The ship has a raised

quarterdeck and forecastle, with the officers sleeping below the rudder and the crew sleeping forward. The main deck directly below is used for passengers and lighter cargo, while the orlop deck is used for the heavier cargo and ballast. In total, an iceship coaster is able to carry some 1,200 tons of cargo.

In a military capacity, a coaster carries a 125-man talon and its supplies in tighter quarters than the Realm transports its troops. In winter, everyone stays warm this way. The League maintains nine coasters as troop transports and 27 as patrol craft, each equipped with a heavy catapult on the foredeck and the quarter deck.



ICESHIP CRUISER

Role(s): Heavy icegoing merchant vessel, large troop carrier, major weapons platform

Length: 160 feet (hull); 250 feet (outriggers)

Beam: 36 feet (hull); 85 feet (outriggers)

Draft: 3 foot clearance between iceriggers and hull

Rig Type/Closest Tack: Imperial with foresail / 3 points
Speed: ••

Maneuverability: -5

Standard/Minimum Crew: 55/15

Soak: 6L (10L for naval ships)

Health Levels: 15/20

Description: The League maintains nine cruisers as its heavy weapons platforms, but considerably more belong to mercantile cartels. Able to transport 2,000 tons of cargo or 500 troops and equipment in tight quarters, the cruiser is the heavyweight vessel for both the Ice Squadron and for the League's major trade routes. The cruiser is the heavy hauler, the siege platform and the big stick of the Oligarch's diplomatic efforts.

Two of the League's cruisers are outfitted as troop transports; the remaining seven are equipped as heavy platforms. These seven vessels are equipped with two light implosion bows, one at the bow and one at the stern. Each vessel also has four ballistae on a side, mounted on the lower decks. The four ships commanded by Essence-users mount a single large Essence cannon amidships on a swivel platform, giving them a 360 degree arc of fire.

Relatively narrow to reduce wind drag and supported on two broad outrigger pontoons with two long steel blades mounted on each, the cruiser rides very close to the surface of the ice, which limits operations in regions of broken ice. A two-deck-high forecastle breaks the force of the wind, matching a quarterdeck at the stern, and the mast rises almost 100 feet into the air, where a crow's nest provides a long-distance observation platform to watch for crevasses, rocky outcrops or pressure ridges. The vessel rides heavily and makes use of two long steering spikes on either side of the stern. These must be jammed down hard into the surface of the ice in order to effect a turn.

The most famous vessels of this type currently on the White Sea are the luxury passenger ship *Frost Dream*, the merchant vessel *Pride of Fair Isle* (which holds the long-distance speed record between Icehome and Diamond Hearth — 11 days) and Blue Dragonfish's flagship, the *Victorious Over Winter*.



ICEHOLT BARGE

Role(s): Fishing and whaling platform /village

Length: 100–200 feet

Beam: 60–80 feet

Draft: 18 feet

Rig Type/Closest Tack: Dragonwing/4 points
Speed: •

Maneuverability: -4

Standard/Minimum Crew: 130/25


Soak: 6L

Health Levels: 15/25

Description: Iceholt barges are ungainly things. Squat, slow, square and as broad as temples, they serve as mobile platforms on the Great Ice for fishing, hunting and, sometimes, mining. Often, iceholt barges do not move for weeks at a time — and then, only when necessary.

Each iceholt barge is slightly different, but usually, they have two masts on their blunt bodies, and their flat-bottomed hull is equipped with a dozen or more steel rails to help it slide over the ice. In the event of a catastrophic ice fracture, they can float, but if anything, they are even more ungainly in the water than on the ice. The deck of an iceholt is crammed with small structures: greenhouses, rendering huts, the vessel's galley, as well as the pilot house and the





officers' hall. Below decks, an average of 70 workers and their families crowd in among cargo holds and workshops. Nearly all iceholt barges are utilitarian and lack any elegance or beauty, but some have been retrofitted with sculptures, paint and carvings by their inhabitants over many years. Over 300 iceholt barges are currently in service, and most of them winter in Fair Isle, Tuskstad or Shield.

THE HASLANTI LEVIES

The League maintains one of the smallest armies in Creation. Weather and agriculture provide the core reasons: if the League took enough people from farming, herding and fishing to create a sizable army, its people would starve. There would not be enough food reserves to keep famine at bay. In addition to the problems of feeding the nation, there is also the matter of bad weather. Assembling the whole army in one location swiftly is an extremely difficult task, and keeping the army fed and supplied there is a nightmare.

Each city in the League is responsible for contributing 1,000 infantry to the League's defense each year, in addition to those who volunteer for service in the Wind Fleet or the Ice Squadron. An additional 1,000 career soldiers form the officer corps and noncommissioned veteran troops, filling out the standing force to 10,000 men and women under arms. The army is organized and drills according to the principles of combat laid down in the Realm, with 500-man dragons, 250-man wings and 125-man talons. Since only a few Terrestrial Exalts live in the League, troops suffer through some training regimens designed to make a Realm legion into a shield for a group of Exalted working Charms.

Instead of a large standing army, the League relies upon a standard militia plan. Every able-bodied citizen of the Haslanti member states is expected to be familiar with arms and equipment, to be knowledgeable in the piloting of a glider and to have made a jump using a spider-silk parachute. Outwall tribes are familiar with riding the chosen animal of their tribe, whether elk or reindeer, and greenfielders who can afford horses know how to ride them, as well. Local militias are answerable first to the city-state's government — whether that be a council of Outwall chiefs or a mayor and a town council. Then, the combined militia answers to the orders of the Oligarchs, through the commanding General of the League. Young men and women participate for at least two months a year over at least four summers between the ages of 16 and 25, while older individuals drill in their standard talons four days a month. A few talented people are recruited for the 1,000-man veteran force or for commando teams assigned to the Ear.

The militia usually operates in 125-man talons, rotating through shifts on garrison duty at frontier forts, engaging in civil engineering projects (such as stabilizing emeralds, clearing roads and building wind-walls), and taking part in paratrooper and ranger training. In theory, the whole militia could take to the skies.

The militia is somewhat more limited than that paper ideal: less than half of the League's two active legions could actually take to the sky at once and only at the cost of suspending regular air boat travel to Crystal and Diamond Hearth. However, as the air boat construction facilities at Icehome and Shield improve, the militia will be able to make good on its boast. Furthermore, the militia trains its forces to function in small groups, as commandoes, rangers and scouts. The militia is less concerned about holding cities, towns and strongpoints. Instead, the militia would prefer to turn an enemy around before it reaches the walls of a city or town.

GENERAL BJORN VARJNISON

Bjorn Varjnison is the overall commander of the League army and militia. A broad-shouldered, brown-bearded farmer's son from Ironfall, he smokes a long white clay pipe and mutters to himself constantly. Though the present Council chose him and he has regularly received accolades from each of the district assemblies of the League, Bjorn worries that the Haslanti will not be able to withstand a major offensive from the Tear Eaters or the Bull of the North. As a human, he has a difficult time persuading Blue Dragonfish of the importance of building up the Ice Squadron, but he and Twenty-One Kestrels see eye-to-eye on the importance of the Wind Fleet. For his own part, Bjorn maintains close relationships with the Ears of the North.

Bjorn is also the grand-nephew of one of the members of the Twisted Stone Conclave, the band of Lunar Exalted that watches over the League's borders and occasionally meddles in Haslanti affairs. He is their ear into the military councils of the confederacy and one of their principal sources of information. Bjorn is particularly worried about the newcomer in the Ears, Elias Tremalion, who has supreme skills and yet also a taste for fine things in life. Elias, however, has noticed Bjorn's attention, and wonders why the General observes so closely.

THE EARS OF THE NORTH

The Ears of the North is the name of the Haslanti League's spy agency, though most people call them the Northern Ears or, more simply, the Ears. The greatest threats to the League's continued unity and survival have never come from the barbarian tribes or from Gethamane, but from the machinations of the Guild and the industrial spies who come from the Realm's client states on the Inland Sea. Against such powers, the military might of the Ice Squadron or the Wind Fleet means little. Instead, to fight forces that strike from shadows, warriors willing to

stand in the shadows and wait patiently are needed. Such warriors are recruited by the Ears.

The Ears' agents are recruited during their military training. Some are selected on the basis of physical prowess, to train as commandoes and rangers. Others are selected on the strength of their skills at languages or their cleverness or their talents at building small and dangerous things. Some are recruited to work full-time, but many more are expected to serve out of patriotism only part-time and perhaps only in emergencies. Few are ever allowed to retire completely, however.

THE GRANDMOTHERS

At the heart of the Ears sit the Grandmothers. In the small greenfield of Bertran's Ford near Icehome, a certain teahouse is filled with chatting and gossiping elderly women for most of the day. These women are the directors and operational board of the Ears of the North, and they report what the Ears learn to the Oligarchs. The Guild agents and Realm spies both find the notion bizarre. Why trust your spy network to a bunch of old women? It can't possibly be true.

And yet, it is. The number of the Grandmothers is unclear, even to their own membership. Some days, there are 30 old gossips in the teahouse; other days, there are only four or five. Each has lost both a child and grandchild in service to the League and was invited to join by the existing membership. Their ages range from early 60s to high 90s, and they come from all the tribes and territories of the Haslanti. There is not one senescent mind among them. At least one of their number since the League's founding has been a Lunar of the No Moon Caste. The present Lunar, Keen-Eyed Snowcat, is 86 (though her aged appearance is due to her shapeshifting skill and not her years). Keen-Eyed Snowcat's main responsibility is not to dominate the Grandmothers, but to hide them from the North's many prying eyes and ears. So far, she has been successful.

The five subordinate branches of the Ears report to the Grandmothers through various channels, and the Grandmothers report to the Twelfth Oligarch and whomsoever the Twelfth pleases. The Grandmothers sometimes speak with contempt of the New Shoot, or the Sixth Branch, which is their name for Elias Tremalion. Even as they mock him for being so hastily and unconstitutionally grafted to the Haslanti system, they respect his growing abilities and regard him with cautious optimism as a tool to ensure the League's continued safety in troubled times. As yet, they have not met him, for he seems too concerned with luxuries and his own comforts.

THE BLOODED HAWKS

The Blooded Hawks act as the battlefield operations teams of the Haslanti. Organized and trained to work in fists of five soldiers and double-fists of ten, the Blooded Hawks work to destroy the resources of enemy forces and

subvert the combat readiness of their troops. Trained in stealth, survival skills and hand-to-hand combat, the Blooded Hawks use gliders to sweep out of the night sky onto a Guild caravans or barbarian encampments. Their missions include information gathering, supplies destruction, enemy demoralization or leadership assassination. A cadre within the Blooded Hawks act as infiltrators and military advisors, as well. They blend into native societies and stir up trouble and rebellion against leaders who oppose the League and lend comfort and aid to Haslanti-aligned chiefs.

The Grandmothers have 20 double-fists at their disposal and six air boats second class for transporting these forces rapidly. Roughly a quarter of them are immediately available, with half usually on-call within a couple of days. The remaining fists are usually on an extended mission, on leave or training too far away to be useful. Captain Ryga Tufnalisdotter is the overall commander of the Blooded Hawks.


THE CUNNING DANCERS

The Cunning Dancers are the analytical branch of the Ears of the North. Where the Blooded Hawks are field operatives, the Dancers examine the papers and information the Hawks bring back and try to form a coherent picture of what the enemies of the League are up to. Codebreakers, cipher-makers, linguists and thaumaturges all work within the Dancers to help create a model of what the League's enemies are doing and thinking about doing and to shield Haslanti activities and plans from them at the same time.

The Dancers' understanding is far from thorough. Most information they work with is days, if not weeks, old. Some of it is years out of date. Dancer workroom maps reveal critical failures in their analysis: a broad semi-circular arc filled with notes and pinned papers covers over the region from Crystal south toward the Inland Sea before tapering out in the neighborhood of Gethamane and Whitewall but ends completely in the western reaches of the White Sea. The Dancers know little of the threats sweeping out of the Great Ice or the West.

In southern operations, the Dancers have a strong understanding of the activities of their enemies and rivals. Guild caravans are carefully tracked, and the Dancers alert communities when likely slave-raiders are near. The roads into Gethamane are carefully observed to see who is going in and what might be coming out. Whitewall and the Realm client states also get a lot of attention. Of late, the Dancers have also been seeking out more information from the war camps of the Bull of the North. The Dancers sometimes arrange to send in fists to investigate. More of the Dancers' information comes from paid informants in the Bull's hosts, however, who pass on information to Haslanti agents in the Soothing Speakers.





The leader of the Dancers is Five-Point Aster, an androgynous, thin man in his early 40s, with long, blond hair and a crippled right hand. He dresses in a tattered gray robe and began his career in the Ears as a codebreaker 30 years ago. As a boy, he found a group of Blooded Hawks on a mission and explained the meanings of their bird-whistle calls to them. As the God-Blooded grandson of a riddle-spirit, Five-Point Aster can tease meaning out of peculiar data, and he has an ear for truth.

THE SHAPERS OF FORM

If the Dancers are artists who see the picture the enemy makes, the Shapers of Form are the artists who paint pictures for enemy eyes. It is their job to conceal Haslanti force movements from watching eyes, to forge letters to enemy commanders and to mislead the spies of rivals. Some Shapers are field agents, who act as hangers-on and assistants to official ambassadors or travel with Haslanti merchant parties. Far more Shapers are involved behind-the-scenes within the League's borders, where they plant incorrect information in places spies will find it or lure agents on wild goose chases for the secrets of air boat construction or the latest information on First Age relics recovered from Crystal and Diamond Hearth.

Two secondary teams exist within the Shapers of Form, namely the savants studying First Age devices in their labs at Windcreche and the team of engineers trying to replicate First Age effects using Second Age equipment, stationed at Ironfall.

The head of the Shapers is Ka Mockingbird, a miner's daughter from the Great Ice. In her early 30s, she is red-haired and bright-eyed with wonder at what her savants and engineers can do most of the time. Her smile and laughter are renowned within the Ears, and she takes great delight in the cunning or the clever. Her favorite phrase is, "Is it simple enough to fool barbarians?" She helped design the folding glider 10 years ago, a critical tool in the Haslanti arsenal.

THE SHADOW KNIVES

The Shadow Knives, called the Nine Fists for their official number of troops, are assassins. Unlike the Blooded Hawks, who usually strike only military targets, the Knives can be sent against almost any entity whose continued existence threatens the League's survival. Trained to the same standards as the Blooded Hawks, the Knives also learn breaking and entering buildings and tents, stalking chosen targets and wearing disguises for getting close to their targets. They also study various crafts and entertainments to provide cover stories for moving around the League and beyond.

Standard procedure for sending in the Nine Fists is for the Dancers to recommend a particular person or entity as a target to the Grandmothers. The old women discuss and

evaluate the various reasons for killing the person and pass their decision on to Salmon Twilight. The Grandmothers advise him whether "accidental" death or direct action would be preferred and what other nation or organization should take the blame. The method chosen, Salmon Twilight chooses a fist or lone assassin who best suits the selected method. The leader of the Nine Fists has several God-Blooded available to him and a vengeful spirit from an emerald laid waste by the Guild, but most of his subordinates are human.

SALMON TWILIGHT

Salmon Twilight, a hard and hairy Wood-aspected Dragon-Blood from Windcreche, is the leader of the Nine Fists. In his 68 years of service to the League and to the Grandmothers, he has killed 60 barbarian chiefs and chiminage shamans, more than 40 officials of the Realm's client states and more than a dozen caravan masters and officers of the Guild. He is particularly proud of the merchant prince he assassinated in RY 741, who was taking slaves from among the Outwall tribes to sell to the Fair Folk.

THE SOOTHING SPEAKERS

Officially called the Speakers of Zephyr and Storm, the Soothing Speakers are the League's diplomatic corps. The largest branch of the Ears, the Speakers send out trained ambassadors and staffs to speak for Haslanti interests in the Realm's client states, in Whitewall and Gethamane and even in the distant East. The Speakers who remain behind read the letters from distant places, send messages to their colleagues across Creation and pass the most important data on to where it needs to go, whether to the Oligarchs, the Grandmothers, the military or another branch of the Ears.

Of late, the Speakers have said much relating to the Zephyr and heard more of the Storm. The destruction of the Tepet legions has raised a number of worries about the League's continued immunity from attack. Yet, the Speakers urge caution for the moment, concerned that matters might suddenly force the Haslanti into a war with a Dawn Caste Solar Exalt and his Circle. Even so, the League is well aware that they might soon have to choose sides.

ICEHOME

The city-state of Icehome is the capital of the Haslanti League. For merchants from more civilized nations from the South, the East or the Realm, the city seems considerably more barbaric and savage than anything they are used to. For the Haslanti themselves, the city seems more soft and easy than they would like. Outlying peoples feel that

WULGAR YHAINILSON

The head of the Speakers is Wulgar Yhainilson. With shoulder-length ash-blond hair, much jewelry, dark eyes and layers of leather and wool over silk, Wulgar presents the very picture of a Northern barbarian prince turned merchant.

Outward gaudiness disguises his inner cunning and vitality. Few see beyond the façade of the wasteful fop to the dangerous weasel. An experienced negotiator, Wulgar led one of the missions to Whitewall, three missions to Halta and four to Gethamane. He is not easily impressed and uses many voices: Wulgar can whisper, bellow, name-drop and drive the knife home with his gently diplomatic tongue.

Unfortunately for the League, Wulgar is overawed by the Bull of the North and is considering betraying the Haslanti to the mighty Dawn Caste warrior.

Icehome may have played out its usefulness as a center of trade and government within the League and that its population should be disbanded.

ICEHOME GREENFIELD

Icehome Greenfield is the largest in the League, and it supports a population of slightly more than 250,000 persons, of whom more than 100,000 live within or within sight of the capital city's walls. About 100 miles long and averaging 32 miles wide, the greenfield is walled in by cliffs more than 100 feet high. A black, slush-filled river flows sluggishly through the center of the greenfield, irrigating fields and orchards; numerous canals also crisscross the land, to supply managed forests with moisture and ease transportation. Ice-skating contests running several miles in length are common in winter.

Numerous towns and villages dot the landscape, appearing to travelers first as a pillar of thin smoke rising into the sky and then as a squat, close group of low houses within a strong wall. Gravel roads bordered by walls of black stones join villages to towns across the fields. Typical family compounds are laid out in a regular L-shape, with a whitewashed summer house, containing workshops and large summer quarters on one wing of the L, a barn for animals and provisions on the other and a two-story winter house with a kitchen on the first floor at the corner. Usually two such houses will share a courtyard, though occasionally four do.



ICEHOME THE CITY

The capital city itself stands in the lee of the black rock outcrop called Citadel Rock, just to the west of a broad harbor. The city's three main districts — the Old Market, the Artisans' Precinct and the Orchard Quarter — all lie to the south of the Citadel. Sixty-foot-high walls with 80-foot towers encircle the districts and join with the cyclopean blocks of the Citadel's bastions. The surrounding territory is divided into fields, managed forests and small farms, while the cliff walls overshadowing the city are mined for building stone and small amounts of iron. To the east of the city and outside the walls lie the docks, where new iceships are constructed and iceholts tie up in winter.

THE DOCKS

Seven fingers of granite extend into the frozen harbor of black ice. Five hundred vessels ranging from day skaters to 100-foot-long iceholts can crowd in for winter. From Ascending Air to Resplendent Water, men can cross the harbor, stepping deck to deck. On shore, between the corniche and the city wall, lies a rough-and-tumble collection of houses and shops. Some are old-style Haslanti longhouses, while others are Outwall-style *aghars* of reindeer bones and hides. More stone and brick structures rise here every year: warehouses for Haslanti traders, foreign merchants and Guild caravans who have neither the prestige nor legal right to own land within the walls. The Docks District's streets are mud and frozen slush in spring and summer and muddied snow in winter.

Loosely, the district is separated into three bands. The northernmost region holds ship construction and warehouses, along the main road from the corniche to the city wall echoes the noise of taverns, hostels, theaters and dueling and the south holds the most odorous businesses, including the slaughtering of animals and the tanning of hides. Despite the distance, however, the smells from this district infect the nostrils of the whole city.

OLD MARKET

Within the walls lies Old Market. This district, more than any other, frames reports of the League in other lands. Here, 20 blocks of roofed arcades form a grid of "winter streets" centered around five small squares open to the sky. On the roofs of the winter streets lies a second set of "summer streets." These are more haphazard and wild, crossing roofs and navigating around both huts and tents. Two-thirds of the city dwell in winter apartments here, among common rooms and halls for dances, parties and ceremonies. Socialites and traders use the winter streets only during the dark months. The rest of the time, these inhabitants prefer the summer streets, since a black market operates in the dark roads below.

Much of Old Market is built of stone and brick, with roofs of red tiles. Inside, frescoes of life on the Ice and in the

emeralds adorn walls. To foreigners, Old Market feels like one of the few truly warm places in the North, while, to herdfolk, Old Market feels like a prison. Old Market thus represents the struggle in Haslanti society between old barbarian ways and the emerging new civilization.

Foreign merchants have a particularly hard time dealing with this tension. Old Market *looks* like a business district one might encounter in any city of the Second Age: there are shops, banks, moneychangers, caravan guards, pickpockets and courtesans. At the same time, however, violent duels occur in the broader parts of the streets and squares, and League arbitrators actually *preside* over these lethal contests.

THE CITADEL

Rising above the rest of Icehome like a dream is the Citadel, one of the great achievements of Haslanti society. The Citadel of Icehome is the official residence of the Council of Oligarchs, the national temple of the League and the Ennead, the treasure house for the League's wealth and the longhouse of the people. Built of white marble instead of the black and gray granite common to the rest of the city, the Citadel seems to be one white cloud in a sky of storm.

A cyclopean wall supports and defends the Citadel. Within, five major buildings crown the summit of Citadel Rock. The first of these is the Longhouse, which serves as the Oligarchs' council chamber and the League's guesthouse. A white marble sheath shelters an inner longhouse made of wood, horn, elk hide and other traditional materials, to remind the Oligarchs of the League's beginnings. Ambassadors to the League sleep here their first night in the city, especially if they intend to be seen as friends.

Arranged around the Longhouse is the U-shaped House of the Oligarchs. The House holds 12 comfortable apartments joined by a gallery of glass, with meeting rooms for private consultations. Most of the Profitable Men disdain the use of these chambers for more luxurious dwellings in the city. Both the Deft Hands and the Landless Party make a point of using this house as their own, to emphasize their claims as representatives of the people.

Behind this stands the Treasury, a beehive of stone buried in the granite, with numerous galleries and chambers tunneled beneath. The Treasury is the League's central bank and emergency fund. It contains 100 jade talents and 12,000 silver talents, as well as trophies and mementoes from Haslanti victories. Some of its galleries are open to public view. Part of the building is given over to Haslanti records, which citizens may consult at any time.

Two more buildings stand at the northernmost point of the Citadel. The larger of the two is the Pantheon of the Ennead, a greenfielder-style godhouse with doubled porches, hearth room and godroom. Decorated with gold, silver, silk wall hangings and precious stones, the Pantheon is the most luxurious temple in the League. The

walls are lined with trophies from military victories; having the symbols of victories set here, rather than in the Treasury, is a symbol of great honor throughout the League.

