



G A T H O X

VERTICAL
SLUM

WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED
BY D.L. JOHNSON
WITH CHAPTER FICTION
BY JOSH WAGNER

A FAR OUT SCIENCE
FANTASY SETTING FOR
SWORDS & WIZARDRY
WHITE BOX EDITION AND
OTHER CLASSIC GAMES

Gv1

CREDITS

Gathox Vertical Slum

A transdimensional urban campaign setting for classic fantasy games.

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Published by DIY RPG Productions

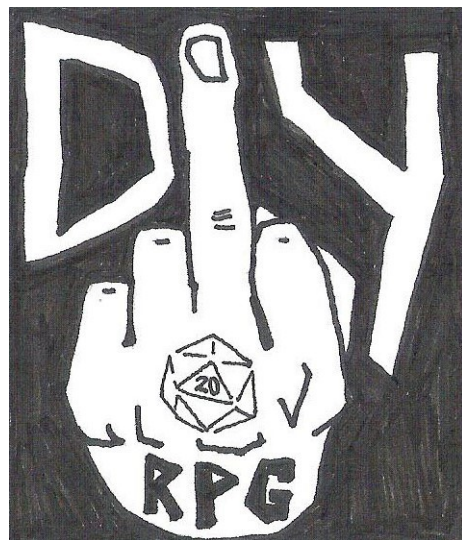
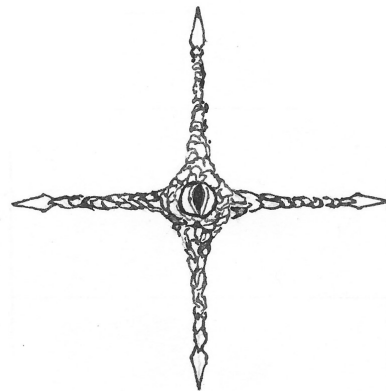


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INTRODUCTION: WELCOME TO GATHOX!

You hold in your hands a copy of my home game, *Gathox Vertical Slum*, the culmination of three and a half years of drawing, writing, editing, and most importantly, good times. I cannot thank you enough for your interest in Gathox.

Gathox is a transdimensional, world-hopping, wandering godling. On its back grows a city, also called Gathox. In this lawless, cut-throat city are innumerable opportunities for violence, excess, hilarity, conflict, advancement, and entertainment.

The book contains descriptions of Gathox as a city, Gathox as a godling, and Gathox as an organism. It details the collision of alien cultures, machinations of scheming gangsters, and the dread movements of ageless and inscrutable entities. It contains new and revised classes, including what I like to think is a very sleek, functional, and setting-based Mutant class. It details how to run a gangland domain game from level 1, and provides tools for generating gangs on the fly. There are 43 brand-spankin' new monsters, a starting adventure, and plenty of miscellaneous goodies to keep a table entertained and playing.

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank a bevy of folks, and I appreciate your acknowledgement of their contributions to the artifact that is now in your hands or on your screen.

First and foremost, I'd like to thank Ally Guldborg, my partner, fellow adventurer, sometime editor, home game player, and all around enabler of my efforts. You are a straight up badass.

I'd like to thank author Josh Wagner, for taking the risk of playing a tabletop RPG for the first time in Gathox with us, and for taking the interest and time to write the wonderful and interconnected chapter fiction featured at the beginning of Chapters 1 through 6. As I write this, Josh is in Japan after a stint in Europe, writing his next great fiction and enjoying this pale blue dot with his partner, Alexsa.

I'd like to thank Mike Evans, for kicking so much work my way over the years, giving me well-earned hard times, and taking on the significant task of additional edits, layout, and publishing of Gathox.

I'd like to thank the Hydra crew, including Chris Kotalik, Robert Parker, Trey Causey, Humza Kazmi, Mike Davison, and Jason Sholtis for their support and initial interest in the book. I first learned the joy of the XD6 vs. Ability mechanic from Robert courtesy of Chris, and both Robert and Trey provided a crucial initial round of edits that helped make this book much better than what it was. Most importantly, Robert Parker has been my steadfast friend and confidant since 2005, and we have shared countless good and hard times together. Thank you.

Finally, I'd like to thank the players in the home game, all of whom I love: Ally Guldborg, William Saylor, Josh Wagner, Alexsa Prince, Greg Ransons, Tony Gregori, Paul Thompson, Erika Fredrickson, Spencer Bryant, Freedom Lee Drudge, Reggie Herbert, Joshua Daidone, Patrick Yoder, and Cale McClure. Hells yeah.

Alright! Onward, to the Great Spire, and may you find your fortune or a hilarious death!

Cheers,

David Lewis Johnson

SLUM LIFE: AN OVERVIEW OF GATHOX

Kettle Boiling Over

Berling's best eye peers through the corrugated ring of a 20X doublet lens optical comparator. One gnarled hand twists focus. Under the glass a miniature scaffold suspends three brass pendulums no bigger than the head of a pin. The customer claims it's a Zhao original. Berling knows the truth. He could tell the minute the nervous stranger dropped it into the palm of the marble hand propped up on the counter with its little green sign saying, "Put 'er there." Even without magnification he could tell, and almost from the sound alone. But running a pawn shop is a work of theatre. Bartering and reputation rely on performance and storytelling. The exchange of goods and services comprises the tip of an iceberg of entanglements without which Berling would have no need to distribute his over three hundred separate envelopes a month through the Kettle and into the Craw. He knows his reputation for impartiality relies on a balance of bribes and the illusion of backroom exclusivity. The only way to achieve true neutrality in the Kettle is to rent a room in everyone's pocket at the same time, and to make sure each one of them thinks they're the only landlord.

That includes the customer, who wants more than money. The customer want an experience. He wants to feel like he's finally pulled one over on old Berling.

"You sure this is genuine?" Berling tries to catch the eyes in front of him.

The stranger shuffles through half a dozen tells. Pupils dilate. Eyes dart down and right. There's a little sideways tip of the head. Miserable bastard even clears his throat. "I picked it up at an estate sale," he says. "An old padrone who was known to have put in orders. Heavy manufacturing mogul."

"Early bird, huh?"

"You get lucky sometimes."

"So no guarantee."

"Not in this life."

Berling doesn't have to force a laugh. The stranger's a shit liar, but he's no fool. Berling retrieves a glass jar half filled with water. He peels the tiny machine off the marble palm with a set of platinum tweezers. Drops it in the jar. Squeezes a silver drop out of a crooked pipette and watches the magnetic material swirl down into liquid space.

A swinging door rattles old bells. Berling sneaks a glance through his long range optical cluster to see Mirez "The Smirk" Bolan cross the room. He approaches the counter like a postman on delivery. The stranger instinctively steps out of his way. Still focused on the water, Berling hands over a square of red parchment, lock folded and sealed with scratler wax, which Bolan accepts between the hip knuckles of a gesture that might signify peace from any other

man. He sniffs it, scrapes an edge against his eponymous scar. A luck ritual. Berling asks where he's been, considering he missed the last two pickups. The killer tugs an ear and points out the window to Kamma Tower's faint outline over the slanted shanty roofs across the street.

"Taking up yoga?"

Berling says. Bolan sniffs again for effect, double taps the glass and walks out.

As Berling screws a lens lid on the jar, the stranger takes off his hat and puts it on the counter. Berling leans into his work, inspecting the gradual effects exerted by the tiny machine on the magnetized fluid.

"You ever been to Kamma Tower?" Berling asks.

"Can't say that I have."

"You know the stories though."

"A bunch of acrobats plastered in the walls?"

"Nothing but clown ghosts, fanatics, and junkies in there now."

"Who was that man?" the stranger asks, glancing at the door.

"You like dance music?"

"Sure."

"Bounces over at Heat of the Kill."

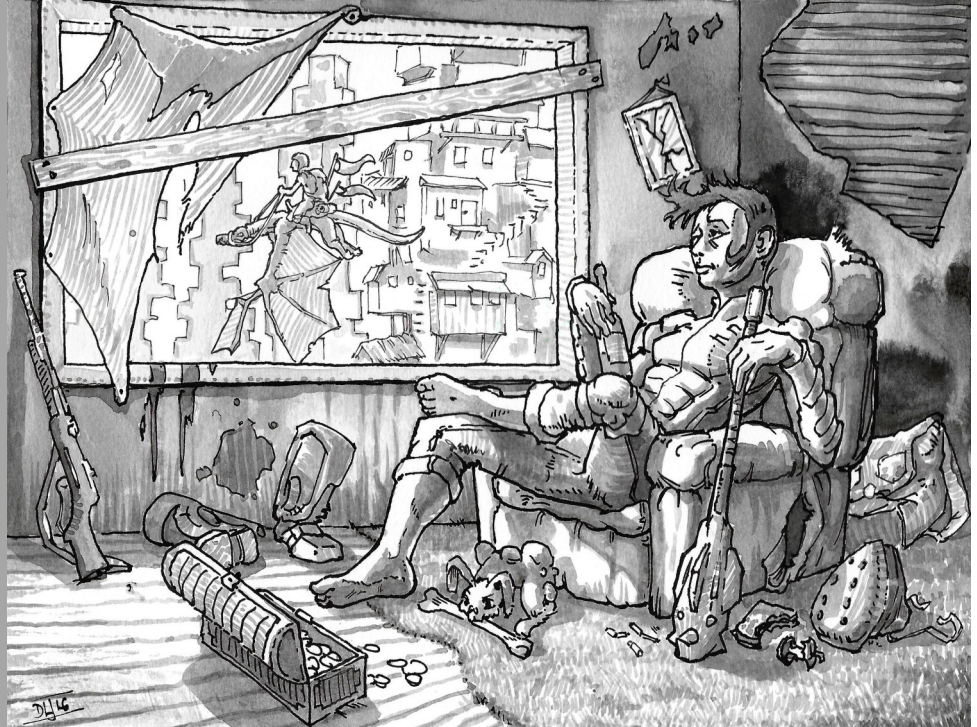
"And picks up his mail here?"

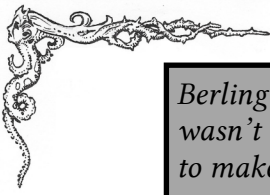
Berling holds out the jar for inspection. "You see that? The fluid's binding around the edges. Zhao originals don't respond to magnetism. No one knows what the hell they are, but they ain't metal. This is."

"Hm."

"It's a good likeness, though. Careful work. I'll give you 9 gold."

"I paid 15 at the sale."





Berling would bet good money the stranger slipped it into his pocket when the old widow wasn't looking. A good Zhao replica's worth 50 on the market, low end. Berling knows ways to make hundreds off them. "Make me an offer."

The stranger thinks it over. "35?"

Now's where the theatre comes in. A sale's one thing, but a happy customer can yield a fortune in the long run. Berling purses lips and scratches eyebrows. He hems and haws. "How about 20?" And then he drops tells of his own. Nervous fingers bouncing and scratching like he's got something to lose.

"Maybe I'll try down the street first," the stranger says, reaching for his hat. Berling lays a relenting hand on the brim and pulls it out of reach. Then, servile, he hands it to its master.

"You win. 30."

Berling's already pulling money out of a drawer. The stranger works up a satisfied smirk to rival Boland's scar, takes the money and heads for the door.

Berling fires a parting question over the sound of jingling bells. "You ever hear of the Vulzari?"

The stranger stops, pivots his head a quarter turn. "Bird gods?"

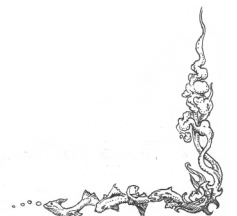
"There's tunnels run from every nightclub in the Kettle to Kamma tower. Bodies go in, but they don't come out. Only one guy I know's been in and out of there since the Night of Sighing Clowns... Maybe you know the names of a few more old manufacturing moguls on the verge of retirement? I think we might be able to arrange a sudden rash of estate sales."

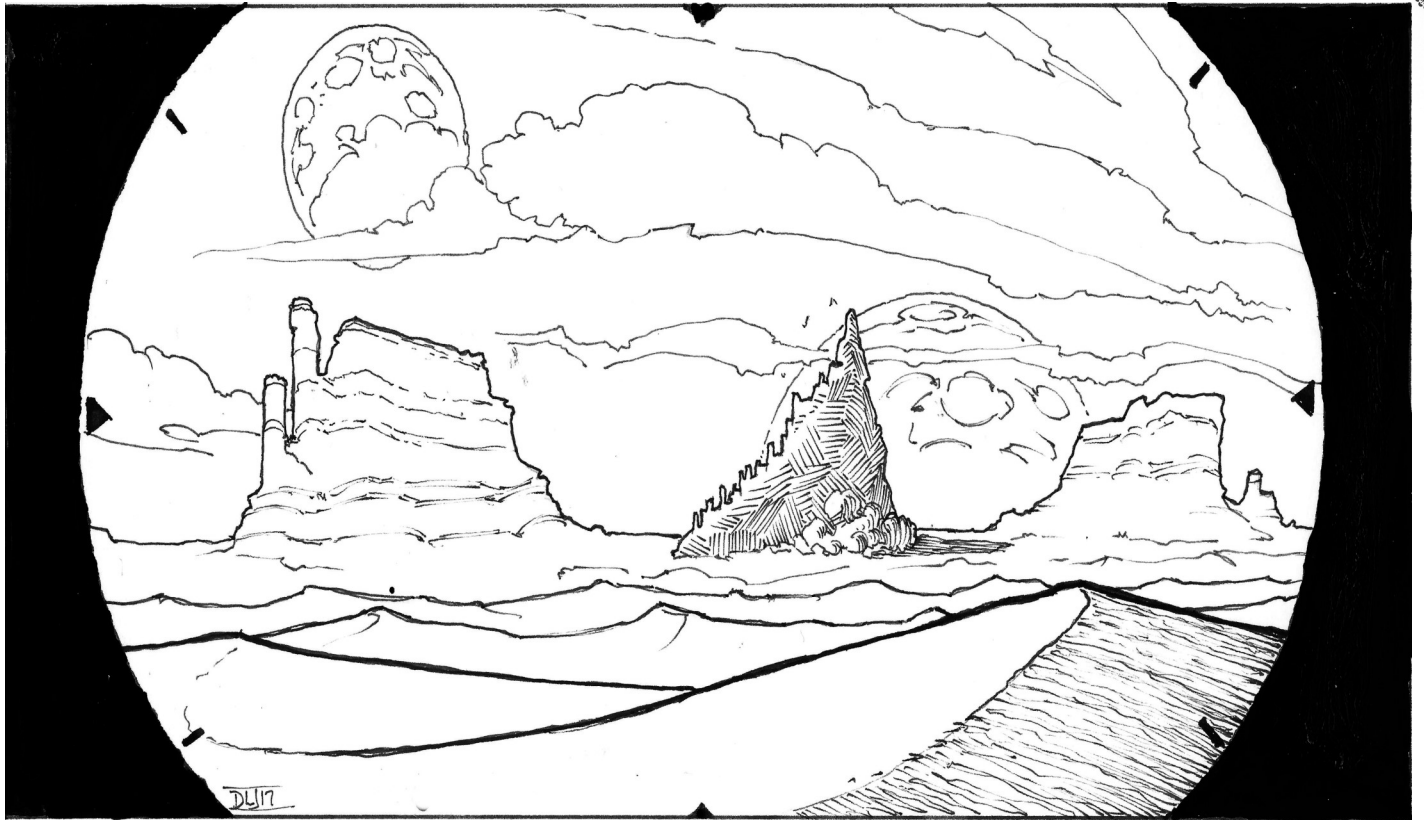
The stranger thinks it over. "I'll see what I can come up with," he says, and walks out.

Berling picks up the jar, removes the lid, and taps the base against the counter. Then he unscrews the false bottom containing a centerpiece of metal filings. Took a lot of practice before he could drop something through water and make it sink to the bullseye every time. The magnetic fluid diffuses into a cloud and ghosts through the jar, leaving the Zhao original abandoned at the base. An exquisite specimen.



What follows is a thorough breakdown of each neighborhood in Gathox, which begins with geographical and cultural information useful for orienting the GM to the overall atmosphere and conditions in the area, as well as conveying the world to players at the table. Following that are details of important locations and NPCs, crafted in such a way as to provide hooks for adventures and mishaps in the course of description.





AT A GLANCE

Gathox is a massive wandering godling, either mindless or inscrutable in motives, who travels across the wildernesses and wastelands of at least two dozen catalogued worlds. Sages of all stripes suspect that the godling may exist simultaneously on these worlds at different points in the universal timeline as well. Gathox finds sustenance on these worlds:, sucking up dunes, woodlands, and small lakes into the half-kilometer wide maw at its rocky head, perpetually driven forward on more than a million humanoid legs. As the great beast moves, these legs regularly break off and decay where they rest, sprouting all manner of gourds and cucumbers within a fortnight.

Those who have approached Gathox from the front claim they can read the obscure lines of a face on the great rocky mound, its mouth agape in a perpetual wail, eyes turned upward. From a distance, Gathox appears to glide along the surface of the earth, lumbering forward at the pace of an elderly porter. Many who spy Gathox for the first

time face difficulty believing that it lives, swearing it looks like nothing so much as a floating island hovering upside down.

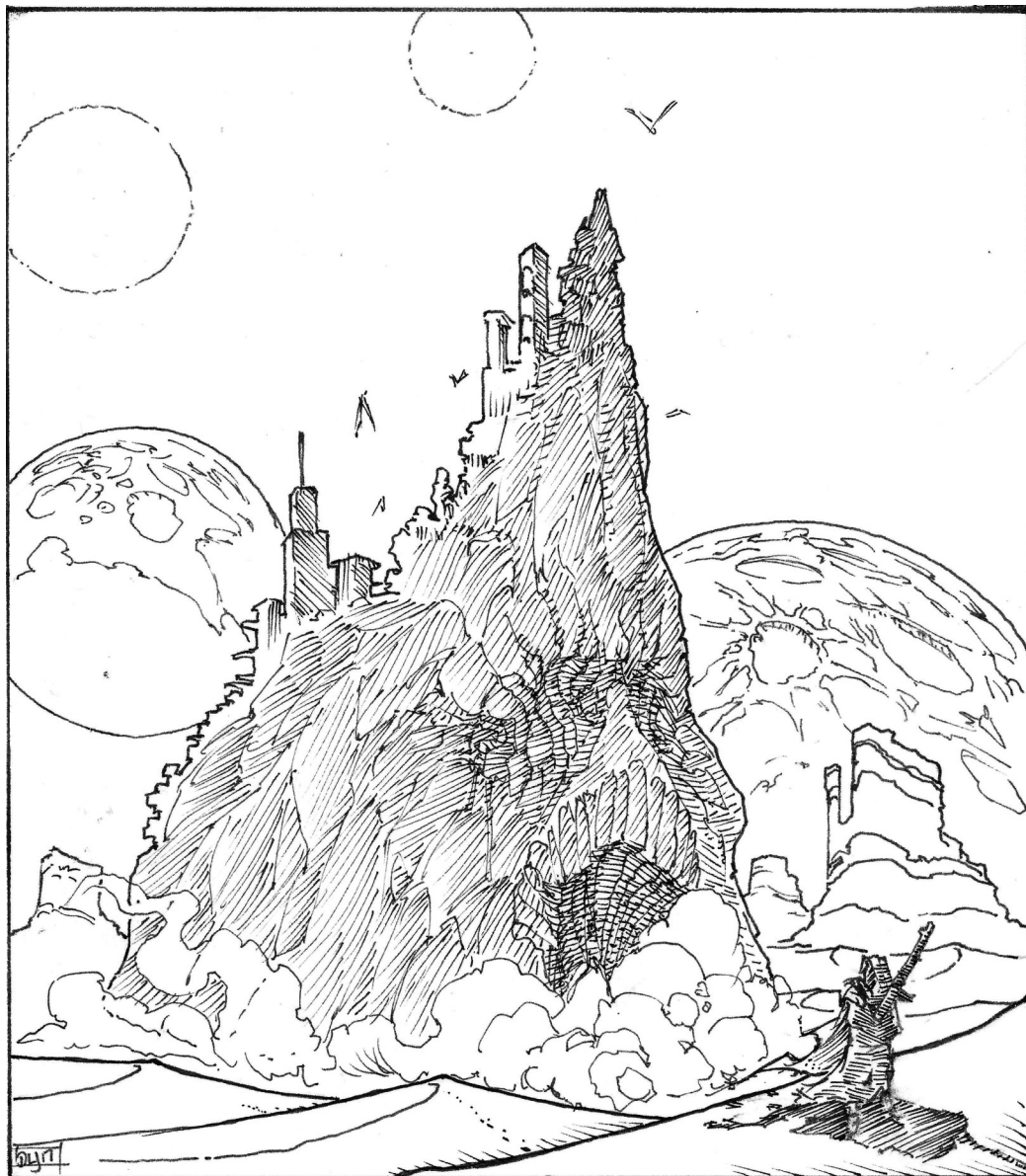
A city, also called Gathox, grows on the sloped, mountainous back of the godling. This vast city is surrounded by a great, rocky wall like the rim of a caldera. Precarious stacks of tightly packed buildings sprout from the godling's hind-quarters, increasing in size and sophistication as the city stretches toward the head of the god, ending in a massive spire which appears like a horn above the face of Gathox. Those who dwell within the city of Gathox often reverently refer to it as "The Great Spire," although this can just as often refer to the actual Spire itself.

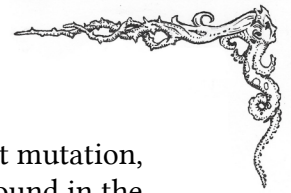
AT FIRST APPROACH

Following in the wake of Gathox, wanderers encounter a variety of strange phenomena. Severed human legs in various states of decay adorn the ground, quickly spouting into fields of gourds regardless of the terrain. Piles of trash, exploded and often burning, punctuate the sides of a great concourse of footprints, as if a shoeless army had recently passed through the area. Travelers who follow the path of the city will eventually gain ground, spying first the Great Spire, then a protrusion of buildings, catapults, and lights.

As wanderers draw nearer, greenery can be seen growing between buildings like weeds breaking through cracks in concrete. Numerous chimneys and

industrial stacks spew acrid, oily clouds of pollution into the sky, leaving Gathox perpetually mired in a haze of particulates. Birds circle overhead, diving to the surface in turn, gradually growing more numerous as distant buzzards draw close to see what the fuss is about. Navigating near Gathox can be a chore, as the strength of the godling's local magnetism causes compasses to point north toward its head. Those who wish to enter the city must do so from the low-sloping back end, which features an elongated metal ramp reaching to the earth which is also supported by human legs grafted to the underside.





IN THE VERTICAL SLUM

Although there are many small, hidden, or secret ways of coming and going, most enter the city of Gathox by the Gate of Exploding Benevolence, a quadruple-arched, gaily painted thoroughfare teeming with grifters. This entrance leads to an open-air market at the base of a densely packed, vertical slum. This slum is divided into three neighborhoods by geographic, social, and functional boundaries.

The largest neighborhood is **The Kettle**, an immense basin of metal pylons, sagging bazaars, and ad-hoc communities, which occupies nearly the entire southern half of the city. The Kettle is the city's industrial heart of manufacturing, but also home to a wide array of gangs and the worst poverty of the three neighborhoods.

Berchan Favela, a violent and brightly-colored neighborhood filled with street performers and urban farmers, lies to the north and east. It sits at a higher elevation than The Kettle, halfway up the back of the godling. The Favela produces most of the city's food.

West of the Favela and north of The Kettle lies the seat of power and influence in Gathox - a collection of palaces, plazas, and mansions called **The Crow**. This is where the most powerful, but also the most alien, factions make their homes, profiting heavily from the slave trade, mining, and other resource acquisition enterprises. The most salient feature of The Crow is the Great Spire: the horn of the godling, upon which the elite build their most extravagant dwellings.

POPULATION

Conservative estimates place the population of Gathox at a quarter of a million, although slaves and underground dwellers are rarely included in these figures; at most, the city might be home to close to a million sentient beings. Nearly two thirds of the population are human, while the rest is comprised of various alien races who have sought shelter in the city over the eons. A significant portion of the human population suffers from mutational defects, to the extent that a mutant underclass has formed in Gathox. Officially, the godling's intense psychic

presence is the cause of the rampant mutation, though xenophobic conspiracies abound in the human citizenry about alien genetic tampering.

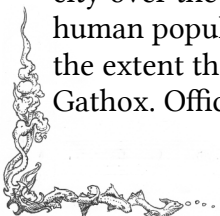
A wide variety of sentient species live together in in the city in varying states of cooperation and opposition. Some crash-landed on worlds the godling has visited, others were denizens; all are now transplants who call Gathox home.

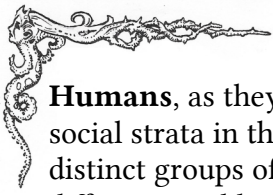
The Bloody People, who call themselves the **Sluurgal**, have called Gathox home the longest of any species, and speculation has it that the godling itself birthed them for the purposes of keeping its surface in good repair. These gaunt, taciturn, and scar-covered humanoids obsess over ritual and live in underground complexes called Mujim.

The Glaat are a race of foul-mouthed, split-limbed space pirates whose ships habitually and inexplicably tend to crash land on worlds the godling repeatedly visits. Their population remains diffuse in the city, with some living "homefree," or homeless, in Berchan Favela and others seeking refuge in the shifting stomach-dungeons deep beneath the surface.

The Gongwarped Fishermen already inhabit a number of worlds on Gathox's travel itinerary, and occasionally wander into the city. These fascist, fish-headed monstrosities are universally reviled and driven underground, where they practice their horrific pseudoscience away from the light of one or more suns.

The Kermen are a spacefaring race of hyper-capitalist humanoids. They closely resemble humans, albeit hairless, one-eyed humans with three digits per limb and rigidly-fused spines. The Kermen have managed to build a successful mercantile empire in the city, and interact tolerably with other species.





Humans, as they are wont to do, dominate most social strata in the city. Strangely, many culturally distinct groups of humans trace their origins to different worlds with wildly varying levels of technology. Whether this is due to a galactic diaspora or universal timeline disruptions remains uncertain.

The short, violent, and hideous turtle people known as **Mi-Chiw** (“MEE-chyoo”) grew from a single crate of eggs thoughtlessly brought into the city on a world not visited for hundreds of years. The Mi-Chiw are barely tolerated, but they occasionally find work as death squads for the elite when they choose to venture above ground.

The Mokron are a race of blue-skinned techno-authoritarians who share some common DNA with humans. They are innovators in the city, but also gatekeep their technology, which has allowed them to become a wealthy demographic in Gathox.

The Vulzari are a race of chicken-men who believe in the inherent supremacy of their culture and are eternally attempting to gain power within the city, only to be regularly wiped out. Their quest for legitimacy is somewhat diminished by the fact that they must forcibly transform other species into Vulzari to propagate.

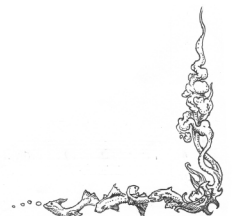
The X’Xul (“ZICK-sool”) are a species of bipedal locust wizards who stumbled into Gathox from their home world a thousand years ago. They have built a considerable slave empire in the city while they wait for Gathox to return to their home world.

GOVERNANCE

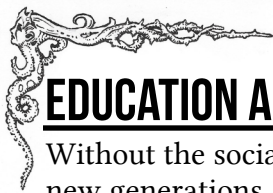
No government holds sway in Gathox, but that doesn’t mean there is no order. **Neighborhood Friendship Societies** are bands of residents organized by proximity or creed, building militias and hiring out specialists to cope with their problems. Street gangs and mobs form in dance halls and back alley fights, displaying their bravado in defense of tenements and petty agendas. Old families form mafias to defend their interests, property, and wealth with strict codes of behavior. Cults and strange ideological factions arise from the muck of poverty, sometimes forming broad alliances to further their political and spiritual goals but, just as often, being ground into dust by opposing forces.

All of these social structures serve to sustain and protect the masses and to occasionally nurture their overlapping interests. Repeatedly throughout the recorded history of Gathox, organizational forces have faced calamity at the hands of the godling. When a prominent family rose to power and attempted to control the entirety of Gathox, the city itself ate them, crushing their public works and devouring their children whole. Their finest apartments on the highest reaches of the Spire were extruded with any their belongings, dumping everything into the wastewater reservoirs of the Kettle.

Sustained governance is made all the more difficult by a peculiar problem: Gathox has a tendency to devour old buildings and public works, occasionally spewing forth a new, improbably structure in its place. When a resident of an apartment building notices small, unhealthy tendrils erupting from the alley and attaching themselves to the building, she knows that the time to pack up and move on has arrived. Occasionally the more unstable residents choose to stay, and rumors of whole underground communities surviving inside the godling periodically make the rounds in watering holes. A favorite pastime of pensioners in stable neighborhoods is to make wagers on which buildings will disappear next, and what might pop up in its place.







EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Without the social services to provide education for new generations, the process of transmitting and expanding knowledge is left to private means - family members, business owners, or community institutions, resulting patchy and disproportionate levels of education amongst the populace. The slow, ad-hoc process of integrating outsiders has occasionally provided boons in knowledge for Gathox, but on the whole the community is experiencing a gradual diminishing of education and technological literacy.

Much of the tech available might compare to 1920's Earth - incomplete electrical grids, few if any automatic firearms, limited systems of communication, motorized transportation only available to the elite, and so on. Medieval and pre-industrial tools are much cheaper and more prevalent than fancy new gadgets.

However, that same trickle of outsiders from vastly different worlds results in a mish-mash of hyper-advanced technologies with antiquated implements. Rare is the market where you can't find a spare laser pistol and some battery charges, although finding someone who can repair said laser would be a much more burdensome task. Even the occasional computer or android might be found in use at some Kettle factory or in the employ of a rich family in The Craw. By and large however, advanced technology is beyond the means of most Gathoxans, and those who have the most resources prefer that it remain this way.

RESOURCES

Life in Gathox mandates certain privations for most residents. A constant threat that the city might phase out of existence from its current world discourages most folks from harvesting resources outside the walls. This means that many resources must be brought in by outsiders, collected passively from the environment, or culled directly from the godling. Recycling occurs out of habitual necessity, and virtually every building or tool has components or sections cobbled together from reclaimed materials. Composting is generally done dwelling by dwelling, although in Berchan, community gardens accept

compost waste. Large translucent sheets of plastic or animal intestines are often strung between rooftops to collect condensation, and virtually every roof bears a jerry-rigged system of pipes and catchments for rainwater.