A smaller stone building beside the Pantheon, built to resemble an overgrown *aghar*, is much more modest. The Tholos is home to the Haslanti's national hearth fire, and it is the largest of eight similar structures each located in a city of the League. The Tholos is the depository for stories of heroes and their sorrows. Any song of valor or tale of epic woe spoken or sung in the Tholos echoes instantly in the other eight tholoi. In a lesser way, any story told in the other chambers will echo softly here. The Tholos is the beating heart that binds the League together — so long as tales of individuals are told here, the Haslanti will always retain some of their barbarian character. The Twisted Stone Covenant, an elaborate net of shells, beads and bones that functions as the constitution, lies hidden here. It is brought out only on rare occasions.

THE ARTISANS' PRECINCT

Below the Citadel is the Artisan's District. Less closely packed than the Old Market, most houses here are small compounds: a workshop and a barn or stable, a summer dwelling for guests and visitors to use in the warm months and a much smaller kitchen and winter dwelling for the cold months. Homes are packed into triangular blocks with narrow alleys between them. Icehome's craftsmen and artists, from makers of Outwall-style tents to master armorers, live in this district. Foreigners and outsiders are rarely welcome in this part of town. In fact, ordinary citizens often challenge those they do not recognize. Traveling with a resident lessens the chance of a rude welcome.

THE ORCHARD QUARTER

The Orchard Quarter is a densely packed region within the walls where there are only a few small house-compounds. Narrow lanes and low stone walls divide the area into numerous orchards for fruit and nut trees, garden plots and meadows set with beehives. Apples, pears, walnuts and hazelnuts are the most common trees.

In summer, young boys and girls seem to run wild here: chasing rabbits and squirrels, stalking each other and terrorizing visitors with toy spears and tiny bows with padded arrows. While the Orchard Quarter looks like the estates of the wealthy, it is instead home to specialty farmers who raise export-quality honey, fruit, cider and nuts.

The children here seem on the surface to be a terrible nuisance, but the Orchard Quarter is one of the ways the Haslanti maintain their connection to their barbarian past. Although the Orchard Quarter is hardly a dangerous place, the trees and meadows provide a semblance of wildness in the city. Beehives and angry farmers provide mild threats. The fruit, the rabbits and the squirrels provide targets, and less-cautious visitors teach opportunism.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS FOR ICEHOME

Warrior: Cliffguard, Warden of the Citadel

Holy Man: Dreamseer, Roundhouse Firetender

Savant: Genealogist, Orchardist, Soil Manager

Criminal: House-Breaker, Dice-Tosser, Highwaywoman

Entertainer: Tholos Singer, Street Juggler

Bureaucrat: Arbitrator, Treasurer, Oligarch's Secretary

OTHER MEMBER STATES

Icehome is only the first among equals within the League. Eight other cities vie for the privilege and honor of being second, and each feels very differently about its membership in the League, with some supporting closer unity and cooperation while others look for opportunities to break away. Each city upholds slightly different values, with some cities choosing to develop greater civilization and other cities preferring a more honest and open, if poorer and more barbaric, lifestyle.

CRYSTAL

Crystal is the only unwalled city in the League, first because of its youth and second its position in a small but not particularly healthy greenfield accessible only by air boat. Surrounded by some fields, it produces most of its own staple foods, though it has difficulty with fruits, vegetables and high-quality animals much larger than goats. Much of this kind of food must be brought in by air boat.

Of the nine cities of the League, Crystal is both the youngest and the most eager for the soft living of civilization. Founded only 46 years ago, Crystal is a boomtown built on a combination of feathersteel mining and the excavation and exploration of a number of First Age ruins. Many residents either work in the mines or the city, seeking to gather enough wealth to move somewhere both more civilized and warmer. Many more are merchants who supply necessities and luxuries of more adventurous work — dry goods salesmen, tool manufacturers and mercenaries of all stripes. Stern barbarians rub shoulders with air boat captains in the streets here, while flute-girls and dancing boys call out from open doors.

Crystal's streets form a grid similar to imperial legion military camps, with the central market and major businesses located along the main north-south and east-west streets and smaller, more specialized markets springing up at the four squares at the center of each quarter: mining equipment in the northeast, animals and slaves in the southeast, First Age goods in the southwest and drugs and prostitutes in the northwest.

Crystal's population reached a height of 15,000 people about 15 years ago, and an additional 15,000 live in villages in the larger greenfield. The Common Council knows its city-state cannot survive without the League and the air boats for the moment, but many residents desire a tighter and more rigorous political and legal system than



Haslanti-style savage democracy. Of all the Haslanti states, Crystal is the most controlled.

DIAMOND HEARTH

Where Crystal is a frontier town seeking law and order, Diamond Hearth is less a community than a year-round riot. Savage democracy suits this greenfield of 80,000 people all too well. Property rights are more likely settled with the long edge of a knife than with arbitration. Forty thousand people live in the shantytown of a city, while an additional 40,000 work the surrounding icebound landscape. Of these, 20,000 are slaves who work the diamond mines and clear away snow and ice from the ruins of Tzatli.

Diamond Hearth lies clustered along narrow lanes of eroded mud and gravel, with handsome stone winter dwellings standing beside wretched hovels built of wickerwork, mud and broken packing crates. Surrounded by snowy wasteland in all directions, the weekly arrival of an air boat or iceship from Fair Isle or elsewhere is a critical component in the population's survival — if survival it can truly be called. Tribal ties have almost completely broken down around Diamond Hearth, and every family or sworn partnership works for itself alone. The district assemblies are little more than caucuses of the richest citizens, with the slaves and most of the general population shut out of decision making.

SLAVE LABOR

Perhaps 15,000 enslaved humans and 5,000 captured beastmen are involved in the mining of true ice, a blue-white material almost as hard as stone that retains its supernal frostiness even in the Far South — and that freezes solid any flesh that comes into contact with it without the protection of several layers of fur. Useful for building iceboxes elsewhere, here true ice is only a fearsome nuisance, a thing to be packed in barrels and shipped away, at the cost of some dozen or more slaves a month. Feathersteel mines, stone quarries and the hunt for First Age artifacts from the ruins of the city of Tzatli cost almost as many lives each month as the true-ice mines.

The casual treatment of life takes its toll on both slaves and masters. The bodies of the dead cannot rot in this arid, frozen wasteland, and Diamond Hearth has virtually no city services to remove the corpses. As a result, the district is gradually becoming a shadowland, a black blot on the windswept Great Ice. As the city sinks deeper into despair and gloom, the servants of Shogun Widowmaker have been carrying off the vengeful ghosts of slaves, and at least some of the living souls, into the depths of Tzatli.

FAIR ISLE

Approaching Fair Isle from the south and east, one sees a pair of tall hills swathed in white and a bright green

vale between them. Fair Isle is the largest emerald in the League, supporting a sunny-hearted population of 20,000 in an oasis of fine trees and well-proportioned stone houses with blue roofs. Fair Isle's streets are steps of honey-colored stone. A broad wall of red stone lines the harbor, and a glassed-in arcade of shops, inns and restaurants faces the ice. The second and third floors of these tall narrow buildings are given over to the farmers, artisans and fisherfolk, who make their living tending the needs of those who work year-round on the Great Ice.

Fair Isle was forced into joining the League; the island's westward and northward position makes it a critical lading point for iceships and air boats. Any ship making the voyage to Diamond Hearth must pass through Fair Isle. As wind deposited several thousand tons of good soil in the vale between the island's rocky hills, Fair Isle became self-supporting.

Despite a genteel and fragile façade, Fair Isle is a town of savage values. Self-reliance matters to the Twenty Matriarchs who tend the tholos here and act as the local government. Because only hard work keeps Fair Isle's bounty from being strewn across the Great Ice and lost forever, everyone is expected to work for the island's survival. The population also remain committed to the League — for now. Before the air boats came, the bare rock supported fewer than 1,000 people scraping meager livelihoods from the Great Ice. Wind-blown soil and regular trade have made the island prosperous. Still, the islanders recall how their grandfathers were defeated in battle, and consider how they might attain their independence again someday.

FORT BEAR

Fort Bear is a small city even in wintertime, with 12,000 people calling it home. An additional 40,000 live in the surrounding Outwall regions, herding reindeer. Nearby pastures are covered with reindeer and elk, interspersed with fields for spring and summertime crops. A massive outcropping of white stone shaped like a sleeping frost bear overlooks the town. Sacred to the herdfolk thereabouts, the burial places of the chiefs and matriarchs of nearby clans are hidden in caves along its flanks, and the tholos stands near the mouth of White Bear. The permanent town gathers just below it on the hill's flanks. In summer, the population shrinks to under 5,000, most of whom are shamans connected to sacred sites on White Bear, tribal elders too infirm for wandering and artisans involved in specialty crafts such as metalworking, *aghar*-building and weaving.

During the weeks of the Fort Bear Assembly, the population often rises to almost 30,000. The Assembly gets little business done with 40 tribes in attendance, but the town and surrounding fields become a massive trade fair, with Haltans, Linowan, Haslanti, Cherakis, Rubylaks

and Sijanese engaged in buying and selling their products. The League government frowns on this fair, regarding it as a usurpation of Icehome's traditional rights as the League's political and economic capital. However, the Oligarchs can do little to stop the fair, as it involves the tribes most loosely connected to the Haslanti as a whole.

IRONFALL

Ironfall lies near the headwaters of the Breakstone River, which flows from a half-frozen lake in the broken hills north to the eastern edge of Icehome's harbor. Between Icehome and Ironfall lies a prosperous valley of farms and orchards, and without that rich farmland, the miners of Ironfall could not prosper. Sixty-five thousand people live in and around the black walls, of whom 20,000 are slaves. Another 100,000 live in the greenfield, the surrounding emeralds and the Outwall.

Ironfall itself is a glum, dour city. Built on cliffs overlooking a massive cataract on the Breakstone River, Ironfall has steep streets that are more steps than roadways. The city's houses are built of black slag-stone dragged out of feathersteel and iron mines bored into the cliffs all around the town. Black clouds always seem to hang above the city, and a tremulous clanging seems to ring out constantly, owing to the number of smiths and metalworkers within. The town's population is hidebound and conservative, and they suspect constant threat from nearby Outwall tribes who wish to steal iron and metalwork. Of course, the herdfolk only want their products and nothing of the city itself. The town to them seems swaddled in gloom and frozen order all the time, cold as the metal Ironfall produces.

Ironfall miners regard themselves as Haslanti through and through, as loyal to Icehome as to their mothers. Settlers from the capital founded their city two centuries ago. Despite the city elders' loyalty, many wonder at the wisdom of trading good metals with herdfolk of uncertain, unproven kinship and peacefulness. While other Haslanti live with the tumult of chiefs and duels of honor, the townsfolk here have a mayor and a town council composed of prosperous smiths and important merchants; the annual assembly is largely a rubber-stamp body for their legislation.

Other Haslanti look upon Ironfall as proof of the evils of civilization. How can it be, they ask, that so many can live in the untamed North and yet be so dead to actual living?

SHIELD

Six hundred miles south of Crystal, Shield guards the League's eastern boundary. Because the city is poor in iron and agriculture both, the city's name is almost a joke. The League spends more to hold the place against the Tear Eaters, the dead from the Fortress of Crimson Ice and the icewalkers than the city has ever generated in taxes or tribute. The cliff walls sheltering the greenfield are low and

heavily eroded, and the wind batters the landscape incessantly — stripping away topsoil here, burying gardens in grit and dust there. Within sight of the city walls, 20,000 people grow potatoes and rye, collect shellfish and mine copper and tin from the surrounding hills. (Bronze production is one of the major industries here.) Another 100,000 farm the surrounding emeralds, fish in the eastern White Sea or herd in the Outwall. Divisions between greenfield, emerald and Outwall are thin here: for example, elk eat grass from what might have recently been a farmer's potato patch.

Five thousand live within the small curtain of badly built wall, most of whom are artisans and bronze-workers who trade with the nearby tribes. The city tholos stands within a park of wind-bent oak trees, and the flame of the public hearth within gutters incessantly. Most of the houses are only one or two stories tall. The tallest structure in Shield actually lies two miles outside the walls, a Guild caravanerai. Its three stories provide the largest single source of revenue to Shield. The Guild thus remains tolerated despite precipitating the Gethamane War 182 years ago.

Despite their poverty, Shield's citizens think they are more free and more independent than other Haslanti. Though the Wind Fleet and the Ice Squadron use Shield as a base, personnel from the military rarely interact much with the Shieldings. Tribal ways thus remain stable and steady here, much more so than in Icehome or even Tuskstad.

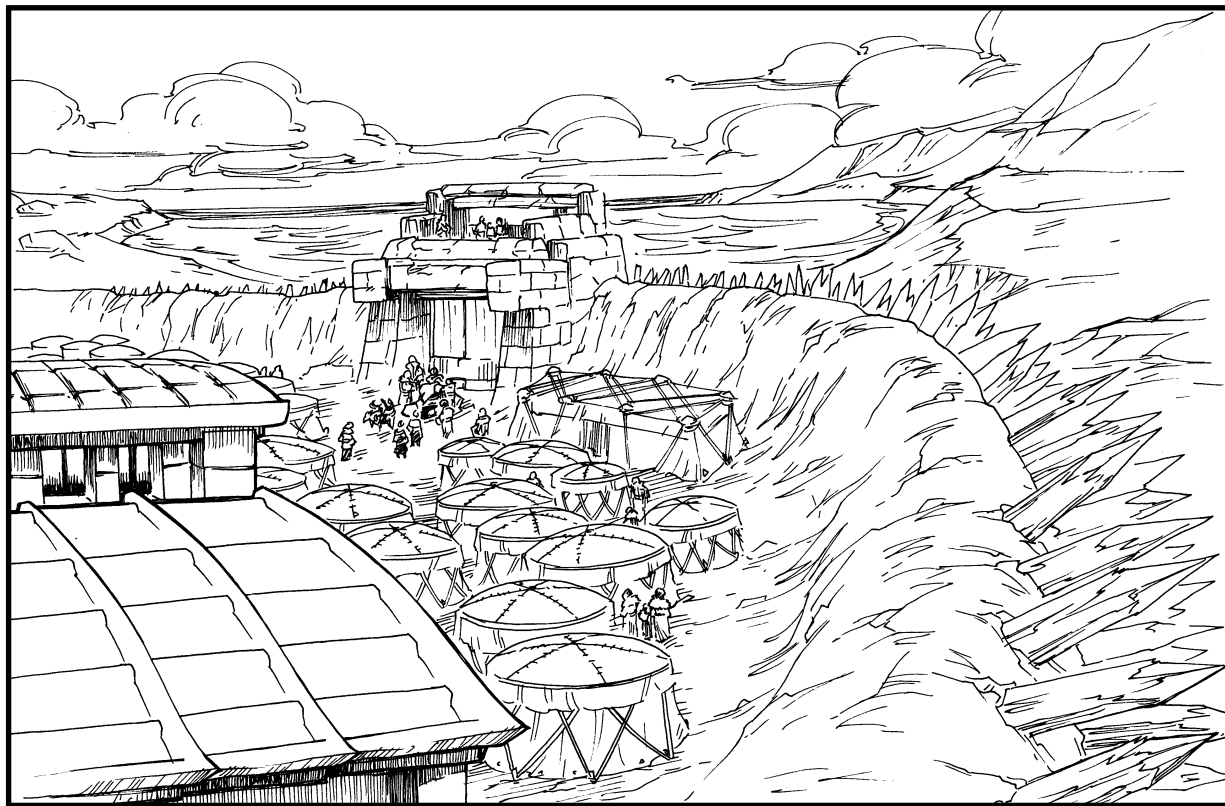
TUSKSTAD

Lying on the western shores of the White Sea halfway between Gethamane and Icehome, Tuskstad is the principal town of the mammoth herdfolk. In the months of Earth, Wood and Fire, Tuskstad is a trade center for salt fish, mammoth hides and ivory, as well as byproducts from mammoth hunts, such as hair and cheese. Most foreign merchants barely recognize Tuskstad as a town, much less a city-state. Instead, they see an overgrown barbarian camp of 15,000 people. Another 80,000 live in the city-state's greenfields, emeralds and Outwall.

In summer, Tuskstad is hot and fly-ridden, smelling of mammoth hides being tanned to make covers for the round *aghar* tents of the Outwall and drying fish and seal meat. The city wall is an earthwork rampart 20 feet high, set with a palisade of wooden stakes. Only four stone structures can be found within: two gatehouses, the tholos marking the Tuskstad's allegiance to the League and the longhouse of Bellowing Mammoth, the wife of the chief of the Laughing Wind tribe.

The Laughing Winds hold Tuskstad and the narrow greenfield vale that extends 12 miles down to the sea and 6 miles wide. For more than 80 years, this tribe has held the vale against all comers. Now, the tribe acts as a major intermediary power between the League and the more independent herdfolk to the south.





WINDCRECHE

Windcreche is a narrow valley on the coast of the White Sea, reachable by both iceship and air boat. Windcreche provides a necessary layover point for air boats making the crossing over the tundra to Crystal, and the 9,000 people who live here in winter make up the ninth and smallest city-state within the Haslanti League. Windcreche has little agriculture. Seal and walrus hunting are major occupations, and the city-state provides more ivory to Creation than even Tuskstad. Despite ivory's importance to the Haslanti economy (especially when buying slaves), Windcreche remains one of the poorer and more tribal of the settled communities. Few foreigners ever bother to visit except on their way farther north and east to Crystal.

Windcreche stands on a peninsula jutting into a large bay, with city walls of rough-hewn stones packed together to form wharves for both skate-boats for walrus hunters and larger iceholts and trading vessels that stop here to collect the ivory or to drop supplies for Crystal. A large, central square serves as the town market and the air boat landing ground. Rendering factory smells from processing whale and walrus blubber into oil and gas for refueling air boats fill every street. Most houses here are small winter dwellings, built of stone covered with plaster mixed with walrus blood (as red walls make it harder to become lost in a snowstorm). Most houses are two

stories high, with the kitchen on the first floor and the living rooms on the second.

Windcreche cows are famous for their small size. None is more than three feet high at the shoulder, but they produce the sweetest milk in Creation. Windcreche butter-cheese is a delicious luxury in the East. Unfortunately, the erosion in the surrounding pastureland, and the distended size of the whole herd, may cause this luxury to vanish forever.

EXALTS OF THE LEAGUE

The League makes use of much technology that any mortal can learn to operate. Humans can all learn to handle gliders, air boats and iceships competently. Yet, many modern nations founder when they try to operate completely without the assistance of the Exalted. The League is no exception: though its Lunar founders often leave the Haslanti to their own devices, the changing ones surely interfere from time to time. The League has a number of God-Bloods and outcaste Dragon-Bloods in its service, in addition to one Solar. There are also numerous Lunars operating within its borders, as well.

LUNARS

The Lunar Exalted are heavily involved in shaping and turning the League to their own purposes and ends. From Gerd Marrow-Eater, Haslanti unifier and warleader, to younger Silver Pact members, some Exalts of Luna

regard the League as their personal landscape, to be as much altered by their will as their own bodies.

GERD MARROW-EATER

Description: Gerd Marrow-Eater founded the League, and as such, he enjoys legendary status whenever he appears. Ranked among the murr-ya, he is a pillar of the Silver Pact, a warleader and chief. At the same time, he is a god to Haslanti, a dreadful elemental power of Creation — and a menace to the Dragon-Blooded, tracked by the Wyld Hunt.

Gerd's Tell is well known from the days when he challenged and fought the chiefs of the Haslanti before the formation of the League. Eagle feathers sprout from his arms and ears, and his head is covered with white down. Players of Hasanti are at +2 to Perception rolls made to notice and recognize him from the tales.

Gerd sees most of the League as his extended hunting grounds but holds a region between Gethamane and Icehome as his personal domain. Though he sometimes takes a direct hand in the League's management, he has wandered more widely in Creation in the last 50 years. At some level, Gerd is bored with the League. Having built a functioning society, he wants to go do something else.

Caste: No Moon

Nature: Architect

Tell: Eagle feathers

Attributes: Strength 4 (8), Dexterity 5 (9), Stamina 4 (7), Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4, Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

Virtues: Compassion 4, Conviction 4, Temperance 4, Valor 5

Abilities: Archery 5, Athletics 4, Brawl 5, Craft (Moonsilver) 4, Dodge 5, Endurance 5, Lore 5, Occult 3, Resistance 5, Performance 5, Presence 5, Sail 3, Stealth 5, Survival 5, Thrown 5

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Artifact 4, Cult (Haslanti) 3, Followers 4, Heart's Blood 5, Manse 4

Charms: Beast Instinct Method, Blossoming Gift of Luna, Body Weapon Technique, Calling Luna's Favor, Courage-Building Address, Crowd-Calming Pronouncement, Crowd-Inciting Method, Deadly Beastman Transformation (x4), Emotion-Shaping Technique, Ever-Wary Fox Technique, Finding the Spirit's Shape, Form-Fixing Method, Gill-Breathing Technique, Glorious Battle Presence, Hide of the Cunning Hunter, Humble Mouse Shape, Hunter's Eye Technique, Lion Roar Method, Many-Faced Moon Transformation, Masking the Brilliant Form, Moonsilver Shaping Rite, Ox-Body Technique (x3), Prey's

Skin Disguise, Sealskin Endurance, Sense

Sharpening Change, Sensing the

Deadly Flow, Shaping the Ideal

Form, Spirit-Scenting Tech-

nique, Tale-Spinning

Mastery, Tattoo-Cutting

Wisdom, Towering

Beast Form, Weather-

Scenting Method,

Whale-Breath

Technique

Beastman Gifts:

Bestial Reflexes,

Resilience of Na-

ture, Rugged

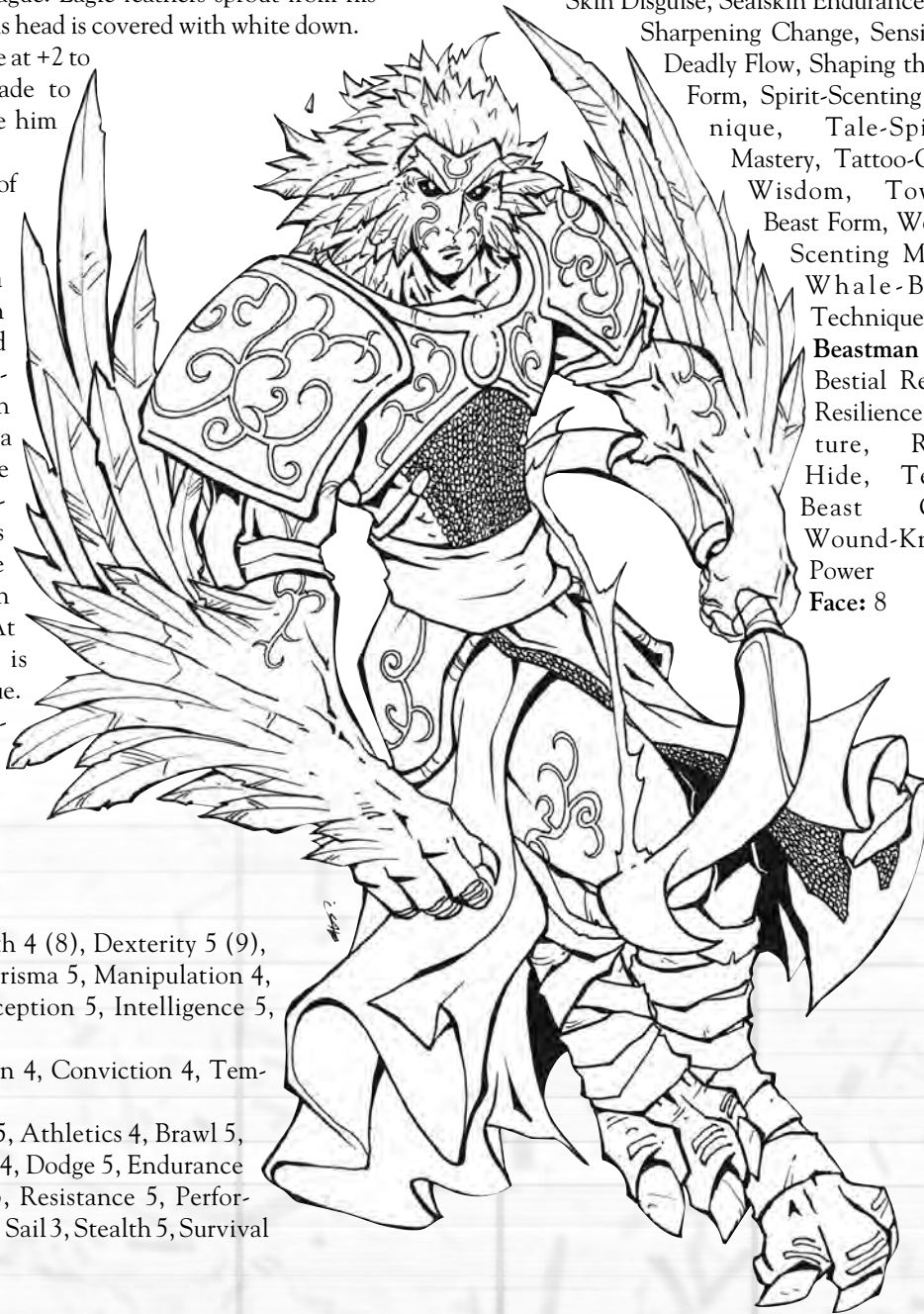
Hide, Terrible

Beast Claws,

Wound-Knitting

Power

Face: 8





Base Initiative: 10 (17)

Attack:

Punch: Speed 10 (17) Accuracy 9 (13) Damage 4B (8B) Defense 9 (13)

Kick: Speed 7 (14) Accuracy 8 (12) Damage 6B (10B) Defense 8 (12)

Bite (Hybrid Form): Speed 20 Accuracy 16 Damage 16L Defense 14

Claw (Hybrid Form): Speed 23 Accuracy 18 Damage 13L Defense 18

Moonsilver Short Powerbow(Arvida's Bite): Speed 10 (17) Accuracy 13 (17) Damage 8L (12L) (Rate 2, Range 350)

Dodge Pool: 10 (14) **Soak:** 7L/7B//9L/9B (Moonsilver chain shirt, 5L/3B)

Willpower: 8 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 4

Personal Essence: 20 **Peripheral Es-**
sence: 48 (52)

Committed Essence: 4

Other Notes: None

EXALTED POWER COMBAT

Attack:

Punch: Speed 10 (17) Accuracy 10 (14) Damage 4B (8B) Defense 11 (15) Rate 5

Kick: Speed 7 (14) Accuracy 10 (14) Damage 7B (11B) Defense 6 (10) Rate 3

Bite (Hybrid Form): Speed 20 Accuracy 16 Damage 16L Defense 14 Rate 3

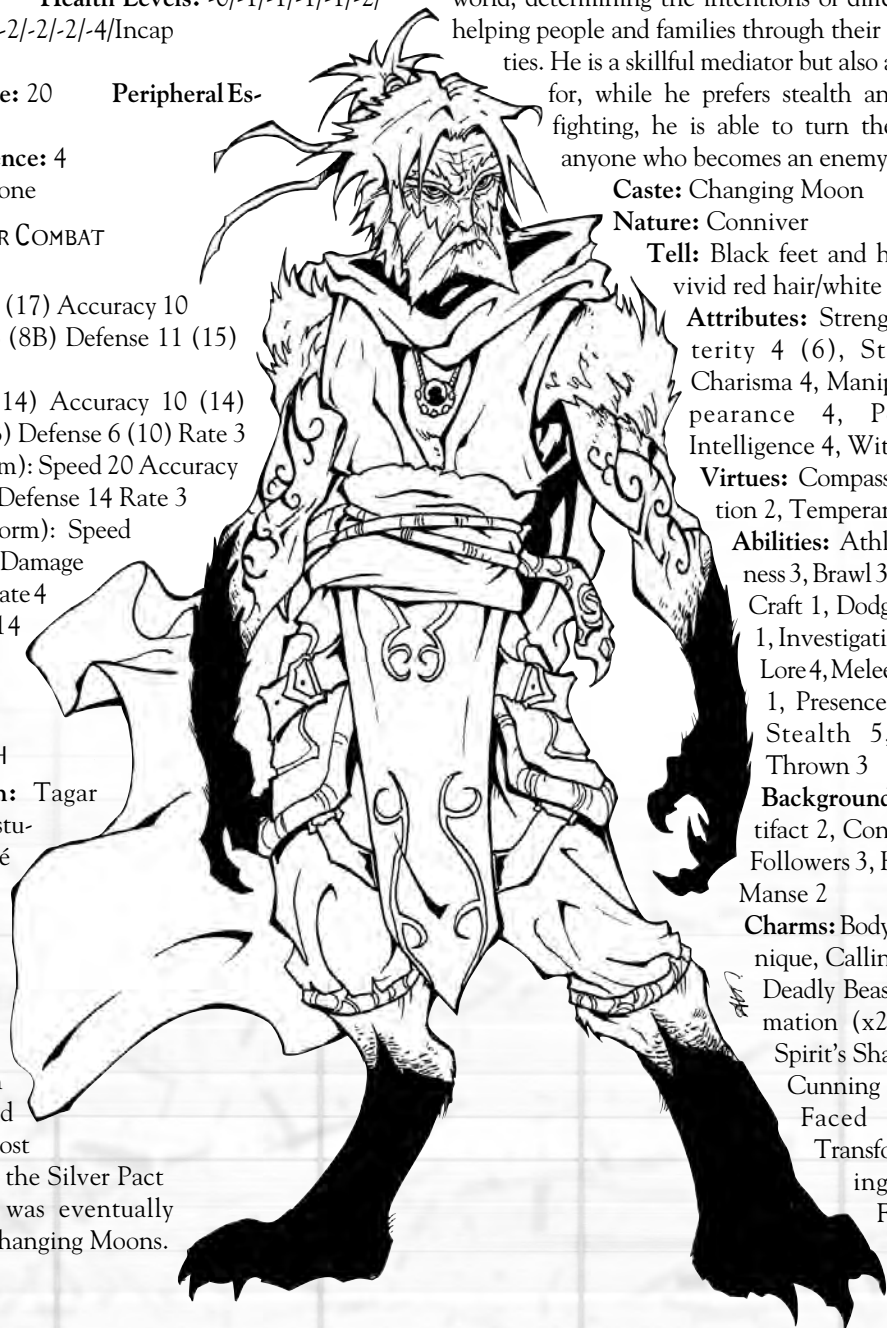
Claw (Hybrid Form): Speed 23 Accuracy 18 Damage 13L Defense 18 Rate 4

Dodge Pool: 14 (18)

TAGAR

FROSTBREATH

Description: Tagar Frostbreath is a student and protégé of Gerd Marrow-Eater. Holding Fox as his totem, he was chosen by Luna during the Black Winter of RY 631. Though he wandered Casteless for almost four years before the Silver Pact found him, he was eventually bonded to the Changing Moons.



Now, he acts as a messenger and herald for the Twisted Stone Conclave, the society of Lunars who watch over the League. Traveling among the herdfolk, he commands their respect and allegiance, for he knows the League's stories — he helped perform some of the events they tell — and he knows the way to influence chiefs and assemblies alike to do deeds pleasing to the Conclave.

Like a fox, Tagar's hands and feet have black booties and mittens, and his head and body hair are both red like a fox's; yet his beard is mostly white. His eyes are also fox-like in their shape. In his human form, he appears to be about 45 years old, and he has two long swirling tattoos down each arm.

Tagar acts as the Conclave's investigator in the mortal world, determining the intentions of different tribes and helping people and families through their various difficulties. He is a skillful mediator but also a dangerous foe, for, while he prefers stealth and quickness to fighting, he is able to turn the tribes against anyone who becomes an enemy.

Caste: Changing Moon

Nature: Conniver

Tell: Black feet and hands; fox eyes; vivid red hair/white beard

Attributes: Strength 4 (6), Dexterity 4 (6), Stamina 4 (6), Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4, Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 2, Temperance 4, Valor 2

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Bureaucracy 4, Craft 1, Dodge 3, Endurance 1, Investigation 2, Larceny 3, Lore 4, Melee 2, Performance 1, Presence 2, Socialize 2, Stealth 5, Survival 5, Thrown 3

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Artifact 2, Contacts 4, Cult 1, Followers 3, Heart's Blood 4, Manse 2

Charms: Body Weapon Technique, Calling Luna's Favor, Deadly Beastman Transformation (x2), Finding the Spirit's Shape, Hide of the Cunning Hunter, Many-Faced Moon Transformation, Masking the Brilliant Form, Ox-Body Technique

(x2), Rat-Head Technique, Shaping the Ideal Form, Stealthy Fox Method, Steel Paw Style, Tool-Hand Technique
Beastman Gifts: Lightning Speed, Resilience of Nature, Wound-Knitting Power

Face: 4

Base Initiative: 8 (10)

Attack:

Punch: Speed 8 (10) Accuracy 7 (9) Damage 4B (6B) Defense 7 (9)

Kick: Speed 5 (7) Accuracy 6 (8) Damage 6B (8B) Defense 6 (8)

Moonsilver Razor Claws (Arvida's Claws): Speed 9 (11) Accuracy 10 (12) Damage 8L (10L) Defense 8 (10)

Sling of Deadly Prowess (Winter Hail): Speed 8 (10) Accuracy 9 (11) Damage 8L (10L) (Rate 2, Range 250)

Dodge Pool: 7 (9)

Soak: 2L/4B//3L/6B

Willpower: 7

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 3

Personal Essence: 17

Peripheral Essence: 37 (42)

Committed

Essence: 5

Other

Notes: None

EXALTED POWER

COMBAT

Attack:

Punch: Speed 8 (10) Accuracy 8 (10) Damage 4B (6B) Defense 9 (11)

Kick: Speed 5 (7) Accuracy 8 (10) Damage 7B (9B) Defense 4 (6)

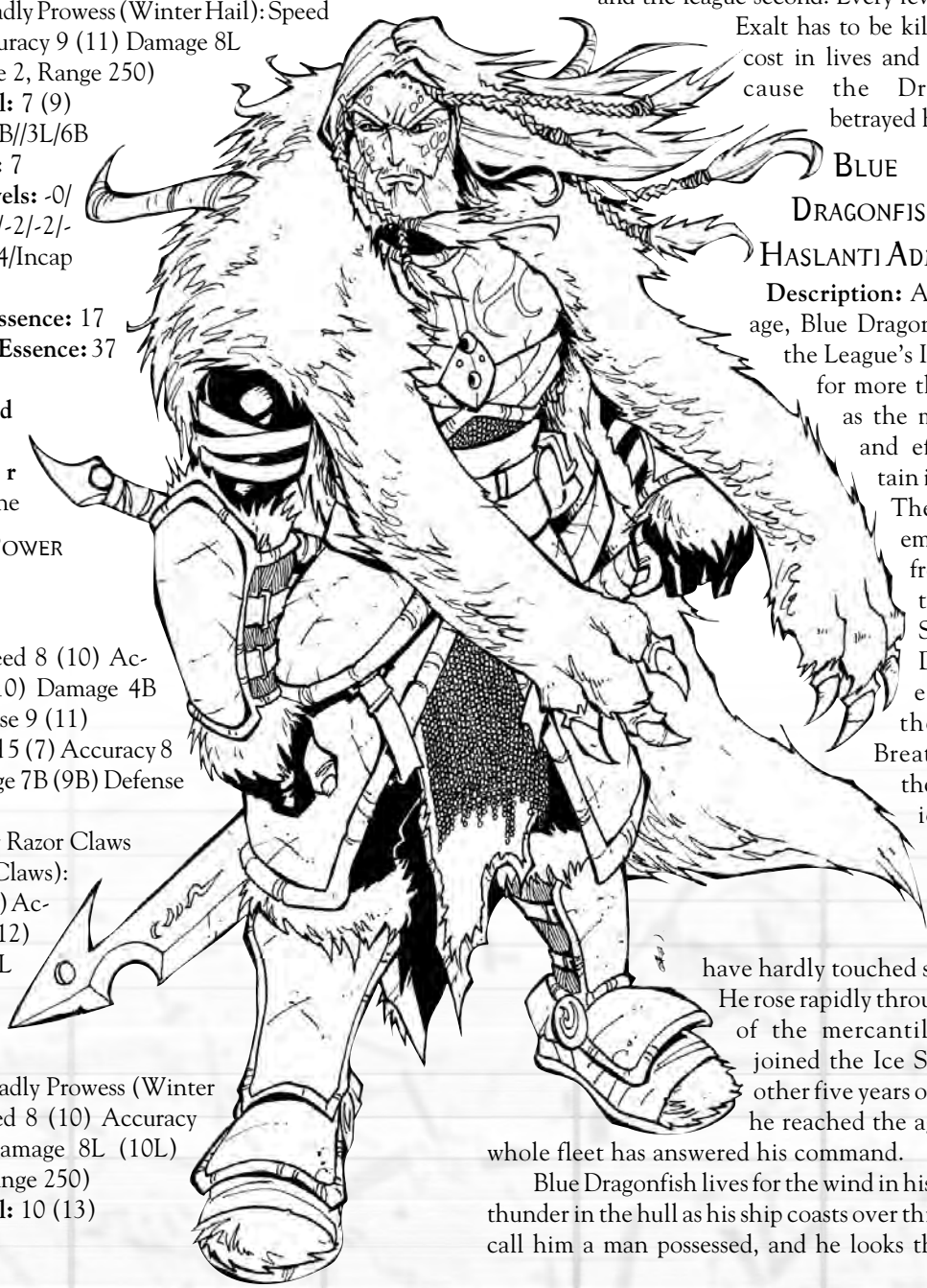
Moonsilver Razor Claws (Arvida's Claws):

Speed 8 (10) Accuracy 10 (12)

Damage 9L (11L) Defense 8 (10)

Sling of Deadly Prowess (Winter Hail): Speed 8 (10) Accuracy 10 (12) Damage 8L (10L)

(Rate 2, Range 250)
Dodge Pool: 10 (13)



DRAGON-BLOODS

Haslanti view the Terrestrial Exalted with a mixture of awe and suspicion. On the one hand, the Immaculate Philosophy made its presence regularly known, and people see the Dragon-Blooded with some hesitancy. On the other, Terrestrials have ridden roughshod over these lands before, and their motives are suspect. Few Terrestrial Exalted are allowed into the councils of the Haslanti — and only after proving both their skill and their loyalty. Even then, Haslanti Dragon-Blooded are much preferred to exiles from other lands. If anything, the Terrestrial Exalts are raised on a strict diet of loyalty to the tribe first

and the league second. Every few decades, an Exalt has to be killed, at much cost in lives and treasure, because the Dragon-Blood betrayed his people.

BLUE

**DRAGONFISH,
 HASLANTI ADMIRAL**

Description: At 92 years of age, Blue Dragonfish has led the League's Ice Squadron for more than 60 years as the most capable and efficient captain in the North.

The son of an emerald-holder from the district around Shield, Blue Dragonfish experienced the Second Breath while at the tiller of an iceship as a teenage apprentice. Since then, his feet

have hardly touched solid ground. He rose rapidly through the ranks of the mercantile fleet and joined the Ice Squadron another five years on. Ever since he reached the age of 30, the whole fleet has answered his command.

Blue Dragonfish lives for the wind in his hair and the thunder in the hull as his ship coasts over thick ice. Some call him a man possessed, and he looks the part more



every day. His beard is more white frost than salt-and-pepper, and his skin took on the blue of icebergs long ago. His long hair is always elaborately braided, so that the wind can set it flying, and his face resembles nothing so much as the crags of an iceberg.

Aspect: Air

Nature: Explorer

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 2, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Abilities: Archery 3, Awareness 2, Bureaucracy 1, Dodge 2, Endurance 2, Investigation 3, Lore 3, Martial Arts 5, Presence 3, Sail 5, Socialize 1

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Artifact 3, Command 5, Connections 2, Henchmen 3, Manse 2, Reputation 3, Resources 3, Retainers 2

Charms: Fine Passage Negotiating Style, Five-
Dragon Blocking Technique, Five-
Dragon Claw, Five-
Dragon-Force Blow, Five-
Dragon Fortitude, Flickering
Candle Meditation, Hurricane-
Predicting Glance, Ox-
Body Technique, Pirate-
Masquerading Method, Spring
Follows Winter, Storm-
Outrunning Technique, Sturdy
Bulkhead Construction, Swallows
Defend the Nest

Base Initiative: 7

Attack:

Punch: Speed 7 Accuracy 8 Damage 3B Defense 8

Kick: Speed 4 Accuracy 7 Damage 5B Defense 7

Jade Long

Powerbow (Master Winter's
Teeth): Speed 7 Accuracy 7
Damage 8L (Rate 3, Range 400)

Dodge Pool: 5 (4)

Soak: 4L/7B (Buff jacket,
3L/4B, -1 mobility penalty)

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/
Incap

Essence: 4

Personal Essence: 10

Peripheral Essence: 21 (28)

Committed Essence: 7

Other Notes: None

EXALTED POWER COMBAT

Attack:

Punch: Speed 7 Accuracy 9 Damage 3B Defense 10 Rate 5

Kick: Speed 4 Accuracy 9 Damage 6B Defense 5 Rate 3

Dodge Pool: 9 (8)

NELLENS RALINONA

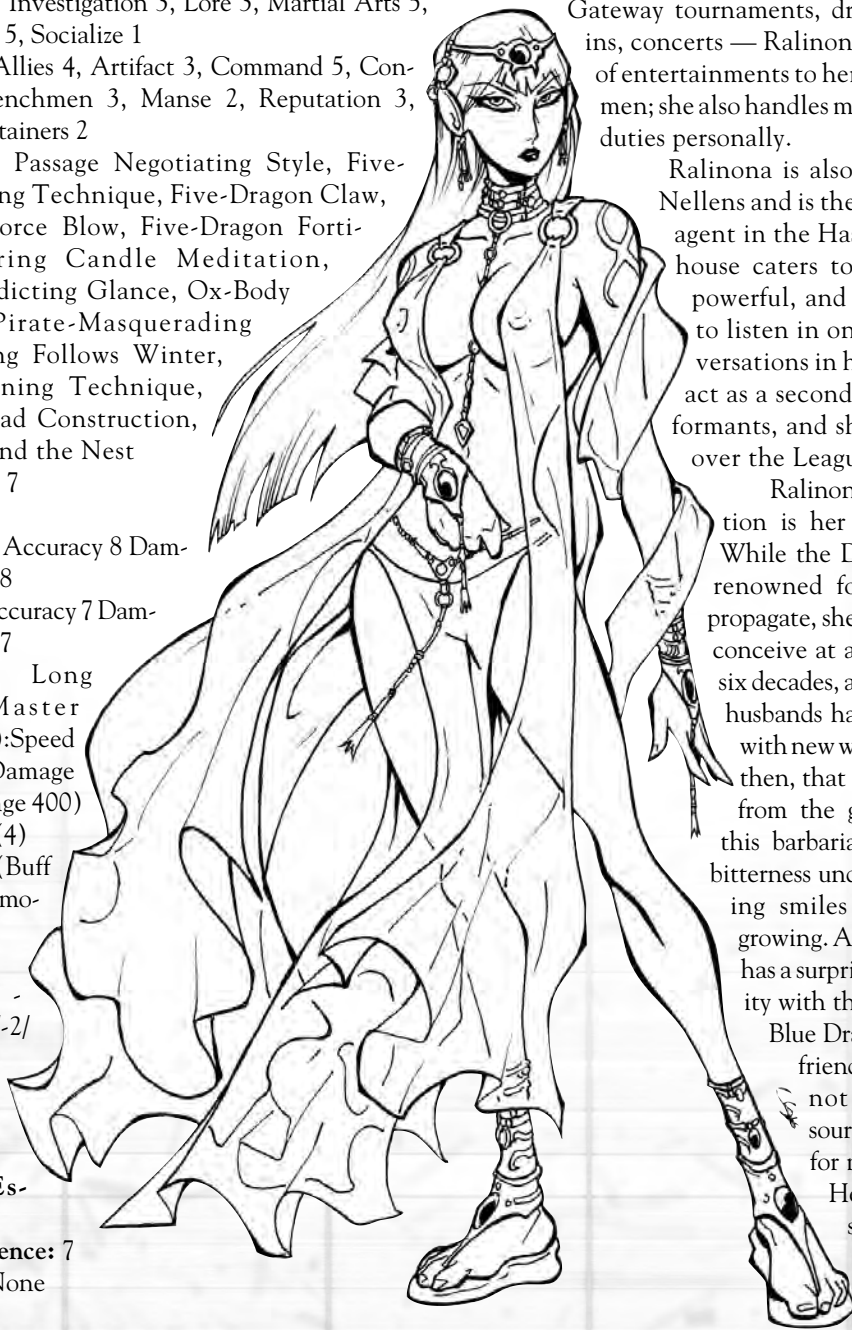
Description: Ralinona is the wittiest, kindest, cleverest and most successful courtesan in Icehome. Catering to a wide array of merchants, diplomats, tribal leaders and foreign visitors, Ralinona's house and girls (and a few boys) are famous in the North as the place to go for all sorts of entertainment — and not just sexual either.

Gateway tournaments, draughts round-robins, concerts — Ralinona provides all sorts of entertainments to her guests and gentlemen; she also handles most of the bouncing duties personally.

Ralinona is also a scion of House Nellens and is the Realm's principal agent in the Haslanti League. Her house caters to the wealthy and powerful, and she herself is able to listen in on many of the conversations in her house. Her girls act as a secondary network of informants, and she has contacts all over the League.

Ralinona's greatest frustration is her apparent sterility. While the Dragon-Blooded are renowned for their ability to propagate, she has been unable to conceive at any time in the last six decades, and her three former husbands have done quite well with new wives. Small wonder, then, that she has been exiled from the glittering courts to this barbarian wilderness. The bitterness underlying her charming smiles is concealed but growing. As an Air Aspect, she has a surprising degree of affinity with the Northerners, and Blue Dragonfish has been a friend and customer — if not exactly a useful source of information — for more than 30 years.

He is attempting to sway her into joining her loyalties with the League,



but in a very soft-handed way. She knows his ploy and seeks to turn it to her own advantage.

Ralinona has silky, yellow-white hair that the wind teases and toys with quite easily. Her skin has a yellow-blue texture to it, and her smile is both playful and intelligent. She prefers silks and fine Southern linens to scratchy wool, but the sight of her in her blue traveling leathers has been known to make customers swoon — or even bow down.