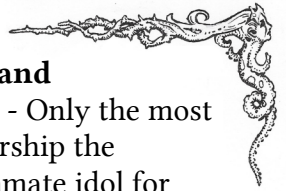
Urban mining and drilling provide a large portion of the resources in Gathox, although with strange results. Those digging past the first 20 to 40 feet of rock might uncover a variety of items and substances: muscle tissue, milk, snot, noxious gases, precious stones and metals, pre-formed alloys, intact apartments, and even live embryos of various species. The largest of these operations is the Chemok Mine in The Craw, worked by hundreds of X'Xul slaves and considered dangerous in the extreme.

Drilling for water is a tricky task, resulting in more failure than success. Those rare attempts which succeed often become hot spots in turf wars between tenements or gangs. Several areas in the city feature naturally occurring surface wells or fountains, forming small streams that run through the city. Most become choked with litter or laden with disease and toxins by the time they trickle down to the poor in The Kettle.

Urban farming and gardening requires ingenuity due to a paucity of wide spaces. Gathoxans tend to rig up hanging gardens around their homes, grow grain crops on rooftops, and always consider the potential of spaces to host plants. Growing seasons vary from world to world, but the city rarely travels through cold climates and thus enjoys two or more seasons each year. Ancient and imposing Jimmelune trees which bear a strange, baby-skinned fruit grow throughout the city, especially clustered in the Great Arboretum in Berchan; other fruiting trees have been imported as well.

The most common livestock available are pigs, chicken, and boil bunnies, all of which can be raised in vented basement pens beneath butcher shops, or in cages hanging from ledges off the sides of high-rise buildings. Occasionally markets will temporarily fill with a glut of delicious "Long Hen" meat after the extermination of a Vulzari surface infestation.





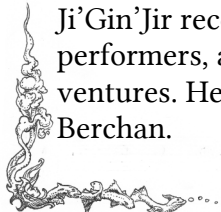
Garbage, though reduced significantly by scarcity, inevitably accrues in the alleys and streets of Gathox. Those so inclined make meager livings clearing out these accumulations, and generally just transport them to the walled edges of the city. Street kids often play in these massive heaps of refuse, and sometimes bring garbage pails with them to build forts. Young lovers might daintily ascend one of these piles to glimpse a sunset from atop the city walls, their budding romance only slightly dampened by the stench and danger. Ultimately, when the piles peek over the walls of the city, Neighborhood Friendship Societies hire out freelance catapult operators to eject the refuse from the city. The catapult operators often light the trash on fire for their own amusement, and during the evenings make a show of their work by adding homemade fireworks to the mix.

RELIGION AND ANTIBIOTICS

Gathox is a godling of unknowable motives who possesses a tremendous reservoir of psychic energy. The godling periodically uses this bank of energy to bridge the gap between times and worlds in its unending quest to sate its appetites and pursue its unfathomable machinations. Virtually none of the citizenry know why the godling tolerates their presence. Indeed, many are entirely unaware of the need they fulfill for Gathox. The city and its residents function as a macro-organism symbiont, feeding on the magical radiation and spare resources of the godling and providing a font of psychic energy and religious worship to fuel the godling's travels. Though Gathoxans don't directly or knowingly worship the godling itself, they do worship at least five major incarnations of the godling. Most people think these are discrete entities, and they often appear as such. These minor deities are listed below.

The God That Grows and Grows (alternate name: Sha-Benyu) - Sha-Benyu is most commonly worshipped in The Kettle by a cult of the same name, who shave their heads, wear neon pink togas, and divest themselves of possessions.

The Goddess Who Balances on Narrow Precipices (Ji'Gin'Jir, pronounced "jee-gun-JEER") - Ji'Gin'Jir receives worship from athletes and physical performers, as well as those about to embark on risky ventures. Her worship is most widespread in Berchan.



The God Which Pulses, Quivers, and Collects (Grand Stultified Energon) - Only the most nihilistic and perverse choose to worship the Energon, and so he makes a consummate idol for both the death-eating, corpse-wearing Surdites and the X'Xul locusts.

The Goddess of Red-Tongued Truths (The Mauve Empress) - A classic deity of destruction and revenge, the goddess serves as inspiration for assassins, disc jockeys, and construction workers.

The God Who Dreams in Pillars and is a Boy (Dzak Molu, pronounced "Jock Mole-ooh") - Most commonly encountered in dreams, Dzak Molu is worshipped as a spirit totem by some, and blamed for night terrors and sleep paralysis by others. He is commonly prayed to by junkies and the Mi-Chiw.

Gathox produces a series of energy harvesters and antibodies called **Zhezhn** (pronounced "Judge-un" or "Shesh-in"). The Zhezhn roam the spaces beneath the city, searching with their astral tendrils for tasty dream snacks and orgies of psychic expression, siphoning a percentage of that energy for themselves and the godling. They also work to repel invaders who penetrate too deeply into the body of Gathox and to snuff out the lives of beings who draw too much energy from it. From time to time a Zhezhn will shift from its natural amoebic energy state and take on a form recognizable by mortals.

Any dreamed or imagined entity could become a deity, often given physical form by the Zhezhn. The deities listed above are powerful Zhezhn who maintain long-term forms as a convenient way for Gathox to focus and harvest the psychic energy involved in worship. Dozens of Zhezhn are worshipped as petty gods throughout the city, which tangentially means that any sentient being could end up accidentally or subconsciously inventing a god during a nap, a daydream, or a good drug binge. Unshaped by the dreams of men, the Zhezhn appear as massive bursts of psychedelic color akin to full-spectrum decalomania art.



TIME AND WORLD-HOPPING

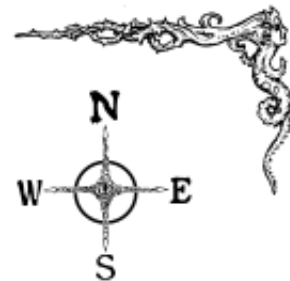
Gathox periodically shifts between worlds and although philosophers and Mentalists have yet to determine the logic or patterns of this migration, they have accumulated a body of knowledge about the subject. For instance, in two millennia of recorded history, Gathox has strode the surface of 31 distinct planets, 24 of them treated to revisits. The shortest stay on any planet was 9 hours on an icy moon of a gas giant, a visit terminated shortly after an invisible sickness struck the populace at large. The longest time spent was in the tropical zone of a wet planet with 6 moons, lasting a little over two decades. Currently, the city strides a world affectionately dubbed “Red Doom,” whose crimson skies, double suns and moons, and unending deserts have played host to the city for 7 years.

Sages also know that the godling chooses worlds with similar gravity and orbits around their star or stars, and that Gathox prefers oxygenated atmospheres and landforms relatively bereft of advanced civilizations. Some worlds have shorter or longer days, but clearly the godling prefers a median of temperatures and other environmental factors. This is fortunate for the dwellers upon its back, say the wise.



CITY OVERVIEW MAP

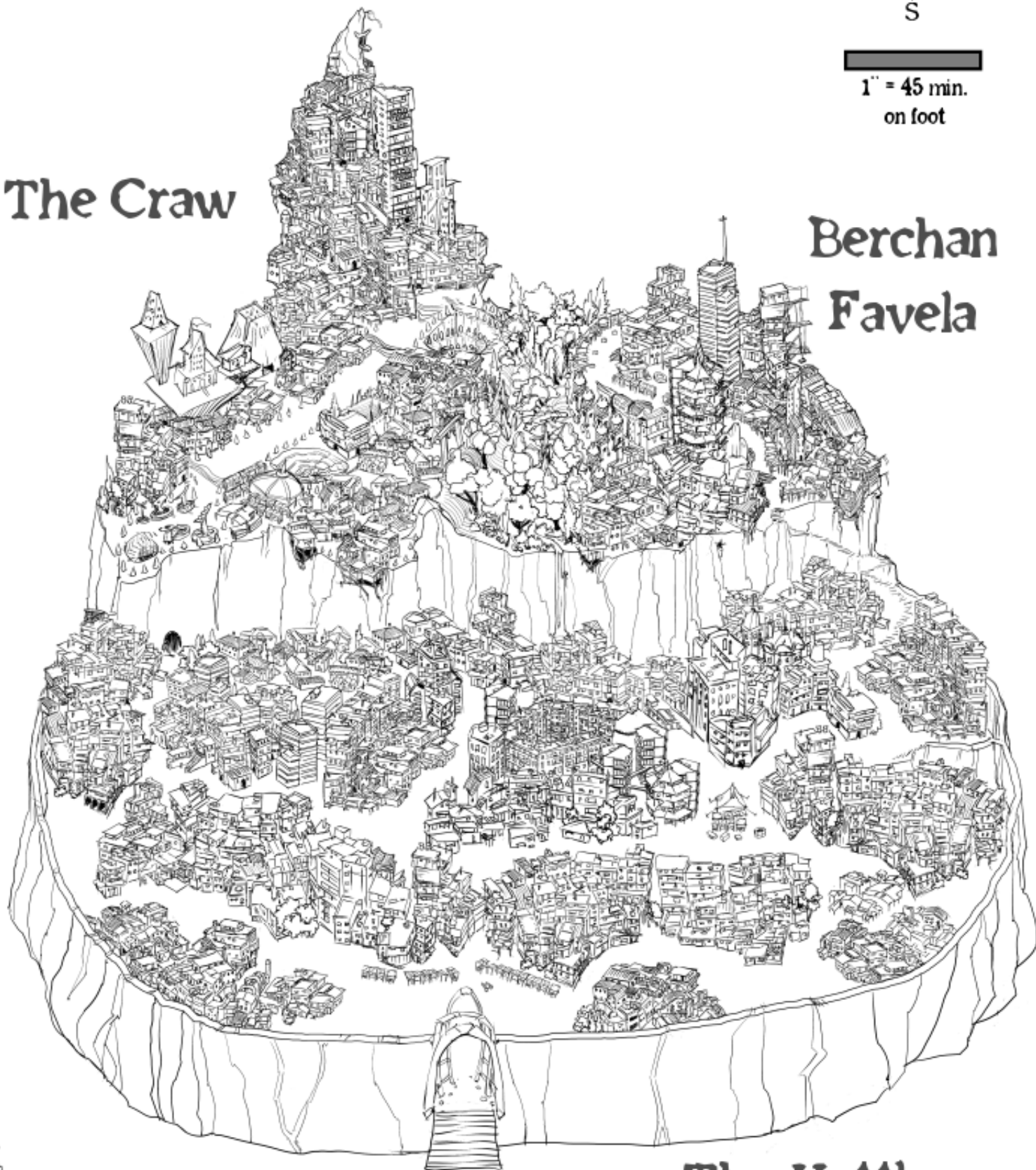
GATHOX VERTICAL SLUM



1" = 45 min.
on foot

The Crow

Berchan
Favela



The Kettle



CHAPTER 2:

WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD!

Revelations

Bolan's feet haven't touched Berchan streets in almost a year. Not for lack of desire. It was at a little trap house in one of these very box slums where he was brought into the world, and where he lived for six years before his family moved to the Kettle. For a long time he resented Berchan Favela, considered himself a refugee, but distance has given him new eyes, and every visit reminds him of the strange, subtle pleasures and vivid creative energy of this poor but colorful neighborhood so often overshadowed by the Kettle's vast and shifting turf.

He glides past the aromatic allure of roasting spices and sizzling oil on flat iron grills lining the streets. Ignores the stilted gymnast and white-faced clown clamoring after him on hands and feet. Bolan takes an alley no broader than the span of a bicycle, casually losing the crumpled red paper down a sewer grate. The name and address were burned into his memory the moment he read them. He should be able to take care of this in time to get back to the club before The Revealer's opening set.

There's no reply at the front door, so Bolan goes to the super's office. A fat man in a grease stained apron tells him Charlie of 318b has been spending a lot of time in the garden this week, "on account of Abe's out of town on business." He looks Bolan up and down. "Or maybe you already know that. Wouldn't put it past Charlie getting some on the side."


"This is business," Bolan says.

He leaves the complex and looks for a high vantage, wondering if there's something about himself that gives off a homosexual vibe. It surprises him to be so surprised to find out which way his target swings. Makes him wonder about the weird sexual possibilities burning inside former hits. There was this one guy who, if someone told Bolan he had a thing strictly for mutants, he wouldn't have thought twice.

Finding his way up a water tower on the roof of a four-story building across the street, Bolan moves into a position where he can get a good vantage of the "garden," a 9x9 plot of rotting soil in the center of the apartment square. A hooded figure kneels there, in the dirt, fingering small holes in which to drop dry, messianic vegetable seeds. Bolan's weapon fits in a regular pocket. Small but effective. The stub scope a work of precision. His target's back stiffens, arms reach for the hood. Bolan's finger on the trigger. Three... two... exhale...

His target pushes a braid of albescent hair out of her pretty face and he can make out long lashes and chokecherry lips. Bolan's finger relaxes, his breath catches in his throat. How had he not even considered Charlie might be a woman? He lowers the weapon. She turns, looking right at him. It's too late. Hands already on her belt.

He hears something like thunder skipping over water, and he flinches at the sound. Heavy caliber. Comes from his two o'clock. A flash on glass. Charlie falls face first in the dirt, surrounded by sprouts and saplings, tools and twine. The blonde in her hair soaking red.



Tonight the Revealer will write him a note asking him where he's been and Bolan will invent some story. Then she'll indicate by gesture alone, "I thought you were a professional," and catch him by surprise. It will be time to talk about weaknesses, about vulnerabilities, and about lusts and needs. But for now he still doesn't know he has an ally. All he knows is he got lucky.

THE KETTLE

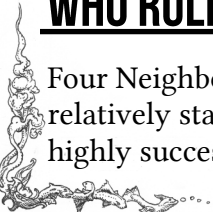
Much of the action and bustle of Gathox reveals itself in the daily thrum of the Kettle. Visitors enter through the low-lying Gate of Exploding Benevolence, first ascending a metal ramp supported by ten thousand muscular human legs grafted to the underside and then passing through the quintuple-arches of the Gate itself. Locals may pass into and out of Gathox through the Kettle by using the Tunnel of Punctuated Peace to the west or the Catwalk of Private Vicissitudes to the northeast.

Once inside, visitors are treated to a dizzying array of sights and spectacles in the central bazaar, The Dregs. In the mornings, the squealing of livestock in mid-slaughter mixes with the raspy calls of town criers as the scent of egg blood soup and Dew-on-Iron fill the air. Dead hangovers and the quiet aftermath of misbegotten nights render this the most peaceful time of day.

By mid-day, the streets clog with marketeers, sly-men, pickpockets, dancehall crashers, and representatives of Neighborhood Friendship Societies. The sewer gases heat and rise, mingling with the aroma of fresh fried meats and body odor. Supplicants of Sha-Benyu, resplendent in their neon pink robes and body paint, preach and beg for the glory of the God That Grows and Grows.

In the evenings, scummers smoke the narcotic huckleberry-like paste of the bakra root in recessed doorways while street barbecues rage into the wee hours. Green neon fumes tepidly billow out of dance halls, and the light of a thousand precariously stacked lilliputian apartments spills out into the streets and delicately illuminates the misty spires of Gathox's dizzying heights.

WHO RULES



Four Neighborhood Friendship Societies maintain a relatively stable balance of power in the Kettle: the highly successful **Dohjaks**, the conservative

Huttimer, alien beings who call themselves **Kermen**, and fresh upstarts known as **The Free Peoples Advancement**. Each faction controls roughly a quarter of the Kettle, and all have agreed to settle territorial disputes through public ritual. While the occasional spat of gangland warfare may erupt, these well-established factions agree that, "Peace equals profits."

The Dohjaks - The Dohjaks ("DOY-ox") are an ethnically homogenous gang heralding from a distant homeworld long-forgotten by all but the most wizened and historically steeped members of their community. They have thoroughly entrenched themselves in the politics of the Kettle, and while their numbers are dwindling, they nonetheless wield considerable influence and economic might.

Dohjaks distinguish themselves visually with red and purple togas, silver close-toed sandals, and golden touques on their heads. Their speech is generally rapid and overly friendly, often to the point of inspiring discomfort. Their skin tones range from light brown to coal, and their eyes are generally golden.

The Huttimer - The Huttimer people are a conservative, insular group of religious sectarians who follow the pronouncements and instructions of the Gorman clan, whose progenitors wrote the (un) holy *Gormanian Edicts*.

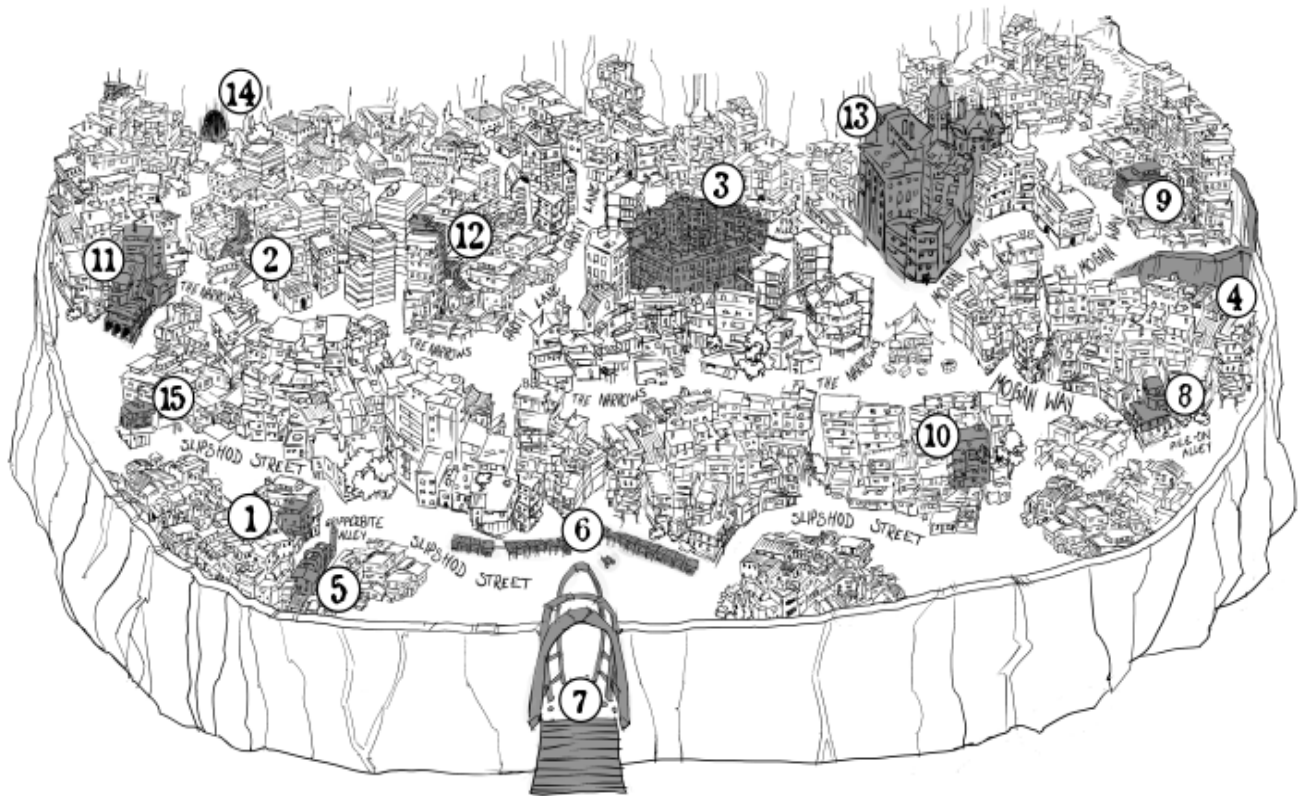
They fashion their surroundings in a sturdy and plain manner, eschewing graven images. On the legitimate end they sell beer, butter, furniture, and sturdy working tools. Beneath this veneer of honesty and hard work lies a heavy truth: these are sacrificial sex cultists who readily trade the boons of their black rituals for steep piles of hard coin.



NEIGHBORHOOD MAP: THE KETTLE

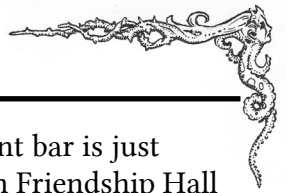


1 inch =
30 min. on foot



- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1) Bar With No Name | 10) Kamma Tower/
Mudling Mansions |
| 2) Berling's Goods and Antiques | 11) Kermen Friendship Hall
Corporate Offices |
| 3) Building 58 | 12) Li Zhao's Dollhouse |
| 4) Catwalk of Private Vicissitudes | 13) Temple of Toil |
| 5) Dohjakeen Friendship Hall | 14) Tunnel of Punctuated Peace |
| 6) The Dregs | 15) Vu Ma's House of
Resplendent Fortune |
| 7) Gate of Exploding Benevolence | |
| 8) The Heat of the Kill | |
| 9) Huttimer Friendship Hall | |





IMPORTANT LOCATIONS

The Huttimer wear plain leather clothing punctuated with paisley patterns on cotton. The men wear their hair short with muttonchops or chin beards, while the women wear their hair pinned up in beehives. Their leader, always the eldest male Gorman, is called a Purveyor, and his wife is called The Unburdened.

The Kermen - Kermen business leaders have a saying: "A noble bid for freedom always begins with the loosening of purse strings." These one-eyed, hyper-capitalist aliens cloak their base greed with a steady drumbeat of individualist poetry and sentiment. Despite their natural selfishness, they regularly fund some of the most ostentatious (if lacking in utility) public works and high-end designers in the Kettle.

Kermen fund themselves through venture capital, investment in factory production at the Temple of Toil manufacturing complex, and slave labor. They often contract hits on rival producers and will occasionally fund 'grassroots' mobs to bust up uncooperative marketplaces. They reward selfishness and greed, but always pay humans and mutants less than Kermen operatives. 9-piece suits and overly dramatic capes are the uniform of the elites; their CEO is often required to sport three capes atop a number of stacked blazers.

The Free Peoples Advancement - The FPA started as a labor movement of former factory slaves and outcast mutants, seeking mutual economic protection through solidarity. On the surface this still appears to be true - members speak the language of solidarity and wear the orange armband of the FPA over their working clothes. Beneath the surface, however, a triumvirate of elite families have taken over as silent owners, funding worker revolts in the Kettle to create easy market opportunities for wealthy interests from the Craw neighborhood.

FPA agents specialize in disguise and infiltration, often developing sleeper cells within other Neighborhood Friendship Societies. FPA members pay dues, which afford them a certain amount of protection as well as discounts among fellow FPA merchants. The X'xul, Mokron, and Gorgontula families (see p.35) run the FPA from the Craw.



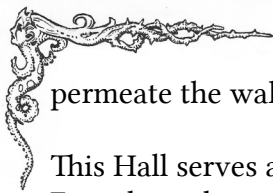
Bar With No Name - This basement bar is just across the street from the Dohjakeen Friendship Hall in Gripperbite Alley. A hand painted sign pointing downward is the only indication of a business here. The interior features hand-carved oak tables and stools and a center circular bar. The Bar With No Name is owned and tended by a blonde, balding, two-headed mutant; one head is called Woody and the other Mickey, and each head chews honey-soaked bakra root. Hay piles in curtained alcoves house drunks and adventurers for 8 sp per night.

Berling's Goods and Antiques - This pawn shop is nestled in a zig-zag alley deep in the heart of Kermen territory. Berling the Pusher, a spider-eyed fat man, and his aged amputee assistant, Skaggers, do brisk business in fencing, forensics, and illicit contract brokering. Despite the location, Berling's staunch adherence to principles of neutrality have allowed him to operate with relative impunity. He deals with a wide variety of clients who often have opposing aims.

Building 58 - This seven-story agglomeration of vertical shanties is arranged in a pentagon, allowing half of the residents to watch each other and the other half to watch everyone else. A hub for FPA agents, labor agitators, and the disaffected of the Kettle, Building 58 has developed its own internal police force, indoor markets, and miniaturized schools and hospitals. Many of the workers who live here are current or former employees of the Temple of Toil - evidenced by the staggering variety of amputations and disfigurements.

Catwalk of Private Vicissitudes - This combination of gate and lookout bridge serves three functions: one, it provides discrete passage into and out of Gathox; two, it functions as the only legitimate bridge between the Berchan Favella and the Kettle, with its 750 Steps of Reason; and third, it provides elevated pyres for dramatic ceremonies of cremation and occasionally reincarnation.

Dohjakeen Friendship Hall - This four-story flagstone building occupies a small garden yard on Gripperbite Alley. The facade consists of a reconstructed striated cliff face. Ebony hardwoods and elegantly curved furniture adorn the interior, and the smells of vegetable broth and grain alcohol



permeate the walls and carpeted floor.

This Hall serves as the home base for the Dohjaks. From here they train troops, hire contractors, coordinate their business activities, and brew their specialty liquor, Dew-On-Iron. Aside from the work conducted above ground, the Dohjaks maintain an underground burial hall, called Dohjam-Briel, where the remains of well-regarded members are ritually stuffed with lavender and encased in silver. Many Dohjaks religiously strive their entire adult lives to secure burial here.

Beyond the oldest silver casements in Dohjam-Briel stand a pair of lichen-crusting iron double doors. Behind these doors lay the extensive ruins of Ce-C'el ("Tchay-SHULL"), constructed from the hardened dream-weeping of the Zhezhn. Dohjak warriors no longer go on vision quests in Ce-C'el; instead, they only enter to collect the strange purple yeast that grows on walls and columns to ferment their Dew-On-Iron.

The Dregs - This vast flea market and collection of shacks occupies the space directly in front of the Gate of Exploding Benevolence on Slipshod Street. Virtually anything can be found here for a price, and skilled negotiations are often creatively disrupted by nearby competitors. The Dregs are akin to a weekend farmer's market on overdrive, and in truth The Dregs sprawl across much of the length of Slipshod Street.

Gate of Exploding Benevolence - This is the primary gate into and out of Gathox; indeed, most outsiders will approach the city and pass through the quintuple arches of this red, yellow, and purple painted gate. A metal ramp, supported by thousands of functional human legs grafted to the underside, provides ascent into the city from the ground below. From the base of this ramp, one notices that the entire city is supported and driven by a million or more human legs. Destitute mutants often prey upon unsuspecting visitors here, either through panhandling, pickpocketing, or mugging, although they tend to relegate the worst offenses to the late evening or early morning traffic.

The Heat of The Kill - This three floor dance hall resides nominally in Huttimer territory, overlooking the shared market between FPA and Dohjak

territories. The Heat of The Kill is notorious for both its incredible all night dance parties and its role as a clearinghouse for contract assassins. Mirez "The Smirk" Bolan appears to be a mere bouncer for the dance hall, but in reality Bolan owns the place and prefers to screen everyone that comes through his doors. A DJ known only as "The Revealer" runs all entertainment here, her calm and emotionless demeanor hiding her impassioned preoccupation with fresh blood.

Huttimer Friendship Hall - This modest, three story granite building features plain and sturdy wooden furnishings with intricate joint work. The scent of fresh bread, butter, and sawdust greet those who enter. Boorish young Huttimer males guard the entrance and staircases, absentmindedly observing the day to day production of market goods.

Official business and important contracts are negotiated on the first floor; residential apartments take up the second and third floors. The basement of the Hall features a cavernous worship room and small library which persistently smells of cleaning chemicals and candle wax. Here the Huttimer perform their group sex magic, consisting of initiatory stages, psychodrama, and genuine magic, although many of the rituals were designed to satisfy the carnal urges of the early Gorman family.

Kamma Tower/ Mudling Mansions - This tower, now mostly abandoned, functioned as a temple for The Goddess That Balances On Narrow Precipices. The bodies of 77 tightrope walkers are rumored to have been interred alive in the walls as a consecration for the Goddess - many athletes and physical actors attribute their successes to the boons gained from this particular sacrifice.

Kamma Tower served as a place of worship for gymnasts, contortionists, fitness gurus and dieters. The temple was founded by the performance enhancement mutant known as Pankratz the Wobbler. The tower was ravaged and subsequently abandoned after a night-long turf war between Kettle street performers and a cadre of physical actors from Berchan Favela, a conflict known as the Night of Sighing Clowns. The Night of Sighing Clowns depleted the ranks of parishioners and left disillusioned war veterans in its wake.



Occasionally, locals spy a furtive bodybuilder or lanky breakdancer sneaking into the abandoned ruins with offerings for the Goddess.

Note: If the group is running the Mudling Mansions scenario (see p. 108), then this tower has been sucked into the earth by Gathox itself, and now serves as a secret dungeon beneath the Mudling Mansions of the Vulzari, which erupted above it.

Kermen Friendship Hall Corporate Offices - This 23 story shantytown houses the central operations of the Kermen gang. Under the guiding hand of CEO Holema Pak, the gang has expanded from simple slave trading into manufacturing, 'sin commitments,' and 'Kermen-in-the-Middle' attacks on the business arrangements of other gangs. It is rumored that the Kermen are currently seeking parts to construct a rocket ship inside the center of their Corporate Offices in the hopes of returning to their home planet.

Li Zhao's Dollhouse - Li Zhao is the crafty and creative father of Jackie Zhao, mutant engineer and 'chosen' of Gathox. Li crafts brilliant dolls of all kinds here in his 4th floor shop, and rumor has it that many of his custom dolls are used in strange ceremonies and rituals. Li remains fairly inured to all of the shenanigans in which his clients partake, being mostly concerned with treating his ailing mutant wife and protecting the interests of his currently occulted son. As a function of his long years, Li has transformed into a man who knows things, and will accept coin for consultations.

Temple of Toil - Situated on the edge of FPA territory, the Temple of Toil houses manufacturing and indentured laborers; press gangs, mauled factory workers, and elite merchant caravans are a regular sight here. While not the only manufacturing hub in the Kettle, it certainly hosts the highest concentration of industrial processes and produces the largest amount of industrial waste.

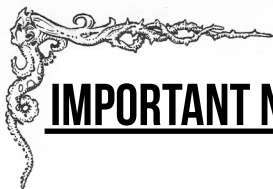
Factory owners have taken to forcing their laborers to worship a very recently concocted deity, The Goddess of The Gears Forever Grinding. Statues of the Goddess feature a dozen arms arranged into a cog formation, each holding a bowl with a mangled body part; piled high in the lap of the seated Goddess are

the products of civilization. Worship involves timed wailing followed by corporate rally chants.

Tunnel of Punctuated Peace - This tunnel provides a third egress from Gathox as well as direct travel between the Kettle and the Craw. The walls of this ascending tunnel are adorned with shelves for the interment of bodies for the well-heeled of the Kettle. Kermen slaves maintain this tunnel in immaculate condition, and the Kermen exact travel tolls on those leaving the Kettle, but never entering from the Craw. Tolls range from exhaustive extortion against undesirables, to the charge of a brief smile for the wealthiest elite.

Vu Ma's House of Resplendent Fortune - This 3-story octagonal gambling parlor features faux-Arabian decor and Sinbad impersonators who double as bouncers. Gamblers and carousers can enjoy lotteries, blackjack, and fighting dice, as well as the occasional boxing match or monster match-up.





IMPORTANT NPCs OF THE KETTLE

BELINDA THE RESCINDAH

Street Tough 5, Labor Organizer and Fence

Cues: Always rolling tape between thumb and forefinger, reframes most conversations in terms of freedom, gives uncanny commentary to players when her back is turned or she is out of direct sight.

Belinda received the moniker 'Rescindah' after successfully organizing garment laborers in the Temple of Toil and forcing the factory owners to repeal their edicts concerning indentured servitude. Belinda used this victory to launch a steady career in labor organization and eventually worked her way to becoming one of the Union Leaders of the Free People's Advancement.

Leadership in the FPA requires some less than savory responsibilities. Belinda coordinates and trains sleeper agents for infiltration of the Kermen and Dohjak gangs, occasionally contracts hits against Kermen and Elven Kings (see p. 27) targets, and fences a fair share of ill-gotten wares for a slight markup. While she dislikes the first two duties, her marked materialism shines through in her enthusiasm for evaluating each piece of gear brought to her for fencing.



BERLING THE PUSHER

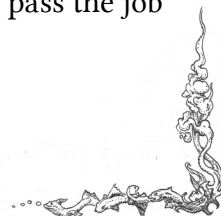
Mutant 4, Fence and contract broker

Cues: Speech seems particularly wet, speaks in hypotheticals, constantly scratching the edges of his dozen spider eyes.

Berling walks the edge of a razor and knows it. His decrepit pawn shop serves as only the cheapest of fronts for the contract brokering, fencing, and information trading which keep him and his assistant, Skaggers, housed and fed. Vengeful targets of old contracts have repeatedly attempted to wipe him and his business off the face of Gathox, and learned the hard way how deep and broad Berling's network has grown. The Pusher lives and breathes a hard policy of neutrality, and this philosophical stance has earned him the respect of all four major gangs in the Kettle.



For the right price, Berling will broker virtually any kind of contract, save ones that deal with anything in The Crow - he deeply fears the extent of power structures and resources there, having narrowly escaped a death sentence at the hands of the X'xul family while watching his old adventuring buddies torn to shreds by their pet Zhezhn. When it comes to brokering information or forensic analysis, he'll pass the job over to Skaggers.





HOLEMA PAK, CEO

Kermen Cosmic Doctor 9, Kermen gang leader

Cues: Eye never blinks, constant disdainful grin, wears a ‘big suit’ with multiple clashing capes, spins a gilded fountain pen in intricate patterns subconsciously which becomes more furious with her growing agitation.

Holema has slaughtered dozens of humans and mutants in the long climb to CEO, but prides herself on never having murdered another Kermen. That doesn’t mean she hasn’t harmed, mangled, mutated, or exiled any of her fellow species, merely that she has never allowed the death of a fellow Kermen to become a variable in her machinations.

As CEO, Holema rarely deals with the common spread of contracts, but rather masterminds the business expansion of the Kermen empire. This includes structuring and strategically breaking contracts with other gangs, overseeing the bidding and purchase process for properties, and protecting her organization from the gaze of elites in The Craw.



On occasion, Holema will venture deep into the Cheery Orchard Necropolis, sometimes with close confidants but more often alone, seeking some obscure knowledge or artifact from dead societies that were previously consumed by Gathox. Her emergence from the depths typically marks a time of rapid expansion for the gang.

JACKIE ZHAO

Mutant 6, reclusive techno-messiah

Cues: Regularly coughs until blood, phlegm, and a small gear emerge from his throat; typically wears a bevy of blankets around his shoulders; eyes sunken and clutches belly.



Jackie seemed like a normal human at birth, and no one suspected his mutation until well into adulthood. He has only a single mutation, a little miracle made flesh: each day he will hack up a tiny gear, and this gear can be placed onto any broken piece of technology, repairing it when no one is looking. This mutation has made Jackie rich, famous, and hated. He’s regularly been the target of kidnappings and assassinations for his talent.

Jackie lives in hiding with a religiously loyal contingent of bodyguards. His wealth affords him the ability to hire a number of doubles around the city to live as he does. This job is a guaranteed death sentence. Jackie wants nothing more than to disappear, but develops unbearable body-wide pain whenever he approaches the gates or walls of the city. Many believe he is blessed, but Jackie

is certain that he is cursed. Jackie would readily trade his life’s earnings for removal of this curse, but so far no efforts from expensive specialists have been successful.



LI ZHAO

Twice-reincarnated human 0, expert dollmaker

Cues: Perpetually slurping pork noodles in the off-hours, preoccupied with thoughts of his wife and son, unwilling to ask tough questions.

Li has lived, died, lived, died, and now lives a final time. He's been making dolls as long as anyone can remember, and it has taken him until his third life before starting a family. Two and a half lifetimes of occupational skill have afforded Li an almost inhuman ability to craft his dolls, which are rumored to occasionally take on a life of their own. His dolls may or may not be responsible for some of the stranger assassination tales traded amongst late-hour drunks.

Li knows a great deal about the city and its residents, and wishes he didn't. However, given the sickness of his wife and the odd situation of his son, Li is more than willing to trade that knowledge for hard coin. He loves a good swath of taffeta cloth, a freshly butchered side of pork, and hot a coal fire. He deeply fears the whispering winds from Cheery Orchard, certain that they are calling his name.



MEHLUD THE SPLINTER

Soldier 7, Dohjak boss

Cues: Gummy smile which exposes tiny, square, well-set teeth; shrunken pupils from a decades-long bakra addiction; inherently dismissive of the capabilities of outsiders.

Mehlud sports a magnificent afro-beard decorated with delicate dangling silver leaves, each one a token of a successful gang contract, enemy slain, brokered deal, or property obtained. He's shored up the loose ends of unfinished business, commanded the respect of young warriors and the eldest Dohjaks alike, and generally performed a bang-up job of running the gang and protecting his community.



The eldest gang members have bestowed upon him the title, "Penitent of the Petrified Grove," referring to his regular private forays into Ce-C'el, which the gang believes to be a mark of piety but which is actually Mehlud searching for . . . something. Sometimes Mehlud isn't sure either, and this inexorable pull keeps him up at night and distracts him in the middle of conversations. It could

be the ravages of the bakra root, or it could be a curse from the depths, but anyone who discovered the truth would certainly have a leg up on the Dohjak boss.





MIREZ “THE SMIRK” BOLAN

Martial Master 3, Proprietor of The Heat of The Kill

Cues: Never smiles, but facial scar creates a smirking effect; tendency to wax mystical about the city; ends most questions with a nose rub followed by an ear tug and a head scratch.

Mirez loves a crowd but never shows it. He likes to people watch and doesn't like to take credit. He enjoys it when people let down their guard, because he then learns things about them. In fact, many of the qualities that make Mirez a sharp business owner also make him a great hitman and contract broker.

“The man who works for a come-up will get it,” he advises to the young toughs in his dance hall. Whenever he says this, though, The Revealer switches records at the DJ booth. Mirez quietly refers to The Revealer as his wingman, but never to her face. No one ever remarks, but everyone always thinks it: Mirez succeeds on the good graces of The Revealer.



PANKRATZ THE WOBBLER

Mutant 6, priest of Kamma Tower

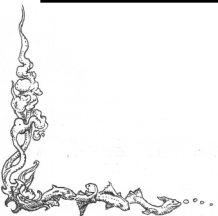
Cues: Always walks an even number of steps on stones, obsessively counts patterns, speaks quickly to one person while observing another.

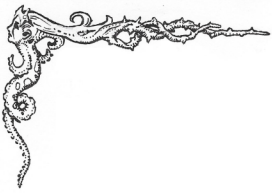
Pankratz may or may not have invented the Goddess Who Balances on Narrows Precipices; Pankratz is very old in this life, his second, and the memories of his first are very hazy indeed. He's certain he knows everything about Kamma Tower, because he built it - that's what the plaque says outside the door. All the gymnasts and strength teams revere him for what he's done for the community. Even the ones who were mangled in his one-night war.

Pankratz hides these days, no longer practicing his tightrope walking or preaching the holiness of Her Majestic Balances. Occasionally, he'll knick a few bottles of medicine for the war vets of The Night of The Sighing Clowns, or he'll steal up the 750 Steps of Reason and jealously eye the tumblers and jugglers of Berchan. His bid for territory was short-lived, though he learned a great deal about himself and the city. Perhaps Kamma Tower will rise again . . .



Note: If the group is running the Mudling Mansions scenario, Pankratz will be heartbroken at the disappearance of his tower. He will depart for the alleys of Berchan, only to return if word reaches him that the players have found the ruins of Kamma Tower intact.





QUIN AZZA

Faith Healer 4, priest of Sha-Benyu

Cues: Constant smile ranges from beatific to vacant; slow, graceful movements occasionally punctuated with unconscious violence; giggle-snorts when uncomfortable.

Few prodigies rise through the ranks of the Cult of Sha-Benyu as quickly as Quin Azza. At the tender age of 19, she bested the previous “Lamp of Green Branches,” head priest of Sha-Benyu in the Kettle, in a magical duel. At 20, she doubled the ranks of the faithful and silenced a great many detractors. Now 21, she has set her sights on establishing real territory in the Kettle.

Quin is happy to accept an adherent’s worldly belongings in exchange for the neon pink robes of the faithful. She will gleefully and carefully shave the head of a true believer and weave their hair into the roots of the Bentark Tree in the Great Arboretum above. And she will most exuberantly disembowel and set aflame the fresh innards of those who threaten her primacy or slander the teachings of the God That Grows and Grows.



But let it never be said that she does not listen to reason, especially if reason walks hand in hand with hard coin.

THE REVEALER

Martial Master 9, Grand Assassin and world-class DJ

Cues: Wears sunglasses at night, especially while DJ’ing; does not speak but always has the right object on hand to make her point; always has one ear pointed in the direction of her business partner Mirez “The Smirk” Bolan.

The Revealer was born without a voice. She learned to speak through other means - writing, object reference, music, art, cutting, shooting, stabbing, etc. The Revealer could reveal the crimson truth of existence with the flick of the wrist, and yet never reveal the purchaser of said truth. Most importantly, never using her voice taught her how to listen.

Some believe that The Revealer owns Mirez. The truth is that she loves him, in the way that an older sibling loves and watches over a younger one. The Revealer listens to him, and for a man with a voice, he is very quiet, which pleases her. They spend many hours simply listening. Some hours are spent speaking in music or in contract, and the best hours, in The Revealer’s opinion, are spent speaking in red.





SKAGGERS

Street Tough 2, amputee assistant fence

Cues: Hobbles around on a peg-leg and makes a conscious show of it, tries to hide the two missing fingers on his right hand, accents his speech with tongue clicks, calls everybody “Boss.”

Skaggers began his career working for Berling the Pusher late in life, after long years of indentured servitude in the Temple of Toil left him mangled and penniless. Berling, being something of a pariah himself, took note of Skaggers’ sorry state and sharp wit and immediately began to train him in the pawn arts. Acutely aware of the value of possessions and property, Skaggers took to the work like a Kermen in cash.

Skaggers watches the shop for Berling, and excels at forensic work. He maintains his own files of fingerprints and makes exhaustive notes on everyone he meets. He comes off a bit blue-nosed and takes advantage of this whenever possible. His fondness for slug beer and disdain for moneyed elites are his main weaknesses, and he does his best to hide these from others.



SMITTY GORMAN

Spiritualist 3, Purveyor of the Huttimer



Cues: Always carries a warm beer in hand, emits little burps between sentences, furls brow and purses his lips when listening.

Smitty is the eldest Gorman and thus the Purveyor of the Huttimer. He plies the sex magic rituals of the Gormanian Edicts to great effect for his people, affording them boons and success disproportionate to their numbers and the size of their holdings.

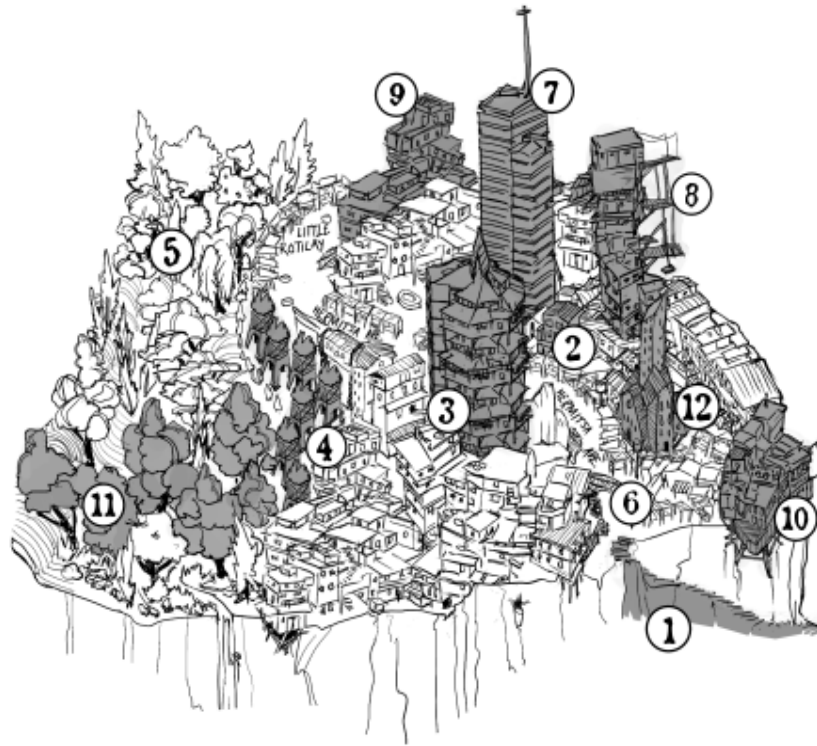
Smitty is a conservative with a great deal of kink, and sometimes his fondness for kink unwittingly spills over into conversations. His negotiations are often prickly and uncomfortable affairs, as Smitty will alternate between shame and innuendo to shift the tables in his favor. His great weakness, as he puts it so elegantly: “I wanna whip those schlubbing Dohjaks, slave weasel-butchers! >burp< Please, pardon my mouth and pass the butter, will you?”



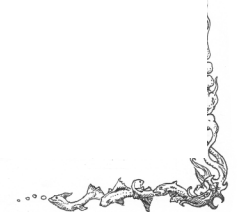
NEIGHBORHOOD MAP: BERCHAN FAVELA

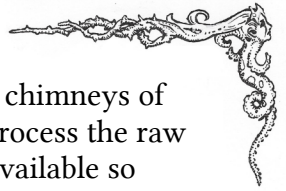


1 inch =
30 min. on foot



- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1) 750 Steps of Reason | 7) Headlong Hurlers' Hall |
| 2) Biria Mujim | 8) Jimtown Launchpad |
| 3) Elven Primacy Hall | 9) Marjang Apartments |
| 4) Freeling Gardens | 10) Pa-Pa-Pa-Paradise |
| 5) Great Arboretum | 11) Saplander's Crossing |
| 6) Hermitsa Avenue Market | 12) Tower of Flex |





BERCHAN FAVELA

Although The Kettle houses the largest population out of any of Gathox's neighborhoods, it wasn't the first. The oldest neighborhood, Berchan Favela, bears the marks of untold millennia of construction and dissolution. Ascending the 750 Steps of Reason from the east end of The Kettle, one finds that the steps change from finely hewn granite blocks to cobblestone to mud and rock. From The Craw in the west, one must cross the Great Arboretum at Saplander's Crossing, an impossibly old and decrepit network of wooden bridges made of oiled branches which have partly petrified. The longest standing tradition in Gathox is the Assertion of Persistence, an annual ritual dedicated to maintaining Saplander's Crossing and the trees of the Great Arboretum.

Upon entering Berchan, affectionately referred to by locals as 'Jimtown,' visitors are first struck by the colorful geometric patterns painted on the crooked buildings climbing the hillside. Next, they note the pervasive scent of pork and frying dough, followed by shock at the abundance of street performers ranging from cornerside puppetry to ad-hoc marching bands. Visitors also register the pervasive presence of men dressed as elves who call themselves 'Elven Kings,' augmented with ceramic or rubber pointed ears and half-starved to maintain appearances. As one travels across the modest breadth of the neighborhood from east to west, one will begin to enter and exit numerous tiny gardens, crossing bridges over diminutive streams whose contents range from seemingly fresh water to raw sewage and colorful, dubious chemical flows.

In the mornings, the Hermitsa Avenue Market erupts into bright flame with the striking of the Corner Fires, and callers begin to shout advertisements from their man baskets atop four story poles. Many citizens of Berchan will practice their yoga and other morning exercises in the tiny gardens scattering the neighborhood. In ritual fashion, butchers slaughter their pigs at the front doors of their shops for good luck, the blood running in streams down the hilly streets.

In the afternoons, hungover brigades of Elven Kings march the streets, gruffly making certain that residents and merchants alike erect their great street fans to block out most of the sunlight. A stink likened



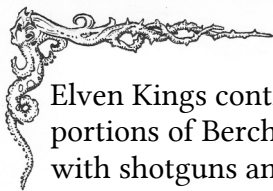
to fermented cabbage rises from the chimneys of shacks where indentured servants process the raw ingredients for the Sho-Maht drug available so cheaply in Berchan. The distant roar of crocodactyls taking flight occasionally pierces the air, the beasts bearing speculative merchants into the dangerous and seldom explored lands of strange worlds beyond the walls of the city.

Come nightfall, the street fans are lowered and mobile stages erected. Impoverished alley theater performances begin amidst roving drum competitions. The eldest race of Gathox, called The Bloody People by humans and mutants but Sluurgical by their own tongue, emerge from their ground holes to begin the endless process of repainting dilapidated buildings throughout the neighborhood. The flapping of boil bunny ears can be heard beating around the upper branches of the Jimmelune trees, where they feast on the ever-growing Jimmelune fruit which is used to create the cheap drink Jimmy wine. By midnight, the Corner Fires are extinguished and private parties begin behind closed shack doors.

WHO RULES

As a smaller community than The Kettle, there are only three gangs in control of the Favela. Although they make gestures toward peace, their interactions are less stable than those of Kettle gangs. The **Elven Kings** arguably hold the most land and wealth, and certainly maintain the most visible presence in Berchan. In contrast to the Elven Kings, the **Headlong Hurlers** maintain a minimal profile, alternately policing and plundering the streets from their stories-high perch poles. **The Bloody People** maintain a quiet underground presence, emerging to maintain bits of the neighborhood in a centuries-old habit of fighting entropy.

The Elven Kings - The Elven Kings come from all walks of humanity, united in their obsessive worship of what they call "Fey Literature." They grow their hair long and starve themselves in an attempt to appear more elf-like, often going so far as to adorn themselves with striated goldleaf jewelry and custom body modifications, like prosthetic ears. The most fanatic of The Elven Kings will seek out extensive cosmetic surgery, a life-threatening process under the best of circumstances in Gathox.



Elven Kings control most of the southern and central portions of Berchan, patrolling the streets armed with shotguns and lungblades. They control the production and sale of Sho-Maht, a deeply euphoric and hallucinogenic sedative popular amongst both the poor and the leisure class, and derive much of their power from this industry.

The Headlong Hurlers - Originally a skydiving cult dedicated to the worship of the Goddess Who Balances on Narrow Precipices, the Hurlers became an aggressive militant street gang after the arrival of their current leader, Sonandra Massone. Massone armed and organized the cult, emphasizing the shock potential of wingsuiting into the streets to seize whatever they want. Their subsequent successes have led to rapid growth in the Favela.

The Hurlers have taken control of the multi-story perch poles scattered across Berchan, using them as recon posts and launchpads to dive into the streets. They wear colorful, high-tech wingsuits and brandish two-handed swords, and their bravado matches their skill. They only allow women into their ranks and hope to become the dominant force in Berchan, harboring a deep hatred for the Elven Kings. Protection rackets and targeted raids feed their enterprise.

The Bloody People - The least gang-like of the Favela's ruling social groups, the Bloody People are entirely organized around the fact that they're a separate and ancient species, apart from the rest of the city. They call themselves **Sluurgical** and dwell below ground in colony apartments called Mujim. Other denizens of Gathox call them The Bloody People for their habit of bleeding on objects to claim them. A Sluurgical will go to great lengths to retrieve an item upon which they've bled.

The staying power and economic success of the Bloody People relies on a complex mixture of ritual marriage and reproduction, ritual thievery, and ritual infrastructure repair. Most citizens of Gathox consider them a tolerable necessity, and so the Bloody People maintain steady and quiet lives below ground. Their greatest desire, and the one least likely to be expressed in mixed company, is to rid the city of all other sentient species. Some say their colonies extend well beyond the confines of the Favela, although no one claims to have thoroughly explored them.

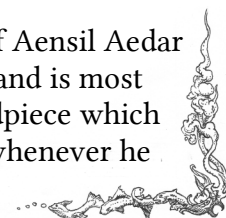
IMPORTANT LOCATIONS

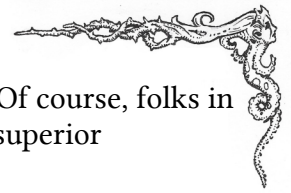
750 Steps of Reason - Ascending from the back end of Mogan Way on the east end of the Kettle, visitors climbing the 750 Steps of Reason are necessarily accosted by the cast-outs of Berchan. These untouchables have taken shelter in the many mud alcoves and makeshift bivouacs hidden among the Steps, with warnings and tall tales of their tribulations. The first 312 steps feature finely hewn granite, the following 229 appear as mottled cobblestone, the next 198 feature a rough mix of stepping stones and cured mud, and the last 11 contain hard packed red clay. Sages and well-heeled brainiacs make a great to-do about those last 11 steps, often musing about the supposed occultation of the 12th step, citing old texts referring to the area as containing 751 Steps.

Biria Mujim - This collection of ossified underground apartments comprises the largest community of the Bloody People anywhere in the Favela. The Sluurgical maintain a variety of public works, including a 70-bed hospital, temples to each of the five major godlings, a silent market, and periodic alcoves dedicated to bleeding on possessions (called Milking Stations). At the eastern end of Biria lies the Phlebotic Chambers of Communal Acquiescence to Time, where a petty prince named Bolsh Vect administers the countless rituals of his people.

Elven Primacy Hall - No den of frolick or addiction in either Berchan or the Kettle rivals the Elven Primacy Hall, in size or in glamorous excess. This 30-story building pierces the sky with a leaf-like spartip statue at the top, and numerous skywalks connect the middle floors of the building to other parts of the Favela. Squads of Elven Kings march imperiously through the building, overseeing the manufacture of drugs and arms in addition to monitoring a wild array of multi-story hanging gardens. Water wheels powered by indentured mutant servants provide relatively clean water to most floors. Periodically horns sound throughout the building, the pattern and frequency of which mandate brutal skipping contests, impromptu poetry composition, or valiant issuances of grave oaths.

An old, crooked man who calls himself Aensil Aedar Elessessilindrin runs the Elven Kings, and is most well-known for his silver and ruby codpiece which thrusts mightily for so elderly a man whenever he





issues commandments. His lieutenants, called the Children of Aensil, remain mostly in his court on the 27th floor, attending his endless parties and reveling in the obscure excesses of courtly play. Sub-lieutenants come and go, acting on the whims of the Children and often contemptuously reinterpreting their whimsical orders to fit the grim reality of the streets below.

Freeling Gardens - On the westernmost end of the Favela, just before entering the Great Arboretum, the citizens of Berchan maintain a vast network of tiny family gardens. These gardens, stacked one atop another in precarious wooden towers up to 3-stories high, feature all manner of strange and exotic edibles. A modest volunteer force of garden attendants patrols the rickety growing towers, ensuring the crops against theft. It is said that a child conceived atop a growing tower will be free of mutations and defects, and occasionally the air rings with the dulcet tones of superstitious young couples entwined.

Great Arboretum - A vast and ancient urban forest inhabited by an indigent population who call themselves the 'Homefree,' The Great Arboretum serves many functions for the city of Gathox. First, nearly all water wells are dug here, and water canals flow from these wells throughout the Great Spire. Second, the well-tended forest provides a natural cleaning system for the pollution of the city. Third, the Arboretum connects Berchan with The Crow via Saplander's Crossing.

The last, and arguably most important, function of the Great Arboretum is the growing of Jimmelune Trees, which bear a fruit of the same name. The Jimmelune fruit grows year-round, tastes like kiwi, has a pear shape, and possesses a skin totally identical to the skin of an infant in all senses. Gathoxans harvest this fruit to ferment Jimmy Wine, the most common form of alcohol in the city.

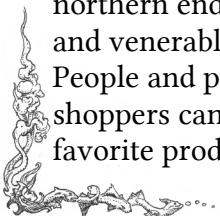
Hermita Avenue Market - Hermita Avenue cuts through the Favela diagonally, northwest to southeast, winding around large scrapers and bridging streambanks along its length. At the northern end of the Avenue lies Little Rotilay, a small and venerable flea market run largely by The Bloody People and perpetually set upon by wrens. Here shoppers can find the most ancient versions of their favorite products, at somewhat steeper than usual

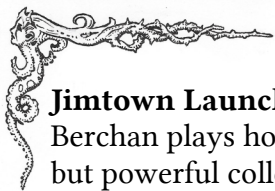
prices and often tipped with blood. Of course, folks in the know often manage to trade in superior antiquities.

The petite corner fires of Little Rotilay, often no more than stone circles heaped with scrap wood, contrast with the infernal pillars of the Hermita Avenue Market Proper on the southern end of the Avenue. In the Market Proper, pigs roast on zig-zag spits by the dozens, guarded and sold by young butchers-to-be known as Scraplings. Sky callers scream advertisements and news through megaphones atop four story manpoles, often the beneficiaries of bidding wars from block merchants. Cheap wares and open drug markets abound, as well as temp work crews and mercenaries. The Market Proper stretches nearly half the distance of Hermita Avenue's length, providing easy access for a wide swath of Favela residents.

Headlong Hurlers Neighborhood Friendship Hall - A single elevator sits at the base of a 22-story windowless tower in the northeastern corner of Berchan, with only a line of odd, abstracted facial expressions carved into granite to indicate any significance about the location. A ride up the elevator takes visitors to the 18th floor, a cold, dim atrium guarded by six of the Hurlers. Those lucky enough to proceed further find spartan dormitories on the 19th floor, common living and working facilities on the 20th, a grand and artless meeting hall on the 21st, followed by an intense training facility on the 22nd. The roof of the tower features retractable climbing poles, which allow scaperdiving access from up to 35 stories.

Sonandra Massone lives in the common dorms along with the rest of the Hurlers, eschewing the excesses of gang leadership in a show of solidarity with her sisters. The monastic life of the Headlong Hurlers breeds fanaticism, and their dedication to The Goddess Who Balances on Narrow Precipices never wavers. Here the Hurlers plot their forays into the city, and the only reaches of Gathox denied them are those of higher altitude in the Crow. Excess wealth is stored in a grand vault, from which regular tithes to lesser shrines of the Goddess are extracted and delivered in the most athletic fashion.





Jimtown Launchpad - The easternmost wall of Berchan plays host to the Wind Merchants, a small but powerful collective of traders and raiders who specialize in training and riding crocodactyls for the purpose of resource extraction outside the city. The Wind Merchants built a reputation for poisoning the crocodactyl stables of competitors, to the point where other factions rarely attempt to muster their own fleet any longer. The Wind Merchants, often derisively called ‘Wingers’ and ‘Flappers,’ invite sriers and dimensional diviners to delight in the lavish suites of Jimtown Launchpad. The Wind Merchants are ever eager for potential signs of the city’s periodic dimensional gating.

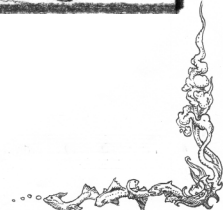
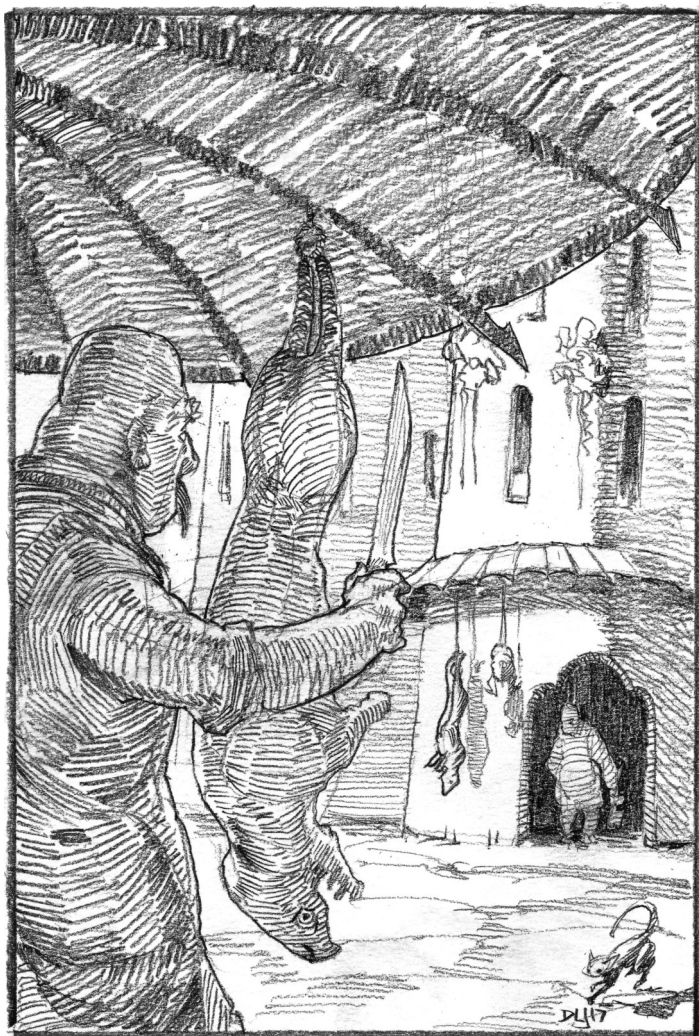
Marjang Apartments - ‘Marjang’ is a word of warning in the Sluurgal tongue, used to scare children into obedience. Situated just east of Little Rotilay, the Marjang Apartments rise 17-stories above the old market, looming and tottering in decrepitude. Rumored to be the first structure in Gathox, Marjang houses a diverse crowd of Bloody People, mutants, stranded Glaat, and outcast X’Xul, as well as many of the ailing and forgotten of the city. Citizens of the Favela consider it a hotbed of contempt and political unrest, although no one can recall residents of the complex being involved in plots or conspiracies in recent memory.

Pa-Pa-Pa-Paradise - No one knows how to throw a party like Scheltzie Emruus, who constructed this temple to theater and vice in the heart of Berchan. Themed like a cretaceous jungle, complete with roaring robotic dinosaurs and trilobite tables, Pa-Pa-Pa-Paradise plays host to parties of the elite, gamblers of all stripes, and best of all, features an animatronic musical performance nightly.