Aspect: Air

Nature: Conniver

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 5, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 2, Temperance 4, Valor 3

Abilities: Archery 2, Athletics 2, Bureaucracy 3, Craft 1, Dodge 2, Endurance 2, Investigation 5, Larceny 2, Linguistics 4, Lore 3, Martial Arts 4, Medicine 1, Melee 5, Occult 2, Performance 5, Presence 3, Resistance 1, Ride 2, Sail 2, Socialize 5, Stealth 5, Survival 1, Thrown 4

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Artifact 1, Command 5, Connections 3, Henchmen 2, Resources 4, Retainer 1

Charms: Elemental Concentration Trance, Seeking Throw Technique, Whirlwind Shield Form, Five-Dragon Blocking Technique, Five-Dragon Claw,

Five-Dragon-Force Blow, Five-Dragon Form, Five-Dragon Fortitude, Language-Learning Ritual, Loquacious Courtier Technique, Ox-Body Technique, Poisoned Tongue Technique, Spirit-Detecting Mirror Technique, Thousand Tongues Meditation, Voices on the Wind, Wind-Carried Words Technique

Base Initiative: 7

Attack:

Punch: Speed 7 Accuracy 8 Damage 3B Defense 8

Kick: Speed 4 Accuracy 7 Damage 5B Defense 7

Chakram: Speed 7 Accuracy 8 Damage 4L (Rate 3, Range 20)

Dodge Pool: 6

Soak: 1L/3B

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-

4/Incap

Essence: 4

Personal Essence: 10

Peripheral Essence: 29

Committed Essence: None

Other Notes: None

EXALTED POWER COMBAT

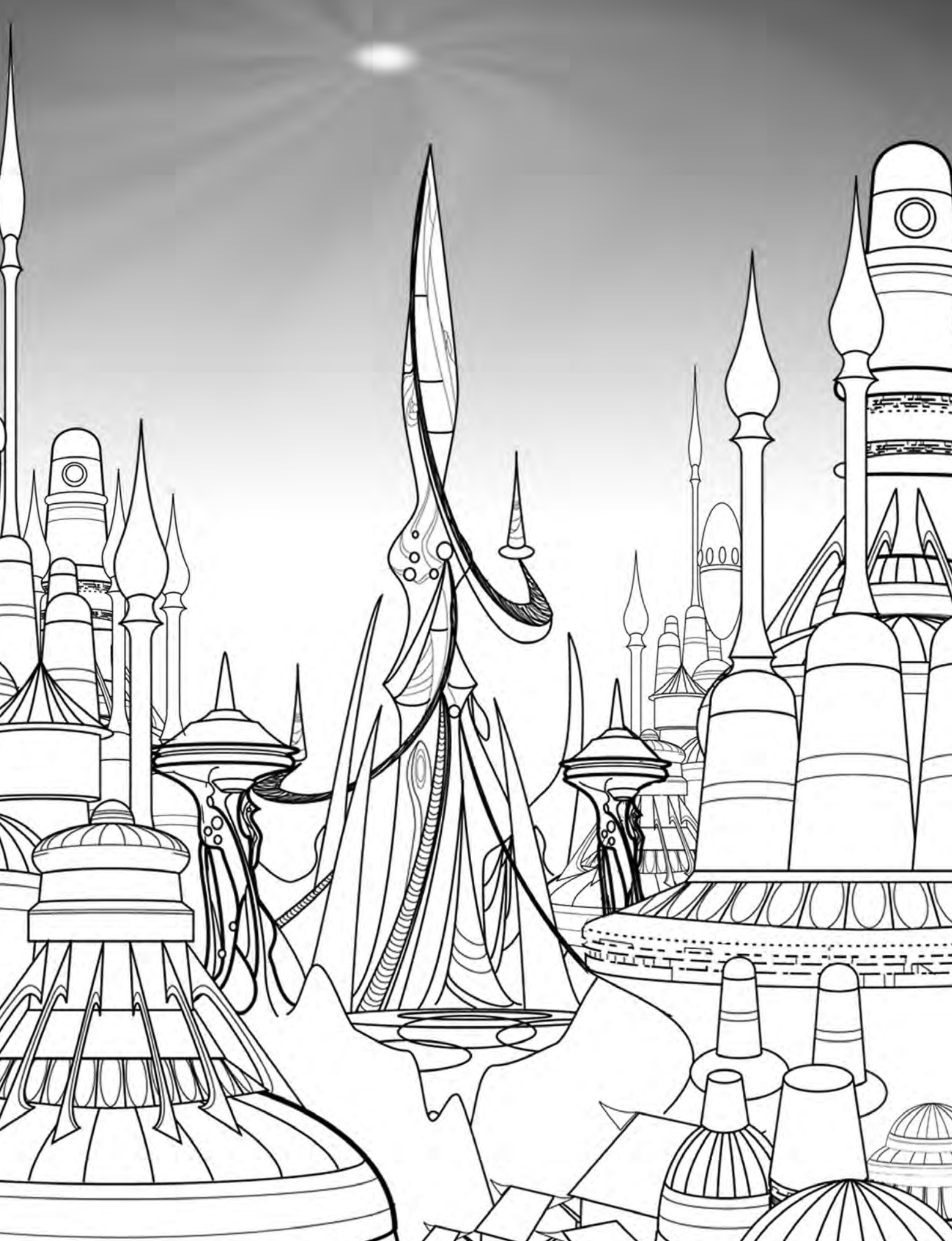
Attack:

Punch: Speed 7 Accuracy 9 Damage 3B Defense 10 Rate 5

Kick: Speed 4 Accuracy 9 Damage 6B Defense 5 Rate 3

Dodge Pool: 10





APPENDIX SWAR, THE CITY OF FORMLESSNESS CONSTRAINED, WHICH MEN CALL OLD CRYSTAL, AND WHAT LIES WITHIN



Far in the North of Creation, beyond the shores of the White Sea, beyond the farthest outposts of the Scarlet Dynasty, where the ice never melts, in a place so terrible only the hardest men can survive, there is a tiny city named Crystal. A mining outpost of the Haslanti League, one of Creation's less impressive rising young empires, the several thousand hardy souls of the city cling tightly to the icy land. They mine thick, rich veins of ore that have lain unharvested in the mountains for centuries, and, in addition, they dig into the ice and snow for relics. From these scavenger's scrapes, the men of Crystal brought forth shipments of scavenged feathersteel from fallen towers and many other looted imperishables from the small First Age ruins that dot the region.

Recently, everything changed when a team of miners searching for feathersteel veins came upon a cavern that was later found to be a fallen airship tower of a First Age city. The city's portals hung ajar, and the narrow corridor within led to the glorious vista that is Swar. Through the tower, the miners found an entire city, entombed under the ice — perfect, uninhabited, untouched by the Contagion — just waiting to be looted. From the vast Essence dome above to the endless streets below, the city was glory in amber. None of the three prospectors was a scavenger lord or anything remotely like one, and none of them had any intention of on-the-job training. When they first saw the city and its fluttering clouds of glittervanes, they wisely


retreated at high speed and informed the city elders of Crystal about what the men had found.

WHAT IS THIS?

This section is partly a treatment of a location, but that location is so dynamic and so certain to change and be changed by the visit of the characters that the material is written in the format of an adventure. The ruins outside of Crystal are a place in flux about to be explored. Characters are likely to be the first to go there, for a variety of reasons, and their visit there will change the place, so this location has been presented in a more dynamic format than location description normally allows.

THE DISCOVERY OF SWAR

There had been a great deal of suspicion around Crystal that there was a First Age construction of some sort in the neighborhood, because the local geomancy suggested a Manse that wasn't present and much of the material recovered in the area looked like military detritus of various sorts. The Haslanti assumed this was debris from military operations or work gangs or some other unknown source operating



in the vicinity of the Manse, and so, the Haslanti were unsurprised to find the large hidden structure, though they were obviously astounded by its extent. (In truth, the local debris field was hurled away from the explosion of the Manse that Swar absorbed to form the Freehold within which it now hides, but more on that later.)

The more the savants and the scavenger lords of Crystal (such as they were) learned about the city, the more excited and confused they became. It was the beginning of Crystal's short warm season, so after a few days of exploration and a few dead explorers, word of the discovery was sent back to the central authorities of the Haslanti city-states. Along with the notification of the discovery was a request for help, as the defenses of the city were obviously far beyond the resources of the people of Crystal to tackle on their own.

The city was dubbed "Old Crystal," due to its proximity to the hardscrabble mining town and the ongoing assumption that Swar was some sort of First Age wonder. Two months later, halfway through the summer, a more serious expedition arrived from Icehome with relatively educated savants and relatively competent scavenger lords.

What the expedition found after it arrived by air boat was not a First Age ruin any of them had ever seen. The find clearly showed signs of an inhuman magical power or some kind of fundamental flaw in its construction. The consensus was that Old Crystal was the product of the folly of Bagrash Køl, spun up from nothing using the Eye of Autochthon. They asserted he had built it beneath the ice to hide it from the wrath of the Scarlet Empress. They believed that Old Crystal was laid low, like so many of Køl's other wonders, when that sorcerer was destroyed by the Eye.

Explorations of the area near the door produced a variety of First Age wonders, both obvious wonders of the kingdom of Bagrash Køl and other strange artifacts whose nature was exotic and was thought, perhaps, to be of some little-known Infernal provenance.

These were mere conjectures, as the savants available to the Haslanti people are half-educated rascals with worn trousers by any standard other than that of an arctic frontier empire. The savants' guesses were good guesses, but they did not recognize the alien hand behind the tools. In truth, the lost city near Crystal had nothing to do with Bagrash Køl or even with the First Age. The story of the city the Haslanti call Old Crystal and that was once more commonly called Swar was far stranger, and deadlier, than that.

Again, the result of the Haslanti prying were stalled explorations and dead scouts, though, at least in this case, the explorers learned something — the city was not a normal lost city. There was something wrong with it: maybe something had gone wrong when it was created, maybe something had happened afterward or maybe some sort of sorcery guarded the place. Regardless, exploration demanded the utmost caution, and absolutely demanded Exalted scouts.

Furthermore, matters have become challenging, because time is now of the essence. The warm season races by, but the Time of Tumult grinds forward regardless of season. Characters who are in the Haslanti League or who are capable of travel at supernatural speed — through multi-day Stormwind Rider marathons, for example — may arrive before the end of the summer travel season during the season of Fire, but slower characters of merely mortal mettle will have to wait out the nine-month winter before going to the city. Nine months when other expeditions can prepare. Nine months of the Time of Tumult grinding forward without desperately needed magical resources. Characters will be pressured to make the trip if they are able, and, if not, they will be expected to be on the first air boat out of Icehome when the storms over the White Sea break for the short Northern summer.

THE PROFFERED REWARD

It is at this point that the narrative of this adventure properly starts, for it is at this point that the characters are assumed to become involved. The powers that be in the Haslanti League see a chance to better their nation and themselves, but only if they can extract the value from whatever sort of horrible magical mishap they've discovered.

This provides excellent motivation for young Exalted aligned with the Haslanti League. Youthful Solars or outcastes loyal to the state or hired on as mercenaries may find themselves at the forefront of efforts to explore Swar. Characters who undertake to explore the matter for the Haslanti League will be offered a Resources payment. This payment will be either enough to give them all Resources ●●● for five years or to increase their Resources to ●●●● for that time for characters who already have Resources ●●●. If characters take the payment as a Circle, it will give them a pool of Resources ●●●● for five years.

This is the kind of offer that the Haslanti are willing to make to any Exalted characters in the North who appear open to recruitment. The Haslanti will not hire anyone with known ties to another major faction (that is, characters who have known Backgrounds such as Backing, Mentor, Allies and so on relating to groups known to entertain their own ambitions). The Haslanti see that this salvage operation will be difficult and will prefer to employ experienced scavenger lords from the East if possible.

Also, unfortunately, much of the payment will come in the form of vouchers and lines of credit with the Haslanti government, rather than in silver and jade. Characters who *do not* dwell in the Haslanti city-states will lose the equivalent of one dot of the Resources payment, and characters who *do* dwell in the Haslanti League will never truly be free of recruitment attempts for "just one more mission" and the implicit threat of the instant evaporation of Haslanti largesse. But still, some characters may be Haslanti patriots, and some others may be young enough that this reward is sufficient to attract their attention.

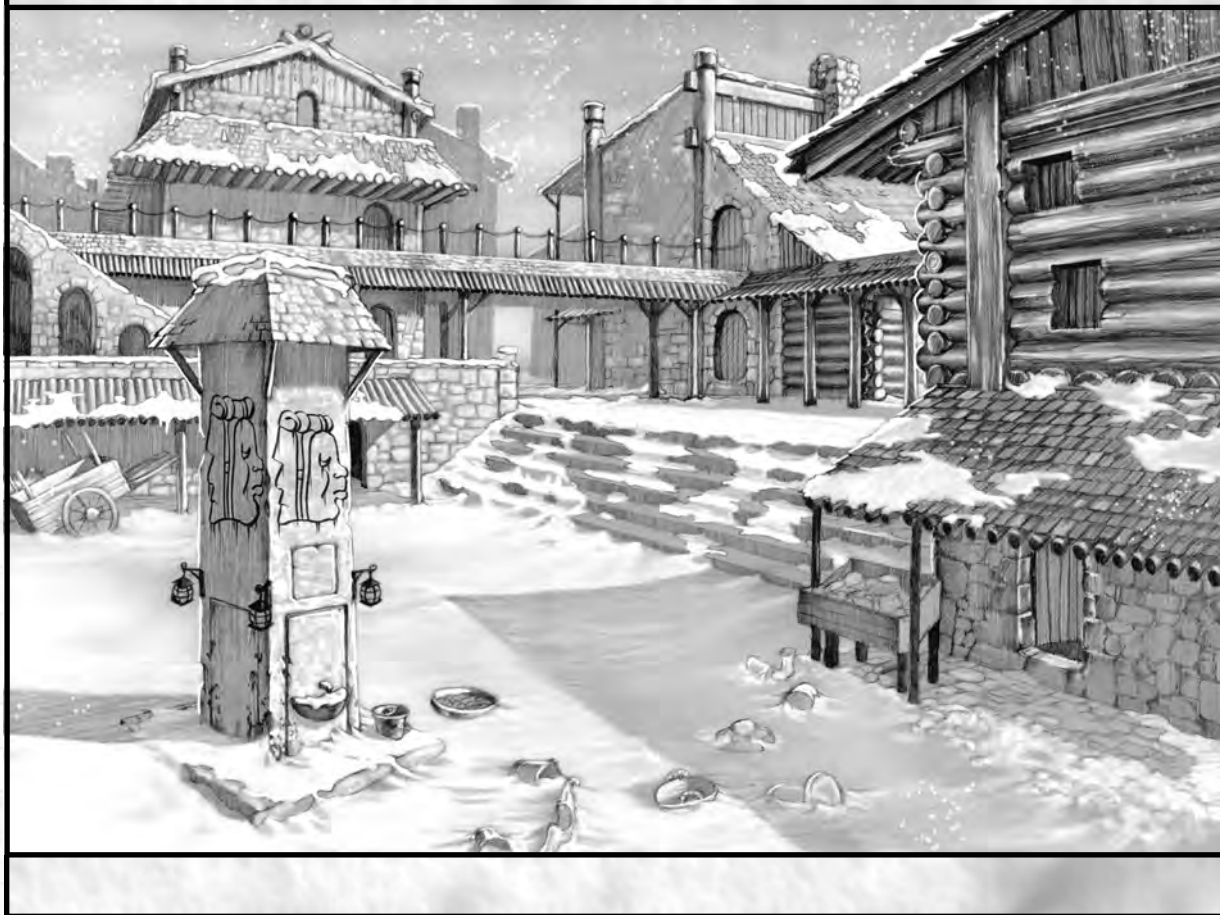
CRYSTAL OVER THE WINTER

Swar does not rest over the winter. If characters come out before the first snow, then matters will progress as they progress. If the characters come out to Old Crystal after the end of the nine-month winter, they will find that the entire city of Crystal is empty, with the gates left hanging open. Similarly, characters who arrive in the spring will find the military camp at the gate of Old Crystal likewise deserted, and no evidence or signs whatsoever of where its inhabitants went.

Meals are found half-eaten and pipes half-smoked, and there are a fair number of half-pairs of shoes. Of course, to leave Crystal, the inhabitants would have had to forge through feet of snow, and there's no evidence anyone ever did so. The only explanation for their disappearance is the word "SWAR" (a nonsense sound in Old Realm) written in huge red-paint letters in the town square in a perfect sorcerer's hand. Needless to say, there were no sorcerers with perfect First Age penmanship native to the city.

The exact mechanical origins of this effect are left undescribed, but it is almost certainly some form of contagious Beguilement through the vessels of the three individuals who discovered Swar. Assume the effect is cloaked from retrocognition by some form of fatelessness that rolls out down from the heavens like smoke, falls quickly over the town and the military camp — and then is withdrawn, and there are no more inhabitants.

None of these beings is ever seen or heard from again. Even if Swar is slain wholly and its every nook and cranny investigated, they are not there. There are no ghosts of them in the Underworld, and Heaven has not received their souls for rebirth. This matter is provided as a terrifying mystery — thousands of people are gone with only a single word left behind to mark their passing. Storytellers can use the disappearance to play up the danger of the city or can have the characters jumping and fretting about the possibility that the Deathlords have their hands in these matters as well. If this adventure is to have any mysterious parts, there has to be a mystery, so don't point the finger immediate at the city of Old Crystal.



Obviously, this reward is not the sort that is going to attract characters who can best Swar on their first encounter. The reward may, however, prove sufficient to draw characters who will subsequently become entangled with the city. Also, obviously, word of the Haslanti search for unattached heroes will spread, just as rumor of the discovery will spread among men and gods from the prayers and whispered secrets of the miners who happened upon the city.

Few know the specific nature of Swar, but all those who care to put their ear to the ground in the North will have heard the stories of the Haslanti League's discovery of a great city buried beneath the ice. Servants of the Bull of the North, the Realm, the Silver Pact, the various Sidereal factions or, really, any group in Creation with the slightest eye on the global prize might arrive in an attempt to steal the thunder of the Haslanti and, instead, find they have laid claim to a terrible threat.

It could also be that the players' characters are powerful enough to arrive on the heels of the news of how a dozen Exalted went into the lost city of Old Crystal and came out again totally changed, and set off across the land on errands they would not reveal. Such an event, at the dawn of the Time of Tumult, is ominous and sure to draw the interest of any powers that are not already attentive to these events.

EQUIPPING THE EXPEDITION

It is possible that characters will have all sorts of equipage when they arrive at Old Crystal, depending on

their fortunes and their ability to haul large loads over long distances. What they can procure onsite and in the Haslanti League is easier to describe. Crystal is itself not large or prosperous. There are no slaves for sale, and the only items above Resources •• available are those directly relating to mining, scavenging or wilderness living. Even most of those items are imported specially over vast distances via air boat, so if the characters want something more sophisticated than clothes and hand tools, the items may take up to a year to arrive if characters can't fetch the items for themselves.

Characters in Icehome can buy items up to Resources ••• in value across the counter and can probably secure Resources •••• items if they have the cooperation of the Haslanti state. In terms of how much can be hauled, probably no more than 5,000 pounds of gear can be moved — and that will take several air boats. Therefore, characters are going to be going on an expedition, not on a public-works project to excavate the city.

Characters who are not friendly to the Haslanti League will not be able to buy anything at Crystal or Icehome. There is no place around Crystal for foreigners to take exploring gear in any quantity except Old Crystal, and characters will be prevented from doing so if the Common Council of Crystal can stop them. If characters arrive after the winter, they will find Crystal abandoned, and they can help themselves to all the cornmeal, candles and shovels they want (and probably a Resources ••• transaction in money if they gather up every coin).



NARRATIVE ARC

The general assumed arc of this story is that the characters come to the city of Old Crystal following rumors of power, offers of riches or some personal drive to explore the unknown. They find the city to be unusual and confusing but, without a frame of reference, are left guessing randomly at what the city might be. After they start making progress attacking the city's riddles, the city starts to push back. Characters isolated from the main group may be subject to powerful shaping attacks that seek to subvert them to the needs of Swar, which are self-protection and escape.

Either the characters prove able to resist Swar's assaults and flee or perhaps even slay the city, or they cannot withstand the psychic pressure of its assault and leave the city of Old Crystal as the psychic slaves of the unshaped Fair Folk, sent off on a terrible quest to free it from bondage. Either way, when all is said and done, unless the characters wrest Fair Folk magic from Old Crystal or are Fair Folk who perform quests on Old Crystal, the characters come off rather less well than they went into the matter, as Swar has few possessions.

CHARACTER MOTIVATIONS

This adventure assumes that Exalted characters are motivated directly or indirectly by the desire to explore the lost city of Old Crystal and loot its riches, while Fair Folk characters are probably drawn by the possibilities pre-

sented by a powerful unshaped Fair Folk ripe for questing that's trapped where it can't escape.


What follows is a basic rundown of ideas for character motivations for this story, broken up by various Exalt types:

Solars: Solars are the Exalted most likely to come in contact with Swar. They are the Exalts most eager to search for untapped power and the most driven to desperate risks to meet their needs. They are also the ones most in danger from contact with Swar. Unlike the Dragon-Blooded, Solars are unlikely to immediately turn tail when they realize the scope of the threat. Unlike Lunars, Solars are not immune to the Wyld. Unlike the Sidereals, Solars cannot call for a huraka assault force. And yet, if bent to Swar's will, Solars will form the most excellent pawns.

Dynastic Dragon-Blooded: The Realm and any of the countless subgroups that compose it can all agree on one thing: they need more wonders under their command, and they don't need to pay anybody too terribly much for them, what with the incipient civil war and all. One way or another, Dynastic characters sent to Old Crystal are going to be all or part of an expeditionary force sent to claim new resources for the Realm, their Great House, their sworn brotherhood or some similar assemblage of worthies.

Dynasts coming to Swar are really in a terrible situation. They are far beyond the borders of the Realm, on the very edge of Creation, probably having just pushed the Haslanti out from the area by force of arms and having





occupied the area at swordpoint. Surrounded by hostile natives, the Dragon-Blooded probably plan on using the city of Old Crystal as a fortress as they loot it. Perhaps they will even get involved in this project before the Dynasts come face-to-face (as it were) with the City of Formlessness Constrained, for whom they will make excellent pawns. As noted above, the one good thing about Dynasts in this situation is that they will be so clearly outclassed they have a very good chance of surviving.

Lunars: The Lunar Exalted have their own contacts with the Haslanti people. The story of the city of antique madness beneath the ice near Crystal moved as quickly among the Silver Pact as it did among every other gang of wind-tongued gossips in Creation.

Lunar characters may well be young Exalts of low status who go to Swar on their own to explore there and prove their worth as members of the Silver Pact. Alternately, they may be sent as scouts or fetchers-of-trinkets for their elders.

In the latter case, it is possible that the young Lunars will be equipped with knowledge of what Swar's true nature is. The elder No Moons are as old and as wise as the Deathlords. It is entirely possible that young characters may be sent to Swar not to slay the city, but to enslave it. More than any other sort of Exalt — other than perhaps the equally arcane Forest Witches — Lunars can find a use for Swar other than as taskmaster or combat practice. Properly equipped with the wisdom of the No Moons, Lunars may force Swar to forge them Graces, wrest raksha magic or accomplish whatever other possibly fatal brush with power an elder Lunar can imagine for his young pack of whelps.

This isn't only a goal for young members of the Silver Pact. Older Lunars may very well have a reaction similar to that of the Fair Folk on discerning Swar's location, seeing it as a captive target for Lunar ambitions to learn the magics of the raksha. If the player group is running more experienced Lunars, it is likely that this is the reason they have come to the City of Formlessness Constrained and not on a search for a new daiklave or a heap of riches.

Abyssals: Abyssals intersect more strongly with Swar than might seem the case at first. The Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears' Fortress of Crimson Ice lies not far from the gates of the city (as Deathlords reckon distance), and the other Deathlords presumably have some interest — negative or positive — in having a vast unshaped raksha smashing its way through the North. Abyssal characters may be sent to free Swar, they may be sent to destroy it or they may simply be another pack of would-be scavenger lords, seeking to sack a ruined city of forgotten miracles — but wearing a rather dark set of clothes.

Sidereals: Assuming that the Sidereals become aware of Swar, it seems unlikely the city will not receive a visit from them. In some ways, the Sidereals are the least exciting visitors to Swar because, other than killing them, it offers

few threats. Sidereals who happen on Swar and are enslaved can almost certainly count on their fellow Exalted and gods in the Celestial Bureaucracy to heal them from this malady. And afterward, a strikeforce of powerful Celestial beings with Wyld immunity is fairly certain to pay Old Crystal a visit and leave the place a smoking Wyld-twisted ruin.

Unless the Storyteller wants to simply display how this terrible threat is a morning's work for the Five-Score Fellowship, it is probably best to make sure that there are real motivations for interacting with Swar. Perhaps the city has something the Exalted need, or is of some use to them or contains some secret that will not survive Swar's destruction.

Whatever the case, as with all Sidereal games, it's not going to be a very exciting game unless there's some external motivation that ties the adventure into the overarching Sidereal plot. Just as with everything else in **Exalted**, from the Sidereal perspective, it's all actually about them and their ongoing mission, and Storytellers must hook this adventure to their politics and personal machinations, just like any other game in which they are involved.

Outcaste Dragon-Blooded: More powerful Dragon-Blooded outcaste groups such as the Seventh Legion can probably make serious designs on ownership of Swar sight unseen. The Forest Witches have the resources to attempt to loot Old Crystal as well. While the Seventh Legion is likely to simply nuke the site from orbit and move on, it is an interesting question if the Forest Witches might actually be capable of making some use out of Swar. Certainly, there are certain aspects of the City of Formlessness Constrained that appear similar to effects with which the Forest Witches are familiar. While the specifics of their strange magical paradise were never explored, it is certainly possible that Forest Witches seeking tribute to their own masters will stumble upon Swar and find it more of a resource than a hazard, but that is a variation on this material that individual Storytellers will have to prepare for themselves.

Others: There are certainly reasons for Alchemicals, Dragon Kings and various other playable oddities to come to Swar. Most of these are the same as outcaste Terrestrials — these others are either with someone else or independent freebooters out for lucre.

Fair Folk: Fair Folk have their own peculiar reasons for wanting Swar. Those who are still loyal to the Balorian ideal are likely interested in freeing one of the great generals of the Balorian cause. Those who are more ruthless will likely see Swar as a handy piggybank of power to be looted as they wish and require in order to fuel their questing. Those hostile to the Balorian cause cannot fail to see that Swar would be a major addition to the arsenals of their world-destroying foes. It would be profound irony for Swar to be destroyed by a group of Fair Folk seeking to protect Creation, but it is far from impossible.

Storytellers should be careful — because if putting Swar into a story with Exalted is asking for dead characters,

then putting it into a story with Fair Folk is asking for worse. Asking Fair Folk characters to fight Swar is like asking Exalted of comparable Essence to face Raksi Queen of Fangs and her five angry Lunar henchmen. It's just not going to end well.

REQUIREMENTS

The city of Swar is a dangerous locale. While the mortals who have recently discovered it have come and gone with only minimal casualties, this is because Swar wishes to lure in those it feels it can use in its endeavors to escape. Characters whom the Storyteller wishes to come into contact with Swar and defeat it must have some very powerful Traits.

However, there's no reason that the characters must defeat Swar when they first encounter it. The City of Formlessness Constrained is exactly the sort of terrible hazard that young Exalts can happen upon and thereby suffer the sort of grave misfortune that defines heroes. Swar will not destroy those it ensnares, so it is not necessary that the city be defeated. Instead, defeat by Swar produces more adventures, for the characters merely obtain another patron whose requests cannot be ignored.

Swar treasures its victims more than anything, as only Essence wielders have any chance of undoing the surveillance patterns that lock Swar into its Freehold. If the players are mature enough to handle compulsion, there is no reason that a trip to Swar cannot be part of the initial events of a series, wherein the characters are compelled to obey their geasa with the city while presumably attempting to escape the binding. However, Storytellers should be careful with this, as players will often fight to the death rather than concede any control of their characters. Be sure the players know ahead of time that there are some fights that cannot be won, and make certain the players are willing to accept the loss of autonomy on their characters' parts.

For characters to have a good chance of defeating Swar and slaying it in a direct confrontation, the following Traits are required:

Powerful Abilities: Swar has an Essence of 8. Sooner or later, characters will not be able to allow it to sap their Willpower any longer. That means Swar can impose die penalties of up to -8 on characters. The group of characters that challenge Swar should, as a group, have at least one individual with them capable of accomplishing remarkable (difficulty 3 or better) feats each of combat, athletics, perception, strength and occult knowledge, even while at an eight-die penalty.

Real Might: Characters should probably have Essence 6, 7 for Dragon-Blooded, with focus Traits at the maximums permitted by their Essence and complemented by advanced Charms. Sorcerers should have bound demons, elementals or other powerful sorcerous servitors. Characters should each have multiple Artifact ••• type

items, and one or more Artifact •••• item in the Circle will probably ease matters considerably.

Wyld Immunity: Lunar Exalted are largely immune to the effects of the Wyld due to the tattooing they receive during their initiation. Other Exalted can achieve similar immunities through the use of powerful Charms. This adventure primarily involves challenging one of the unshaped Fair Folk. Characters who are not immune to the Wyld will find Swar the deadliest of hazards and a sepulcher for heroes. Characters who are immune to the Wyld's effects and can shrug off Swar's shaping attacks will simply need to survive the various hazards and wee folk of the city. Characters who are immune to the Wyld can probably slay the city even if they possess only Essence 4 and 5, provided they are sufficiently frugal with their Essence.

THE TRUE HISTORY OF SWAR

In the time of the Contagion, when the wards around the world fluttered and failed and the armies of the Fair folk advanced, in the first rank of the great unshaped swords of Balor was Swar, who raged first forward and then back, hither and yon, in the shape of a great vortex of the Wyld, which ravaged and destroyed Creation. In Swar's glorious rage against all that was, it advanced far ahead of the Balorian armies.

When the Empress' counterblow came, Swar was the first to absorb it. Vastly wounded, Swar struggled to escape the lash of Creation's defenses. Darting away from the waves of iron fire, Swar leapt atop a powerful war-ruined Manse and twisted it until it was a Freehold, and then, Swar pulled his vast shapelessness inside the faerie hill and vanished.

By the time the eyes of Creation's defenses finished with the denser concentrations of targets near the edge of the world, Swar was long hidden behind the Freehold's fatelessness. Yet, Swar was neither forgotten nor destroyed, and so, the sensors of the War Manses sweep forever across its last known location, observing, waiting. The unshaped raksha cannot be located, but it cannot leave, for the weapons that enforce the wards around the world will never forget its location. And so, it remains here, trapped and hateful, until Creation's end — or until Swar can manipulate circumstances so that the eyes of Creation's defenses no longer search for it.

Swar has no intention of waiting for the world to end. To do so would mean conceding to some other being the honor of that deed, and Swar is gravely determined to end the scourge of shape itself.

And so, Swar has waited. It has set its lures, and finally, it has been discovered. It has given out treasures, small glories, to explorers and killed a few who were overbrave. Reward and risk together is the hero-summoning honey, and Swar knows it. Soon, Exalts will come, and Swar will enslave them and use them to set it free.



Perhaps this will be, perhaps not, but that is the plan of Swar, the City of Formlessness Constrained, Which Men Call Old Crystal.

GENERAL APPEARANCE

Swar is in general appearance not unlike many small-to-medium-size First Age cities. This resemblance to the works of men is only superficial, but has served the city well. Because of this general semblance to the works of men, the city has so far been mistaken for one. There is a central Manse at the city's center and a tight collection of subsidiary Spires around it. There are smaller, less glorious buildings in a ring around the central cluster of Spires, and then a vast sprawl of small residential structures, with poverty increasing and the size of structures shrinking as the distance from the core increases.

All else about the city is a wonder, for Swar has never genuinely dwelt among mortals and its attempts to masquerade as a human city have produced rather eccentric results.

First, Swar's location is highly unusual. Old Crystal seems to have been swallowed by an ice sheet, or built there deliberately, for the whole city lies beneath 100 feet or more of pack ice. A glinting violet dome of Essence appears to hold the city's vast roof aloft, so, clearly, the glacier's arrival was anticipated. However, the city shows none of the other massive engineering works that would have been necessary to make it secure against the crushing feet of the herds of Mount Mostath. The actual reason for the location is, of course, because it is a faerie mound; the location was chosen to minimize the surface of the Freehold exposed to Creation. However, seen as a work of mortal or divine hands, it seems obvious that the city was built after the glacier was in place, for aesthetic reasons or military ones, either to decorate the city or to hide it.

Unlike other First Age constructions, the Spires are not of dazzling white marble, gold and glittering steel. The structures of Swar are made of azure glass, of red-brown stone, of darkly gleaming aluminum and of excellent faux jade in a dazzling rainbow of colors. Swar's central Spires are all of aluminum and faux jade, vast airy structures that could never withstand a stormwind. The five to twelve story towers arrayed around the Spires are built of azure glass blocks, also trimmed with faux jade and aluminum. The circles of residences around take the approximate character of tenement or apartment blocks, and they are universally built of thick, red-brown stone far more at home under the pale-blue desert sky than under the glinting violet dome and endless tons of white glacial ice.

And so, the city stretches, from black anodized heart, through blue glass and jade, to the thick red stone of the residential Barrios. All of this is lit forever in the tones of late twilight by the Essence dome above. The dim roads are occasionally dazzled by the coruscations of the fox carriages as they hurtle through the streets trailing shrieks and music and embers, and, far above the pavement, shine the

sundrop sparks of the glittervanes. These glass needles dart across the city in their multicolored packs, some swooping down to light the streets below, others hovering high above to dive on flushed-out prey.

The fox carriages, the glittervanes and a hundred subtle miracles that seethe across the face of the city, always just around the corner, all combine to give the city's heart a glittering appearance, for there is always some actinic light glinting off the many reflective surfaces at the city's core. In Swar's suburbs, the porous, nonreflective stone drinks in the light, and the effect is one of darkness, punctuated by the clangorous splendor of passing fox carriages or glittervane flocks, and succeeded again by black silence.

Swar's peculiarity extends to a far more fundamental level than merely eccentric choice of building materials and lighting. The buildings of Swar have rooms that are not arranged as mortals arrange rooms, and those rooms have doors between them whose location is dictated by the same alien logic. Structures are built so that one must traverse other houses to go between interior rooms. Doors pierce walls at random heights from the floor, and they are not always provided with stairs. Furnishings are scattered at random, and rooms seem to have strangely combined functions (bathing pool and bedroom, for example, or dining room and coal room).

In addition, the roads and buildings are not laid out any more sensibly than their contents, and navigation is a terrible chore. This is especially true in the outer reaches of the city where the red-stone structures crowd together in drifts of aimless sprawl, built along roads that connect to nothing and lead to nowhere. So far, no scavengers have penetrated very far into the city because of this and the hazard of the glittervanes, which put a quick end to Haslanti efforts to use small scout balloons to work their way forward over the tenements. Toward the center of the city, as the buildings become larger, the aimlessness of the streets is less obstructive, and it is easier to travel — but the buildings are far more difficult to move in as their scale is increased tenfold over the apartments and townhouses of the residential sections.

OUTSIDE OF SWAR

While the inside of the City of Formlessness Constrained is the meat of this adventure, the context for Swar is provided by the human geography around it. What follows are descriptions of the military activity around the entrance to the city, and of the nearest city. These are the most important elements of the mortal backdrop of Swar.

CRYSTAL

Crystal is a town of about 25,000 individuals located approximately seven miles south of the entrance to Old Crystal and approximately 800 miles north of the most northerly banks of the frozen White Sea. Crystal is also approximately 100 miles northwest of the Fortress of Crim-



son Ice, which is perhaps as uncomfortable a position as a colony of mortals had ever survived for long in, but the Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears has not yet destroyed it.

Crystal is a hardscrabble community primarily devoted to salvage and some limited mining of feathersteel. Crystal is more an outpost than an actual town, as there is nothing actually done there, other than mining and scavenging and some limited carpentry and processing of wild game parts. The mayor is an earnest, honest young man named Pillar of Probity who is a talented but impolitic idealist in what was until recently a career-ending frontier post.

There is a garrison of 50 full-time soldiers — kept small to avoid attracting the Deathlord's notice — but every adult has weapons and armor and is at least nominally drilled for fighting. There are enough supplies to survive for almost two years cached throughout the community and more hidden in the surrounding countryside. This is not merely paranoia about the nearby Deathlord — the area is closed even to the sturdiest air boats for 11 months out of the year. With only four months to reach the city, it is possible that the unseasonable winds could cut off Crystal from the rest of the Haslanti League for an entire year, making two years of supplies as a necessity.

Recently, Crystal has received almost 100 new inhabitants and all their food and fuel, but only for a summer's stay. The city is hoping that the fat-bellied visitors will be gone by the time the winter snows close back in, or there is going to be hunger and social conflict over the winter from overcrowding.

Worse, many of the people of Crystal know that they are under increasing threat from what has been discovered around the city. While many of the inhabitants of the city are ignorant in any conventional sense, they are all familiar with the corruptive effects that wealth and the discovery of artifacts can have on individuals. They know there is a Deathlord 100 or so miles away, a world full of hostile powers, a city full of wonders that nobody can get at or use and not enough empty seats on the air boats back to take off the population and no efforts being made to do anything of the sort.

THE ENTRANCE TO SWAR

Seven miles from Crystal, the area outside of Old Crystal has become the bivouac of a significant force of Haslanti League air marines. A company of 100 troops is now deployed in the area, dug into an ice-palisade fortification they have built around the entrance with compacted snow and water. A group of 30 are always guarding the entrance to the city, another 40 or so are loose in the camp and able to spring to arms relatively quickly and 30 are on patrol during any given day.

The 100 troops require a major supply effort from the Haslanti League. It's not as if Crystal has enough surplus to supply them. As a result, there is a massive supply dumping

THE NATURE OF THE DOME

It is likely that characters will spend some time attempting to discern exactly what the purple Essence dome over Swar really is.

What the dome is not is real. Swar is actually “much smaller inside” than the city in the ice, even at that city's smallest. There is no giant dome holding up tons of ice. There is merely an arcane construct that exists coterminous with most of the ice. The format of a domed city with a single entrance serves to keep the exposed surfaces of the Freehold as small as possible, but a great deal of effort has been spent by the city to make the Essence dome look convincing.

For all Swar's many weaknesses in understanding mortals and mortal life, Swar has a good understand of the mechanics of Essence and can fake mortal sorcery well enough — Swar certainly saw plenty of it in the days before the Contagion.

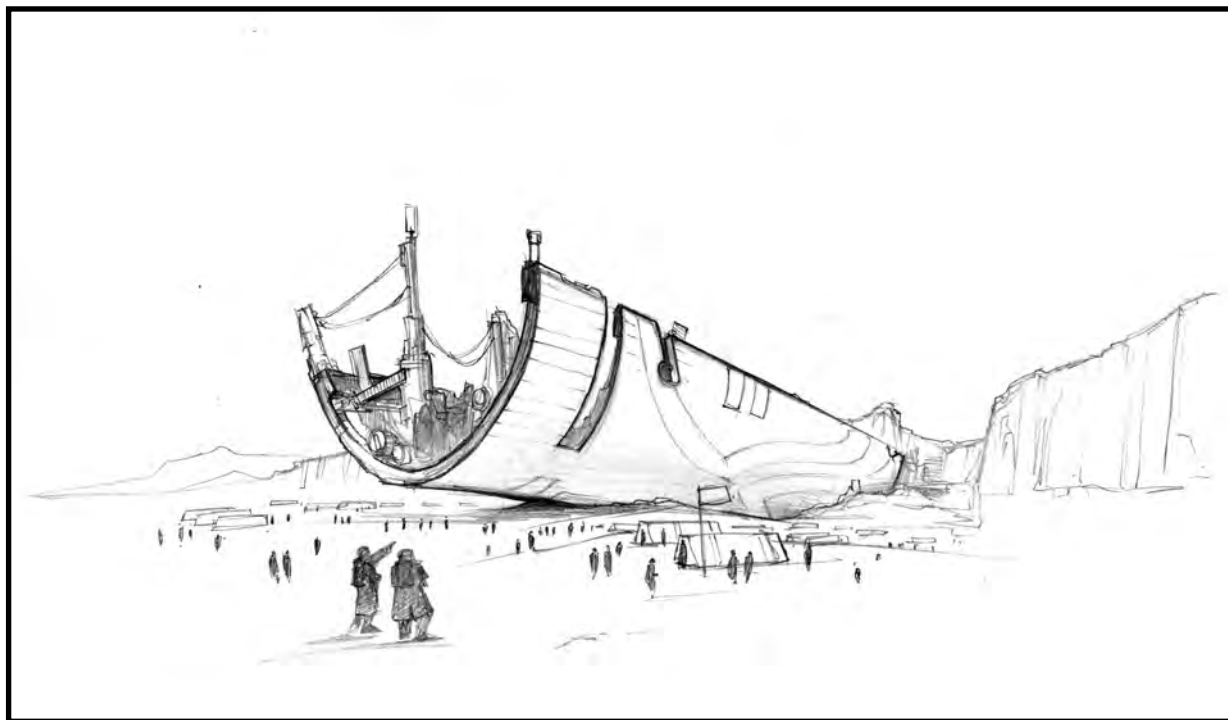
Inspected visually, the dome is absolutely indistinguishable from mortal sorcery. Even if inspected with All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight or some similar comprehensive Essence vision, the dome will most likely appear to be a complicated Celestial-level sorcery effect. Players of observers must succeed at a difficulty 7 Perception + Occult roll for their characters to discern that the Essence patterns in the sorcery are unnatural and rooted in the Wyld.

program going on, as the League attempts to build sufficient supply caches for the kind of massive labor force that will be required to loot the city and the equally massive military force that will be required to protect the looting efforts. This program is only in its initial stages, because there is obviously no way to plan around the nearby presence of the Deathlord and little idea which Exalted will willingly take up arms for the Haslanti; the matter is still in the preliminary stages until a plan is concocted.

The actual entrance to Swar seems to be a fallen airship tower, built so as to imply the city had only one. This is unusual in a city of that size (successful Intelligence + Lore roll, difficulty 4, to realize), which should have at least two such towers. Feel free to suggest stealth or lack of resources or a build date after the decline of airships had begun (definitely the case if Bagrash Köl built it) in order to explain the discrepancy.

However, one thing is obvious upon inspecting the mad city that lies within and the airship tower itself (assuming success on a Perception + Investigation check, difficulty 3) — which is that the airship tower is of modular, simplified military construction, while the city inside is obviously not.





Characters who garner at least five successes from the Perception + Investigation roll will notice that the airship tower itself is clearly of a style older than the city itself but the amount of wear on the tower seems equivalent, roughly, to when preserved evidence suggests Swar itself was raised — shortly before or after the Contagion.

THE SHAPE OF SWAR

In truth, Swar has no shape. Its self is an illusion, its image a lie. All things in Swar are malleable and can flow and twist at the will of the unshaped's selves, and the city is itself aware, alive and willing to mislead, for the raksha's subordinate selves use the Freehold's Throne Room, Fountainhead and Stronghold to exert their influence across the Freehold.

Yet, Swar is content with its city-self and has, in some ways, succumbed to the lure of shape, for though Swar is bizarre, it is, without a doubt, constant. Even when Swar flows like quicksilver, the shape of reality inside Swar tends to stay in an urban context. Rarely does the scene dissolve into strange new vistas, but instead, unreality creeps or leaps down the urban byways. Areas that are not under the active influence of Swar's shaping powers generally revert quickly to their original urban décor, spattered here and there with trivial memorials to whatever madness once held sway.

Still, tendencies aside, there is no shape to Swar, save what the city gives itself, and its tendency toward appearing to be a certain city is to give the adventure character and predictability. While inside the city, there is no limit to the forms of madness the characters can seem to experience. On

the other hand, both Swar and your story have a certain requirement of constancy. Don't let the game spiral off into crazed chaos. Swar is a city of illusion and madness, not just another random fluffy cloud of mutations.

THE TRUE EXTENT OF SWAR

This is the mortal description of Swar. Swar is a rather different place from the perspective of the raksha. Swar is a level 5 Freehold, meaning it naturally has 10 waypoints. It has a Stronghold, however, and the Sword Grace of the lesser self that claims that Stronghold is 5, so Swar has an area of 50 waypoints as a result. This is vast extent for Freehold in Creation and is enabled only by the powerful Stronghold of a mighty unshaped Fair Folk.

What this all means in terms of mortal distance is: waypoints can be stretched to cover a mortal distance of some 30 miles. Swar could make itself as much as 1,500 miles deep if it shaped itself into a chain of waypoints only one waypoint wide. Swar has a more complex structure, however, which makes it easier to penetrate but keeps Swar's self in a tight defensive package.

Swar's true structure is a 4x5 grid of waypoints that comprise the Barrios around the city, followed by two stacked 3x3 grids of waypoints that represent the city's subterranean zone and its azure-glass administrative district, followed by the complicated spiral that is the city's administrative towers.

To the eye, seen from the entrance, Swar is small, and it is perhaps a mile or a mile and a half from the outside of the city to the central Spire. This is far from the truth and

ROADS AND ROOMS

The twin perils of navigating the roads and rooms of Swar form complementary challenges to explorers. In the outer reaches of the city, the buildings themselves are relatively easy to navigate, but the directionless dead-end streets that connect them are maddening, and they do not aid in navigation whatsoever. On the other hand, virtually any stunt requiring some sort of urban architecture is possible at any time.

In the sprawling tenements of the city, it is generally a difficulty 2 Dexterity + Athletics roll to move in a house — for example to enter it, exit it or change rooms. Characters with perfect balance (as in a Charm) and who can leap 10 or more yards vertically can move freely. Characters who cannot leap at least 10 yards vertically or receive a lift from someone who can will require either stunts or the mortal paraphernalia of ropes, bridges, slings and many other specialized pieces of gear in order to move about.

In the vast blue-glass cathedrals of the Heights, where the buildings are huge and the entrances obscure, the check can be at difficulty 3, 4 or even higher to move between rooms, and characters who are not preternatural athletes or gifted stunt artists will require a vast amount of mortal climbing gear to traverse these spaces.

The mazy streets are just the opposite. It requires a successful Wits + Larceny or Survival roll of difficulty 4 to make any forward progress through the Barrios. Otherwise, the character simply finds herself at a dead end or blind courtyard every time she seeks to move toward the city's heart. If the Dancing Mask is actively Ring shaping against the character, this roll will be made at -7. It takes 30 miles of travel and three scenes (or rolls) to move from one waypoint to the next. Raksha who attempt to rush through two waypoints to arrive at a third will find they cannot move at a speed greater than one waypoint per scene.

More toward the city's center, the very size of the buildings makes the mazy streets between them less important, as they are only slightly more confused than such thoroughfares would be in a mortal city. In the Heights, the difficulty of the Wits + Larceny or Survival roll is 2, and a player need only make it twice for her character to progress to the next waypoint.