Saplender’s Crossing - Spanning the breadth of the Great Arboretum and passing over the heads of the ‘Homefree’ and gardeners alike, Saplender’s Crossing provides access to various corners of the Arboretum and connects the Favela to The Crow. The bridges are made of deadwood intertwined with the semi-petrified branches of ancient Jimmelune trees. Every year, a maintenance ritual led by the Bloody People, called the Assertion of Perpetuity, overtakes the Crossing. Citizens poor and rich come together to oil the dead branches, repair ropes, and tie bits of

ancestral skeletons to the trees. The rich occasionally indulge in pushing some of the poorer attendants off the edge.

Tower of Flex - Pankratz the Wobbler constructed Kamma Tower as a religious and social response to the entrenched power in the Tower of Flex. Run by a cabal of powerlifters, Flex operates in a testosterone-fueled mode of kyriarchy formally called “POWERTRUTH.” The tenets are designed to reflect the primacy of muscle density over other kinds of physical expression, and other athletes are generally forced to subject themselves to the predations of Powertruthers if they wish to worship at the tower. The Tower of Flex is the only public temple to the Goddess Who Balances on Narrow Precipices in Berchan.





IMPORTANT NPCS OF BERCHAN FAVELA

AENSIL AEDAR ELESSESSILINDRIN

Soldier 8, Imperial Emperor of the Elven Kings

Cues: Perpetually adjusting prosthetic elf ears; flatulence when moving to sit or stand; purple blush streaks from continual sweating; speaks in the royal ‘We’ until he forgets, and upon noticing his error lashes out violently.

No elf can elf like Aensil. Having been exposed at an early age to the classic fey novel, “To And Fro Once More,” Aensil began a lifelong journey to become one of those graceful, courageous, elegant elves. For a stout youth with a blooming preponderance of facial hair, Aensil faced an uphill battle. Countless fistfights and insults beset him as he grew into adulthood, encouraging him to enroll as a mercenary and pursue the soldier’s life. By the ancient age of 30 he had amassed sufficient piles of gold and began to enact his master scheme.



Aensil kept a list of everyone who ever taunted or bullied him. First was his childhood friend, followed by schoolyard bullies, girls he fancied, instructors and food vendors and so on, and each inexplicably vanished in their order on his list. By the time he crossed off the last name, Aensil walked the streets thronged with bodyguards and elf enthusiasts, and the streets of Berchan bent to his will.

He may be old, and cranky, and to all appearances suffering from old timer’s disease, but Aensil maintains a lethal grip on power through his Elven Kings, holding the crew together with a heady mix of vice, blood, and Elvish poetry.

BOIAN DECEBAL

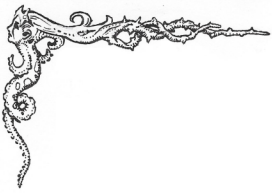
Street Tough 7, Powertruther and Tower of Flex Enforcer

Cues: Asks strangers about the beauty of his quads, suffers from bruxism, brushes his long reddish curls from his eyes while talking.

At the Temple of Flex, true believers come and go, and Boian ensures that a certain number of those who leave never return. Many a flexible roustabout, lightning-quick agitator, and spiteful clown have suffered their last gasp under Boian’s patented “Walnut Cracker” deathblow technique. Boian’s pride in his work has paid off, affording him access to Tower funds for his personal agenda, which includes slave trading and real estate speculation.

Boian also maintains a lovely head of curly red locks which descend past his impeccable pectorals and end at his navel. The weird beauty of his hair and his bloody reputation have resulted in a devoted cult of fan art in the Favela. He proudly displays these gifts in his chambers at the Tower and occasionally leaves them as calling cards during the course of his work.





BOLSH VECT

Sluurgical Prince and Tiresome Tyrant

Cues: Monotone speech patterns with an intolerable frog in the throat, covered head to toe in scars of wealth, mumbles phrases of ritual when daydreaming.

Biria Mujim always needs a leader; not for inspiration, not to advance the interests of the Bloody People, and not to maintain stability for the isolated community, but because rituals must be remembered properly to be executed properly. For the last 117 years, no Sluurgical could remember the rituals as thoroughly and categorically as Bolsh Vect.

Vect recalls a childhood of fastidious study and observation, back when the Sluurgical still shared a library (before a cunning X'Xul bled on every book and effectively stole their collective knowledge). Vect does not speak fondly of those times, for he speaks fondly of nothing. When every action requires a ritual, and his fellow Sluurgical grow lazy and forgetful, only the tyrannical application of his memories as manifested through imperious action can right the wrongs which grow before him.



Bolsh Vect anticipates and enjoys the enforcement of punishments for infractions against and amongst his people. His punishment is as swift as the Ritual of Confirmation of the Contents of the Governmental Hourglass, as certain as the Ritual of Confidence in the Certitude of Tri-Dimensionality, and as severe as the Ritual for the Cessation of Childlike Stubbornness in the Face of Reasonable Requests.

CHIMAUX THE BOOK-ENDER

Spiritualist 6, Sage to the Wolfies

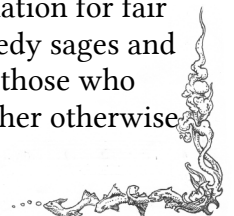
Cues: Compulsively sorts book markers found in her robes; frames discussions in a late-hour, apocalyptic fashion; rapidly alternates between wild gesticulation and unflinching stillness.

Chimaux began her psychic studies after years of grueling labor as an indentured servant in the Temple of Toil, sewing garments for the elite of the Craw. A labor revolt amongst the millers swept through the garment sector, led by a youthful gang of doe-eyed rebels known as the Wolfies. Inspired, Chimaux slew her floor boss and hit the road with the Wolfies.

Years of adventure and violent mishaps with the Wolfies have taken their toll on Chimaux; during a harrowing mission to capture a Zhezhn deep within the Cheery Orchard Necropolis, she picked up a nasty bakra habit which remains with her to this day. Burn scars adorn her hands and neck, and she avoids her nightmare-plagued dreams with a nightly regimen of downers.



The Wolfies grew old and sought retirement, and now Chimaux spends her time handling their accounts, collecting old tomes, and reading fortunes for those with the coin to spare. She brokers information for fair prices, having often been on the other side of the negotiating table and feeling the sting of greedy sages and informants. She peppers her speech with ominous portents and stormy affirmations, although those who play upon her interest in the ecological cycles of purple cave yeast often see a brighter side to her otherwise doomy mien.





HUMULA

Glaatu Mutant 4, Triple Agent

Cues: Her fingers ululate in a drum-like fashion when focusing on demanding tasks, fresh picked Jimmeline fruits bring her perverse joy, snorts through her ears when feigning offense.

Humula journeyed to Gathox as the sole surviving miner from the crashed Glaatu expedition ship *Shumenu's Appendage*, uncertain of when a rescue team might recover her. Upon arrival, she was immediately set upon by a small gang of thieves. By midday she had been kidnapped, sold for experimentation, and then traded for a pallet of batteries. That night, she burned down a corner shop and warmed herself in its embers. Gathox had proven itself a worthy home.

The Elven Kings grudgingly respect Humula for her uncanny knack of finding new markets for the Sho-Maht they produce, the Headlong Hurlers respect her impeccable tip-offs as to the specifics of Elven King drug shipments, and the Mokron family pays her very well for keeping the two gangs in check with one another. Humula feels as though she has successfully conquered the Favela, and anticipates changes in her fortune with the skill of one attuned to the heartbeat of the city.



JOSUÉ VAGNER

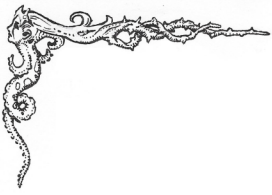
Street Tough 11, Executive Chairman of the Wind Merchants



Cues: Laughs heartily at every joke, plays at matchmaking amongst any company, impulsively applies ointment to the bite scars cratering his arms.

Josué lives the high life: high flying on crocodactyls through perilous worlds, high living in the lap of luxury at the Jimtown Launchpad, and high on the power his business affords him. Josué trained throughout his youth as a dactyl-tamer, suffering innumerable injuries from the outbursts of juvenile crocodactyls which would have driven lesser men to take up the quiet life. His tenacity and prodigious intelligence attracted the attention of his superiors, and he climbed the ranks of the Wind Merchants in short order.

Never one to rest on his laurels, Josué now brokers deals between elite customers in every neighborhood, either trading his own wares or taking home a middle slice of someone else's pie. The Wind Merchants have profited from his leadership, all the more so after his successful campaign to rid Gathox of competitors; the best that other merchants or explorers can now manage is to set out for brief scavenging missions near to the path that the city takes across whatever world is at hand. Full of smiles, handshakes, and guarantees, Josué Vagner considers none his equal and takes no prisoners.



SCHELTZIE EMRUUS

Proprietor of Pa-Pa-Pa-Paradise

Cues: Flamboyantly greets everyone with nicknames he appoints them, always twirling a cane and wearing a dinosaur-print shirt, smells of popcorn and dust.

Everybody loves Scheltzie. A consummate host and entertainer, Scheltzie worked his way up from back alley improv troupes to weekend gigs as a fire clown to finally owning the hottest juke-joint-cum-theater in Berchan. He designed Pa-Pa-Pa-Paradise himself with an eye to entertaining folks of all ages, incomes, and leisure time preferences, and prides himself on providing a safe and welcoming atmosphere for even the most wary and obtuse clientele.

Of course, no one climbs the social ladder without stepping over fellow climbers. Scheltzie has backstabbed, double-crossed, and bumped off his fair share of competition, but that's all in a life's work for Berchan's number one host and entertainer. He still performs twice a month to stunned audiences, displaying athletic and dramatic prowess befitting a man a quarter of his age. Some in the audience note that he occasionally incorporates strange, almost ritualized gestures into his shows, and many of these audience members also note that they go home feeling a bit more . . . drained than they would have anticipated. Regardless, the man and his animatronic backing performers manage to always pack the house.



SONANDRA MASSONE

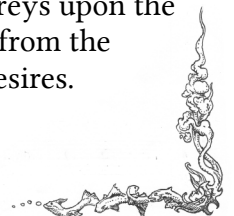
Martial Master 5 and leader of the Headlong Hurlers

Cues: Speaks with a drawl at a slow, deliberate pace; noticeably bereft of extraneous adornments; her eyes are wide and unblinking, affecting a thousand-yard stare.



Sonandra arrived with her brother Mokul from a cold, barren world which she never mentions by name. Several years of simultaneously toiling and indulging her worst impulses drove her into a deep depression, amplified by the subsequent death of her brother at the hands of Sha-Benyu cultists in the Kettle. Alone and stripped of all the trappings of her past, she sought salvation in fanatical devotion to The Goddess Who Balances on Narrow Precipices. First training with Pankratz at Kamma Tower, then betraying his trust during the Night of Sighing Clowns and turning the tide in favor of the Powertruthers, she finally committed herself to pursuing empire in the name of Ji'Gin'Jir.

Sonandra only accepts women into the Headlong Hurlers, her fanatical gang of wingsuited, scaperdiving cultists. She lives, trains, and raids with them in their Neighborhood Friendship Hall, which she received from the Wind Merchants in exchange for the lives of dozens of trade competitors. Sonandra deeply dislikes the Elven Kings and only occasionally preys upon the lesser residents of Berchan. When the whim strikes her, she will deem fit to act upon requests from the poorest denizens of the Favela, although she typically takes liberties when interpreting their desires.



Cues: Practices her bid-calling song on anyone she can, smells like barbecue sauce and rancid meat, chest tentacle whips about excitedly during sales transactions.

Orphaned shortly after birth, the adolescent mutant formerly known as Vendula was taken in by a widower butcher and former Wolfie gangster named Bolumang Three Fingers. Bolumang disguised his adopted daughter as a boy, renaming her Vaclav Vaclav (doubling up on the most common male name in the city), and training her in the arts of butchery and thievery. Vaclav took to the life with only a modicum of childish discontent.

Vaclav, now aged 12 years, maintains a boyish appearance and participates in advertising bids with sky callers while guarding the roasting spits outside her father's shop. She also manages to run short cons on both rude clients and dismissive competitors, going so far as to instigate a minor turf war by Scrapling proxy between the butchers and tanners several blocks down from her corner. She sees much, occasionally selling what she knows for current and future favors.



THE CRAW

Less vast and sprawling than the Kettle and younger than Berchan by a millennium, The Crow nonetheless controls the secret fate of the city from upon high. While citizens refer to Gathox in its entirety as 'The Great Spire,' only the physical dimensions of The Crow actually fulfill this colloquialism. From the first, the craggy and apparently inhospitable reaches of The Crow appealed to the moneyed elite who could afford to erect luxurious defenses upon cliffs and steep hillsides. As generations of aristocrats and the wealthy fell into ruin in The Crow, new generations would simply build atop the fresh ruins of the old. Eventually, a climbing bivouac of manses and palatial skeletons formed, breaching the upper limits of the sky with a central cluster of imposing and exorbitant skyscrapers. Nowadays, the peak of the Great Spire invades the horizon line of even the most-lowly gutter, only obscured by turning indoors or facing away. Nor can citizens escape its shadow in their social lives, for the families who run The Crow leave their impact scars upon all facets of society.

From the Kettle, one passes through the Tunnel of Punctuated Peace, keenly aware of the death investments in those dim halls of the Tunnel, ascending northward up a series of enclosed circular staircases and across cliffside patios, until one finally passes the gleaming and decrepit Fountains of Jeet'rr and into The Crow. From Berchan in the east, visitors enter the Great Arboretum, surmounting a bewildering series of tree bridges at Saplander's Crossing, until they reach the Gateway of Vigorous Platitudes, where the Gehada pipists and Pulinga drummers constantly rehearse songs of welcome and adulation.

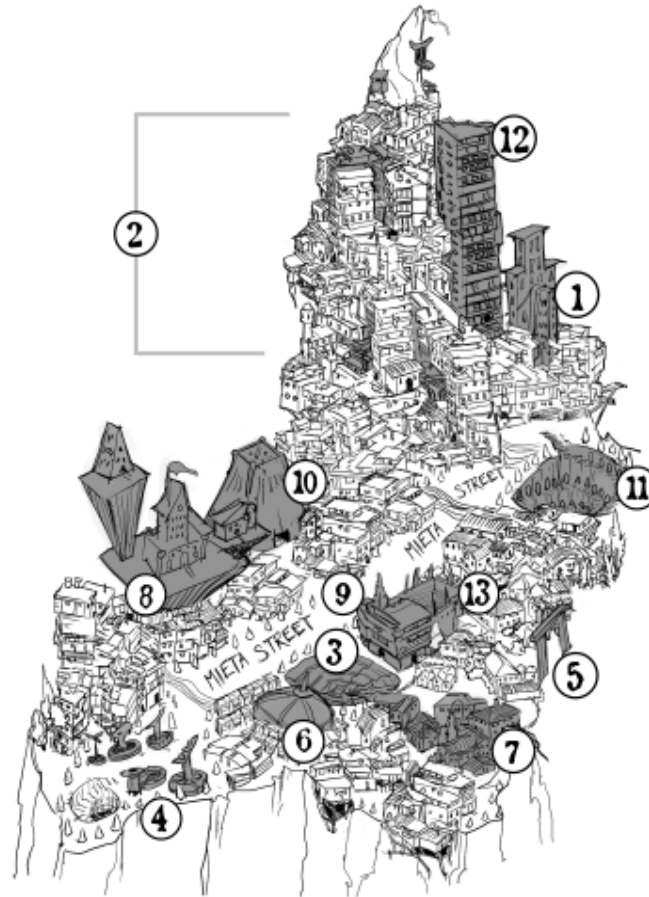
Morning in The Crow begins with those same Gehada pipes sounding the echoing walls of the Great Spire in their nasally, quarter-tone fashion. The masons of the Great Spire, perpetually set upon to build great works and tear down the walls of last year's fallen elite, begin a great ritual wailing. Between the pipes and the wailing, the entirety of The Crow resounds with a rarified, soul-capturing wake up song. Smiling, courteous, and cruel, Whipcrackers guide teams of slaves about their daily tasks of water hauling, stone scrubbing, and mining. In the Gathoxan Whole



NEIGHBORHOOD MAP: THE CRAW

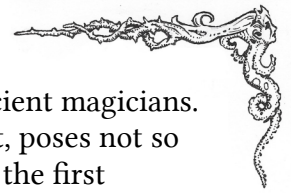


1 inch =
30 min. on foot



- | | |
|--|--|
| 1) Cerulean Municipal
Conference Hall | 7) Hillside Meadows
on the Pleasant |
| 2) Cheery Orchard Necropolis | 8) Mennau Maximanor |
| 3) Chemok Mine | 9) Mieta Street |
| 4) Fountains of Jeet'rr | 10) Polejenkh |
| 5) Gateway of Vigorous
Platitudes | 11) Sennarit Descala |
| 6) Gathox Whole Goods Market | 12) Shock the Tower Nebulaic |
| | 13) Slimpitaj |





Goods Market, fat and fawning merchants light the laser mirrors which reflect and illuminate their shops. Earlybird aristocrats begin their social calls among the innumerable fashionable cafes along Mieta Street, stepping on or over slaves and the homeless without missing a beat.

In the afternoon, the sound of the neighborhood gradually shifts to polyrhythmic beats courtesy of the Pulinga drummers, who play wildly in their scant bondage gear upon their 19-toned marching drums. The scribes alight to their high patios and covered balconies to chirp at the city, a ritual of abscission from the commoners as well as the tyranny of history. Press gangs finally muster the hate and energy to roam the streets, on the prowl for unlucky loners and unfashionable types. Members of the leisure class travel to the Sennarit Descala to pay homage to statues of the wealthy dead in a ritual of conspicuous consumption called The Wasting, where exorbitant gifts and rare foods are stuffed into alcoves beneath the statues and doused in slow-acting acids.

As the suns set, the lights of skyscrapers and high chateaus twinkle greens, yellows, and purples at the streets below. The evening air fills with the staid and droning tones of the Meichok strings, played with a passionless repetition by single jet-setters from open bedroom windows. Beneath proper buildings on the Spire, a faint glow can often be detected in the corner of one's vision, a telltale sign of activity in the ruins beneath. The streets themselves spontaneously fill with illustrious illusion parades, courtesy of house wizards attempting to impress and delight their employers. Strange and sultry parties linger on behind massive colonnades into the early hours of the morning.

WHO RULES

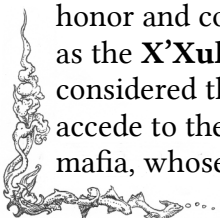
A triumvirate of entrenched gangs rule The Crow, adhering to a pact of mutual aid which has secured the riches of all three to varying extent. Each gang structures itself after the notion of a family or mafia, complete with harsh and perverse internal codes of honor and conduct. While the locust wizards known as the **X'Xul** own the most property and are considered the most treacherous, they regularly accede to the demands of the technocratic **Mokron** mafia, whose bewildering array of technological

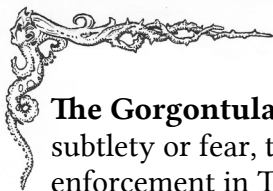
secrets pose great threats to the ancient magicians. The **Gorgontula** family, in contrast, poses not so much threat as lifeline, for they are the first successful breeders of crocodactyls as well as the only elites willing to risk themselves raiding the outside world.

The X'Xul - The X'Xul are a tight clade of phenotypically plastic, bipedal locust wizards from a planet called Tchk'Lektk ('Chick LECK-tick-uh'), which Gathox has crossed only once. Stranded in the city after a brief visit, the X'Xul began the hard work of building an empire for themselves. While they trust one another due to their instinct-level psychic bonds, the X'Xul have no qualms with deceiving and destroying any sentient beings with endoskeletons.

While they might be most known among commoners for the miraculous magical tchotchke they manufacture, their reputation among The Crow is very different. First, they maintain great vats of mutagenic, semi-sentient flesh, which they use to disguise themselves as humans when in public and occasionally sell to individuals interested in extensive body modification or controlled mutation. Second, the X'Xul are responsible for the extensive slavery found throughout Gathox, due in no small part to their implementation of press gangs, which they call "Dedicated Volunteerism."

The Mokron - Techno-authoritarians who crash-landed their generation ship during an emergency dissident purge, the Mokron mafia inhabit Gathox out of necessity. They are waiting for the time when Gathox retreads the world on which they crashed, in order to retrieve resources on their generation ship that will allow them to continue on their path of galactic colonization. Blue-skinned humanoids who require only light disguise to blend with the populace, the Mokron have infiltrated the FPA and the Temple of Toil in the Kettle in an effort to control manufacturing and production for their own ends. The Mokron are also the most likely of the three families to utilize assassination as a political tool, and often furnish their hitmen with incredible technologies that allow them to proceed entirely undetected. Many labor leaders and titans of industry have perished at their whim.





The Gorgontula Family - Known for their lack of subtlety or fear, the Gorgontulas provide muscle for enforcement in The Crow, bodies and expertise for ventures into the wilds beyond the walls of Gathox, and an extensive knowledge of horticulture which informs the sustenance of the city. Additionally, their arrival in the city marked the introduction of crocodactyls to the Gathoxan biome, resulting in a proliferation of the beasts.

The Gorgontulas mark their entry into adulthood by adopting a tattoo which features a basilisk at the center of a web, a celebration of their clearly fabricated and modestly absurd family name. In fact, the Gorgontulas make a habit of inventing mythic portmanteaus for the names of item both common and extravagant. Despite their whimsical approach to nouns, the Gorgontulas are slavers, mercenaries, bullies, and raiders of the most proud and unsavory sort.

IMPORTANT LOCATIONS

Cerulean Municipal Conference Hall - This magnificent blue marble palace, built upon the wreckage of a fascist theatre complex, houses the majority of the X'Xul population in Gathox. The Cerulean Municipal Conference Hall features lush bamboo garden dormitories, ritual summoning chambers lined with the husks of powerful dead X'Xul wizards, and a stellar observatory, along with the usual bevy of functionary chambers. From here the locusts plot their machinations for the city, pursue arcane tangents, and greet those Gathoxans who might serve their ends. Few humans have seen the X'Xul unmasked, and those who do generally receive an invitation to the Conference Hall, never to be seen again.

Cheery Orchard Necropolis - The Necropolis began as nothing more than a collection of stone houses abandoned by ancient chieftains and built over by a subsequent generation of conquerors. Each successive layer has added additional chambers and roads beneath the Great Spire, to the point where a vast city, perversely mirroring the temples and palaces of the living above, sprawls beneath The Crow. The Necropolis can be accessed through ill-kept entrances between the homes of the wealthy or by its more formal entrance in the northeast of

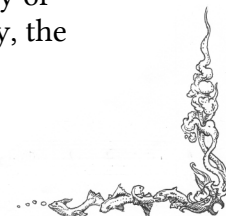
The Crow, known as Sennarit Descala, where pear blossom trees cluster together in the faint daylight available there.

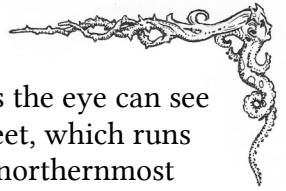
Cheery Orchard plays host to a bevy of Surdites, colonies of insect hive-intelligences which feed upon and animate the dead. The Surdites worship The God Which Pulses, Quivers, and Collects, also known as the Grand Stultified Energon, whose fossilized form is trapped deep within the Necropolis. A small legion of Zhezhn also inhabit Cheery Orchard, along with a variety of Mutant Freaks and other indigenous species. Many spelunkers and speculators have tried their hand at plumbing its depths, and a handful have survived to tell the tale.

Chemok Mine - Situated in the southcentral region of The Crow, this mine is endlessly worked by legions of slaves. Strangely, Gathox itself continues to regularly fill in and stock this particular region with metals and building materials, creating an improbable smorgasbord of useful resources for the city. Unconfirmed rumors hint at a band of escaped slaves who've carved out living space deep below ground, fomenting revolution, but the slavers chalk such things up to hope-mongering amongst the property.

Fountains of Jeet'rr - Upon climbing the tiresome staircases of the Tunnel of Punctuated Peace, travelers emerge among a broad plaza filled with comically oversized fountains which supply a great deal of the potable water for The Kettle and The Crow. Gorgontula sentries stand guard over the worm-themed fountains, jealously defending this irreplaceable resource from endless apocalyptic plots from cultists, madmen, and agitators. The fountains have stood for as long as anyone can remember, and spill over into underground chambers which wend their way throughout the city, erupting sporadically.

Gateway of Vigorous Platitudes - Traveling from Berchan, those who utilize Saplander's Crossing are greeted by a chorus of pipes and drums played from atop a gaily painted triple archway. Here, servants dressed in rainbow togas are paid to eagerly recite a series of truisms and bromides as a way of welcoming visitors. Several times a day, the



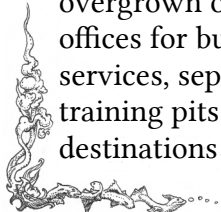


musicians will toss down large, multi-colored confetti from above which feature printed fortunes and lucky numbers.

Gathox Whole Goods Market - This compact open-air market prides itself as “The Most Plenteous Plaza of Premiere Products,” and salespeople here tend to unsparingly gift samples and free wares to shoppers, no doubt afforded by outlandish pricing. Inclement weather proves no barrier for Gathox Whole Goods, as a translucent canvas dome can rise from the circumference of the market to protect the area. Ritualized negotiations here include arm wrestling, card sharking, and riddle contests. If an item cannot be found elsewhere in the city, it can likely be found here.

Hillside Meadows on the Pleasant - Communities for the newly rich tend to find themselves beset by all manner of trouble in other parts of the city, so many would-be aristocrats and ascendant businessmen dream of owning or renting a home here. Situated just west of the Gateway of Vigorous Platitudes, this gated community rents foot soldiers from the Gorgontulas for patrols, specialists from the Kermen to manage growth, and performers from Berchan to provide in-home entertainment on demand. Mansions, villas, and elaborate towers make up the majority of the structures here, although private schools, top notch eateries, and a luxury hospital exist for those enduring the hardships of lasting abundance.

Mennau Maximanor - The Gorgontulas constructed this absurd interpretation of a manor after years of wildly successful raids outside the confines of Gathox. The manor itself resides on a raised platform which balances on an inverted pyramid, the tip of which extends a dozen meters into the ground. This raised platform features yards with more raised platforms, each with small yards and more platforms, growing more diminutive with greater height; many of the platforms feature odd and misshapen shacks built by family members in good standing. The Gorgontulas built this way to accommodate the fecundity of their ranks, and much of the property is overgrown or full of junk. Mennau hosts exterior offices for business folk to contract Gorgontula services, separated by function, including crocodactyl training pits and flight ‘tours’ of the city and destinations beyond.



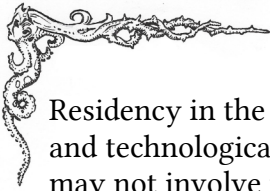
Mieta Street - Cafes, cafes, as far as the eye can see extend from the center of Mieta Street, which runs from the Fountains of Jeet’rr to the northernmost cliff of The Crow. Society moves or grinds to a halt based on a cup of coffee, and little empires are dreamed into being and quashed daily in the gas houses of Mieta Street. Other shops, often devoted to novelty or obscure interests, break up the rows of cafes, as do tiny private gardens which are selectively open to members of the public.

Polejenkh - The X’Xul built Polejenkh to control the ‘flotsam and fleshbags’ of Gathox, and the onyx, windowless trapezoidal building stands as a testament to this totalitarian impulse. Polejenkh serves as headquarters for the human secret police of Gathox, known as The Jenkhir, as well as tactical death squads comprised of the Mi-Chiw turtle people, which are called Little Feet. In Polejenkh, the X’Xul provide training for both groups, who subsequently use the building to imprison and torture enemies and dissidents.

Sennarit Descala - The elite have taken to encasing their most famous dead in stone and placing the tomb-statues in a long series lining the stairs of a deep, circular depression in the northeastern corner of The Crow called Sennarit Descala. Sennarit Descala serves two purposes; first to house the dead for rituals, and second to provide entrance into the Cheery Orchard Necropolis.

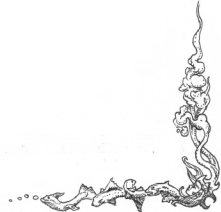
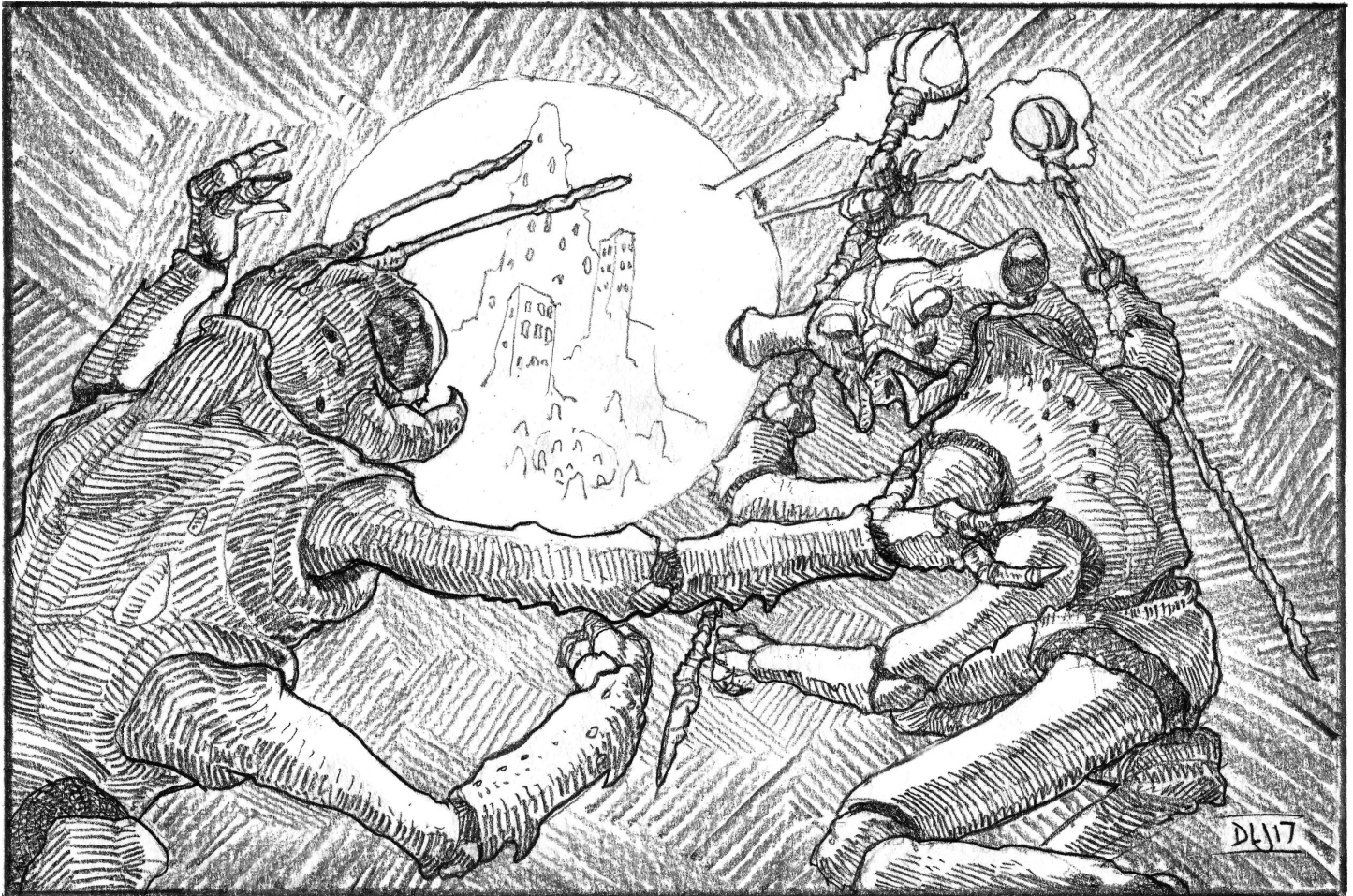
Crow citizens often come here to perform a ritual known as The Wasting, in which they bring incredibly expensive luxury items and rare foods to the statues and insert the goods into windowed stone boxes below. After placing the items, slow-acting acid is poured into the boxes from a top hole, gradually dissolving the visible goods.