Fair Folk may use their Perception + Awareness as a Ring-shaping action at difficulty 2 to sense the way forward in either the Barrios or the Heights. Characters with All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight or some similar sensory power that allows perception of Essence flows can also make Perception + Awareness rolls at difficulty 2 to find the proper way forward to the next waypoint by following dragon tracks. Both rolls must be made the same two or three times as normal navigation. Characters who are supernatural trackers and can perceive Essence can advance automatically, but it still takes a minimum of two or three scenes.

The Undercity of Swar and the Spires have their own unique rules. See the Undercity section on page 130 and the Spires section on pages 131-132.

merely a visual illusion. Swar can, in fact, be as shallow as a mile and a half from the outer edge of the city's protective dome to the central Spires of the city, if it aligns its streets and compresses its self. It can also be as deep as 240 miles to the foot of the central Spire, and characters who attempt to bypass its structures will find themselves traveling the full depth and then some, all while beset by razor winds and glittervanes (see "The City's Response to Exalted," on pages 132-133).


Note that this is the reality of Swar. This is how the vast occult being that forms Swar has arranged its metaphysical body. The fact that one can see the central administrative towers from every scene does not make it possible to leap or fly directly to them. While they appear in the background of every inward-looking vista, they are not actually "there." Abilities such as Travel Without Distance will carry the character only into the next waypoint, while attacks that have a line-of-sight range and other effects that should be able to reach the city's center will seem to vanish into the distance and disappear instead.

Visual abilities that let the characters see the outside of the Spires will not offer an accurate picture of the conditions at the end of the journey and will, instead, show a complicated but false pattern of ladders and platforms outside of the Spires, suggesting a long climb. Let players make all the Perception + Awareness and Intelligence + Lore rolls they want at difficulty 5 for their characters to chart a path up the side of a Spire.

THE BARRIOS

The Barrios of Swar are a jumble of different simple styles of houses. Some are for single families, some are for extended families and some are built to house large numbers of individuals in small apartment units. Other areas are devoted to cottage labor — baking, potting, butchery, shops, shrines and so on. Superficially, at least, the arrangement is one of residences mixed in with shop fronts and small workshops. However, the chaotic mixture of functions and spaces makes the result far more confusing than even the most haphazard and ingrown mortal slum.





Rooms and houses open onto one another in no sensible order, and every sort of furnishing is used in every context — there are hog pens with imperishable reading lamps and butcher's blocks with mattresses and blankets. If characters start trying to diagram a tiny area, the Storyteller should just play along and let them catalog the contents and speculate about the “lives” of the individuals who once lived in the city.

The streets of the Barrios are paved with red-black earth, with stones and gravel hammered into the surface of the road as if by hundreds of years of passage, though, of course, no feet have ever trod them. There are gullies, washes, wells and footbridges, all of which handle runoff during tinflake falls, but these falls are comparatively few, and most of the public works of this sort are nothing more than ornamental follies. There is no water in the wells, the gullies lead nowhere save to conduits that pipe the metallic flakes off to whatever arcane fate befalls them. The structures have windows that can be opened and closed like shutters and whose glass panes — still unwarped and perfect after all these centuries — can be shifted from glittering mirror chrome to rainbow polychrome and back, but which are not transparent in either direction ever.

The furnishings of the Barrios are made of a white-pine or white-ash colored wood, with a dark, regular grain and a smooth texture. All furnishings are worked flawlessly, with no signs of rough tooling, and have a soft, matte finish. The endless assortment of furnishings are strewn more or less at random through the Barrios. While there is little of the furnishings in the streets, the furnishings are packed into the rooms every which way, adding to the incongruity of the architecture and making the intended purpose for many locations indiscernible.

DESTROYING FREEHOLD STRUCTURES

Freehold structures such as the Stronghold, Throne Room, Glory and Fountainhead are all vulnerable to shaping attacks. Destroying one requires a difficulty 3 shaping attack using the Virtue related to the Grace in question. Obviously, the characters attuned to it, if any, will probably attempt to defend the location. It requires a difficulty 5 shaping action to destroy an Arcane Redoubt, and this can be done with any Virtue, but only from the same waypoint as the Redoubt.

THE HEIGHTS

After five waypoints of Barrios, the Heights begin. The Heights is a common term for First Age neighborhoods where the standards of living were high enough to support powered people- and cargo-lifters of various sorts, mostly elevators and lift tubes. These structures sometimes rose 10

or more stories, and they were the residences of elite bureaucrats, investors and other well-heeled worthies.

In Swar, what is maintained about the Heights is that they are all tall. Swar knows nothing of human socioeconomic structures. Where First Age structures were traditionally made of marble and granite, Swar has built them from gleaming translucent blue glass. By their nature, the Heights are filled mostly with ornamental architecture — arches, pillars, processions and so forth. Here and there inside these glass-block palaces, like inclusions in crystal, lie rooms full of the same furniture that fills the Barrios.

The Heights of Swar were never made for human use or habitation, not even in the most confused sense. They are puzzling monuments, and little more. The vast upper extents of the Heights are haunted by packs of glittervanes. Their lower reaches are like great hollow churches, full of thick blue starlight and echoes. The windows in the Heights have no glass in them, being simply holes in the structure, though some have unglazed latticework suggestive of windows and obstructive to movement.

The Stronghold: The fortress of Him Who Hurls Axes is located in a rather unusual domed building among the blue glass towers. This building is constructed of the same blue glass as the rest of the Heights, but there are no glittervanes nesting on its ovoid roof, and the building stands only perhaps five stories tall, squat and hidden among the taller structures. The Stronghold cannot be seen from any other waypoints save the one in which it is located. Even from there, it takes a successful Wits + Awareness roll at difficulty 7 from the ground (4 from the air) or a successful difficulty 2 Perception + Awareness roll as a Cup-shaping action to detect the Stronghold through its subtle camouflage.

Within the heart of the temple, which is crisscrossed by walkways, narrow passages and other hallmarks of Creation's defensive architecture, lies a map of the city in minute detail. The map is 10 yards on a side, and the players' characters are indicated by beads of white light. The presence of Him Who Hurls Axes lingers close to the map. This map is useful to players because it accurately reflects the interlocking waypoints of the city. Characters who have seen the map may thereafter subtract 1 from the difficulty of attempting to move from waypoint to waypoint in Swar.

Him Who Hurls Axes does not stray far from his post, and characters who wish to do battle with him in a mortal fashion must come into his lair and withstand the barrage of his blades if they wish to do him ill.

The Fountainhead: The presence of the Dancing Mask haunts the aerie of the tallest tower in the Heights, far from the Stronghold of Him Who Hurls Axes. From its heights in the 14-story tower (a 60-yard jump from the ground), the Fountainhead regards the city that forms its domain and responsibility. The focus of the Dancing Mask's Fountainhead is a great blue crystal ring, fastened to the floor, in which the same blue color that fills the blocks cleanly and without ripple surges and twists, visibly mixed with plain, clear crystal.

Dancing Mask lurks nearby here, monitoring the city under its control through its awareness of the focus.

The Fox Cataphract: The Fox Cataphract stalks the Heights as well. He walks the streets as a soldier on patrol — or like a bravo stalking his turf. Roaring fox carriages bolt forth from him when he hardens his gaze, and they lurch back into his being from all corners of the city when he pauses to catch his breath. He does not intrude onto the Fountainhead or the Stronghold, but instead, patrols the boundary between the two regions.

There is often mock strife in progress between the Fox Cataphract and the city. This mirrors the genuine distaste Swar has for its shaped bastard child, but since occult prohibitions prevent genuine shaping combat, there are merely displays as Him Who Throws Axes and the Keeper of the Tower hurl mock attacks and preliminary injunctions at their shaped foe. Their goal is to demonstrate massive power as an advertisement for what shall happen when their strength is unleashed. This display is a rather pointless one, all things considered, but it satisfies the internal needs of the individual raksha in question. These attacks leave no lasting scars on the city and do no harm to the Fox Cataphract, but the attacks can cause tremendous light displays and shower axe blades and summonses down miles away. Fox carriages are also frequently attacked in this fashion, and these are invariably destroyed by Swar when it pounces.

THE WEATHER IN SWAR

Swar occasionally suffers from falls of metal snow. The material, which is apparently tin covered in zinc, floats down from the Essence dome in scaly flakes. A fair amount of this material can fall — up to a half-inch an hour for up to 12 hours at a time. After 12 to 36 hours, the flakes of tin and zinc melt into a quicksilver-type substance and flow into the city's gutters, from whence the material drains away to the Undercity. So far, the denizens of Crystal have not yet seen a zinc fall, and the first one that mortal explorers witness will probably send them scurrying for cover for days (with good reason). The zinc falls occur more often when snow falls outside, but they still only happen about half as often.

These tinflake showers are Swar's only significant weather. At some times, light breezes seem to blow from random directions, but the City of Formlessness Constrained is a place of stillness and unchanging light, where endless centuries have passed without laying their hands on the vast illusion that is the city's face.



THE UNDERCITY

Beneath the Heights of Swar is an industrial zone of sorts, whose complexity and arcane oddity serve as counterpoint to the crystalline blue purity above. It is apparent that Swar had some idea that cities possessed an infrastructure for utilities and waste disposal, but it is also apparent that Swar had only a passing acquaintance with such edifices, perhaps from seeing them rent asunder. The corridors and conduits beneath Swar are as confusing as a sheep's intestines. The corridors are great, then narrow, they combine industrial and pedestrian functions seamlessly and the processes that are performed in the city's great industrial bowels have no connection to any chemistry or Essence-working practiced in Creation.

In the bowels of Swar, memories and dreams and quicksilver and strange fruits are ground together to produce compounds that are used in no processes, stored nowhere, merely passed back through conduits part organic and part metallic until they are allowed to boil back into the unshaped gossamer that is the true Swar.

The Undercity is Swar's id, where the dark processes and painful decisions that govern Swar are made, and the Prince Malevolent dwells there with his goggle-eyed angels and his hateful mechanical dreams. The city wishes always to herd intruders down into the Undercity, for the Prince Malevolent will not rise from his domain, but to be victimized by his Cup is Swar's surest way to bind interlopers to its will and force them to free it. In addition, the Prince Malevolent is the most ruthless of Swar's selves and, thus, is considered best at confronting threats by the Heart. Characters who penetrate to the Heights are sure to find themselves under constant pressure to flee downward to where the Prince Malevolent can ravish them.

Navigation in the Undercity is very difficult, for the passages shift frequently and direction is determined more by heart than physical law. Players must make a successful Wits + Awareness roll at difficulty 5 for their characters to find their way through the tunnels to the next waypoint. Players of characters with Essence vision merely need to successfully roll Wits + Awareness at difficult 3, and players of Fair Folk can roll a Perception + Awareness roll as a Cup shaping action at difficulty 3 for their characters to make their way to the next location. Only travel on foot is normally possible in the Undercity, and travel faster than walking or through other means requires a stunt. Travel through shaping is limited to one waypoint at a time. There are no "buildings" per se in the Undercity, though there are some very large rooms with smaller structures in them.

The Glory: The Prince Malevolent's Glory is a great turning spindle deep in the heart of the Undercity. Inside this terrible dynamo, alchemical fluids and reagent are transformed from dream to Essence, and from fantasy to nightmare. None who see this terrible machinery of spiri-

tual alchemy can remain unmoved. The essence of the Prince Malevolent dwells within, twisting reality in the calculus of need and addiction.

THE SPIRE ENTRY

The true heart of Swar is the city's Spires. These towering structures rise more than halfway to the Essence domes, and the Spires appear to be naught but willowy aluminum monocoques and honeycomb foams, part of a structure built for a great underground cavern, safe from wind and precipitation and so many of the other things that ravage buildings. There are a number of subsidiary Spires, but above them all rises the central Spire.

The surfaces of the Spires' aluminum are black anodized, some shiny and some matte. All over the surfaces of the Spires is masterful faux jade — the magical stone in all but its sorcerous potency — forming countless murals. These cartouches are simply random combinations of mythic elements, and in them, the godly archetypes perform strange actions. Here, a huraka first gives fire to a goat. There, the Unconquered Sun directs the phases of the moon.

While it appears from a distance that Swar's Spires must be ascended by climbing the outside, the fact of the matter is that they are too slick to climb easily (requiring a successful difficulty 6 Dexterity + Athletics check to climb each of the 54 10-foot segments of spire), and there is no entrance to the central Spire except at the bottom.

The entrance to the Spire is guarded by the Keeper of the Tower, who dwells in the Freehold's Throne Room at the gate.

The Throne Room: The Throne Room is an out-of-the-way guardbox at the entrance to the central Spire, a conference room large enough for a dozen or so men to meet. In the internal mythology of Swar, it is the rallying place of the unshaped's forces and the focus of rule in times of stress. It is also difficult for mortals to find — difficulty 5 on the Perception + Awareness roll for characters to notice the distant rattle of the litany bones, and a difficulty 6 Dexterity + Athletics test of balance and nimbleness (automatic if a Charm such as Graceful Crane Stance is used, or flight, or a vertical leap of over 50 yards) for characters to make the jump to reach the Throne Room door. A character could, of course, use rope. Raksha and characters who can sense Essence flows will have no problems locating the Throne Room, but must still reach it.

Within the Throne Room, the Keeper of the Tower lurks, rattling his Litany Bones endlessly as he squats on the floor in a circle of blood and fire. Even if he perceives that he is observed and can be struck, the Keeper will not defend himself from mortal attack. Swar is a city whose laws are fixed and whose society is that of dust and shadow and silence, a falsehood whose only purpose is affront at the characters. The Keeper of the Tower is the conductor of an imaginary symphony. He will not stir from his bones until he is slain. He will, however, contend in shaping combat with all comers.

THE SPIRE

At the center of the city of Swar lies the Spire, the seat of the Freehold's bonfire. Within the Spire itself is the bastion of Swar's self, an ever-blowing Wyld storm that twists and writhes in the tight confines of the tiny space allotted it. The Spire comprises 10 waypoints, and within them, Swar's primal madness reigns. Swar's primary mind will not leave the Spire to tread its own roads, waiting instead for intruders to attempt to beard it in its lair.

The interior of the Spire is pure chaos, as devastating and brilliant as that which isolates the former seat of government in Nexus. The Spire is brilliant colors, burning sensations and howling, slicing madness, all flowing in every direction. Characters who are not Fair Folk cannot move without flying or using some other mode of movement that does not require leverage. Also, players of Exalted who can tire must make a successful Fatigue roll at +3 difficulty every scene (20 minutes) or have their characters fall from a vast height. Each waypoint is 30 miles across, and Storytellers should assume characters fall the maximum distance to the steel floor inside the door of the central Spire. It will take characters about 20 minutes to fall one waypoint, so some characters may be able to recover from exhaustion on the way down.

The paths between the waypoints are hidden, and players must make a difficulty 3 Perception + Awareness roll, at -4 dice, for their characters to find their way due to the punishing conditions within the Spire. Players of Fair Folk need only make a successful Perception + Awareness roll, difficulty 2, as a Ring-shaping action for their characters to detect the paths of travel between waypoints.

In addition, the effect of the agitated state of the space within Swar's Spire on unprotected mortal flesh is quite astonishing. It is Pure Chaos within the Spire, and the player of any creature that is not immune to the Wyld will have to make a difficulty 6 Willpower + Essence roll every scene. Success causes them to gain a blight, failure causes them to gain an abomination, and a botch curses them with a deformity.

For more details on mutation, see Chapter Six of **Exalted: The Lunars**. Storytellers without the Lunars book can assume that unless a character is protected from the effects of the Wyld by some Essence effect, she will quickly mutate into an unrecognizable blob of protoplasm. Success on the Willpower + Essence roll merely causes a minor change, while failure on this difficulty 6 roll essentially removes the character from the purview of humanity.

The Arcane Redoubt: Deep in the swirling chaos that is the heart of Swar, there is a pillar of bonfire, and within that bonfire is an iron pot so great that five men could not lift it, and within that pot lies Swar's soul of souls. There is not much to the Redoubt, merely a flame, a few powerful runes and the pot that holds the wrathful heart of the City of Formlessness Constrained. Those who would



approach it must withstand its attacks on their long approach, and they are many and powerful, so it is more a matter of the journey than the destination. If the Redoubt is destroyed, Swar itself will immediately be destroyed by the combination of the crushing pressure of reality and a barrage of geomantic assaults from the War Manses that still monitor the spot of Swar's imprisonment. Apply this assault to characters as three 25A strikes that can only be dodged or blocked by perfect defenses. Increase the damage to 75A if the characters are Fair Folk.

THE CITY'S RESPONSE TO EXALTED

Swar has the following goals with the Exalted: It will attempt to herd them through the Barrios as a test. If they can navigate their way through the Barrios while withstanding attack, they will be driven into the Heights by Him Who Throws Axes and the Fox Cataphract, where hordes of glittervanes will attempt to drive the characters underground to the lair of the Prince Malevolent. There, the Prince will attempt to ravish them. (See the Prince's write-up on pages 136-137.)

This is how Swar will react. Keep in mind that Swar's component beings do not share some sort of psychic link, and most of them are almost incapable of communication, even with Swar's central mentality. Swar has shaped this strategy into itself through centuries of meditation and self-exploration. When things actually unfold, the subsidiary personalities do not communicate well. They have certain tendencies and habits that interlock to form defensive strategies. Characters who slip through Swar's initial scourging will find it much easier to evade the city's defenses.

After the characters are ravished, the Prince Malevolent will act as a conduit for the voice of Swar itself to speak — a dramatic act that costs Swar a significant amount of power — or abandon the characters if they still seem hostile. They will be allowed to retreat from the city by the most direct route, and if they seem reasonable, some poppet will come and explain matters to them to aid them in their quest. Those who remain aggressive will be allowed to strangle on their ravishment until they discern an answer or come crawling humbly back, begging for instruction.

Swar does not know that some Exalted can negate ravishment (see **Exalted: The Fair Folk**, page 141), and so, it will assume that any Creation-born being it maims and sends out beyond its bounds are its slaves. Swar is very intent on this peculiarly raksha point of view, and will be rather astonished if those that it enslaves comes back trailing vengeance. Swar accepts victory and defeat in the shaping contests on a fundamental level, and has very little to lose. From what Swar has wrung from its handful of victims, Swar reckons itself the equal of any Exalt who will come to stand against it in this Age. Of course, Swar also has no idea that the Sidereal Exalted exist, nor does it have

any meaningful appreciation of the Deathlords and little understanding of the might the gods themselves wield — so Swar is prone to biting off more than it can chew.

Included below are some of the more likely themes that interactions may take with various types of Exalted. Obviously, every game is different, but these themes present the stereotypical thrusts of the Exalt types and show how they are likely to come in contact with Swar — and how Swar is likely to respond.

DYNASTIC DRAGON-BLOODED

Swar knows the Dragon-Blooded well from its studies of Creation prior to the fruition of the Balorian Crusade. Swar has been hoping it would encounter them first and feels they are most suited to its needs. If a mixed group of Celestial and Terrestrial Exalted comes into contact with Swar, it will probably attempt to discard or destroy the Terrestrials, though quick thinking or hard bargaining might save them.

This is also an excellent setup for ill-fated Storyteller characters in games where the players must wait until after the winter to go exploring, as Terrestrials who came into contact with Swar crisscross Creation in search of information on the War Manses as secondary opposition to a more experienced party.

OUTCASTE

Outcastes sent to Swar are, if possible, in a worse situation than Dynasts. The difference is that the average Dynast can count on a family, the military of the Realm and his own superior training. Outcaste mercenaries or freebooters have only their own necessarily lesser resources with which to pursue their ends and protect their selves. Yet, they are still as exposed to shaping combat damage as any other Terrestrial. The problem for them is not so much that they will come to some worse fate than a Dynastic Terrestrial — outcastes too will be sent to destroy the War Manses — they are just going to be far less well-equipped and more likely to die in the process than a Dynastic Terrestrial. Of course, it doesn't matter too very much because whoever destroyed the Manses is probably going to be killed in the process by their defenses or shortly thereafter by their owners.

SOLARS

After Terrestrials, Solars are the Exalted most in danger from contact with Swar. Unlike the Dragon-Blooded, they are unlikely to immediately turn tail when they realize the scope of the threat. Unlike Lunars, Solars are not immune to the Wyld. And unlike the Sidereals, Solars cannot call for a huraka assault force. If bent to Swar's will, Solars will form the most excellent pawns. Swar knows of the Solars — it remembers their hateful, golden glory, and it remembers that some could resist it and some not.

Swar will attempt to enslave each Solar at most once, but if the Solars are showing signs of being very powerful or having immunity to Wyld influence, the city will simply seek to destroy them with environmental hazards and manikin attacks. However, it hopes to attempt to twist them to its own ends.

Note that those Solars who know Wyld-Shaping Technique can slay Swar quite readily, although it will take a fairly long time, and each can shelter safely behind Integrity-Protecting Prana or Chaos-Repelling Pattern while they do it.

WYLD-SHAPING TECHNIQUE

Wyld-Shaping Technique can reshape one waypoint per invocation. It is difficulty 1 to reshape the Barrios, difficulty 2 to affect the Heights, difficulty 3 to affect the Undercity or the Spire and difficulty 4 to affect the bonfire, Stronghold, Glory, Fountainhead or Throne Room.

Apply the higher of the base difficulty of the target area and the difficulty determined by the desired result and described in Wyld-Shaping Technique on page 187 of **Exalted**. The character must be in a waypoint to transform it.

Swar cannot erode the reality in Wyld-Shaping Technique under the current circumstances in any story-relevant length of time, and the characters can gradually stamp it out one waypoint at a time, and end up left with an area with the contents of their choice and some very, very strange geometry.

LUNARS

Swar knows the Lunar Exalted as powerful fighters, magnificent in all things, but slightly less powerful than the Solars and without the occasional gesture-level fiat over reality. What Swar explicitly does not know is the changes that have taken place in the Lunar Exalted, particularly the emergence of Wyld tattooing. Swar sees the Lunars instead as powerful but not as dangerous as the Solar Exalted; whereas, in fact, a Lunar is far more deadly to the city than any Solar could ever be. Swar will try to use shaping at least once on each Lunar until they indicate to it the shaping doesn't work or it becomes clear through elimination that no Lunars are shapeable.

ABYSSALS

Swar has never seen an Abyssal before, but it won't have to think long to decide that the terrible robed figure with the howling sword and the black aura of death is, in fact, a terrible apparition of doom. This is especially true given the deathknights' very evident resemblance to Solars. Indeed, Swar may not even know they are *not* Solars of some sort. Since they are so closely analogous to Solars, Abyssals

might well be seen as some rare subcaste of the Chosen of the Sun. This may prove useful to Storytellers who want to run a game that plays up the mysteries of the Abyssals, especially an Abyssal game that focuses on those questions. However, Storytellers should keep in mind that Abyssals are not actually Solars — Chaos-Searing Treatment and Wyld-Slaying Burst are nowhere near as powerful as Wyld-Shaping Technique, and Wyld Shield Meditation is not nearly as effective as the Chaos-Repelling Pattern.

SIDEREALS

Swar does not know of the Sidereal Exalted. Even before the end of the First Age, the Sidereals did not advertise themselves on the front lines of the battle for Creation. The Sidereals are an unknown to the City of Formlessness Constrained, and it will probably treat them like Solars — roughly but warily, seeking to overmaster, not destroy.