Shock the Tower Nebulaic - This skyscraper houses the Mokron technocrats and all their technological marvels. The outside of the skyscraper illuminates at night with glowing, alternating abstract art holograms, and the smooth surface of the tower is broken up with the occasional designer waterfall or postmodern sculptural installation. Visitors are restricted to the first three floors, except for select members of the FPA, who may ascend to the 8th floor for meetings.



Residency in the tower is determined by invention and technological accomplishments, which may or may not involve the usurpation of others' work and lives. Fulim Mokron resides in the rotating, trapezoidal apartment at the top, as he always has, rarely descending below the 30th floor. Rumor has it that he's working on either a new generational ship for his people or a doom machine of unknown specificity, but no one has glimpsed his machinations and lived to tell about it.

Slimpitaj - Slaves in The Crow are sorted into camps by owner here, ranging from fenced four-man tents for the most petty and forgettable of slaveholders to full dormitories for the slaves of primary gangs. The Gorgontula family mans most of the posts here, although private parties are allowed to furnish their own guard detail to their slave camps. A weekly lottery determines which slaves are sent to fight in closed gladiatorial parties held in the center of the camp; owners are well-compensated for their sacrifices, including a month's free admission to future fights.



IMPORTANT NPCS



CH'LAUT'TK

Cosmic Doctor 4, X'Xul Rebel

Cues: Human skin wrinkles and bunches excessively, rapid speech filled with clicks, kicks the ground when nervous.

Ch'laut'tk was born with a shrunken gland in his nervous system that kept him from psychic attachment to the rest of his X'Xul clade, resulting in his ability to understand and absorb the moral frameworks of other sentient beings. At an early age he exhibited a disturbing lack of cruelty, resulting, as it so often does, in exile.

These days Ch'laut'tk splits his time between haunting the Chemok Mine, searching for escaped slaves in hopes of leading them against their masters, and exploring the ruins beneath the Spire, often pairing up with other prospectors in the area to maximize his take. Ch'laut'tk currently owns and religiously studies a book called "Liberation Thaumaturgy And The Inner You," and is quick to share his views on the modern self-improvement movement.



FULIM MOKRON

Cosmic Doctor 15, Mokron gang leader and mad scientist

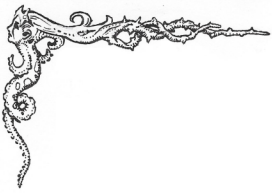


Cues: Inscrutable eyebrow movements, impulsively scratches formulae into surfaces nearby, always vies for pole position in conversation.

Fulim built the citywide dominion his clan now enjoys, having augmented his age through arcane studies and gene therapy. He longs for the years of guiding a generation ship across the vast oceans of space, and detests the tiny hell to which his people have been condemned by the stark indifference of the void.

The FPA are the kind of puppets with which Fulim loves to play - complex yet predictable, programmable and easy to use while rewarding user competence. He is sure that the FPA, with the right combination of technical instructions and social programming, will begin to manufacture the parts he needs to fabricate the theoretical models he has developed for a dimensional gate. He need only continue on his current path, as wise and as patient as it is.





K'X'RIZXSA

Spiritualist 11, X'Xul Overlord

Cues: Often only dons the upper half of his human skinsuit, spits black bug juice when entertained, leaves a trail of bamboo shoots wherever he goes.

Imperious to a fault, K'x'rizxsa believes his position as Overlord of the X'Xul to be utterly secure. After all, who else could manage the Mokrons and Gorgontulas while maintaining a slave army and manufacturing the finest magical toys in the town? Certainly not his predecessor, who sat idle as the Dedicated Volunteers revolted and devoted his long mating cycles to the study of human morality. No, K'x'rizxsa is unique among his people in that he is completely incapable of interspecies empathy, which makes him the perfect defender of his race. Furthermore, the rest of the X'Xul know it.

K'x'rizxsa fears the day when humans come to fully understand who and what his people are, and would rather be the singular face of monstrosity when needed than have his entire clade face the prospect of genocide. He also believes himself perfectly competent to handle the issue, although recent Dohjak spy reports indicate that the Overlord's mind has begun to slip ever so slightly.



LAIRRE HATSA

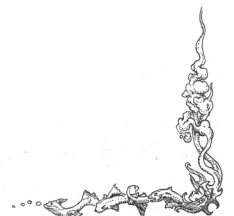
Martial Master 9, Jenkhir agent



Cues: Has no scent, attempts to finish other people's sentences and is often correct, repeats a new name three times.

Lairre hates bugs. Beetles, flies, wasps, spiders, ants - he hates them all. The ones he hates the most are also his bosses, the X'Xul, and they lured him into this job disguised as humans with the promise of power and respect in exchange for blood. They trained him, sure, and now he's damn good at what he does, but no one knows who he is, his superiors abuse him out of sheer spite for the human race, and his subordinates think he's, at best, a lap dog to the bugs.

There are perks - like the penthouse in Hillside Meadows or the endless stream of strapping young Huttimer men at his beck and call, but Lairre is almost certain that he'd trade all of that for a chance to exterminate some of the creepy crawlies. Unfortunately, he gets the feeling lately that the Jenkhir are watching him more closely than they used to.





MELANIE OF THE PARAPETS

Human Gehada and Pulinga musician

Cues: Absentmindedly drums on available surfaces, whistles incessantly, clears her throat twice per sentence.

Melanie entertained her way out of the slums and into the lead seat at the Gate of Vigorous Platitudes. Endless hours of practice paid off, resulting in a considerable wage and accolades from everyone who hears her music. Melanie has it good.

But, everyone gets a little restless - Melanie can dream even bigger now than ever before, so she's started running side jobs. Little errands here and there, mostly keeping an eye out for who passes through the Gate with who and when. Pretty soon she's going to start her own night club, steal away all the best musicians, and live the high life. But she just needs a little bit more money, which means running just one more job or two.



RENAULT THE GO-TO-WORK MAN

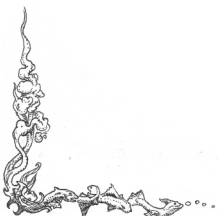
Director of the Slimpitaj

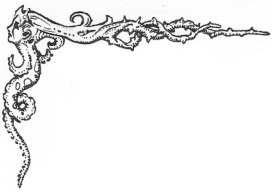
Cues: Hacks incessantly when laughing too hard, slaps slaves on the backside to iterate his points, stimulated by the blood of a fight.

Renault runs Slimpitaj like a personal playground - he started the gladiator parties, encouraging customers to wear togas and leafy crowns like he read in those off-worlder books. He borrows a slave or three for his own benefit now and again, occasionally tossing the resulting progeny to the crocodactyls. He even sold his guards on the idea of getting the slaves to distill booze in their spare time, and now everyone can have a nip on the job while making a tidy profit.



Renault believes he can go on like this forever. He might even earn himself a fat, early retirement for all the hard work he's done for the X'Xul; certainly, they owe his family a debt for the security they enjoy. Maybe he'll buy a few of his longtime favorite slaves to tend his house when he exits the labor force, just for old times' sake. Renault is, as they say, the Go-To-Work Man, and it would be nice if somebody did some work for him for once.





SHASTA THE SERPENTIGRESS

Street Tough 12, Gorgontula Expedition Leader

Cues: Always exclaims “Blech!” whenever she disagrees with someone, carries a flask for the sake of constitution, missing half her face as a byproduct of work hazards.

Shasta argued, shot, and outran the competition on her way to becoming a Croc Rider for the Gorgontulas. None of her cousins or childhood friends could keep up with her, and now look at her - leading the charge on raiding expeditions into unknown lands, meeting strange beings and slaying them, hauling home with the goods.

The crocs don’t always want to fly right, though, and she’s taken plenty of tumbles from on high. One even got ornery and tore part of her face right off - that one she gutted and mounted over the dinner table. Shasta has a finger on the pulse of those beasts, and everyone respects her for it. That’s why she’s the star of the family and the face of the Gorgontulas when they head to big time negotiations.



VOL-MAK-DRON, ASCENDENT RESPLENDENT

Surdite Guardian of the Sennarit Descala



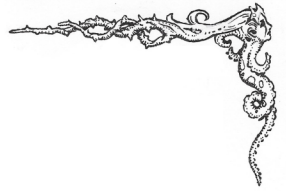
Cues: Hissing speech, easily bored with the idle chatter of humans, laments his restraint in the consumption of the dead he guards.

Vol-Mak-Dron shares that essential trait of all Surdites of referring to itself with the royal “We.” Unlike its Surdite brethren, Vol-Mak-Dron avoids the consumption of dead flesh and instead stands vigil over the entombed corpses at Sennarit Descala. On the orders of the Grand Stultified Energon, Vol-Mak-Dron remains largely dispersed, existing on a starvation diet while monitoring the entrance to the Cheery Orchard Necropolis for the purposes of forward intel. The Energon favors the tomb-statues of the Descala as well, and commands his steward to protect them with violence if necessary.

Individuals aware of Vol-Mak-Dron’s presence often attempt to converse with it. If the Surdite condescends to engage them, it will usually take the form of a cloaked humanoid male with a buttery, chorused voice, remaining largely in shadow. Vol-Mak-Dron quickly bores of interactions with humans, and will express it with indirect displays of casual violence and vandalism. Its favorite game is to pretend to be a poltergeist haunting the area, pranking the horrified elites with all manner of teasing, taunting, and minor mayhem. Vol-Mak-Dron possesses an encyclopedic knowledge of the Necropolis, although it is reticent to share the terrible secret fate of all Gathoxan life with visitors.



CHAPTER 3: COSMOLOGY, GODS AND ANTIBODIES



Ways of Knowing

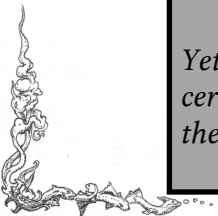
In the 14 hundred and 14th year of the Age of the Scorpion, during a severe drought that spanned the entire Crath valley east of the Zveltspire orogenic belt on a world where we have not sojourned for two-hundred and forty-seven years, witnesses from multiple villages recorded sightings of a floating black island drifting along the horizon. Accounts agree that the island emerged in the north, moved south over the course of seven fortnights, and then vanished. Multiple expeditions were sent to investigate the phenomenon, yet none returned. From the safe distance of their mountain observatories, primitive astronomers tracked the island's movement by carefully measuring the angle of sunlight reflected off what most scholars now believe was the mirrored ziggurat known today as "the Throat of Ji'Gin'jir," and which was later destroyed in the Scorpionic Kettle Riots that ultimately led to the formation of the original Neighborhood Friendship Societies and transition into the Age of the Apiary.

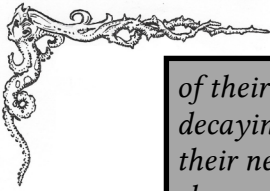
Had the ancient astronomers more precise observational technology, more nimble imaginations, or a deeper sense of history, they would have realized that what they observed was no mere levitating island, but our great city of Gathox.

These earliest sightings mark a turning point from myth to verifiable history in the vast body of extramural Gathoxan lore. Accumulation and analysis of such documents count as our best resources for mapping the procession of the godling on its ordained inter-dimensional circuit, whose geometric meaning is as disputed and enigmatic as generation itself. We know today the migration of Gathox is as unwavering as the constellations and more complex than the wandering stars. And yet all three processes are harmoniously interconnected, for their conjunctions herald the phases by which we leave one world and enter another.

Other patterns within the city are less well understood. Why structures sometimes arise and sink from the godling's flesh remains conjectural, no less so than the reasons our own psychological, political, economic, sexual, chemical and quantum schematics spiral in conjunction with the interdimensional schisms of ancestral lineage and galactic alignment, and how the shape and skin of the godling's external movements resonate with interior structure—the veins and capillaries of clogged streets and brutal alleyways, the pulsing swell of market and industry, the clang of hammer and kettle, the whirl of drill and dancer, the flash of adventurer's torch and grifter's grin. In ancient days Gathox was perhaps even more advanced—for time in our city is anything but linear, and space as a function of our eternal journey is anything but planar. Many have come to Gathox out of curiosity only to find themselves unable to return to their home world. Entire generations often pass before we make our way back to a particular point of ingress. A citizen may wait a lifetime to revisit the raging Xebian sunsets that marked his youth or the twin Crathian moons under whose watch she endured the initiation of her gang.

Yet these matters bear little sway on the day to day life of our people. Most observe the ceremonial festivals by which priests mark our inter-dimensional migration; but what use has the slumlord for calculating declinations and bearings that won't arise again until the old age





of their great grandchildren? Who in this drooling autoclave of crippled machines and decaying alliances, from the gang initiate to the psychic adept, can afford to think beyond their next meal? When has a mutant found an ally trustworthy enough to secure a full-night's sleep uninterrupted by paranoia or strange dreams?

From the wealthiest X'xul godfather to the hungriest Dohjak ratskinner, the minds of the masses concern themselves very little with the million marching legs of the godling. Gathox may move on, but to survive one must concern oneself with moving up. The Berchan streets mask the sewers, while a vantage from the Craw's towers promises social acclaim. To those in the cerulean spires of Mokron the ever-shifting skylines mean little more than luxury, while the beggars and scrapers of the Kettle are lucky to notice a single star on any given night.

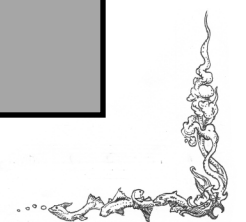
The average denizen wants nothing more than to forget the past, and finds it dangerous to speculate too deeply into the future. The mill of our city grinds forth under a preoccupation with the present. Only we privileged few, those of the unnamable order, keepers of the flame of translation, pledged to a life of study and self-denial can fathom the secret of our destiny hidden in the cryptic parallels of history. Within the last age, our adepts have found a means of interpreting these ancient legends using migratory symbols and cosmic maps gathered over the slow centuries, revealing at last some continuity within the narrative. In several instances, visitors who have managed to arrive and escaped our city before our city escaped their world have left behind accounts and legends which bear prophetic undertones for recurrences to come.

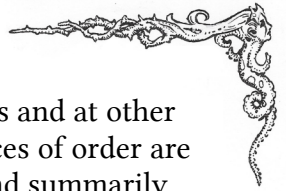
Careful analysis and perilous translations of seemingly random and prosaic alien texts have allowed us to ward off three otherwise devastating cataclysms over the past one hundred years. Many believe the transients who wrote these documents so many ages ago are vessels by which the Gathic subconscious communicates its will. Though on a time scale incomprehensible to us, this process has revealed itself a form of the city's reflexive navigation, as one might anticipate the throw of a dagger by the angle and distance of its throwing arm. Thus, our tireless work must continue without lapse.

Whether you believe that Gathox grows, balances, quivers, licks, or dreams matters little. Our symbiotic alliance with the otherness of the earth will continue to bear us across myriad worlds, rotating with mathematical precision from one dimension to the next (a violent molting and recalibration ego), to provide the ever-shifting landscape of our social fabric and material livelihood. May the Militant wield iron or fire, may the Mentalist illuminate the darkness, or the Mutant manipulate their own genetic clocks, each act, which seems a product of free individual will, is but a release of chemical energy in the synaptic aggregation of our mighty mother's neurons or the breaking of a covalent bond in one of her innumerable myofibrils synchronously contracting in any given heartbeat.

This heartbeat, like our own, pulses with stars and resonates the skeletal core of every cold world we touch. Thus, do we sustain the godling who sustains us.

-Ur-historic excerpt from Chimaux The Book-Ender's "Shifting Aeons and The God That Walks And Eats Forever"





While the machinations of Gathox may appear nigh-inscrutable to mortals, there's rhyme and reason to its willingness to host sentient beings on its back. Possessed by a boundless hunger, the godling has to keep eating; to keep eating, the godling must roam many worlds; to roam many worlds, the godling needs psychic energy. Gathox provides material sustenance to sentient creatures, which is cheap and easy to come by, in exchange for much more-rare psychic energy. Gathox uses this energy to phase through the cracks in space/time and arrive at suitably delicious locations in the universe.

Antibodies and harvesters known as Zhezhn help Gathox to maximize the usefulness of the city's populace in numerous ways. First, the most common Zhezhn dwell in spaces beneath the surface, siphoning little spurts of psychic energy from the minds of the creatures above them. Unshaped by the dreams of men, the Zhezhn appear as massive bursts of psychedelic color akin to full spectrum decalomania pressings, and keep a portion of their harvests to themselves while transmitting the rest to the godling.

Second, the Zhezhn foster the religious impulses of Gathoxans, which helps to increase the intensity and variety of psychic energy harvested. While common Zhezhn in their natural state bear no standard physical form, they will often adopt forms familiar to the minds around them. Any fever-dreamt psychic entity could become a worshiped deity, and the Zhezhn have an uncanny knack for appearing as materializations of dreams to denizens of the city. In practice, dozens of Zhezhn are worshiped as petty gods throughout Gathox, which tangentially means that virtually anyone could end up accidentally or subconsciously inventing a god during a nap, a daydream, or a good drug binge. Manifestations vary in persistence and credibility, but all serve to increase the religiosity and superstition of the populace.

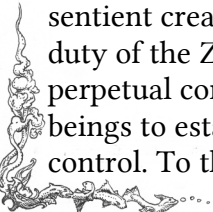
Third, the Zhezhn seek to sow disorder, and in doing so act like antibodies. Gathox needs psychic energy, and has found that the potency and volume of available psychic energy is at its highest when sentient creatures are in strife. Thus, it becomes the duty of the Zhezhn to keep Gathoxans in a state of perpetual conflict, destroying the efforts of sentient beings to establish city-wide governance, order, and control. To this end, the Zhezhn will sometimes

provide boons to breakaway factions and at other times destroy budding empires. Forces of order are treated as invasive foreign bodies and summarily flushed from the system.



THE FIVE GREAT ZHEZH

Though the city itself isn't directly worshiped, denizens of Gathox worship five major incarnations of the godling. Most people think these are discrete entities, and they often appear as such. Generations of families may dedicate themselves to one 'deity' and maintain a shrine. Entire communities have organized around public temples to their preferred 'ascended master,' and gangs may invoke the name of their 'patron saint' before charging into a turf war. What follows are the descriptions of the five Great Zhezhn of Gathox, and the favors and disfavours each might confer.



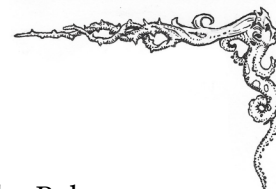


THE GOD THAT GROWS AND GROWS, (OR SHA-BENYU)

Worshiped by humans and Vulzari, The God That Grows and Grows represents fecundity, ambition, unchecked growth, and the primacy of nature over artifice. Followers of Sha-Benyu include the “Homefree,” sex cults, gardeners, and hedonist warlords. The God That Grows and Grows is said to grace the homes of parents who have produced octuplets and the gardens of urban farmers whose produce have grown monstrously large. Conversely, Sha-Benyu is said to have cursed the great works of Gathoxans by sucking them into the earth, rendering clutches of eggs infertile, and sickening leaders with cancer. His image is a mass of writhing yellow tentacles, and his passage is known by the creeping vines and the scent of mildew.

Favor/ Disfavor: Praying to Sha-Benyu before embarking on a major decision may allow the supplicant a 5% chance to enjoy a 1-die advantage while advancing their social ambition, at the GM’s discretion. Failure in this ambition may impose a one week penalty of -1 to saving throws.



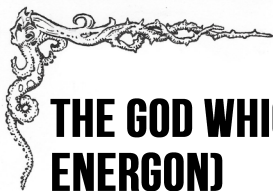


THE GODDESS WHO BALANCES ON NARROW PRECIPICES (OR JI'GIN'JIR)

Acrobats, bodybuilders, performers, and daredevils of many races worship The Goddess Who Balances on Narrow Precipices. She represents the power of the living body, the tenuousness of living amongst many deaths, and the triumph of will over inertia. Ji'Gin'Jir is said to preside over pageantry and games of risk, and to cast a hateful eye on sloth and indecision. Her grace is known by disasters averted and her wrath felt in the punishment of indebtedness. Her image is a mass of gymnasts intertwined, and her passage is known by lingering stench of sweat.

Favor/ Disfavor: Prayer to Sha-Benyu before the performance of an extraordinary physical act may provide a 1% chance to improve the attempt by 1 die. Failure after the granting of this boon is punished by reduction of Dexterity by 1 point for the rest of the day.



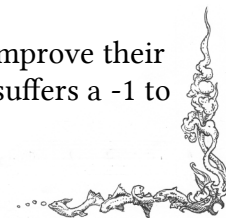


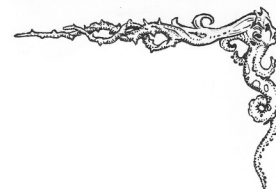
THE GOD WHICH PULSES, QUIVERS, AND COLLECTS (OR THE GRAND STULTIFIED ENERCON)



Few sane beings willingly worship The Grand Stultified Energon, as few who breathe would dedicate themselves to death and accumulation. The X'Xul pay grudging obeisance to the Energon, and he reportedly bestows upon them luck in the accumulation of other sentient beings. The Surdites (see pp.98), sentient insect swarms which animate the dead, serve him absolutely. The Energon's wrath is known by the choke of drowning, and his boon by indifference to suffering. His image is that of an imperious and calcified skull fossil, and his passage is known by the burn of ozone.

Favor/ Disfavor: Praying to the Energon allows the supplicant a once per week, 5% chance to improve their saving throw by one point for one task. Should the 5% check fail, the supplicant immediately suffers a -1 to their saving throw for the rest of the day.



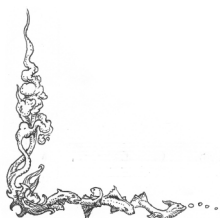


THE GODDESS OF RED-TONGUED TRUTHS (OR THE MAUVE EMPRESS)



Burning hate, a desire for vengeance, and unfulfilled longing fill the hearts of the followers of The Mauve Empress. Assassins pray to her before and after meeting their mark. Construction workers whisper her name in place of the names of unrequited loves. Disc jockeys invoke her for guidance in shaping their playlists. Her boon comes in the form of blood pumping, and her wrath comes in the form of utter resignation. Her image is that of a great feathered head and a bloody forked tongue, and her passage is known by the taste of iron in the air.

Favor/ Disfavor: Prayer to The Mauve Empress may grant the supplicant a 2% chance to improve their reaction roll by 1 for an encounter. Regardless of the success of the prayer, the next unsuccessful attempt to kill another creature will result in the loss of 1 point on reaction rolls for the next day.



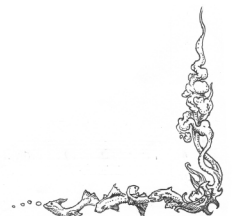


THE GOD WHO DREAMS IN PILLARS AND IS A BOY (OR DZAK MOLU)

Many believe the young boy braced between two pillars in their dreams to be their spirit guide. Others who breathlessly wake with their bodies frozen, staring into the pupil-less eyes of a boy crouched on their chest, call him a demon. The Mi-Chiw believe he hides in the heart of stars and wish to build a ladder to him in the sky. Dzak-Molu fosters the trips of junkies and the dreams of amphibians. His favor is found in revelatory dreams and his scorn is felt in all deprivations. His image is that of a fiery child between two columns, and his passage is known by an acrid drip at the back of the throat.

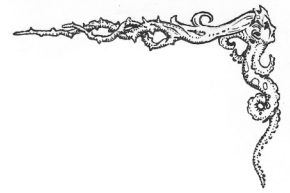
Favor/ Disfavor: Favor can only be incidentally gained, through intense bouts of intoxication. A player has a 3% chance to gain favor during an altered state, which will allow a bonus of 1 point on both initiative and reaction rolls until they sober up. Disfavor is gained when that 3% chance is failed, in which the bonuses are reversed to penalties.

Additional information on the Zhezhn, including monster stats and a helpful Random Zhezhn Generator, can be found in the Monsters chapter (see pp.103).



CHAPTER 4:

CHARACTERS AND HOUSE RULES



In the Mouth of a Garden

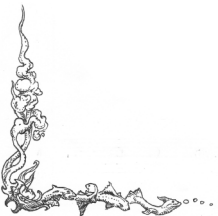
The X'xul takes off his hat and coat and drops them in the incinerator. He peels away the loose skin of his human form and lays it in a drawer that retracts back into the wall on contact. He imagines the pawnbroker congratulating himself on a fine day's work and a good score. The trinket, so valuable in the Kettle, is worthless to the X'xul, except as a means to manipulate *them*; as a way to get into the pocket and heart of a man like Berling.

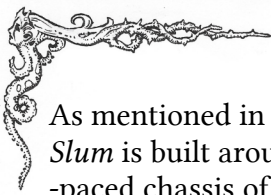
The X'xul looks out the window of his 19th story cell. From here the city of Gathox looks like a circuit board. As with most X'xul, he is in the business of espionage. Setting up a long, convoluted chain of dominos throughout the city. He watches steam rise from the Kettle's perimeter where rows of streetlights trail off toward the edge of Berchan Favella, a zone illuminated solely by firelight. It always looks so easy from up here, like the pieces were ordained to fit from before time's dawn.

He rubs the soft, protruding fibers of his arms across his eyes and mandibles. This both cleans and mollifies his face for the manipulation of masks.

A new drawer opens and presents him with a second flesh suit. He owns dozens. One for each life he lives among the mammals. Today's final assignment is his least pleasant: a Berchan woman whose husband holds a key political position. The husband has been gone for a week and will expect his happy wife to greet him upon his return. The X'xul finds their rituals more dull than disgusting, but a job is a job. All for the good of his race.

The hair is genuine, as is the skin. The technology beneath the surface gives it its luster, its artificial warmth, its twitch, its pulse. He puts her on and looks at himself in a standing mirror. This one is considered at the peak of her beauty by their standards, and blonde is a favored color for their hair. He finds his bag. If he leaves now he can catch the short ride to Berchan. Perhaps he can relax in the garden for a while before the husband returns. There is something revitalizing about working in the dirt that even his people don't understand—a new truth he has learned, though he has not learned how to express it. Today will be a good day.





As mentioned in the introduction, *Gathox Vertical Slum* is built around the very loose, simple, and quick-paced chassis of *Swords and Wizardry: Whitebox*. As such, there are a number of standard conventions carried over, and the general preferences of *Whitebox* optional rules are specified in their respective locations. For any rules not listed here, please refer to your copy of *Swords and Wizardry: Whitebox* if available, or feel free to adapt *Gathox* material to the gaming system of your preference.

GATHOXAN CHARACTERS

Character generation in *Gathox* proceeds as per the standard method – 3d6, in order, straight across the board for all six ability scores. The GM is encouraged to eschew ability modifiers as well. *Gathoxan* characters use the single saving throw method, the standard experience bonuses, and typical starting gold. Given the flexibility and shifting nature of morality in *Gathox*, the alignment system is ignored entirely. If a GM feels so inclined, they may assume that all living creatures are Neutral, that *Gathox* and the *Zhezhn* are Lawful, and that the universe itself is Chaotic.

All characters are assumed to be human, including Mutants, as most of the alien races are indifferent or inimical to mankind. All Hit Dice are assumed to be D6's for all characters and monsters, and weapons are all considered D6's with plus or minus 1-point modifiers to indicate comparative power unless otherwise noted. This keeps the statistical inflation low and enforces a simple kind of direct brutality in combat. Violence is swift and abundant in *Gathox*, after all.

Character sheets require the addition of two scores: Reputation Points (RP) and Legacy, which are used in forming, running, and advancing their gangs. Additional information about RP and Legacy can be found in Chapter 5: Running the Game (see pp.80). If the GM allows it, characters may also reserve space on their character sheet for Wheelhouses, described later in this chapter (see pp.63).

The GM has the option to implement a light skill system for the players, known as Wheelhouses. The rules for Wheelhouses can be found in this chapter as well (see pp.63).

ABILITY CHECKS

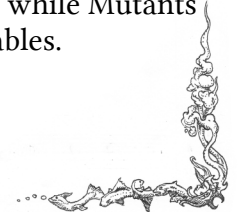
Typical iterations of the classic fantasy game use a 1d20 roll against an ability as a check, where rolling equal to or under the score in question results in success. In *Gathox*, a slightly different yet still fairly common method for ability checks is used. The formula is 'Xd6 vs. Ability Score,' and allows the GM to modulate difficulty and probability on the fly. Below is a simple table for determining what test should be most appropriate for the level of difficulty inherent in an attempted task.

ROLL	RESULT
1d6 vs. Ability	Exceptionally easy task, but a small margin of error still exists.
2d6 vs. Ability	Fairly easy task, with a margin of error.
3d6 vs. Ability	Standard check, used in most cases, with a reasonable margin of error.
4d6 vs. Ability	Challenging task, with a high margin of error.
5d6 vs. Ability	Incredibly difficult.

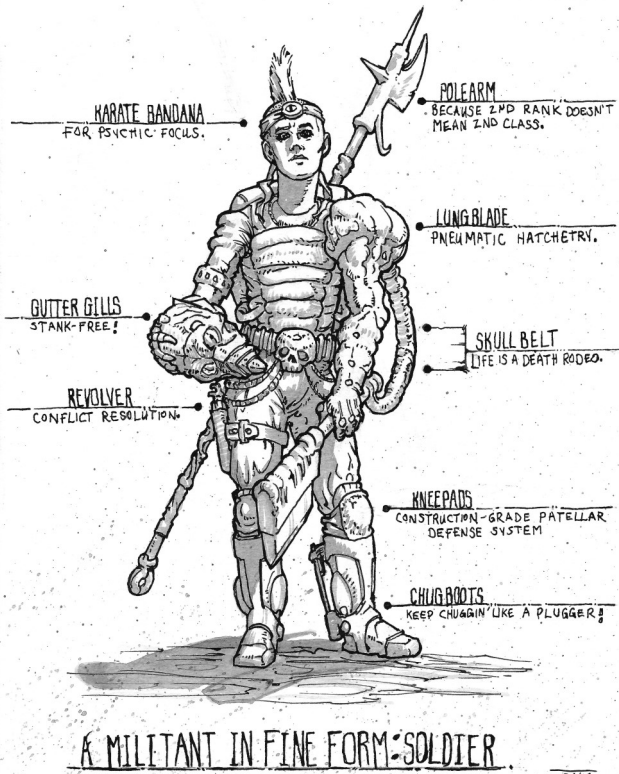
The GM need not roll for underwhelmingly easy tasks. The GM might also choose to modulate the difficulty of easy tasks slightly by allowing the dice to explode. If, on tasks requiring a check of 1d6 or 2d6, any die rolls a natural '6,' the player must add another die, somewhat increasing the chances of failure. Again, discretion is the name of the game.

CHARACTER CLASSES

Characters in *Gathox* are divided into three classes: Militant, Mentalist, and Mutant. No clerics exist in *Gathox per se*, although any bloke off the street could start their own church or religious gang. Militants and Mentalists are each divided into subclasses of their own and possess unique abilities, while Mutants are specialized by their own random tables.



MILITANTS



Militants are the bread and butter of street gangs, the might making right for the elite, and the most common PC occupation in Gathox. Rare is the street urchin who grows to adulthood without learning the sweet science, and rarer yet is the merchant who has no need of muscle to enforce the protection of her goods in a lawless city.

Militants use the advancement tables and abilities listed for the Fighter in *Whitebox*. A Militant can choose to be a Street Tough, Soldier, or Martial Master at the beginning of play. Each possesses a unique ability to aid in distinguishing themselves from their brethren.

THE STREET TOUGH

This Militant knows the pulse and rhythm of the city, living in tune with the nuances of bravado and eternally studying the art of the hustle. Barroom brawls and back alley beatdowns provided ample classroom instruction for the Street Tough, and now the Tough is ready for the big time.

The Street Tough enjoys a natural +1 to unarmed attack, and may attempt to *Intimidate* any humanoid, although only one at a time. The *Intimidate* forces the target to roll a saving throw: success means the humanoid has called the Tough's bluff, and failure means that the humanoid must obey the next request made by the Tough, short of harming themselves or their allies.

THE SOLDIER

Unlike the Street Tough, a soldier consciously chose a career path from an early age, signing on with a private defense company or entering into formal training with an established gang at a young age. The Soldier understands the chain of command and how to fight in groups, and never lets the chaos of the moment undermine their countless hours of drills and martial practice.

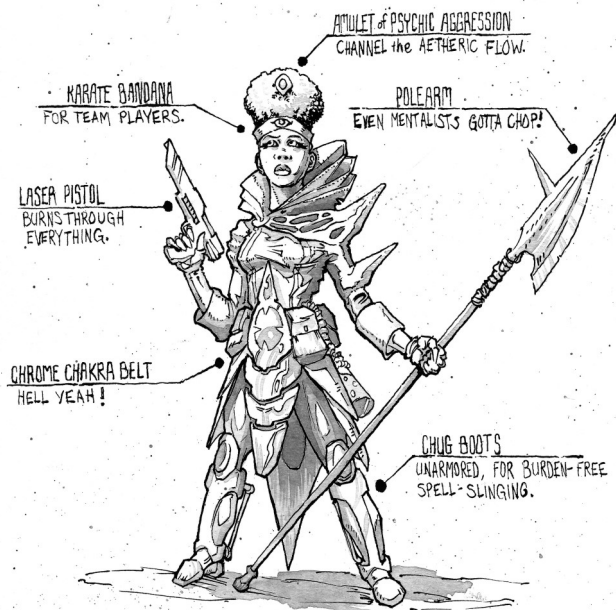
The Soldier has learned how to apply instantaneous discipline to even the most ragtag band of combatants, and may assert *Discipline* on their party up to 3 times per day. The use of *Discipline* inspires the Soldier and her fellow combatants to gird their loins for battle, granting a 1-point bonus to AC and saving throws for 3 rounds. This only applies to teammates within vocal range.

THE MARTIAL MASTER

A Martial Master is a Militant raised within an insular family tradition of fighting, often utterly idiosyncratic and divergent from common forms of fighting. The Martial Master spends virtually their entire adolescence and early adulthood training with family members to become a self-contained, one man army. Players are encouraged to be creative with their chosen martial path, whether it be kung-fu, gun-kata, or something even more wild.

The Martial Master enjoys a 1-point bonus to armed attack rolls, and may *Brandish* two weapons at once without penalty. The *Brandish* allows the Martial Master to roll damage twice and take the higher of the two rolls upon a successful attack – in the case of two weapons doing unequal damage, use the higher value damage roll.

MENTALISTS



A MENTALIST IN FULL: COSMIC DOCTOR

Mentalists spend their lives in study and ritualistic practice, learning to harness psychic gravity wells and astral confluences for the purposes of invoking magic. In Gathox, they find themselves in the service of elite families, advising gang leaders, or carving out pieces of the city for their own weird devices. Some ply their trade ministering to the masses, forming cults to extant godlings or dreaming up their own. Yet others plumb the depths of reality to expand their consciousness or see beyond the veil of the cosmos.

Mentalists use the advancement tables and abilities listed for the Magic-User in *Whitebox*. A Mentalist can choose to be a Spiritualist, a Faith Healer, or a Cosmic Doctor at the beginning of play. Each possesses a unique ability to aid in distinguishing themselves from their cohort. Unlike *Whitebox*, a Mentalist may use any weapon; however, any weapon that is not a dagger or a staff does 1d4 points of damage instead. This allows the Mentalist to deploy in combat with ranged weapons or polearms at second rank, but diminishes their effectiveness.

THE SPIRITUALIST

Mankind's adventures into the world of the self have culminated in the studies of the Spiritualist. Tapping into magical reserves within themselves, Spiritualists have learned to see beyond seeing, and often sell these skills for exorbitant prices. Although occasionally derided as 'table knockers,' Spiritualists genuinely possess powers which yield results.

The Spiritualist may use *Psychometry*, which allows her to glean a piece of information from touching an object with bare hands. This requires one turn of focused, uninterrupted attention, and the information sought must be posed in the form of a question to the GM. At levels one through four, this power can be used once per day; at levels five through nine, twice per day; at levels 10 and above, 3 times per day.

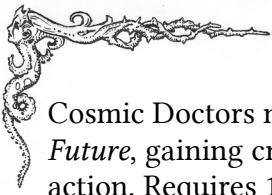
THE FAITH HEALER

This Mentalist has been touched by the mystic forces of Gathox - not the city built by hands, but the God That Walks Forever. The Faith Healer preaches from soap boxes, climbs the esoteric ranks of cults, and treats the sick for sums of gold. Although despised by many as bilkers or spiritual tyrants, Faith Healers possess magic as strong as any other Mentalist.

The Faith Healer may use *Lay On Hands* to heal the injured. He must touch his bare hands to a prone subject, and at the end of a round heal them of 1d4 hit points of damage, plus one point per level. At levels one through four, the Faith Healer may do this once per day; at levels five through nine, twice per day; at levels 10 and above, three times per day.

THE COSMIC DOCTOR

Cosmic Doctors consider themselves the true purveyors of the arcane, the final arbiters of the divide between the worldly and supernal, the ordained masters of reality. Their studies have taken them so deeply down the rabbit holes of paradox that they become eccentric and bizarre, often with appearances to match. Cosmic Doctors find work in Gathox as advisors to elite families and traders in rarities of all sorts.



Cosmic Doctors may listen to the *Echoes of the Future*, gaining crucial clues as to an intended path of action. Requires 1d4 rounds of unbroken silence, and the GM arbitrates the results as she sees fit. This may range from reducing a die roll by one die of difficulty, or by describing an astral insight which reveals useful information. Usable once per day at levels one through four, twice per day at levels five through nine, and three times per day at levels 10 and above.

WILD MAGIC

Given that Mentalists are constantly invoking magic in the midst of city-wide psychic fluctuations while riding on the back of a world-hopping godling, strange side effects can occur while casting a spell. When a spell is successfully cast, there is a 1-in-8 chance of wild magic effects; on a roll of 8, consult the chart below.

ROLL (1D10)	WILD MAGIC EFFECT
1	The air ionizes, creating a burnt oxygen smell in a 20'x20' area.
2	The caster's skin changes hue 10% warmer, toward red.
3	The caster's skin changes hue 10% cooler, toward blue.
4	Light rapidly shifts from bright to dark, like a strobe, 10' radius, for 1 round.
5	A thin sheet of ice materializes on everything in a 20' radius.
6	The sounds of laughter in reverse fill a 20' radius for 3 rounds.
7	The spell leaves a permanent holograph hovering at the point of casting.
8	The caster's face transmogrifies into an entirely different face for a day.
9	The skin melts off the caster's hands, leaving exposed muscle and bone. No damage.
10	The caster's eyes become two glowing orbs of purple light.





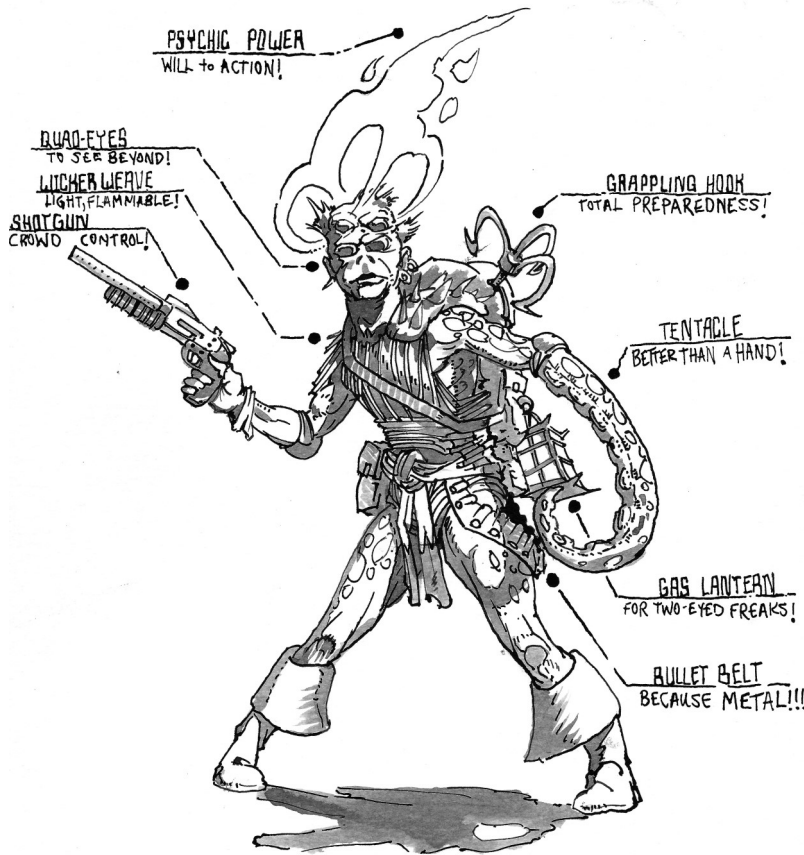
MUTANTS

Mutants are a special breed of bizarre creature - a human born corrupted from the psychic radiation of Gathox itself. There are as many variations of viable adult mutants as there are humans. Gathoxan Mutants are scorned and maligned by the elites, abused and taken advantage of by merchants and gangs, and often forced into the most impoverished places in society.

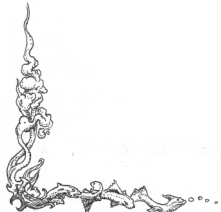
For all these endless abuses, Mutants have incredible potential. They are natural psychic talents, and they continue to mutate as they progress in level. The harsh reality of their day to day lives forces them to become quick learners, acquiring Wheelhouses (if the optional rules are used; see pp.63) at a pace which far outstrips any of their adventuring comrades. Many mutants eventually form their own gangs or establish their prowess as traders and power brokers.

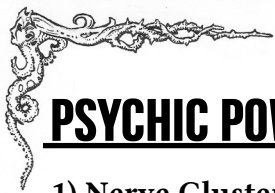
Each mutant starts with 1d3 random beneficial mutations, and 1 random negative mutation. Mutants will gain an additional beneficial mutation at levels two, four, and six. They are the only beings to possess genuine psychic powers (i.e. not based in magic). Mutants use the level and hit die advancement of Clerics. They may use any armor, at a cost penalty of double the normal price, and may use any single-handed melee or ranged weapon at full effectiveness. Two-handed weapon damage is reduced to 1d4.

Mutants accrue additional psychic powers as they increase in level, and these are rolled randomly on the table below. Rolling randomly for psychic powers may result in a double-up; in this case the mutant may double their use of the power. Mutants start off with a psychic power, and gain an additional random psychic power at levels three, five, seven, nine, and eleven.



A MUTANT ON THE MAKE!





PSYCHIC POWERS

1) Nerve Cluster Stimulation - The Mutant may, once per day, accelerate the production of electrons in their body, allowing the emission of psychic bolts. These bolts have a range of 60' and do 1d6+1 damage on a successful attack roll. Creatures weak to electrical attacks must save or suffer double damage. This power lasts for 3 turns and allows the mutant to discharge one bolt per round.

2) Liminal Materiality - The Mutant may spend a round in psychic meditation and partially dematerialize their body and possessions for up to a turn. They appear sufficiently translucent as to be effectively invisible in dim light. Additionally, normal weapons only inflict one point of damage - only lasers or magic can do full damage. They cannot inflict more than one point of damage in this state or pass through other objects. The mutant may use this power once per day for every four levels (1/day at 1st, 2/day at 5th, etc.).

3) Psionic Summons - The Mutant may focus her desire on one non-living object of up to 40 lbs. in a 100' radius, causing it to dematerialize at its current location and re-materialize within 20' of the Mutant, so long as nothing occupies the space at which the Mutant intends it to materialize. This is usable once per day.

4) Auratic Pattern Recognition - This power allows the Mutant to visualize the subtle shifts in the aura of a humanoid creature within a 40' radius, giving the Mutant a basic read on the surface level intentions of the target. Lasts 1 turn and gives a +1 to the Mutant's reaction rolls, as well as initiative if the Mutant is alone. Usable once per day.

5) Field of Atonia - The Mutant may emit a 50' radius psychic blast of crippling energy, causing all specified targets to experience a withering of their musculature and nervous system which lasts 1 turn. This inflicts a -1 penalty to initiative and attacks, and halves movement. Usable once per day.

6) Psychic Guillotine - The Mutant channels her feelings of rage and oppression into a psychic hatchet which strikes at the base of a target's neck, inflicting 1d6+1 damage automatically. Usable twice per day.

7) Self-Reconstructive Meditation - The Mutant may enter into a mantra-led trance lasting an hour and allowing her to psychically force her cells to regenerate. The Mutant then rolls a Saving Throw. If successful, she regains half her total hit points; if a failure, she regains one quarter of her total hit points. Either way the Mutant must consume twice as much food for the next 24 hours. Usable once per day.

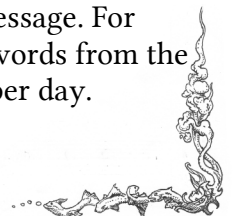
8) Ectoplasmic Arm - The Mutant vomits a stream of ectoplasm from her mouth, nose, tear ducts, and ears, which then can be remotely operated as an arm with the full functionality and equivalent STR of the Mutant. This arm has a range of 60' and lasts 1 turn. Usable twice per day.

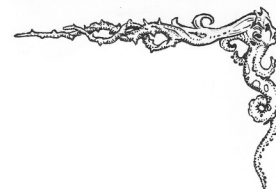
9) Telepathic Tranception - The Mutant may target any creature within 200' for the purposes of reading its mind. A successful 3d6 vs. WIS roll allows the Mutant to read said mind for up to 1 turn, and can still move at half speed while doing so. A failure simply means that the Mutant spams the target's mind with psychic effluvia, causing wild and unpredictable reactions instead (subject to GM discretion). The Mutant may choose to fail this roll. Usable twice per day.

10) Paralytic Communion - The Mutant can target up to 1d6 creatures in a 30' radius, forcing them to make a Saving Throw or be paralyzed. This lasts for as long as the Mutant remains motionless or 1 turn, whichever is shorter. Usable once per day.

11) Bleeding Heart Syndrome - The Mutant channels the totality of her hate into an entropic field of vengeance. Every targeted creature of $\frac{1}{2}$ the Mutant's hit dice or less in a 50' radius must make a Saving Throw or instantly have their heart violently explode from both the front and back of their torso in a firehose spray. Usable once per day.

12) Terminal Communicue - The Mutant may construct a message of up to 60 words in length, which she then transmits toward an intended target. If the target is within a 1 mile radius of the Mutant, said target will instantly receive the message. For each $\frac{1}{4}$ mile beyond that, subtract ten words from the back end of the message. Usable once per day.





BENEFICIAL MUTATIONS

Roll 1d20 on the table below to generate mutations.

1	Claws or teeth do 1d6 dmg, appearance changes to reflect the growth.	11	Mutant sprouts oily fur which resists most liquids, but not acids.
2	A nimble tail, 4' in length, grows from the tailbone. Usable as a 3rd limb.	12	Elongated tongue, retractable; can reach 1d3 feet in length.
3	A fully functional third arm grows from the chest of the Mutant.	13	6 holes appear instead of nose; can detect poisons by smell within 10'.
4	Extra pair of eyes above normal eyes, allowing for infravision up to 30'.	14	Calcium deposits on skull create heavy dome; 1-point bonus to Saves against mental attacks..
5	Skin becomes random mix of fur and scales, +1 AC bonus.	15	Quick regeneration, allows Mutant to recover 3 hp per rest turn instead of 1.
6	Mutant can secrete mild paralytic venom from glands in throat, two doses per day.	16	Pockets form just below eyes, can shoot spines up to 20' 3/day, 1d4 dmg.
7	Mutant becomes barrel-chested and grows super-sized lungs. Can survive underwater twice as long as normal.	17	Can eat almost anything non-poisonous and nonmetallic, never needs rations.
8	Natural skin webbing appears between digits and limbs. Good for swimming at twice the normal rate and gliding and reducing fall damage by 10'.	18	Translucent skin with shifting pigmentation allows Mutant to blend into environment from 20' or further. Reduces chance to spot the Mutant by 1 in 6.
9	Giant bat ears allow echolocation within 15'. Need ear-pro for loud sounds.	19	Bulbous cancers (3 daily) grow from body; can detach and move, following simple commands (including listening, carry up to 5 lbs., and spying). 2 hp each, up to 5 at once under command.
10	Marsupial pouch grows on torso, allowing Mutant to carry an extra 30 lbs.	20	1d6 limbs become tentacles. 1-4 for arms/legs, 5 is head, 6 means body is amorphous and flexible. Sensory organs and fine motor skills remain intact. Head tentacle can also grasp objects.

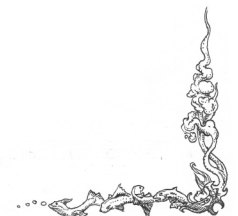




NEGATIVE MUTATIONS

Roll 1d20 on the table below to generate mutations.

1	Skin dry and brittle, takes double damage from fire.	11	Diseased skin, flaking and red, possibly pustulent. -1 CHA.
2	Stress can cause paralysis - 3d6 vs. WIS check in stressful situation (GM fiat), failure forces Mutant to curl up in a ball for 1d4 rounds.	12	Enlarged facial features, creating slurred speech and breathing. -1 CHA and -1 to reaction rolls.
3	Water dependent - needs to immerse in water for 10 minutes every 6 hours or suffer 1d4 dmg/hour.	13	Misshapen limbs and twisted bone growth, add 1 die of difficulty to DEX checks.
4	Direct sunlight causes Mutant to suffer a -1 penalty to attack, damage, and Saves.	14	Brittle bones and weak ligaments. When making a STR check, roll twice and take the lower number.
5	Arthritis - swollen joints make it difficult to haul gear. -2 Encumbrance slots.	15	Fused spine - makes checks for climbing, crawling in confined spaces, and gymnastic movements 1 die more difficult.
6	Black and white vision, unable to see color.	16	Body temperature can't regulate - double the negative effects of cold and heat.
7	Taste and smell senses are totally absent.	17	Shrunken or missing arm (1-2) or leg (3-4).
8	Weak skin - physical attacks inflict an extra point of damage.	18	Tumors cover body, reducing movement by half and encumbrance by -20 lbs.
9	Single eye - two eyes have merged into one. Depth perception off, leading to a -1 attack penalty.	19	Insatiable appetite requires the additional consumption of 1d4 rations per day.
10	Inhuman voice, -1 to reaction rolls.	20	Roll two negative traits from above.





CLASS TITLES

Should the players and the GM find use or entertainment in it, provided below is a table which lists class titles by level. Feel free to modify them to fit the feel and intent of your home game.

LEVEL	STREET TOUGH	SOLDIER	MARTIAL MASTER	SPIRITUALIST	FAITH HEALER	COSMIC DOCTOR	MUTANT
1	Skinner	Grunt	Trainee	Table Knocker	Street Preacher	Neophyte	Odd Growth
2	Bruiser	Cadet	Adept	Sir or Madame	Cloaker	Parlor Trickster	Scummer
3	Mack	Privateer	Wheel of Fists	Seer	Witness	Lesser Magi	Weirdling
4	Ruffian	Mercenary	Purveyor of Pain	Medium	Ministrant	Chanter	Lurker
5	Knifer	Stalwart Ward	Lord of the Field	Clairvoyant	One Who Binds Wounds	True Magi	Child of Gathox
6	Harrier	Sergeant of Earth	Lord of the Walls	Channeler	One Who Feeds Many	Wizard	Beast in Low Places
7	Enforcer	Sergeant of Heaven	Tactician of Sun	Speaker of the Dead	Bearer of Good Tidings	Master of Strange Tides	Beast in Shadows
8	Boss	Sergeant of the Five Points	Strategist of Stars	Voice of the Undying Will	The Light of Truth	The Wind Between the Stars	Dwells In Deep Murk
9+	Kingpin	General	Xanatos	Heavenly Avatar	Saint	Dark Sorcerer	Monster





WHEELHOUSES

Wheelhouses are overarching background and learning themes that lend aid to players in applicable situations. They are broader categories than typical skill systems, and are intended to be used more loosely. This keeps the game moving quickly and minimizes excessive paperwork for players and GMs alike. The GM is, as always, free to skip or modify the use of this rule as befits her game.

When an ability check for an action is called for, if the player has a reasonably appropriate Wheelhouse, they should notify the GM, who may decide to improve the check by 1d6. This is intended to replace long skill lists and keep the game moving quickly.

Wheelhouses are, by nature, descriptive and open to interpretation. If the GM finds that their players engage in too much sophistry or regularly attempt to apply Wheelhouses in absurd ways, she may feel free to penalize the players appropriately or drop the use of Wheelhouses altogether. A good social contract at the table, explicit or otherwise, goes a long way to making a good game.

Militants and Mentalists each begin the game with one Wheelhouse, and gain an additional Wheelhouse at levels three, five, and eight. The Mutant begins with two Wheelhouses and gains two additional Wheelhouses at levels three, five, seven, and 10.

Feel free to invent wheelhouses or allow players to make these up in addition to choosing from the sample list below.

List of Sample Wheelhouses: Wildlife, Surface Environments, The Underworld, Government and Hierarchy, Business Acumen, Black Market, Piracy, Survival Craft, Ancient Civilizations, Time and Astronomy, Weird Chemistry, Architecture, Gathic Lore, Improvised Invention.

HEALTH, HEALING AND HOSPITALIZATION

There are no clerics in Gathox, and magical healing is a rarity. Thus, the 'healing economy' of Gathox operates somewhat differently than in other game settings.

A freshly generated character is allowed to start with the maximum possible hit points according to their class and ability scores. Each level acquired afterward requires the character to roll their normal hit dice, keeping a running total for hit points. This gives starting characters a slight but important advantage in terms of survivability.

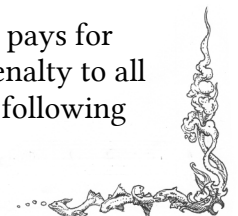
In combat, tightly focused exploration, or other situations where time is measured in rounds and turns, the party may choose to rest for 1 turn per hour, allowing each character to recuperate 1 lost hit point on a successful 3d6 vs. CON check. Additionally, a character may choose to rest for an entire hour, healing 1d3+1 hit points with a successful 3d6 vs. CON check. In either of these cases, the opportunity to heal only applies to characters that have not reached zero or fewer hit points.

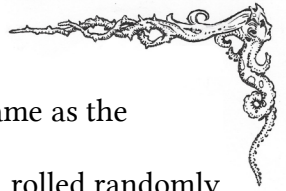
Med kits, worth 25gp each, may also be applied to injured characters once per day for the purposes of healing; a successful 3d6 vs. WIS check by a character with a med kit to an injured party members allows for the healing of 1d3+1 hp. A med kit may be used three times before it must be replaced. Spells, abilities, and various sundry and magical supplies may allow for additional healing. Finally, a six hour shift of sleep allows for the full recovery of hit points. PCs who reach zero or fewer hit points immediately fall unconscious, and bleed out 1 hp/round until healed, med-kitted, or they reach ½ CON in negative hit points and die.

If a PC is reduced to zero or fewer hit points, they will require a week of hospitalization at the rate of 50 gp/level. The cost increases with level because higher level PCs have more Hit Dice and tend to suffer more grievous and complicated wounds. The players may need to cut that hospital time short or save cash, which plays out as follows:

1) For each day less than 7 that a PC leaves the hospital early, they incur a 10% chance of infection. Infection consequences are left to GM fiat, with a nod toward creative results.

2) For every 10 gp less that a character pays for hospitalization, they suffer a 1 point penalty to all attack rolls and Saving Throws for the following week.





3) If a player wants to pay top dollar for intense restorative services and make it out of the hospital in a day, they can pay 100 gp/level for the luxury of personalized care.

If players need on-the-spot healing while in the city but have not reached zero hit points, they have a 50% chance of finding someone to perform the service within a three block radius, and each character must spend 10 gp/hp healed.

CHARACTER DEATH

If a PC should perish in the course of adventuring, the following protocols may ensue:

1) Surviving party members split the character's gear as they see fit, and the player rolls up a new character at level 1. Party members cannot confer the dead character's possessions to the newly rolled character.

2) The player of the deceased character may choose to instead play as the deceased's hireling, if such a character exists. This 0-level character need only accrue 500XP to reach level 1, at which time the player may choose an appropriate class and reroll HP. The hireling may inherit some of the deceased character's gear at the party's discretion. Leveled hirelings or henchmen may be substituted.

3) The deceased may opt to *Reincarnate* if the party follows the following procedure:

A) Bring the body and possessions of the deceased to one of the dozens of funeral pyres installed at the Catwalk of Private Vicissitudes.

B) Douse the body and possessions on the pyre with Dew-on-Iron alcohol (100 gp worth).

C) Light the pyre and watch it burn completely.

If the procedure is followed precisely, within 1d4 hours the reincarnated body of the deceased character will erupt from the ground wherever the party stands, naked and covered in mud, ready for action. A reincarnated character will have the following properties:

A) Same age and different gender.

B) A name that rhymes with the name of the deceased.

C) Will remember living life in a parallel, utopian version of Gathox; an Ur-Gathox, if you will.

D) Will have one ability score the same as the deceased, at the player's pleasure.

E) Will possess 1 negative mutation, rolled randomly.

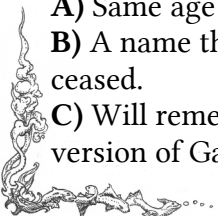
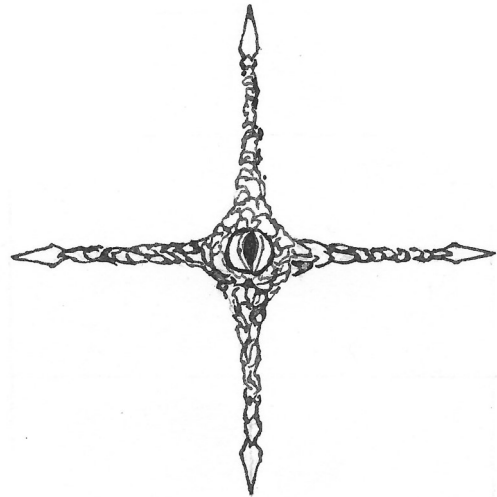
F) Will possess 1/2 the experience points of the deceased.

G) Will be of a class of the player's choosing after ability scores have been rolled.

H) Will find a chicken skin pouch of coins in their left hand worth 1d6x10 gp.

I) May possess a hireling who appears, also naked and covered in mud, 10% cumulative chance per level of the deceased.

A character may reincarnate twice; the negative mutations of previous reincarnations carry over, so that a re-reincarnated character will have two negative mutations. After a third death, the character may be interred in the walls of the Tunnel of Punctuated Peace, splitting 5% of the experience points of the deceased between each of the remaining party members as well as a freshly generated character.





EQUIPMENT

Below is a fair representation of weapons, ammo, armor, and specialty gear available in Gathox. Ambitious GM's might bring in extensive equipment lists from other sources, including fantasy and sci-fi settings, to flesh out their campaign needs. All the equipment available in *Whitebox* is, of course, available as well.