THE CITY'S RESPONSE TO RAKSHA

For all Swar's disregard of mortal vengeance, the city wants nothing to do with the Fair Folk. In Swar's time, the shaped Fair Folk were few in number, but Swar is vastly discerning in the ways of its milieu. Swar knows that, since the world has not ended, the Balorian Crusade has fallen and the shaped will have multiplied and infiltrated the edges of Creation. Swar knows that, because no major efforts to resecure its location have taken place, Creation is probably in disarray as well. As a leader in the Balorian Crusade, Swar is intimately familiar with Creation's permanent border and how perilously close it hides lies to the edge of the Real. Swar can only conclude it has, by the greatest of fortune, evaded the notice of its raksha brothers and sisters to date.

Swar knows this will end, sooner or later. Swar's strategy when dealing with raksha is very simple — dead men tell no tales. The unshaped is powerful enough to offer its own context to those who come to walk its byways. It is isolated from the Wyld, and questing against it will not help it raise its Essence, but will, instead, strip it of its self and Essence. If Swar is spotted and news is released of its location, then it will quickly be mined out and destroyed by the ambitions of the shaped. This, Swar knows.

As a result, any Fair Folk who enter its precincts live on blessedly borrowed time, for no self of Swar is friendly to them in the least. Of course, it is notable that Swar has no idea that the Fair Folk may have the kind of extensive commerce with the beings of Creation that sometimes takes place in the Second Age. Swar knows nothing of Ravagers. It knows nothing of the Guild's trade in slaves. In short, Swar knows nothing of a world where releasing a handful of obviously spellbound Exalts to do Swar's world-spanning bidding might reach the ears of the raksha princes and engender an investigation. Swar has no concept of the cat's-paw in this matter and will obligingly attack those sent to provoke it with its full fury.



SPECIFIC RESPONSES

Swar knows that there is no chance at hiding its nature from its fellow raksha, and, as a result, Swar is not particularly canny when dealing with the Fair Folk. To the City of Formlessness Constrained's perception, the raksha present a much more dire threat. The city sees itself as superior to mortals, as a destructive whirlwind. The dire threat of Creation's War Manses is frightening but an abstraction brushed against once, not like Swar's endless centuries of existence in the raksha milieu. So, the city's perception is that the forces of Creation gathered together seem like a reasonable foe, while even a single hobgoblin is a terrible threat to its existence. Normally, Swar will concentrate the full weight of its Freehold's power against raksha intruders. The Freehold has a Stronghold, a Glory, a Fountainhead and a Throne Room. This is a matter that will communicate itself quickly, as the nature of the response and the aura of the shaped conspire to give the matter a distinctive feel.

Though the Glory is constrained by the nature of the Prince Malevolent, all of the other special areas of the Freehold will be powered by the appropriate Virtues' subselves of Swar. Each will strike at intruding Fair Folk in shaping combat, seeking to prevent their targets from fleeing Swar.

THE FACES OF SWAR

Swar itself has several subsidiary selves it uses to defend its self and to police its city. Most are closely attached to different regions in the city, but each can and does move about to different extents. Of these, Swar itself and the Prince Malevolent move least, never leaving their particular areas, while the Fox Cataphract and the Dancing Mask move freely about the city.

Storytellers should keep in mind that, with the exception of the Fox Cataphract, Swar's selves are unshaped and lack bodies. Even the Keeper of the Tower's self is merely an illusion given to the place.

In some cases, Swar's selves are noted as having shaping weapons. In each case, these are merely Essence organs that accomplish similar tasks. They can be made ready and unready as normal shaping weapons, but if the subsidiary selves are slain, these weapons are lost.

HIM WHO HURLS AXES — SWORD

Description: Him Who Hurls Axes is the strong right arm of Swar. It is he who is the cutting edge of Swar's wrath, and it is he who seizes the possessions of those who do battle against Swar and renders them as tribute to the unshaped's Heart. Him Who Hurls Axes is brutal, direct and effective. He was long the public focus of Swar, and he remains the most glorious of the unshaped's selves.

Him Who Hurls Axes dwells in his fortified bunker Stronghold (see page 128). Among the offshoots of Swar, he

ESSENCE, QUESTING AND THE UNSHAPED

The unshaped normally permit the shaped Fair Folk to undertake quests within them for reasons of personal benefit. As beings so vast and poorly organized, the commerce of ideas between their various waypoints is tenuous at best. Questing shaped raksha are one method by which change can be affected across an unshaped raksha's space.

Normally, the unshaped must endure quests to increase Traits the way that the Exalted must spend time training. This text will not detail the specifics — playing the unshaped is far outside of *Exalted's* mechanical purview — but the proportions are like unto those of mortals for training similar Traits. Each time a subsidiary self takes part in a shaping contest, the self experiences the equivalent of seven days of training, win or lose, which can later be applied to increasing Traits. Each time the primary self takes part, it gains three weeks of training that can be applied to itself or any subsidiary selves.

Normally, losing a questing contest is not terribly hard on the unshaped. It temporarily decreases the Essence of any defeated selves by 1 for a story, but the influence of the Wyld and the growth enabled by the questing interaction replenish this. However, one of the unshaped trapped in Creation (an event which has happened to Swar and possibly to a few unfortunate unshaped seized by the Solar Deliberative for experimentation) does not experience this renewal from natural Essence flows and so suffering questing is a death sentence, as it will consume and deplete the raksha's Essence by 1 point per self per time it is defeated in questing combat.

Characters only gain rewards per the various effects of damage on the unshaped if the victim of their shaping is of an Essence higher than their own.

is the one that is closest to the material, as is to be expected from a creature so intently focused on battle. His presence is marked by a whirling cyclone of razor-edged projectiles. He does not bring these with him, but gathers them as he finds them, and so his attacks sometimes have a whimsical character as he hurls showers of unlikely objects such as plates and glass fragments. He is restrained from constant rampage by the action of the Keeper of the Tower and little else. Were it not for the Keeper's constant citations and injunctions, there would be naught left of Swar save ax-scarred ruins, and to trouble Swar is to awaken Him Who Hurls Axes for War for a terrible rampage.

Shaping Combat: Him Who Hurls Axes attacks enemies with cascades of slicing attacks, using Dexterity + Presence, Dexterity + Archery and Dexterity + Athletics



MORTALS KILLING SWAR

Just because an unshaped Fair Folk's selves have not used Assumption Charms to join the physical world does not mean they do not have a presence in a waypoint and a selfness that can be assailed. They have the same Virtues and Feeding Maws as any other raksha. These things are simply hard to perceive and easy to defend. Normally, they are immaterial and invulnerable to mortal damage and intent on shaping combat with invading raksha.

However, characters with Ghost-Eating Technique and other spirit-slaying Charms and the ability to perceive dematerialized spirits have a very good chance of killing some of Swar's selves. (For mechanical details on this, see the "I Got Disintegrated!" sidebar on page 135 of *Exalted: The Fair Folk*.) Swar will cheerfully hide the Virtues of the selves at range and behind obstacles, but only after it realizes that mortals can prove a real danger to it. Its experience with mortal weapons designed to slay the Fair Folk is with First Age and Shogunate weapons of war — great mechanical devices that project Essence-destroying rays or release iron thistledown.

Swar has no personal experience with Exalted who can slay the unshaped with their personal weapons. Only after some Exalt strikes one of its lesser selves with a telling blow will it realize that mortals are potentially quite dangerous. At that point, it will begin to play an ultra-conservative game, hailing Ring-shaping attacks down on intruders with the Dancing Mask's cosmos seed and using swarms of poppets to slay mortal opponents in a merely mortal fashion.

to bury his opponents in showers of razor-edged glass, glittervanes, hardened wind and, of course, axes. This effect is wielded as a Hazard and is a natural form of sky barb that can only cause hurtling rains of razor-edged things. If he is forced to unready this shaping weapon, he can use the glittervanes directly as a monster.

Him Who Hurls Axes focuses his vexation on stealing cysts, pennants, Hearthstones and, then, all artifacts. Against other raksha, this tactic is especially useful, as a lack of pennants and cysts means there will be no flight from Swar's clutches.

Attributes: Strength 8, Dexterity 6, Stamina 8, Charisma 6, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4, Perception 6, Intelligence 4, Wits 6

Virtues: Compassion 4, Conviction 5, Temperance 4, Valor 6

Abilities: Archery 6, Athletics 7, Awareness 6, Bureaucracy 2, Craft (Glamour) 5, Dodge 6, Endurance 4, Investigation 4, Larceny 3, Lore 2, Occult 4, Performance 5, Presence 6, Resistance 5, Socialize 2, Stealth 6, Survival 2

Charms: Assertion of a Greater Vision, God-Humbling Victory Sword, Ill-Approving Eyes, Radiance of the Invincible Warrior, Sapphire Emptiness Kata, Scattering the Foe, Unparalleled Terror Technique

Shaping Base Initiative: 11

Cup (Conviction): 5

Cup Soak: 14 **Cup Health Levels:** 9

Cup Attack (Stealth): 6

Entanglement: Speed 5 Accuracy 11 Damage 6 Defense 11 Rate 1

Milieu: Speed 11 Accuracy 12 Damage 6 Defense 13 Rate 5

Prodigies: Speed 8 Accuracy 12 Damage 9 Defense 8 Rate 3

Ring (Intelligence): 4

Ring Soak: 16 **Ring Health Levels:** 8

Ring Attack (Craft [Glamour]): 5

Gossamer: Speed 11 Accuracy 10 Damage 12 (Rate 2, Range 0)

Raw Will: Speed 11 Accuracy 9 Damage 6 (Rate 2, Range 0)



Staff (Manipulation): 5
Staff Soak: 14 **Staff Health Levels:** 10
Staff Attack (Occult): 4
 Entanglement: Speed 5 Accuracy 7 Damage 6 Defense 7
 Rate 1
 People: Speed 8 Accuracy 10 Damage 9 Defense 6 Rate 3
 Society: Speed 11 Accuracy 10 Damage 6 Defense 11 Rate 5
Sword (Dexterity): 6
Sword Soak: 18 **Sword Health Levels:** 12
Sword Attack (Athletics): 7
 Entanglement: Speed 5 Accuracy 11 Damage 8 Defense 11
 Rate 1
 Hazard*: Speed 21 Accuracy 12 Damage 15 Defense 10
 Rate 2
 Monster: Speed 15 Accuracy 14 Damage 14 Defense 11
 Rate 2
 Personal Prowess: Speed 13 Accuracy 14 Damage 11
 Defense 13 Rate 3
 * Preferred Attack
Base Initiative: 12
Attack:
 None, no body
Dodge Pool: 12 **Soak:** 4L/8B
Willpower: 10 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 6 **Essence Pool:** 60

THE PRINCE MALEVOLENT — CUP

Description: The Prince Malevolent is Swar's black underpinnings. Swar was always a creature of the Sword and Staff, except that, to enable those schemes and plans, it needed to be proficient at the sort of manipulations that only the Cup can provide.

And so, the Prince Malevolent grew within Swar, a darkness within the greater darkness of the unshaped, a cold, calculating hand willing to stroke a heart there, massage an ego here, to play at love and loyalty. In all of this, Swar was remarkably successful, to the point where its mastery of the Cup began to outstrip its desire for such mastery. The Prince Malevolent was isolated away from the rest of Swar's systems, reduced down to a black box process whereby the unshaped could extract the benefits of the Prince's mastery of the Cup, but without experiencing the effects of mastery.

In the context of Swar's current preoccupation with masquerading as a mortal city, the Prince Malevolent is the city's service Oubliette, the darkened infrastructure that drives the city. There is no place in central Swar where the streets do not thrum with the hidden motors of the Prince Malevolent's domain.

The influence of the Prince Malevolent is primarily heralded by the growth of pressure, oppression, arcing scarlet Jacob's ladders, steam whistles, objects glowing red-hot from heat and other, similar signs of industrial danger and malfunc-



tion. The Prince Malevolent is the black, surging havoc at the heart of an industrial accident, the glorious infiltration of systemic poisons. He is the interpenetrating system failure, and to be in his presence is to know the pressure that exigent circumstances can force on a system.

Shaping Combat: The Prince's attacks are very sinister, and very direct, as he uses Conviction + Performance to crush his foes with the glowing radiance and glowering aura of his presence. Around the Prince, steam hisses, leaks drip and free will runs like wax before a fireplace. The Prince Malevolent is a simple, direct and powerful combatant. He seeks to use Cup combat to ravish the target's Conviction with the following two commands:

- The character cannot bear to leave Swar for a year and a day, save at the leave of Swar.
- The character cannot bear to harm Swar or see Swar attacked.

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 6, Stamina 6, Charisma 8, Manipulation 8, Appearance 8, Perception 7, Intelligence 7, Wits 7

Virtues: Compassion 6, Conviction 4, Temperance 5, Valor 4

Abilities: Archery 4, Athletics 4, Awareness 5, Bureaucracy 6, Craft (Glamour) 6, Dodge 4, Endurance 4, Investigation 4, Larceny 4, Lore 5, Martial Arts 2, Medicine 2, Occult 5, Performance 6, Presence 5, Resistance 4, Socialize 6, Stealth 4, Survival 3

Charms: Assertion of a Greater Vision, Dissonance of Principles, Heart-Cutting Style, Howling Dream Consumption Prana, Ill-Approving Eyes, Sapphire Emptiness Kata

Shaping Base Initiative: 11

Cup (Conviction): 4

Cup Soak: 15 **Cup Health Levels:** 10

Cup Attack (Performance): 6

Entanglement: Speed 5 Accuracy 10 Damage 4 Defense 10 Rate 1

Heart Thorn*: Speed 5 Accuracy 10 Damage 9 Defense 12 Rate 2

Milieu: Speed 11 Accuracy 11 Damage 4 Defense 12 Rate 5

Prodigies: Speed 8 Accuracy 11 Damage 7 Defense 7 Rate 3

* Preferred Attack

Ring (Intelligence): 7

Ring Soak: 15 **Ring Health Levels:** 12

Ring Attack (Craft [Glamour]): 6

Gossamer: Speed 11 Accuracy 14 Damage 13 (Rate 2, Range 0)

Raw Will: Speed 11 Accuracy 13 Damage 7 (Rate 2, Range 0)

Staff (Manipulation): 8

Staff Soak: 16 **Staff Health Levels:** 12

Staff Attack (Occult): 5

Entanglement: Speed 5 Accuracy 11 Damage 8 Defense 11 Rate 1

People: Speed 8 Accuracy 14 Damage 11 Defense 10 Rate 3

Society: Speed 11 Accuracy 14 Damage 8 Defense 15 Rate 5

Sword (Dexterity): 6

Sword Soak: 14 **Sword Health Levels:** 10

Sword Attack (Presence): 5

Entanglement: Speed 5 Accuracy 9 Damage 6 Defense 9 Rate 1

Personal Prowess: Speed 13 Accuracy 12 Damage 9 Defense 11 Rate 3

Base Initiative: 13

Attack:

None, no body

Dodge Pool: 10 **Soak:** 3L/6B

Willpower: 8 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 7 **Essence Pool:** 70

THE DANCING MASK — RING

Description: The Dancing Mask is the monitor and overseer of Swar's material self and physical laws. More than any other one of Swar's components, the Mask has altered profoundly since it was confined to its current city-shape. The Dancing Mask was once the monitor of Swar in a much more dynamic, much faster self, keeping its internal processes fit and ready for fast travel or hard combat.

It is due to this that Swar's self is always lit here and there by flickering miracles — the unshaped's Ring cannot bear to keep the entire location static as it is, so areas that are completely out of sight often boil with tiny prodigies.

These flickering miracles vanish just before they come into anyone's direct line of sight. This frequently leads individuals traversing the city to feel as if they are walking into a room where everyone has fallen silent and is watching them and adds to Swar's eerie ambient feeling of watchful suspense.

The Dancing Mask's presence is heralded by tiny miracles. Mostly, it spends its time at the Fountainhead, where the Dancing Mask's boiling illusions will not disrupt the city's semblance of stasis.

Shaping Combat: The Dancing Mask attacks in a rain of miraculous calamities. Using Intelligence + Craft (Glamour) and Intelligence + Martial Arts, it reverses gravity, showers targets with terrible substances, implodes buildings on its targets and attempts to lethally manipulate its victims' life processes. The Dancing Mask is doubly armed, for it is the striking fist of Swar. While the Dancing Mask resides in its Fountainhead, it wields a curdling dream bow and showers raw destruction on targets within the city. If forced to depart the Fountainhead, for whatever reason, the Dancing Mask bears a cosmos seed within itself that allows it to fight at long range even without the support of the Fountainhead.

When the Dancing Mask fights with the curdling dream bow, the attacks are shockingly direct — impalements, immolations, poisonings and crushing blows. When the Dancing Mask wields the cosmos seed, the modes of attack are more indirect and subject targets to falling structures and dangerous environmental conditions such



as toxic air and burning rain. Characters who succumb will be incumbered to the following:

- First, to defend Swar and keep it secret.
- Second, to seek out the Manses that keep Swar imprisoned and their methods of control, and to deactivate them or destroy them so that Swar may flee Creation.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 7, Manipulation 7, Appearance 7, Perception 7, Intelligence 7, Wits 7

Virtues: Compassion 4, Conviction 5, Temperance 6, Valor 4

Abilities: Archery 3, Athletics 4, Awareness 4, Bureaucracy 5, Craft (Glamour) 6, Dodge 5, Endurance 3, Investigation 5, Larceny 4, Lore 3, Martial Arts 6, Occult 4, Performance 4, Presence 5, Resistance 6, Socialize 2, Stealth 3

Charms: Assertion of a Greater Vision, Flesh-Carved World, Ill-Approving Eyes, Mind's Grip Rigor, Pounding Dream Harmony, Shuddering Wyld Inference, Waypoint Knife, Wyld-Curdling Attack

Shaping Base Initiative: 11

Cup (Conviction): 5

Cup Soak: 16 **Cup Health Levels:** 9

Cup Attack (Investigation): 5

Entanglement: Speed 5 Accuracy 10 Damage 4 Defense 10 Rate 1

Milieu: Speed 11 Accuracy 11 Damage 4 Defense 12 Rate 5

Prodigies: Speed 8 Accuracy 11 Damage 7 Defense 7 Rate 3

Ring (Intelligence): 7

Ring Soak: 17 **Ring Health Levels:** 13

Ring Attack (Martial Arts): 6

Curdling Dream Bow*: Speed 11 Accuracy 14 Damage 19 (Rate 3, Range 1)

Gossamer: Speed 11 Accuracy 14 Damage 13 (Rate 2, Range 0)

Raw Will: Speed 11 Accuracy 13 Damage 7 (Rate 2, Range 0)

* Preferred Attack

Staff (Manipulation): 7

Staff Soak: 10 **Staff Health Levels:** 12

Staff Attack (Occult): 4

Entanglement: Speed 5 Accuracy 9 Damage 7 Defense 9 Rate 1

People: Speed 8 Accuracy 12 Damage 10 Defense 8 Rate 3

Society: Speed 11 Accuracy 12 Damage 7 Defense 13 Rate 5

Sword (Dexterity): 4

Sword Soak: 14 **Sword Health Levels:** 8

Sword Attack (Presence): 5

Entanglement: Speed 5 Accuracy 7 Damage 4 Defense 7 Rate 1

Personal Prowess: Speed 13 Accuracy 10 Damage 7 Defense 9 Rate 3

Base Initiative: 11

Attack:

None, no body

Dodge Pool: 9 **Soak:** 2L/4B

Willpower: 10

Essence: 6

Gossamer: 15

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence Pool: 60

THE KEEPER OF THE TOWER — STAFF

Description: The Keeper of the Tower is the lawgiver of the City of Formlessness Constrained. In the time before Swar's imprisonment, the Keeper was the ruler of the unshaped's body politic, chastening alternate personalities and moderating the influence of the other Virtues. Like most eunuchs, it is the ruler of the ruler, and the laws of the Keeper constrained the Heart of Swar as thoroughly as they confined its other Graces. In this manner did Swar police its self for dissident ideals and rogue beliefs. Now, it is the Keeper of the Tower's pronouncements that dictate the customs and politics of this empty city, and the crooked rattling of his litany bones sets the lockstep of the feet that never tread the city's pavement.

The Keeper's presence is signaled by the appearance of runes and heatless red flame and a feeling of manipulative oppression quite unlike the looming power of the Prince Malevolent. Shaping or not, the Keeper never ceases to rattle his bones or croak in his rasping voice the litany of the laws of the city of Swar. This self-serving document is a mass of codes and regulations never meant to be practiced nor ever examined as a whole for plausibility. Its arbitrary nature extends to the very level of Essence and atom, and every being that lives or does not live is guilty of egregious offenses of composition, to say nothing of any crimes that may have been committed against the will of the City of Formlessness Constrained, which is of course enshrined as the highest principle.

Shaping Combat: In combat, the Keeper is shamelessly direct. Through Manipulation + Occult, the Keeper wrings out the law like a wet sponge, changing what the Keeper wishes without precedent or reason. It criminalizes the most basic functions of life and existence. The sentences are of the utmost utility to the state, and the Keeper is Swar's "backup Prince Malevolent." Targets who are snared will first have their Cups ravished as if they were the victims of the Prince Malevolent, and then, they will be vexed as if they were victims of Him Who Hurls Axes.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 7, Stamina 5, Charisma 5, Manipulation 7, Appearance 4, Perception 6, Intelligence 6, Wits 6

Virtues: Compassion 5, Conviction 7, Temperance 4, Valor 4

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 5, Brawl 3, Bureaucracy 6, Craft (Glamour) 5, Dodge 4, Endurance 3, Investigation 5, Larceny 4, Lore 6, Medicine 2, Occult 7, Performance 3, Presence 5, Resistance 3, Socialize 5

Charms: Assertion of a Greater Vision, Deeper Into Trouble Technique, Furiously Stalling Destiny, Ill-Approving Eyes, Inauspicious Moment for Attack, Laughing Monster Stance, Sapphire Emptiness Kata, Subtle Hammer

Shaping Base Initiative: 12
Cup (Conviction): 7
Cup Soak: 14 **Cup Health Levels:** 12
Cup Attack (Larceny): 4
 Entanglement: Speed 6 Accuracy 11 Damage 4 Defense 11 Rate 1
 Milieu: Speed 12 Accuracy 12 Damage 4 Defense 13 Rate 5
 Prodigies: Speed 9 Accuracy 12 Damage 7 Defense 8 Rate 3
Ring (Intelligence): 6
Ring Soak: 16 **Ring Health Levels:** 10
Ring Attack (Bureaucracy): 6
 Gossamer: Speed 12 Accuracy 13 Damage 12 (Rate 2, Range 0)
 Raw Will: Speed 12 Accuracy 12 Damage 7 (Rate 2, Range 0)
Staff (Manipulation): 7
Staff Soak: 14 **Staff Health Levels:** 14
Staff Attack (Presence): 5
 Entanglement: Speed 6 Accuracy 10 Damage 5 Defense 10 Rate 1
 People: Speed 9 Accuracy 13 Damage 8 Defense 9 Rate 3
 Society: Speed 12 Accuracy 13 Damage 5 Defense 14 Rate 5
Sword (Dexterity): 7
Sword Soak: 15 **Sword Health Levels:** 11
Sword Attack (Presence): 5
 Entanglement: Speed 6 Accuracy 10 Damage 4 Defense 10 Rate 1
 Personal Prowess: Speed 14 Accuracy 13 Damage 7 Defense 12 Rate 3
Base Initiative: 13
 Attack:
 None, no body
Dodge Pool: 11 **Soak:** 2L/5B
Willpower: 10 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 6 **Essence Pool:** 60
Gossamer: 15

SWAR ITSELF — HEART

Description: At the farthest extents of Swar's remote, towering self lies the raksha's vast and powerful Heart. The area around Swar's Heart is a terrible place, full of tearing chaos and wild, roiling madness, and it reflects the horror of Swar's inner self fully, a hate-taloned need regulated only by the influence of the Graces and constrained only by fear and the logical limits of its own growth. Those who would seek to beard Swar must necessarily confront its Heart. Swar's Heart is comparatively simple; it has little subtlety and no nuance. Those who come to it have passed the outer layers of the unshaped raksha's refined self and come to its howling inner core, twisting endlessly around the Freehold's bonfire.