WEAPONS

WEAPON	DAMAGE	RATE OF FIRE	WEIGHT	RANGE	PRICE
Axe, battle*	1d6+1		15	M	7 gp
Axe, hand	1d6	1	5	M or 20'	3 gp
Axe, Lungblade**	1d6, exp. dmg. on 6		20	M	225 gp
Billy club	1d6		5	M	3 gp
Blackjack	1d6-1, on nat. 20 Save vs. K.O.		2	M	7 gp
Bow, short	1d6	2	5	30'	25 gp
Bow, long	1d6+1	2	5	60'	50 gp
Bow, cross	1d6+1	1	5	45'	45 gp
Brass knuckles	1d6-1, Save vs. KO on Nat. 20		3	M	5 gp
Club	1d6		10	M	0 gp
Dagger	1d6-1		2	M	2gp
Dynamite (stick) ***	2d6, 1 in 4 fuse fail	1/2	1	see below	125 gp
Flail	1d6		12	M	4 gp
Flail, heavy*	1d6+1		15	M, 2nd rank	10 gp
Hammer, throwing	1d6-1	1	5	M, 20'	2 gp
Hammer, war*	1d6		15	M	7 gp
Lance	1d6		15	M, 2nd rank	8 gp



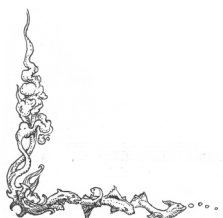
WEAPON	DAMAGE	RATE OF FIRE	WEIGHT	RANGE	PRICE
Laser, pistol**	1d6, exp. dmg. on nat. 20	1	7	60'	325 gp
Laser, rifle*,**	1d6+1, exp. dmg. on nat. 20	1	20	120'	400 gp
Mace	1d6		10	M	5 gp
Morningstar*	1d6		15	M	5 gp
Mulkin	1d6		7	M	8 gp
Pole Arm*	1d6+1		15	M, 2nd rank	8 gp
Quarterstaff*	1d6		10	M, 2nd rank	2 gp
Revolver	1d6-1	2	5	45'	60 gp
Rifle*	1d6+1	1	10	120'	85 gp
Slingshot*	1d6-1	1	1	40'	1 gp
Shotgun*,****	1d6+1 to all targets in 10' area	1	10	20'	200 gp
Spear	1d6	1	10	M, 2nd rank, thrown	3 gp
Sword, short	1d6-1		5	M	7 gp
Sword, long	1d6		10	M	10 gp
Sword, bastard*	1d6 one-handed, 1d6+1 two-handed		12	M	20 gp
Sword, heftblade*	1d6+1		15	M	30 gp
Sword, katana*	1d6, exp. dmg. on 20		10	M	40 gp

* two-handed weapon.

** mechanical failure on a natural 1 requiring 30% of cost to repair.

*** damage affects 20' radius of blast center - fuse fail is 50% chance of detonation in hands.

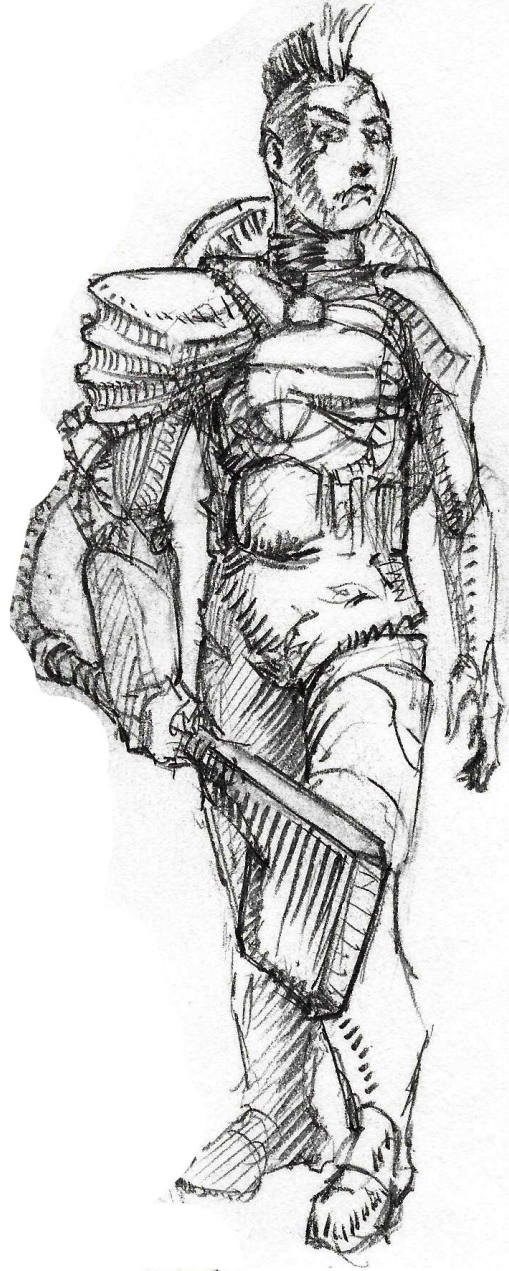
**** effective within 20' and hits everyone in a 10' square.



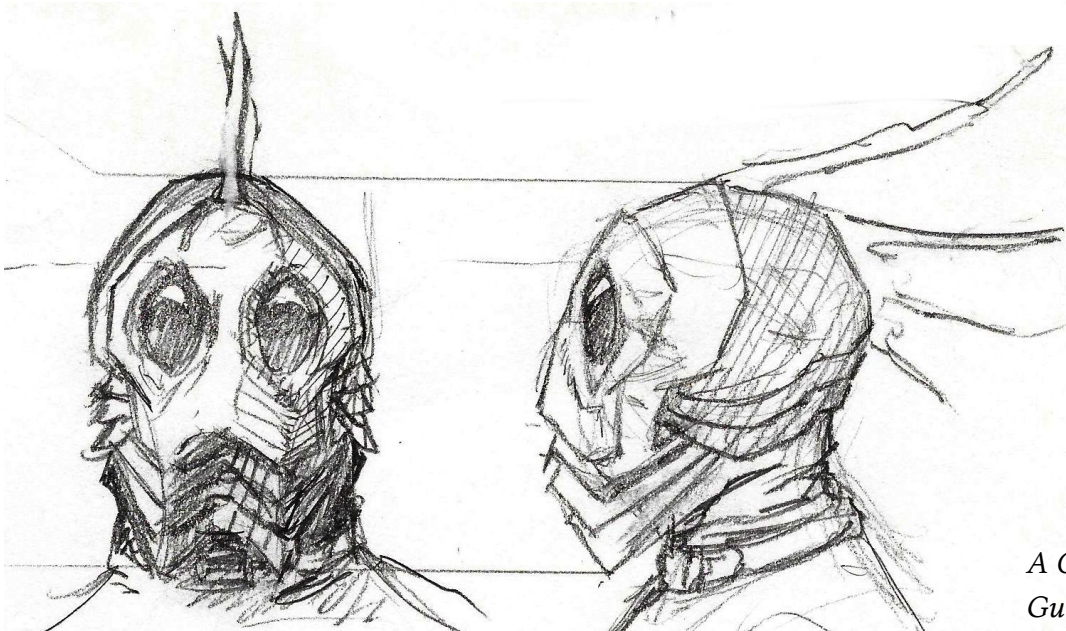


A Street Tough wielding the vicious Lungblade Axe

AMMUNITION	COST
Arrows for Bows	10 gp for 20
Bolts for Crossbows	15 gp for 20
Bullets for Rifle or Revolver	25 gp for 20
Charges for Lasers	75 gp for 10
Shells for Shotgun	30 gp for 20
Shot for Slingshots	3 gp for 20



Chug Boots



*A Cosmic Doctor sporting
Gutter Gills*



ARMOR

Armor is piecemeal in Gathox, owing to a paucity of armorers as well as the abundance of heat and ubiquity of narrow confines in the city. Materials vary greatly and pieces are often cobbled together from unlikely sources. Lasers ignore armor unless kevlar, carbon fiber, or magically reinforced. Armor damaged but not destroyed may be repaired for 50% of the total cost. A character may only wear 5 pieces of armor and may never double up pieces on a given body part.

See armor table on pg 69.

SPECIALTY GEAR DESCRIPTIONS

Chug Boots - These sturdy mechanical boots allow the wearer to bear larger loads, effectively increasing carrying capacity by 30 lbs. While heavy, they provide little in the way of armor, and can be worn by any class.

Gutter Gills - This fish-like helmet provides air filtering for hostile environments, improving saving throws and CON checks against harmful airborne substances by 1 point. Swappable filters last 1 turn each. Additionally, the fish-like eye goggles built into the helmet provide a green filter that mitigates both bright and dark light, allowing 15' vision in what would otherwise be blinding light or total darkness. 10 gp/filter.

Karate Bandana - This mystic scrap of cloth provides 1 point of AC to the wearer and features a hard medallion in the center of the forehead, useful for headbutting. If the entire party wears Karate Bandanas, the resulting psychic communion allows the party +1 to group initiative.

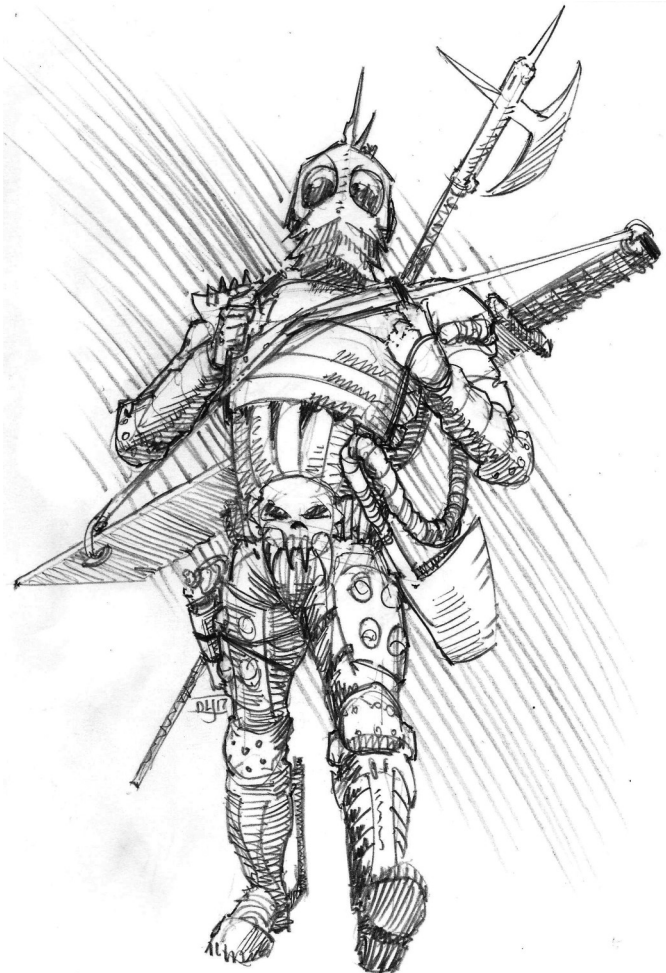
Kneepads - these work-tough construction kneepads protect the wearer from a variety of patellar hazards, improving AC by 1 point and potentially mitigating some limb damage to the leg.

Lungblade - This powerful weapon consists of a pneumatic upper body suit with a large, flexible air bladder on the back. A tube runs down the back of the wearer's preferred weapon arm and into the base

of an unsettlingly large hatchet or meat cleaver. The wearer's natural body movements build up pneumatic pressure in the bladder, allowing any attack with the blade to explode damage on a natural damage roll of 6, which continues with each subsequent 6. Mechanical failure on a natural To-Hit roll of 1, requiring 30% of cost to repair.

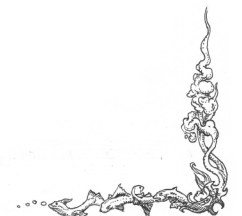
Polearm - This 8'-12' long two-handed weapon has been generalized for multiple purposes, featuring a variety of spikes, blades, ball peens and hooks on the killing end. With a successful attack roll, any militant using the polearm may choose to roll a 1d6 separate from the character's damage roll; a result of 1 indicates the militant may use one of the implements at the end of the weapon to perform an appropriate combat stunt of their choosing, subject to GM fiat.

Skull Belt - An essential bit of kit, the Skull Belt marks the wearer as a magnificent bastard while providing easy access to a variety of pouches, weapons, and bullets.





PIECE	EFFECT ON AC [AAC]	WEIGHT	COST
BDSM leather suit	-2[+2]	20	150 gp
Belt, Skull	-1[+1]	15	40 gp
Bracers, Metal	-1[+1]	10	25 gp
Breastplate	-1[+1]	15	60 gp
Chain or link tunic	-1[+1]	20	40 gp
Chug Boots	0*, see description	N/A	250 gp
Elbowpads, kneepads	-1[+1]	5	25 gp
Gauntlets, Metal and fur	-1[+1]	10	30 gp
Girdle, metal and lizard skin	-1[+1]	12	40 gp
Shin Guards	-1[+1]	10	30 gp
Gutter Gills	-1[+1]; 6 rnds. breathing, 10' dark vision.	10	75 gp, 10 gp refill
Helm, metal or carbon fiber	-1[+1]	5	25 or 50 gp
Helm, Skull w/fangs, horns	-1[+1]	10	35 gp
Joreen Chitin Plates	-2[+2]; nat.20 reduces by 1	15	120 gp
Karate Bandana	-1[+1]*, see description	3	40 gp
Kevlar, flak jacket	-2[+2]	20	200 gp
Shield, punching	-1[+1]; also, 1d3 counter on miss	10	15 gp
Shield, body	-1[+1]	15	10 gp
Shoulderpad/baffles/pauldron	-1[+1]	8	30 gp
Trenchcoat, lined	-1[+1]	5	50 gp
Wicker weave	-1[+1]; easily burned or softened	15	10 gp





Duty and Truth

“Kobe Ngai reporting for duty, third generation Gathox citizen happily appointed to folding station M!”

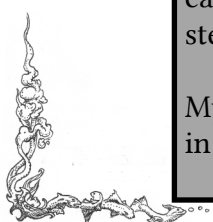
I say all this to Jana every day and she always giggles. Does it tickle her as much each time or is she just that polite? Or does she have a crush? I see her sometimes pretending not to look at me. I think. Maybe it’s my imagination.

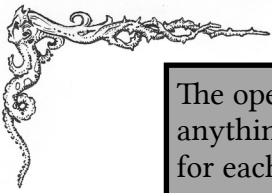
First Jana hands me a full sheet of red paper with a name written in the middle. This paper is assembled from two half sheets each with alternating letters of the name on tabs like teeth at the top and bottom of the respective pages. When the sheets fit together a complete name is revealed. Jana’s job is to combine these sheets and glue them into one. My job is to fold the resulting paper. We are not supposed to read the names. Jana went to special classes that taught her how to look at something without seeing it. I am told to simply look away until I make the first fold, which will completely cover the name. It’s easy and I can do it without looking, but sometimes I look anyway. We all do. I think even Jana can’t help it sometimes when her eyes get tired.

Actually, the first thing that happens is Antoni sorts the sheets coming from a black cylinder pushed by air down the long tube running down from the ceiling into the room. Then Antoni hands them to Jana, who does her thing and hands each page to me one at a time. After folding I give the paper to AJ who applies the wax and places it in a separate cylinder that goes back in the long tube which runs down to the floor. AJ never has a chance to read the names. He never asks if we read them. But I know part of his job is to keep an eye on the rest of us.

I’m third generation here. My grandparents hopped on Gathox for like honeymoon or something and they never able to get off. Gathox shifted and left their world. The godling’s dimensional shifts aren’t understood, so all they could do was wait to see if their world came around again, but it didn’t. Oh sure, they went to several different priests, all proclaiming they have a deep understanding of the godling’s dimensional shifts and as to when Gathox would reappear on their world. Well... I’m here, so you can see how right they were. My Haps and Mam were decided they were content enough here and never tried to leave again after the first time. Haps was clever and made an okay life for him and Mam and my mother when she was born. Mother married a Kettle boy for love. They named me after my Haps’ old hometown. There’s some deep Gathoxan roots on my father’s side. Deep enough to get me this job. It’s a good job. Now I won’t have to marry until I damn well want too. There are a few boys but no one really worth my time. Work is easy, even important they tell me. Part of a system. A little moving piston in a great steamball for keeping it all running.

My first fold is horizontal and in half, then half again with the bottom fold. Then that fold in thirds. I tuck the bottom corners and on it goes until the paper envelops itself.





The opening slit gets a fancy seal of wax. When I glance at the names they never mean anything to me. The pages come from the girls upstairs, who stand in two long rows, one for each half sheet. The first row of girls write the even letters in the names; the second row write the odd. Each individual girl writes a single letter per name, which she copies out of unique code books provided by their supervisors in the morning, so the most any girl can ever see is half a name. Until it gets to us. At some point you have to trust someone, I guess. I don't know where the names come from or who makes the code books. I don't know where they go when I'm through folding them.

Every day at lunch, which is at the noon hour when the shadows are gone, we all eat in one large room. Over a hundred of us. We never talk about the names at lunch, but sometimes after work we do. Jana says she one time recognized a name belonging to a neighbor boy who was five years old and then found out the boy disappeared a few days later. We also heard stories of names linked with other missing people and suspicious deaths, but there are so many people with the same name in Gathox that it might be just wanting to make a story out of a coincidence. Maybe the names are people who need protection, or maybe the envelopes eventually connect to larger envelopes with secret messages or a summons. Whatever it is must be important because they pay us well and expect us to do exemplary work. I've gotten so I can fold one piece of paper in under 15 seconds. They tell me the last girl who had my job saw her own name on the red paper and she screamed so they fired her immediately, but she's still alive and well and her husband runs a flat iron under the Stowe overpass with three children and they all seem very happy.



THE GANGLAND GAME

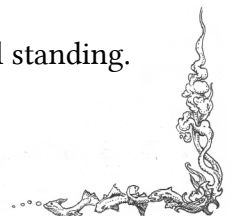
Gathox provides the opportunity for interested players to engage in domain-level play from level 1. If the players choose, they may form an enterprise together which we loosely term a 'gang.' While the intentions of the players may or may not be altruistic, players starting gangs will be rubbing up against a wide variety of self-interested and well-armed organizations throughout the city. As described in previous chapters, these range from ethnic and species organizations to religious groups and corporations; all are considered gangs.

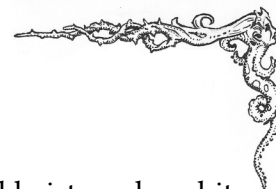
Running a gangland game requires tracking additional points and information on the part of the GM as well as players. Additionally, the GM will be required to devise the motivations of rival or allied gangs during a campaign. Mechanically, two new sets of points are introduced:

*Reputation Points (RP), earned individually by each player for successes; and

*Legacy, which is a running tally of the RP spent by the gang and indicates their relative social standing.

Given that RP spent begets Legacy, let's look at how Reputation works.





REPUTATION

Reputation is a currency which players earn through a variety of successful actions. A solid heist or clean hit can boost the name recognition of individuals or a party and even pave the way for the formation of a gang. It is incumbent upon the GM to provide the players with opportunities to earn RP, which can range from simple adventuring to fulfilling contracts for other gangs and even drumming up their own work. Players earn RP as follows, with failure incurring an equivalent loss in RP; RP can never be reduced below zero. The GM may wish to expand upon or narrow this list as fits the needs of the campaign.

DEED	POINTS (RP)
Successful Heist	1
Successful Retrieval	1
Successful Assassination	2
Simple Contract Fulfilled	1
Complex Contract Fulfilled	2
Neighborhood Territory Claimed/ Defended*	1
Guard or Escort Terms Fulfilled	1
Simple Investigation Solved	1
Complex Investigation Solved	2
Successful Carousing	1
Gaining A Level	1

*Neighborhood Territories become available when players clear dungeons, wipe out an enclave of gangsters, take over a business, or seize residential territory. It is up to the GM to provide these opportunities, especially by paying attention to player interest in mentioned properties and developing missions around them.

above average; the equivalent of a 1st level Street Tough. They can be assigned leadership of a crew of mooks, hired as management of a front business, or retained as a henchman, earning a ½ share of treasure and experience. Must have at least two mooks before purchasing a Lieutenant. Their retention costs 50 gp/ month per level or standard henchman earnings, whichever is appropriate.

*1 Brainiac, whose Morale is 2 points above average; the equivalent of a 1st Level Cosmic Doctor. They can be assigned to handle money laundering and bookkeeping, improving the earnings on a given property by 15%. A Brainiac can also uncover new mission contracts and marks, providing basic intel for these as well as minimizing factional animosity generated through outside contract work. Their retention costs 75 gp/month.

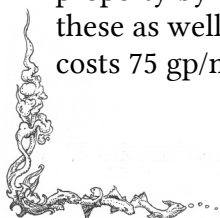
Players can spend RP to win friends and influence people, as well as make bids on neighborhood territories. Spending occurs as follows:

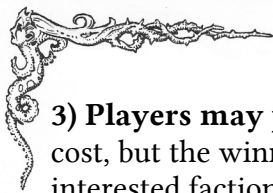
1) **A player can spend one RP to reroll a Charisma Reaction Roll or Morale check.** Up to three rerolls may occur for a given encounter, with corresponding expenditures. This allows for even the most uncharismatic players to riff off of their reputation in a bid to influence people.

2) **A player may spend 5 RP to attract potential gang members.** These don't appear out of thin air, but rather must be recruited through play. The player can attract one of the following types per expenditure:

*1d3 mooks, whose Morale is 1 point above average; the equivalent of 0-level Men-At-Arms. They can be assigned to hiring detail on adventures, defense of property, upkeep of protection racketeering, or soldier duty in turf wars. Their retention costs 20 gp/ month.

*1 Lieutenant, whose Morale is 1 point





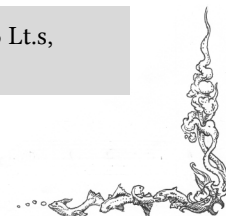
3) Players may pool their RP to make a bid on a territory. Territories can be contested and vary in cost, but the winner of an uncontested RP auction can expect little to no physical resistance from other interested factions when the auction closes. Typically, a successful bid requires a subsequent adventure to secure the property, although smaller properties might simply require a base purchase price.

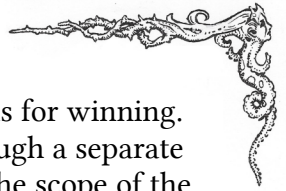
TERRITORIAL BIDS

Players engage in a reputation-based bidding process when spending RP on territory. Depending on property size and value, opening and maximum bids may vary. The more valuable the territory, the more likely competitive bids will be made. A lost bid still requires the expenditure of 1 RP, reflecting a slight hit to status for failure; the party must decide who pays that price. If two or more gangs bid the maximum RP for a territory and one side doesn't concede to the other, a turf war begins - which can manifest in a number of ways and might play out either diegetically or through wargaming. A successful bid requires the payment of full market value, with costs ranging from outright purchase to fixing or personalizing a space.

Listed below are the potential territories, minimum and maximum bids, chance of counter bid, property value, weekly yield, and minimum staffing requirements:

TERRITORY	MIN BID	MAX BID	COUNTER	VALUE	YIELD	STAFF
Market Booth	2	6	10%, 1 gang	150 gp	35 gp	1 mook
Market Tent	3	10	15%, 1 gang	200 gp	50 gp	2 mooks
Abandoned Shack/ Apt.	4	12	20%, 1 gang	230 gp	70 gp	3 mooks
Street Corner	5	15	25% 1 gang	275 gp	80 gp	3 mooks, 1 Lieutenant
Small Business	7	20	35% 1st gang 10% 2nd	650 gp	120 gp	3 mooks, 1 brainiac
Large Business	10	25	50% 1st gang 20% 2nd	1,000 gp	180 gp	3 mooks, 1 Lt., 1 brainiac
Dungeon, Small	12	30	55% 1st gang 25% 2nd	1,500 - 3,000 gp	250 gp	6 mooks, 1 Lt., 1 brainiac
Dungeon, Large	17	35	65% 1st gang 30% 2nd	2,200 - 5,000 gp	320 gp	10 mooks, 2 Lt.s, 1 brainiac
Apartment Complex	20	45	70% 1st gang 35% 2nd	8,000 - 12,000 gp	500 gp	12 mooks, 4 Lt.s, 2 brainiacs
Factory/ Base	25	60	80% 1st gang 40% 2nd, 20% 3rd	10,000 - 15,000 gp	625 gp	20 mooks, 2 Lt.s, 3 brainiacs
Mansion/ Villa	27	70	90% 1st gang, 50% 2nd, 30% 3rd	15,000 - 22,000 gp	800 gp	25 mooks, 5 Lt.s, 2 brainiacs
Mega-fortress/ Castle	30	100	100% 1st, 70% 2nd, 40% 3rd, 20% 4th	25,000 - 30,000 gp	1,100 gp	30 mooks, 6 Lt.s, 4 brainiacs





Territorial bids occur in a specific order, leading either to the successful acquisition of a territory or a turf war. The order is as follows:

- 1) The GM presents available territories, which may or may not be level-appropriate. Each territory will stay on the market for 1d4 weeks.
- 2) The players choose place a minimum bid on one territory.
- 3) A one week waiting period occurs in-game; the players are spending their downtime casing the joint, putting out feelers in the neighborhood, and otherwise scheming about their potential acquisition. During this waiting period, the GM rolls a percentage check to see if there is a matching counter-bid from another gang.
- 4) If no counterbid occurs, players win the bid! They pay 1/2 the market value, which represents the material investment in making the place suitable to their ends. They must staff it with the minimum staff indicated within a week or the territory goes back up on the market and the players suffer a loss to Legacy (see pp.80).
- 5) If a counterbid occurs, the players must double their minimum bid to up the ante. The GM must either re-roll the percentage check for counterbids to see if rival gangs stay in the game or make a fiat decision as to whether it's in their best interests to bid further.
- 6) If all rival gangs drop out of the bid, the players win the territory, adhering to the requirements of step 4.
- 7) If rival gangs have stayed in the bid, then the players must make a max bid as per the above table. Again, the GM determines by roll or fiat whether rival gangs counter with a max bid.
- 8) If the rival gang drops out, the players win the territory, paying the maximum of RP. They must then appropriately fund and staff the territory.

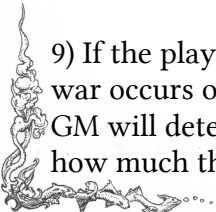
9) If the players and rival gangs reach max bid, a turf war occurs on the site of the contested territory. The GM will determine the makeup of the rival gang, how much the rival gang is willing to risk in terms of

staff and material, and the conditions for winning. This may be best accomplished through a separate gaming session and, depending on the scope of the confrontation, either resolved through direct combat or by the wargaming rules of the GM's preference.

SEIZING TERRITORY

Players and rival gangs may attempt to seize territory from one another throughout the course of a campaign. If players wish to seize the property of a rival, the GM will need to craft an adventure around this goal, taking into account the physical location, it's overall worth to the current owners, how it's staffed, and what an attempt at forcible seizure means for the politics and balance of power in the neighborhood.

Players will experience an attempted territory grab if, as a group, they lose enough Legacy to drop one tier (see pp.80). There is a 50% chance that a neighboring gang decides to move in on the players' largest or most lucrative property; otherwise, the GM chooses a lesser property that makes geographical sense in relation to which gangs would be likely to move on them. Sometimes even allies will swoop in on a weakened organization and chalk up the social fallout to the cost of doing business. The GM will need to determine the size of the invading force and the determination of its constituents.





LOSING PROPERTY

Players may lose property either through seizure or neglect. If the players have lost enough Legacy to drop a tier and subsequently fail to defend their property, it has been seized and they suffer further Legacy loss (see pp.80) as well as whatever material and financial damages were incurred in the battle.

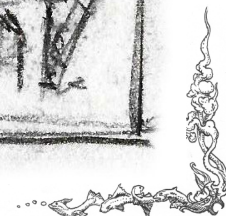
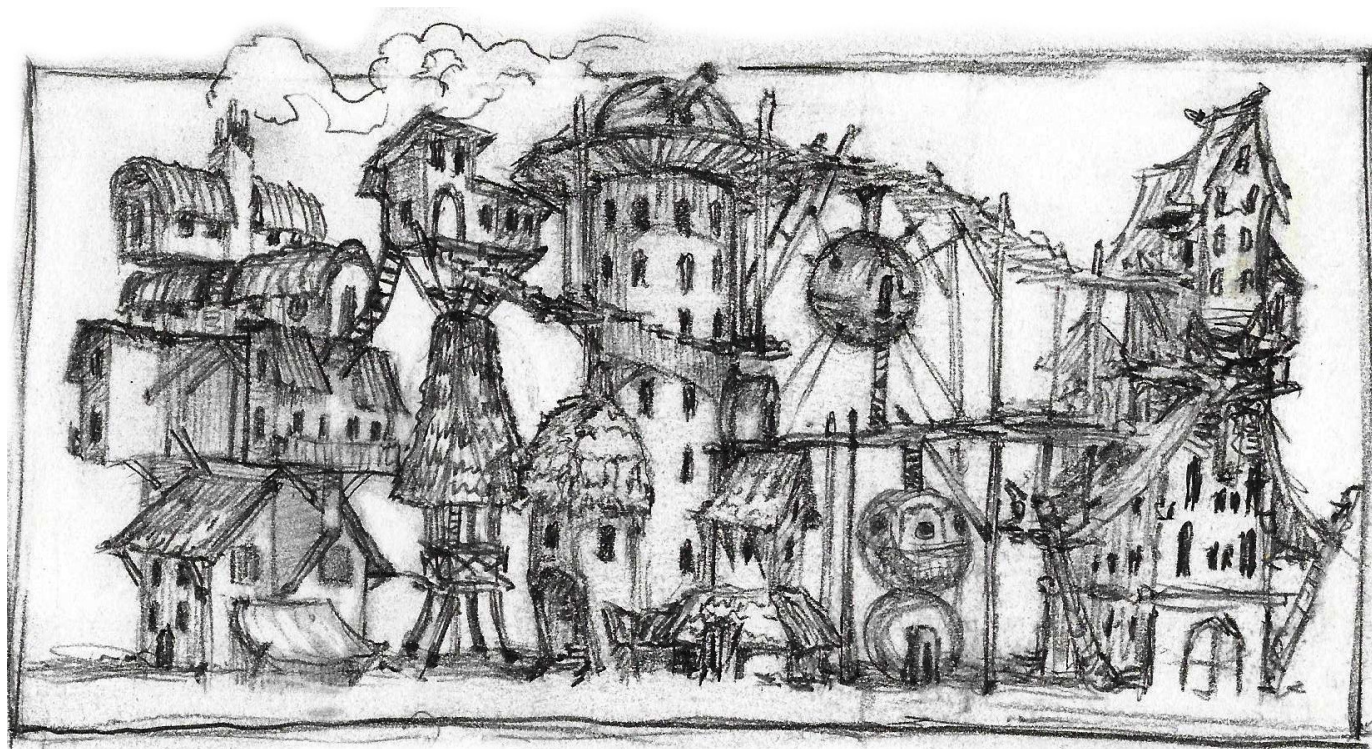
Additionally, players can lose a property through neglect. Players may temporarily pull staff from a location to perform another function, such as fighting a turf war on another front or bringing hirelings along on an adventure. This is perfectly fine and to be expected; however, there is a cumulative 25% chance each week that a territory goes under- or unmanned that a rival gang will seize the opportunity to take it. That means a property left untended for a month is guaranteed to face a seizure attempt. The Gm might allow the players a chance to hold the territory with any remaining staff, although the likelihood of success is slim. A building left completely unmanned automatically falls to a rival gang.