Shaping Combat: Swar's Heart attacks by undermining and destroying the integrity of its targets in a somewhat indirect fashion, manifesting its attacks as the swirling terror of the Wyld storm within the Spire.

Swar has three weapons that it can wield. It bears a commandment lens for Staff combat (its preferred weapon,

wielded with Manipulation + Thrown), a heart thorn for Cup combat (wielded with Conviction + Larceny) and a Nishkriya mask for Sword combat (wielded with Dexterity + Athletics). Swar's combat effects are the same as those of Him Who Hurls Axes and the Prince Malevolent, save that they are backed by the undiluted might of Swar's Graces — they are expressions of the city's unshaped will, and it is natural that their wishes and behavior match those of the city.

Attributes: Strength 8, Dexterity 8, Stamina 8, Charisma 8, Manipulation 6, Appearance 6, Perception 8, Intelligence 6, Wits 8

Virtues: Compassion 7, Conviction 6, Temperance 6, Valor 8

Abilities: Archery 2, Athletics 7, Awareness 8, Bureaucracy 3, Craft (Glamour) 8, Dodge 6, Endurance 6, Investigation 5, Larceny 7, Lore 6, Medicine 4, Melee 6, Occult 8, Performance 4, Presence 6, Resistance 5, Socialize 6, Stealth 4, Survival 5, Thrown 8

Charms: Assertion of a Greater Vision, Awakened Dream Manufacture, Compelling Presence, Ecstatic Reproduction Style, Flesh-Carved World, Forging the Arcane Redoubt, Forging the Cup Grace, Forging the Fountainhead, Forging the Glory, Forging the Heart Grace, Forging the Ring Grace, Forging the Staff Grace, Forging the Stronghold, Forging the Sword Grace, Forging the Throne Room, Furious Maelstrom Craft, Gaping Virtue Mouth, God-Humbling Victory Sword, Heart-Cutting Style, Howling Dream Consumption Prana, Ill-Approving Eyes, Iron Nightmare Muzzle, Maddening Summons, Manacles of Virtue, Mind's Grip Rigor, Pounding Dream Harmony, Pyre of Dreams Defense, Radiance of the Invincible Warrior, Sapphire Emptiness Kata, Scattering the Foe, Shape-Forged Servant, Shuddering Wyld Inference, Swallowed Grace Defense, Swift Wings of Song, Unparalleled Terror Technique, Unsightly Rigor Approach, Untouchable Performer Technique, Whispers Behind the Eyes, Writhing Ego Evasion, Wyld-Curling Attack, Wyld Prince Resilience

Shaping Base Initiative: 15

Cup (Conviction): 6

Cup Soak: 17 **Cup Health Levels:** 15

Cup Attack (Larceny): 7

Entanglement: Speed 9 Accuracy 13 Damage 8 Defense 13 Rate 1

Heart Thorn: Speed 9 Accuracy 13 Damage 13 Defense 15 Rate 2

Milieu: Speed 15 Accuracy 14 Damage 8 Defense 15 Rate 5
 Prodigies: Speed 12 Accuracy 14 Damage 11 Defense 10 Rate 3

Ring (Intelligence): 6

Ring Soak: 18 **Ring Health Levels:** 14

Ring Attack (Lore): 6

Gossamer: Speed 15 Accuracy 13 Damage 14 (Rate 2, Range 0)

Raw Will: Speed 15 Accuracy 12 Damage 8 (Rate 2, Range 0)





Staff (Manipulation): 6
Staff Soak: 16 **Staff Health Levels:** 14
Staff Attack (Thrown): 8
 Entanglement: Speed 9 Accuracy 12 Damage 8 Defense 12 Rate 1
 People: Speed 12 Accuracy 15 Damage 11 Defense 11 Rate 3
 Society: Speed 15 Accuracy 15 Damage 8 Defense 16 Rate 5
 Commandment Lens*: Speed 15 Accuracy 14 Damage 8 (Rate 2, Range 6)
 * Preferred Attack
Sword (Dexterity): 8
Sword Soak: 18 **Sword Health Levels:** 16
Sword Attack (Athletics): 7
 Entanglement: Speed 9 Accuracy 13 Damage 8 Defense 13 Rate 1
 Nishkriya Mask: Speed 19 Accuracy 18 Damage 11 Defense 16 Rate 3
 Personal Prowess: Speed 17 Accuracy 16 Damage 11 Defense 15 Rate 3
Base Initiative: 16
Attack:
 None, no body
Dodge Pool: 14 **Soak:** 4L/8B
Willpower: 10 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 8 **Essence Pool:** 80
Gossamer: 20

**THE FOX CATAPHRACT —
 SWAR'S LESSER SWORD**

Description: Like all of its kind, Swar is unique. Part of its uniqueness, currently, is that it is gestating another raksha. As of yet, this nearly complete raksha has no Heart Grace but is not merely a transient ripple of miracle within Swar's selfness. Swar cannot itself erase him, and he clearly has his own Graces, but in place of his Heart, the Fox Cataphract carries an effigy of Swar's own Sword Grace.

Swar is, like most raksha, murkily uncertain to outright distrusting of its own motivations. It does not know where the Fox Cataphract came from, if he was its own creation as a form of reproduction, a gift or attack from another raksha, a mental illness or Essence cancer or some sort of occult wound left by Creation's defenses. It cannot remember a time before there was a Fox Cataphract, and Swar knows that its memory is clearly distorted.

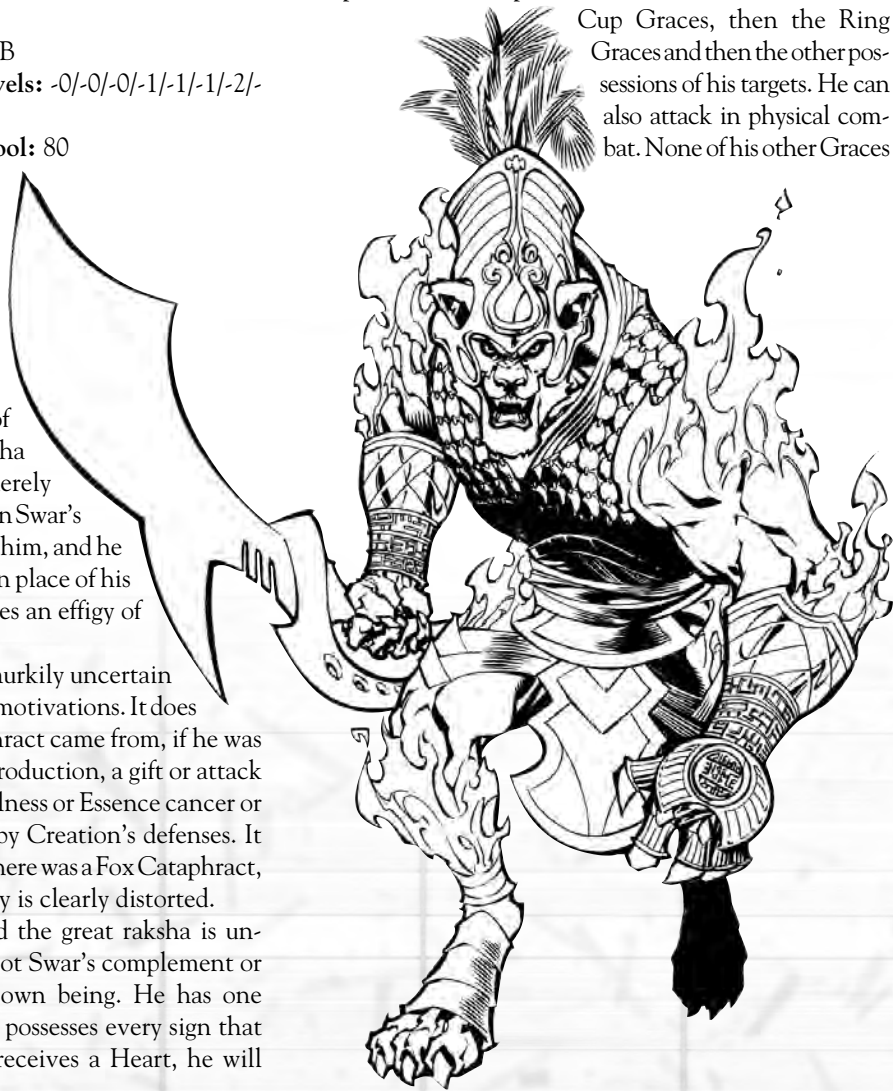
Although he is shaped and the great raksha is unshaped, the Fox Cataphract is not Swar's complement or antithesis, but very much his own being. He has one feeding maw, on his Valor, and possesses every sign that another will develop — if he receives a Heart, he will

certainly not kindle as a commoner. If he will be a Xia, a Cataphract or an Anarch remains to be seen. He shows characteristics of all three.

The Fox Cataphract is brash and loud and prone to clangor. He is also, currently, shaped, having used Assumption of Elemental Shape (Fire). This makes him vexing to Swar, which sees him as a mutant child and plans to slay him immediately if he divides from it and retains shape.

The Fox Cataphract currently appears to be a huge, hulking fox-man, whose fur is made of blue fire, clad in gossamer mail of interlocking golden shields with protective runes and rubies and bearing a terrible gossamer sword. His helm is tall and crowned with a plume of unearthly peacock feathers.

Shaping Combat: In shaping combat, the Fox Cataphract has a very limited set of options. He activates Radiance of the Invincible Warrior and attacks in Sword shaping combat with his Dexterity + Brawl, wielding personal prowess and hurling himself forward, swinging his sword, leaping over obstacles and rushing in for the kill of the foe with a primal rage so great it could savage even the unshaped. The Fox Cataphract will attempt to seize the Sword Graces, then the Cup Graces, then the Ring Graces and then the other possessions of his targets. He can also attack in physical combat. None of his other Graces



are well developed enough for him to initiate shaping combat with them, but he can still defend with them.

Attributes: Strength 12, Dexterity 6, Stamina 10, Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4, Perception 8, Intelligence 5, Wits 8

Virtues: Compassion 4, Conviction 4, Temperance 4, Valor 5

Abilities: Archery 4, Athletics 6, Awareness 5, Brawl 6, Craft (Glamour) 4, Dodge 6, Endurance 8, Investigation 2, Larceny 1, Melee 6, Occult 4, Performance 5, Presence 6, Resistance 6, Ride 4

Charms: Aegis of a Martial Destiny, Antagonist-Naming Technique, Assertion of a Greater Vision, Assumption of Elemental Shape (Fire), God-Humbling Victory Sword, Ill-Approving Eyes, Radiance of the Invincible Warrior, Scattering the Foe, Thematic Stunting Methodology, Unparalleled Terror Technique, World-Devouring Warlord Stance

Base Shaping Initiative: 9

Cup (Conviction): 4

Cup Soak: 13 **Cup Health Levels:** 8

Cup Attack (Performance): 5

Milieu: Speed 9 Accuracy 10 Damage 5 Defense 11 Rate 5

Ring (Intelligence): 5

Ring Soak: 17 **Ring Health Levels:** 9

Ring Attack (Endurance): 8

Gossamer: Speed 9 Accuracy 14 Damage 14 (Rate 2, Range 0)

Raw Will: Speed 9 Accuracy 13 Damage 8 (Rate 2, Range 0)

Staff (Manipulation): 4

Staff Soak: 13 **Staff Health Levels:** 8

Staff Attack (Occult): 4

Society: Speed 9 Accuracy 9 Damage 4 Defense 10 Rate 5

Sword (Dexterity): 6

Sword Soak: 19 **Sword Health Levels:** 11

Sword Attack (Brawl): 6

Entanglement: Speed 3 Accuracy 10 Damage 12 Defense 10 Rate 1

Personal Prowess: Speed 11 Accuracy 13 Damage 15 Defense 12 Rate 3

Base Initiative: 14

Attack:

Punch: Speed 14 Accuracy 12 Damage 12B Defense 12

Kick: Speed 11 Accuracy 11 Damage 14B Defense 11

Giant Gossamer Sword: Speed 14 Accuracy 14 Damage 18L Defense 11

Dodge Pool: 12 **Soak:** 5L/10B

Willpower: 9 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 5 **Essence Pool:** 50

Gossamer: 10

EXALTED POWER COMBAT

Attack:

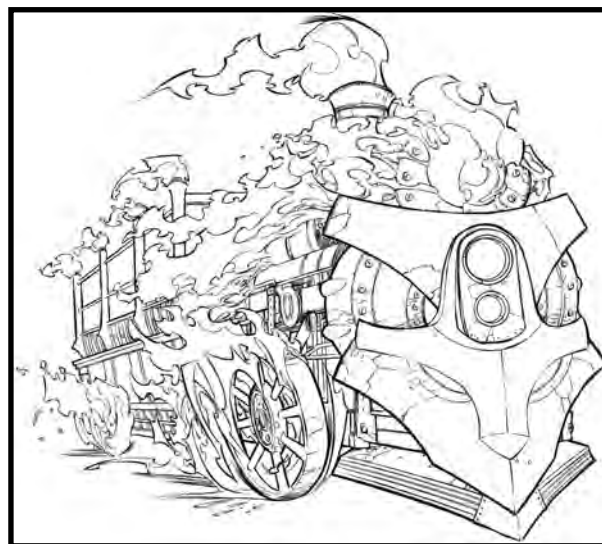
Punch: Speed 14 Accuracy 13 Damage 12B Defense 14 Rate 5

Kick: Speed 11 Accuracy 13 Damage 15B Defense 9 Rate 3
Giant Gossamer Sword: Speed 14 Accuracy 14 Damage 18L Defense 11 Rate 3

Dodge Pool: 17

OTHER ANTAGONISTS

Some of Swar's phantasmal residents have a recurring character, being the favorite imaginings of the various subsidiary selves that govern parts of Swar. In their long centuries of empty repetition in the silence, these treasured toy dreams have become the poppets of Swar. Some, like the fox carriages, are extremely dangerous, while many of the others are merely slightly solidified glamour.



FOX CARRIAGE

Description: The fox carriages are an echoing side-effect of the gestation of the Fox Cataphract in the belly of the semi-shaped Swar. When they began, this phenomenon created mere phantoms. However, centuries of echoes and the growing strength of the Fox Cataphract have lent a solidity to these creatures that make them more than mere shaping illusions. Now, they belt up and down the mazy streets of Swar, letting out train-whistle shrieks and snorting blue fire like the proto-raksha that they echo. The fox carriages are seen only in the Heights and the Barrios of Swar, as they cannot fit into the Undercity or the Spires.

The fox carriages are vast fox-headed vehicles of blue flame, appearing somewhat as a cross between a steam locomotive and a chariot, and with room for up to 12 on the rear. At first appearance, they are a form of mass transit system for the city of Swar, and they will often appear to act as one, stopping for visitors and whisking them from location to location or driving them about randomly. When Swar is roused against intruders, and the Fox Cataphract is dispatched to confront intruders, the fox carriages will likewise rouse themselves into combat. They are brutal



fighters, attacking by crushing the target with their iron wheels, and dispatching animate fireballs from the top of the fume-stack on the front of the carriage.

Shaping Combat: The fox carriages are some of Swar's weapons in shaping combat. They are a horror. If for some reason the Fox Cataphract is slain, the fox carriages will become unavailable.



GOGGLE-EYED ANGEL

Description: The goggle-eyed angels are the servants of the Prince Malevolent. They are his technicians, worshipers and sacrifices. They live only to serve him. They crawl from great vats and are returned to them. And yet, repetition has given them enough reality that they are a somewhat of a threat for creatures of Creation.

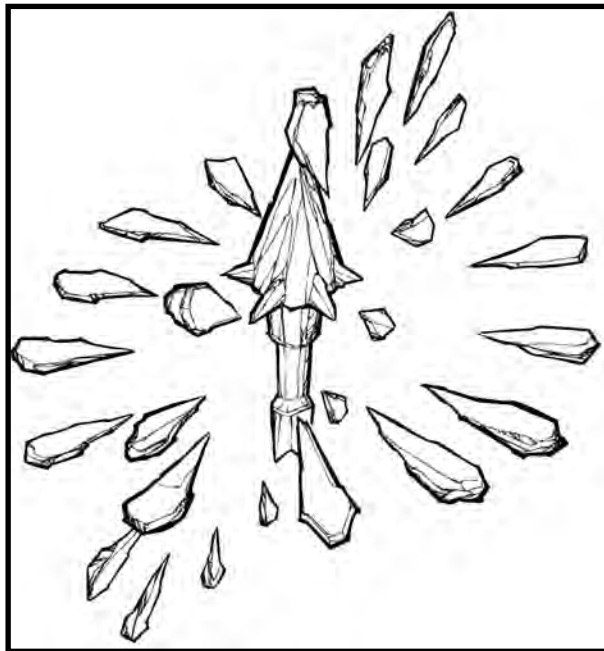
The goggle-eyed angels are exactly that: tall, willowy figures, with gangly, nimble limbs. Their great eyes stare unblinking, seeking out every speck of light in the Prince Malevolent's great dark recesses and drinking it in, leaving

the place all the darker behind them. They have protruding pot bellies and slouching postures, and they are filthy with the strange chemicals of the Undercity.

Goggle-eyed angels are shy and do not leap readily to combat. Instead, they lurk deep in the machinery of the Undercity, their glittering eyes watching from a safe distance. When any battles conclude, the angels will resume their custodial duties, cleaning up any ghastly remains and repairing any damage the Undercity suffered in the fighting. However, if directed to do so by the Prince, they will fight ferally with their savage, dirty yellow fingernails and rotting brown and yellow teeth.

Shaping Combat: The goggle-eyed angels may be props in shaping combat but do not form a weapon. The Prince Malevolent does, however, have a number of them

as possessions, which he can use as his servants in the shaped world, but their low intelligence makes them of limited use.



GLITTERVANE

Description: Glittervanes are the manifold offspring of the Keeper of the Tower. Each dictum, rule, observation or cutting idea flutters from his head and flies on its tiny crystal wings to the upper aeries of the Heights, where the dreams nest and grow in rookeries of their kind, drinking the color pumped into the azure blocks from the pumping stations in the Undercity. Over time, they grow to the size of medium dogs, and when their time has come, they release their hold and fall downward.

Many do not fly, and their shattered remains dot the upper stories of the Heights. Others do, and these glassy razors patrol the skies above Swar's waypoints. Thousands of these glittering predators are Swar's to command, and the city gives them over to Him Who Throws Axes.

Glittervanes are shining, glittering agglomerations of crystal grown from the edicts of the Keeper of the Tower. There is a cigar- or dart-shaped central body, surrounded by a swirling vortex of razor-edged glass that both provides lift and a cutting surface. Glittervanes are lit from within by a soft but exceedingly bright pastel light. The most common colors are pink, blue and green. They provide torchlight visibility out to 20 yards.

Glittervanes nest in the Heights until they are mature, then they patrol the air of the city in packs of 6 to 24. Normally, the packs patrol using a high-low split, with the lower group flying across the terrain and lighting it with their bodies, and the other half of the group hanging up higher, ready to dive down on any revealed targets.



| Creature | Physical Att. Str/Dex/Sta | Will. | Health Levels Spd/Acc/Dmg | Attack | Dodge/Soak | Abilities |
|------------------------|------------------------------|-------|------------------------------|--|------------|--|
| Fox Carriage* | 7/4/11 | 6 | -0x4/-2x4/ -4x4/1 | Fireball: 6/7/11L Carriage Rush: 6/10/20Bp | 4/14L/20B | Archery 4, Athletics 4, Awareness 1, Brawl 4, Presence 3 |
| Goggle-Eyed Angel** | 3/3/3 | 2 | -1/-3/1 | Claw/Bite: 6/5/2L | | Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Lore 1, Survival 2 |
| Glittervane** | 2/5/4 | 2 | -1/-3/1 | Stab: 11/10/6L | | Athletics 5, Martial Arts 4 |

* Never extras. This is an automaton that never fails Valor checks and never makes any other kind of check.
** Always extras.

Shaping Combat: Glittervanes are one of Him Who Throws Axes' Sword shaping weapons. They are a monster.

OTHER HAZARDS OF SWAR

Swar is not filled only with poppets and terrible unshaped Fair Folk. While other raksha could probably ignore Swar's often-hazardous nature or simply bypass it with their shaping, the Creation-born cannot avoid the Wyld's hazards so easily, and the City of Formlessness Constrained has many exotic materials and dangerous hazards to which a character may be exposed.

THE WAR MANSES

The War Manses that keep Swar imprisoned are a matter for the Storyteller to decide on. It could be that they are simply one or more small, hidden, hardened First Age military facilities that must be researched, found and destroyed. It could be that Swar forces the characters to brave the Imperial Manse to save

its skin or that the characters already control one or more of the War Manses in question. The specifics are up to the Storyteller to determine. The Manses are one of the ways Swar ties in with the rest of a Storyteller's game, so they are left open so that the person running the game can attach them to the larger plots as needed. What is definitely true is that the Storyteller must make some decisions about where these Manses might be, how many there are and what might control them. Assuming Swar does not destroy the characters utterly and is not destroyed by them, the War Manses in question are going to be very important to the next phase of the series. At a bare minimum, keep a number and some locations on hand for when things suddenly go in the directions of needing to move the characters on to the next stage of things. There is no reason to think they will give you an instant's peace after they figure out where they are supposed to go. Also, there is every reason to expect the characters to split into small groups to explore multiple locations at once, so don't assume you will just be able to feed them one location at a time either.

| Object | Soak (L/B) | Health Levels to Damage | Health Levels to Destroy |
|--------------------------|------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Black Aluminum Walls | 12/16 | 20 | 30 |
| Blue Glass | 2/20 | 1 | 10 |
| Blue Glass Windowframe | 1/10 | 1 | 2 |
| Red Adobe | 8/8 | 20 | 36 |
| Fallen Airtower Entryway | 12/18 | 40 | 80 |

| Hazard | Diff. | Resisted Effect | Failed Effect | Interval |
|---------------------------------|-------|-----------------|---------------|----------|
| Undercity Waste Immersion | 4 | 3L | 6L | 1 turn |
| Falling Shower of Blue Crystal | 3 | 3B | 3L | 1 turn |
| Flame Aura of Fox Carriage | 3 | 2L | 6L | 1 turn |
| Razor Winds | 5 | 1L | 2L | 1 turn |
| Tearing Chaos Within the Spire* | 1 | 5B | 1A | 1 scene |

* This is in addition to resisting the Wyld effects of the tower. Aggravated damage from tearing chaos ignores armor.

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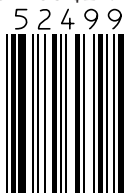
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