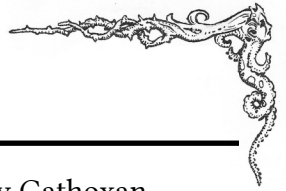
GANGS WITHOUT TERRITORY

There are a multitude of gangs in Gathox, and for every organization that owns an empire of sweet

properties there could be a dozen or more that own one shabby shanty or nothing at all. It is entirely possible that players will opt to start their gang and expand their enterprises without acquiring property. Perhaps they're waiting for the right moment to seize territory from a slightly more powerful gang, or maybe they're choosing to consolidate their resources and build alliances before establishing a physical presence.

Some players may choose to simply use RP to acquire a steady stream of expendable hirelings and influence interactions to their favor. If this is the sort of game players choose, the GM is encouraged to provide variability in the cost of recruiting and maintaining their mooks. If players are notorious in their neighborhood for hiring and quickly slaughtering their mooks in risky adventures, RP and monthly maintenance costs may double or even triple. Likewise, churning through hirelings may lead to a lack of available mooks in the area, necessitating that players venture further into rival territories and risk the unknown to keep their cannonfodder stocked.





MUTINY

Gangs are staffed by the dispossessed, the self-interested, the greedy, the murderous, and the entrepreneurial of Gathox, and this heady mix of unruly personalities can quickly devolve into backstabbing and betrayal without careful tending by the players. The GM may invoke a Mutiny check when any of the following events occur:

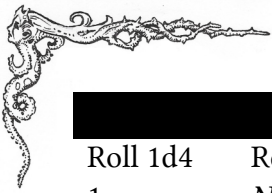
- 1 The players lose a territory; 1 in 4 chance.
- 2 The players lose half or more of their hirelings in battle; 1 in 3 chance.
- 3 The players lose a tier of Legacy; 1 in 6 chance.
- 4 The players fail to pay their employees in a timely fashion; 1 in 2 chance.

The GM is encouraged to take two aspects into consideration when checking for Mutiny: first, that the Mutiny occurs as an appropriate response to the above conditions, and second, that the players have the opportunity to intervene before the completion of the Mutiny. For example, if the players have just been raided for the lion's share of their gold by a rival gang and must delay the standard payments for their employees, allow them the opportunity to renegotiate with their hirelings before the hirelings strip the property bare and throw their lot in with another gang. Likewise, if the players lose a tier of Legacy, an ideological faction may arise amongst their employees and attempt to assassinate one or more of the players. In this case, it might be possible for the players to rely on their hired Brainiac or a network of informants to root out the malcontents before they strike.

GANG GENERATOR

The GM may find need to create new Gathoxan gangs on the fly, especially when allowing players the opportunity to sandbox in the city or if the organizations mentioned in Chapter 2 don't fit the immediate needs of the game. The following is a multi-die procedure for quickly structuring criminal organizations, which are often key players in larger conspiracies. To generate a gang, roll a d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, and d20 all at once. The results build off of one another and combine to paint a solid picture of the size, nature, purpose, and flavor of the organization. Upon completing the generation of a new gang, the GM must assign it a Legacy tier (see pp.80), either by choosing an appropriate tier or rolling 1d12 to randomly generate the tier.





TYPE OF GANG

Roll 1d4	Result
1	<i>Neighborhood Gang</i> - While criminal, their origins are based in social play and mischief. Identities rely on ostentatious bluster or threat.
2	<i>Mafia/Tong</i> - Larger families, clans, ethnic or business interests. Initiatory membership, typically featuring discipline and a code of conduct.
3	<i>Symbolic Alliance</i> - Loose horizontal alliances of gangs or chapters who adopt the same or similar symbols. Umbrella divisions as opposed to hierarchy.
4	<i>Ideological Alliance</i> - Large alliance of smaller ideologically-aligned groups. Often religious or ethnically homogenous. Most likely to make spectacular displays of public violence.

*Note: The following tables will produce a single sub-group or cell of the larger alliance in question; simply re-roll the d6 through d20 tables to create multiple cells and sub-groups if you wish to flesh out the entire alliance.

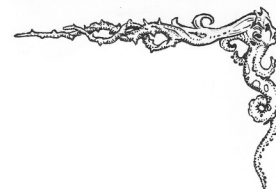
GANG STRUCTURE

Roll 1d6	Result
1	<i>Egalitarian</i> , with an elected boss and/or lieutenants.
2	<i>Cult of Personality</i> , with a strong, charismatic leader.
3	<i>Might Makes Right</i> , where leadership is challenged and established based on violence.
4	<i>Hired Guns</i> , with membership bearing employee status.
5	<i>Inner Circle</i> , where a central committee of leadership steers the group.
6	<i>Sleeper Cell</i> , with discrete power distribution and the scope of action is limited.

SIZE AND DISTRIBUTION OF GANG

Roll 1d8	Result
1	1 boss, 1 lieutenant, 2d3 mooks
2	2-boss partnership with 2d4 mooks
3	1 boss, 2 lieutenants, 2d6 mooks
4	3-boss triumvirate, each with a lieutenant and 1d6 mooks
5	1 boss, 3 lieutenants, 3d4 mooks
6	Frontman and silent senior partner, 3 lieutenants and 2d8 mooks
7	Headless: 4 lieutenants, each with 1d6 mooks
8	1 boss, 2d3 lieutenants, each with 1d8 mooks





NAMING SCHEME

Roll 1d10	Result
1	<i>Honorific, two words.</i> Ex.: Shining Force, Rising Tide, Radiant Fist.
2	<i>Two word opposites.</i> Ex.: Goodly Scoundrels, Holy Bastards, Burning Sharks.
3	<i>Outlaw name.</i> Ex.: Pistoleros, Hole-in-the-Wall Gang, The Executioners.
4	_____ <i>Brotherhood/ Sisterhood.</i>
5-6	<i>Family name of leader.</i> Ex.: The Muenchen Family, The Jodorowsky's.
7-8	<i>Geographical name.</i> Ex.: The Scrape Hill Bandits, The Blood River Reavers.
9	<i>Business front.</i> Ex.: Talon and Feather Mercantile, The Tanner's Guild.
10	<i>Leader's crew.</i> Ex.: Tamara's Boys, Agathura's Raiders.

GANG MOTIVATIONS

Roll 1d12	Result
1	Social club/fraternization.
2	Defense of territory.
3	Religious fanaticism.
4	Hated enemy.
5	Ethnic/cultural supremacy.
6	Class warfare.
7	Control of legitimate businesses.
8	Black market entrepreneurship.
9	Mercenary muscle/contract work.
10	Protection of a certain class of people.
11	General mayhem/targeted terror.
12	Reactionary/ revolutionary (against status quo).

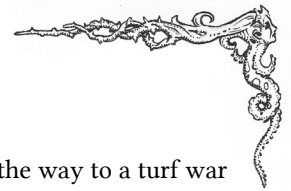




DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

Roll 1d20	Result
1	Boss has a twin as lieutenant; 50% chance their aims are at odds.
2-3	Drug addiction runs rampant in the lower ranks.
4	Members are indentured, and fallen members are replaced by siblings or parents.
5-6	The mooks are planning a mutiny.
7	The lieutenants are quietly moving against the boss(es), unbeknownst to their mooks.
8	The boss is planning to kill and replace the lieutenant(s) as soon as possible.
9	The gang has recently lost a significant amount of territory/business.
10	The gang is in it's heyday, having recently acquired a tremendous resource.
11-12	Upper management is blind to the machinations of outside forces.
13	The gang has an extensive network of informants, and is unlikely to be taken off-guard.
14	Fallen members are martyred and idolized, leading to fanaticism amongst the lower ranks.
15	All trust has broken down, leading to factionalism.
16	The organization is currently planning its most risky operation yet.
17	The gang is old and semi-defunct, save for one up-and-coming young tough.
18-19	The leadership is held together by romantic interests.
20	Roll one additional motivation on the d12 table and roll again here.





LEGACY

As a gang expands its empire and leverages the reputation of its members to grow, it begins to build its Legacy. The Legacy of a gang is calculated by keeping a running total of the RP spent by its members. Legacy is divided into twelve tiers, with the lowest reserved for young upstarts and the highest reserved for the most advanced enterprises and criminal syndicates. One notices that the Legacy of a gang may grow simply by using RP in the manner described in the section "Gangs Without Territory" above (see pp.75), although some benefits associated with attaining a higher tier require that the gang possesses territory. Listed below are the Legacy tiers by score, the associated gang title, and the benefits associated with the tier.

Common sense ought to guide the GM when applying these benefits. Price discounts might only apply if shopping from vendors sympathetic to the cause of the players, accessibility to social circles and gang leaders might depend on the previous actions of the PC's, and absurd or tyrannical holidays and social norms may carry their own consequences or be ignored by the populace. The GM reserves the right to suspend or revoke a Legacy benefit if the players choose to use it pedantically or in a spirit of cynical gamesmanship.

Legacy is subject to the failures and setbacks of the gang. The conditions for loss of Legacy and

associated costs are as follows:

1) Lost Turf War – If the players bid all the way to a turf war as described earlier in this chapter and lost that war, they will immediately lose an amount of Legacy equal to the max bid

2) Seized Territory – If the players suffer the seizure of a territory by a rival gang, they lose an amount of Legacy equal to half the max bid value of the territory.

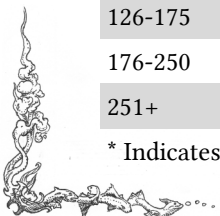
3) Lost Bid – If the players lose a territorial bid before reaching a turf war (i.e. they choose not to up the ante all the way to a conflict), they lose 1/2 the value of the minimum bid on the territory in Legacy.

4) Loss of Key Hirelings – If a Lieutenant is killed or commits Mutiny in the course of play, the gang loses 1 Legacy; the Mutiny or death of a Brainiac incurs the loss of 2

Legacy provides a number of benefits to the gangland game. First, Legacy provides a tangible measure by which the players may track the progress of their gang. Second, it provides the GM with an easy tool to estimate the influence of an extant or newly generated gang. Third, Legacy aids in maintaining the hedonic treadmill of Reputation Points, as RP feeds into Legacy and Legacy may provide feedback into the future use of RP. Finally, changes in Legacy may change how to the city of Gathox interacts with a gang on a mechanical level, providing additional benefits and consequences for the successes of failures of the PC's.

TIER (LEGACY)	GANG TITLE	BENEFIT OF TIER
0-10	Alleycats	-
11-20	Hoodlums	-
21-30	Ruffians	-
31-40	Young Bloods	5% price discount in home neighborhood*
41-55	Street Gang/ Posse	Reduced chance of assault in home neighborhood
56-70	Tough Company	Additional 5% price discount in home neighborhood*
71-85	Wrecking Crew	Recognized in previously inaccessible social circles
86-100	Rat Pack	Additional 5% price discount in home neighborhood*
101-125	Mob	Reduced chance of assault city-wide
126-175	Mafia	May request peaceful audience with other gang leaders*
176-250	Cabal	Can create a new holiday and capitalize on the profits
251+	Syndicate	Can create a new city-wide social norm

* Indicates the gang must own territory to enjoy listed benefit.





PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: RUNNING THE GAME

This section is not intended as a hard and fast method of running a game set in Gathox. Rather, it is a description of the methods I have used to run Gathox for my friends in the home game as well as strangers at conventions. Much of it may seem familiar, some of it may seem new; I ascribe the success of the processes described below to a number of great Game Masters and designers. Any deficiencies might be squarely placed at my feet. Feel free to use and take inspiration from anything described here (or anywhere in this book, for that matter), or feel free to do it even better!

I start with a character generation session, getting a general feel for what each player envisions for their character. I also encourage some bantering and interaction, hopefully encouraging players to settle into character. I also take the time to familiarize everyone with the rules and concepts needed to play the game, and attempt to keep it as simple as possible – I've had a large number of new and novice players over the course of Gathox, and I always tell them that when they need to roll dice, I'll inform them, and that they are free to attempt anything they want.

I'll follow that by asking each of the players what sort of things they would like to do in Gathox, clarifying who is interested in dungeoneering, gang battles, assassination and intrigue, investigation, fetch quests, exploration, and so forth. In fact, I find that it's crucial to stay in touch with the needs of players in this regard, and ask this question every couple of sessions. Player needs change over time, and I feel that it's my duty to run a game that caters to those desires. If they want to change course, I do my best to accommodate that. Of course, all of this assumes that players are interested in adventuring in a lawless dystopian city on the back of a world-hopping godling!

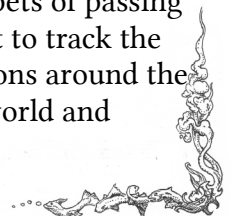
After the initial setup, I'll spend my time designing useful adventures for the players that match the most agreed upon desires of the group. When one adventure clearly ends, I will announce new potential missions and adventures in the form of a newsletter, *The Kettle Crier*, or written requests from potential

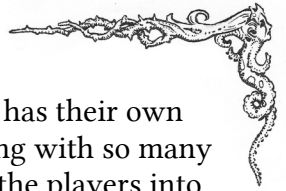
employers or extant contacts. This keeps player choice intact and minimizes my need to prepare for every eventuality and whim. Anything I design that doesn't get selected can be saved for later use or retooled for a different purpose. I will also, from time to time, provide unique items listed for sale as well as colorful men-at-arms for hire in the PC's neighborhood. I have included a few of these in Appendix A: Miscellanea (see pp.119) at the back of the book for deployment in your game.

Aside from assigning a player mapping duties, I find it useful to have a different player track their gang's progress. Usually this involves keeping track of Legacy, properties, hirelings, political ties, accumulated gear, and payments. One player kept this on a single sheet of two sided paper, while others have assembled piles of note cards to this effect. Regardless, I hold onto this information, as well as character sheets, in between sessions, so that I can review them and mark potential corrections for next session.

If a session ends with a completed adventure or mission, I'll typically allow a week of downtime to pass as the players tend to their characters' needs as well as the progress of their gang. Occasionally I'll provide opportunities for players to earn a little extra xp or other in-game rewards for creating ephemera tied to their gang. This has included song lyrics to a gang anthem, oaths for joining, drawings and symbols, uniform design, calling cards, handwritten threatening messages to rivals, description of businesses and fronts run out of properties, and more. In this way the game becomes richer for everyone, and it also provides imagination fodder for future sessions.

As another function of downtime, I'll take a good, hard look at the political situation the PC's find themselves in and decide what other gangs are doing. I can plant the seeds of future adventures during this time, and will write news reports that reflect public accounts of the decisions made and actions taken by other groups. These can be included in *The Kettle Crier* or relayed informally via NPCs. They also make great fodder for rumor tables and snippets of passing conversation. Ultimately, it's important to track the machinations and progress of the factions around the PC's, as they directly affect the game world and provide new avenues of play.





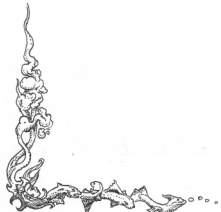
After a session is over, I'll perform some light housekeeping which includes assigning XP, treasure, and RP when necessary; writing send-offs for the deceased; reviewing session notes and transferring whatever information is useful into an adventure log; curating a unique items list; and tracking the changes of status with allies and rivals. This usually takes me about 30 minutes.

I keep a note card with pertinent information for each gang the PC's have encountered, which includes their leader and stats, info for standard mooks, their base, and any contacts the characters may have in the organization. The utility of this should be obvious, and I encourage anyone running Gathox in a similar fashion to maintain a useful system for quickly accessing gang info.

Finally, I've been very fortunate as a GM to experience sizable interest in my weekly home game. For quite some time I hosted between 8 and 12

players at my table. While each GM has their own strategy for keeping the game moving with so many players, I made the decision to split the players into two cooperative teams and run them in heats throughout the sessions. Each heat was in the range of 10 to 20 minutes, and each team had to prep what actions they wanted to take while the other team declared those actions and played through their heat. I wouldn't make a heat last longer than 20 minutes, because I feel that 30 minutes or more of dead time for a group of players would kill the momentum of a game and create player disinterest. Your mileage may vary.

To sum it up: listen to the needs of players, keep track of the world around them, devise adventures that meet those needs, and encourage creativity from everyone at the table. Nothing earth shaking. Have fun rampaging around the Great Spire, and watch out for Zhezhn!





CHAPTER 6:

THE BESTIARY

JACKIE ZHAO (A Case Study)

His cough won't go away. It started eleven weeks ago with a tickle at the base of the throat, a dry palate, and a scratchiness under the tongue. Only mild coughing, no other symptoms. But it wouldn't go away. Two weeks later he stopped by Kin's clinic on the sixth floor, sat for twenty minutes with a big view of the Kettle out her waiting room window. She called him in and blasted flood lights down his throat and told him everything looked normal. "You feel a fever you come back," she said.

Jackie's family lives at 349H on level 8, Quarter East. By coincidence he was born at 3:49am, which his mother always corrects his brother when he uses that word-- coincidence. "It's a miracle," she insists. "Jamie's little miracle." But Jackie can no longer afford to believe in synchronicity. First he lost his last job over a misunderstanding. Now his health. What next?

He doesn't actually *feel* all that bad. Coughs like the devil first thing in the morning, but during the day his energy is high and his throat is fine. Jackie doesn't drag himself out of bed until he gets so hungry he can't stand it. But once he's up and moving everything is back to normal.

A month after his visit to Kin, Jackie has a fit so intense it literally throws him out of bed. He runs to the bathroom sink and hacks until something comes up. A little thing he catches in his hand before it can vanish down the drain, just to look, just a need to see what's coming out of the body. Blood and phlegm, spotty and thick--but something else in there, too. Something black. Old blood from deep down maybe?

He drops it in a glass. A loud, clinking sound. He fills it a quarter with water and swishes and strains it and what's left over is like a flat, black plastic ring with a tab at one end. He's just wondering what the actual fuck when another fit takes him to his knees. His eyes are watering. He can't keep steady enough to get back to the sink so it all comes out on the peeling tile. A thick, yellow wad. And then more blood. It sprays forth from way back like his throat's a high pressure valve and someone just cracked it with a spike. When the stream stops there's a puddle big enough to make a handprint.

Jackie sifts through the bile and finds a dozen tiny machine parts: a metal pinion, a cog, and a rubber seal. The next day there's more of the same, along with plastic valves, sockets and wee springs. He washes them all off and puts them on a little shelf in the sunlight.

The coughing gets worse every day from then on. Hurts like hell. What's nice is the fifteen minutes or so after things come up and out, when Jackie can feel a warmish kind of glow in his stomach. In these moments his breath comes easy and slow, like pure spring water filling his body with light, and always follows this sketchy vision in the head of some giant, writhing, interconnected structure of spiraling machinery far out in the desert.



It makes him understand the whole city of Gathox is but a fragment in some vast and tangled system whose purpose, Jackie can tell, is to bind a bridge from the core of the planet to the power of the sun.

Jackie trades in a few old things he inherited from his mother for a small space in the Dregs. Here he sets up his table and covers it with the tiny machine parts hacked up over the previous three weeks, some too small to see without a magnifying lens. At first people buy them for the novelty. *What adorable little trinkets, so precisely made, will you take five silver for this one?* It doesn't cost Jackie anything but discomfort, so he lets them name their price. By the time they come back the following week to complain, he's already spent it all on shitty anti-starvation noodle machines.

"I put it under glass, the little spring," a customer says. "Now it's gone. And my neighbor bought one of the pinions and she says that vanished too."

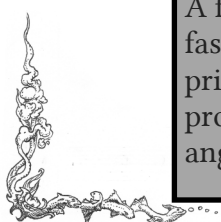
Jackie explains he's not responsible for what's lost or stolen, but the old man tells him nothing's lost or stolen—he'd kept it safe and now it's gone. Besides, he's asked around and it's happened to everyone. Like these things are just evaporating into thin air.

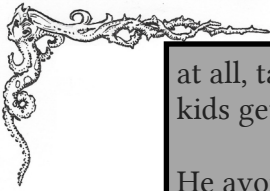
There's a mob around Jackie now, mostly folks who didn't make a purchase but who want to make trouble. Then a girl rushes in screaming hallelujah. "It's a miracle," she says, how their boiler started working again after being deemed hopelessly kaput by every mechanic in Huttimer territory, and her pops thinks it had to be the little cog he bought from Jackie. Set it on the old boiler because there was nowhere else to put it. Then it vanished. Then the AC coughed to life.

Of course everyone's skeptical at first, but Jamie clears out his stock to replace the parts that vanished for his customers. When they get home naturally they figure what could it hurt and they put them on some busted machine or other. And in no time at all every dead device is back up and running; Jackie's little miracles, they're saying. And business booms.

One morning, after a fit so severe it wipes him out for the rest of the day, Jackie has a dream. In the dream he's still coughing. Sitting on a couch on the rooftop sixteen flights above his apartment. Surrounded by pigeons and antennas, flora outgrowing their pots, raw materials for a bridge someone intends to build between this roof and the one next door. He's on the couch hacking away, in his dream, and he can feel something lodged in his throat, loosening with each gasp. Takes a deep breath and slams those lungs like a bellows and out comes a long nylon rope, whipping up into the clouds. Seems no end to it, but he can feel it unraveling somewhere in his chest. Now he's in the desert and the great structure from his vision is nearly complete. The people building it are like little turtle men, no higher than Jackie's knee, each one hunched under their hardshell backpacks. The rope still uncoils from within, flying toward the sun. The turtle men watch and sing, keeping the whole system in motion. Their song sounds like a choir of sneezes, hiccups, and wheezes. The rope has latched in some outer orbit and it's pulling the planet up and into the sun. He panics and opens his eyes.

A few weeks later, Jackie's got the most popular shop in the Dregs. He can't cough shit out fast enough to keep up with the demand. Which on the one hand is great because it drives prices up and now Jackie's rolling in it, but of course he can't exactly force himself to produce any faster or train other people to do what he does, so every day is basically angry mobs all the time fighting for their place in line. He stops going down to the market





at all, takes cash up front, and has pieces delivered to clients by bicycle until one of his kids gets bikejacked and Jackie upgrades to some muscle and an armored rickshaw.

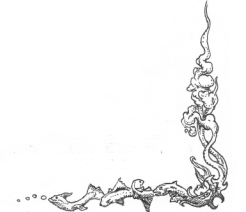
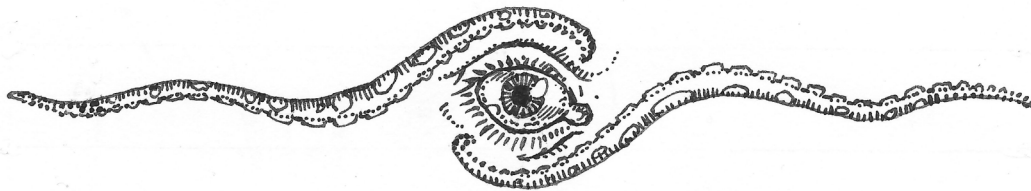
He avoids doctors and medicine. Requires bodyguards of his own after threats from the local mechanics guild. Jackie's sure they're the ones that sent him anonymous envelopes dusted with dextromethorphan and various antihistamines. He's starting to get word from the top, or somewhere near the top, or the mystery that may or may not be something like a top at all, that a man with his skills could be useful in a starship reclamation project. But he's not interested. "I'm too sick to travel," he says. "Half the day now I'm in bed."

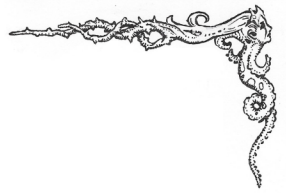
He's still dreaming all the time. Now the planet hurtles toward the sun with Jackie at the helm; feels like his intestines ripping out through his face. He bites down on the rope to relieve the ache in his chest. The earth flies headlong into searing heat. The desert's mechanical gyro whirls and grinds. He sees Gathox way down under a tower of milling flywheels and pressurized valves and a complex network of coiling cable and pipework. The clans of turtle people rejoice. Jackie can't fathom it. What's to rejoice about when it's all moments away from crisping up like Tol Zhanda's secret recipe for fried spiders? He can feel the heat sucking moisture out of his skin. *It's all over*, he thinks. *Wakey wakey. Time to shine.* But he doesn't. He starts slipping between consciousnesses, either to wake up or never wake again in any form but ash. He feels the rope tighten and his legs leap of their own volition. Bounding as high as a wish, but doesn't come down. Dislodged from the surface of the earth. The centripetal force thrusts the planet outward far, far past the pull of the sun. Jackie floats in the void, watching the blue sphere soar away like a marble from a sling or an interstellar cruiser aimed for forever.

Jackie no longer leaves his home. Every morning the cough brings pain, then a flowering light.

His apartment is empty and dark. He keeps no machinery here. One rug, a small couch for clients and visitors, and an open window for his entertainment.

At night, the wild shouts and flickering shadows from the Kettle lull him to sleep. But he startles himself awake whenever he can manage it. He no longer finds pleasure in dreams.





This chapter features 43 monsters which dwell within Gathox, divided into thematic and species groups, and featuring their image, a brief description, and roleplaying notes listed in a fashion similar to personal ads.

ALIEN RACES

Each of the following monsters have been imported from other planets and times. Some crash land on planets that Gathox travels, some are indigenous to visited planets, and others seem invariably to encounter Gathox throughout time and space. Members of these sentient races maintain stable populations in Gathox. The GM may consider them options for player character races if it suits the campaign.

Bloody People

Armor Class:	7[12]
Hit Dice:	1-5
Attacks:	As human
Special:	Aura sense
Move:	12
HDE/XP:	1-5/10-240

As Big As: A tall human.
Smells Like: A distinct air of iron.
Sounds Like: A bored, squeaking mouse.
Favorite Pastime: Soccer, bleeding on tchotchke.
Turnoffs: Bright lights, hair.



The Bloody People, or Sluurgical, dwell under the surface of the city in highly functional and secluded communities called Mujim. Their warriors travel in warbands of 2-6, each led by a 2 HD Commandant. Four or more warbands together are led by a 4 HD Pedant Royale, and each Mujim is led by a 5 HD Prince or Empreza. The Sluurgical bleed on objects to claim them as possessions, which leads to interesting and often confusing combat scenarios. Sluurgical have a 2 in 6 chance of sensing the immediate intentions of other humanoids by reading their auras, with a round of concentration.

Fishermen, Gongwarped

Armor Class:	5[14]
Hit Dice:	2+3
Attacks:	3; 2 tentacles plus weapon in chest arm
Special:	Servants
Move:	9
HDE/XP:	5/240

As Big As: Andre the Giant.
Smells Like: Dried maure sprinkled with fish sauce and served on a tarnished brass plate.
Sounds Like: A conniving 3rd Reich pseudoscientist.
Favorite Pastime: A toss-up between vivisection and testing new mixtures of herbal remedies.
Turnoffs: Heat waves, being proven wrong.

Gongwarped Fishermen are said to be the unholy byproduct of scientific hubris and deep sea terrors. They have developed a culture of pseudoscientific pursuits, and love the challenge of stitching together the parts of disparate species into unwholesome new creatures. Often solitary from other members of their species, the Fishermen will occasionally gather into schools of 2d4 members to raise up new Mutant Freaks (see pp.96) as servants. Each Fisherman is typically accompanied by 2d3 of these wretches, who do their bidding loyally.





Glaatu



Armor Class:	7[12]
Hit Dice:	2
Attacks:	2
Special:	Multilimbed
Move:	15
HDE/XP:	3/60

As Big As: A skinnier version of a bear.
Smells Like: Sulphur and pyramid-scheme perfume.
Sounds Like: A drunk speaking in reverse.
Favorite Pastime: Playing poker, drunk speaking in reverse.
Turnoffs: Thick limbs.

These foul-mouthed, polyglot alien pirates occasionally mine for legitimate work. Their ships have an uncanny knack for picking up on Gathox's magnetic signature in the cosmos and accidentally crash landing nearby. They travel in scavenger teams of 2-20 and prefer to dig to safety when on solid ground. Their split limbs allow them to wield two weapons at once without penalty, including two-handed weapons.

Kermen

Armor Class:	9[10]
Hit Dice:	1
Attacks:	As humans
Special:	None
Move:	12
HDE/XP:	1-7/15-600

As Big As: Steve Buscemi.
Smells Like: Pressed suits, stress sweat.
Sounds Like: A cross between used car salesmen and lecturing dads.
Favorite Pastime: Marching in lockstep, swindling for fun and profit.
Turnoffs: Communalism, poor people.

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the Kermen are a spacefaring race of backstabbing hypercapitalists. They organize in units of 2d6 members, each with a specific task. For every 10 Kermen present, a 2 HD Manager will accompany; for groups of 30-50, a 4 HD Director will accompany; and for groups of 100 or more, a 7 HD President or CEO will lead the way. They are enterprising and cunning, using rules to their own benefit and to the detriment of their many enemies.





Mi-Chiw

Armor Class:	4[15]
Hit Dice:	2+1
Attacks:	Claw or spell
Special:	Stink
Move:	6
HDE/XP:	120

As Big As: A small boulder.

Smells Like: A tepid aquarium.

Sounds Like: Dapper British gents with squished voices.

Favorite Pastime: Ladder construction.

Turnoffs: Mammalian signs of affection.

The Mi-Chiw naturally go to ground in Gathox, establishing wet warrens and complex hatcheries. They have a species-wide instinctual desire to build ladders, and they often stack these ladders on the surface at night in an attempt to ascend to the sun in the morning and touch Dzak-Molu, their god. They travel in bands 3d4 members and will warren with 12-60 members. Every 5 members will be accompanied by a 4+2 HD Shell Priest, who casts as a 3rd level Mentalist.



Mokron

Armor Class:	8[11]
Hit Dice:	3-9
Attacks:	As human or by spell
Special:	Invention
Move:	12
HDE/XP:	240-1700

As Big As: Boris Karlov.

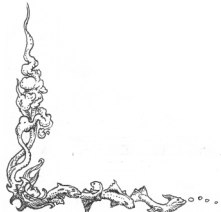
Smells Like: Fried plastic and vegan chili.

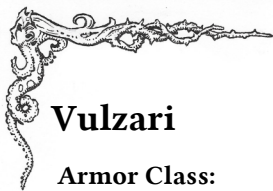
Sounds Like: An angry boss growling commands through a vocoder.

Favorite Pastime: Inventing, stealing inventions and passing them off as their own.

Turnoffs: Others having original ideas.

The Mokron are a spacefaring race of techno-authoritarians with distant genetic ties to humans. They prefer diplomacy and subterfuge to outright hostility, although they are competent adversaries who draw on eons of accumulated skill and resources. A typical Mokron squad consists of 3d4 foot soldiers with 3 HD, led by a 6 HD Technocrat; 6 squads form a Strike Team led by a 9 HD Silicator. Most Mokron are armed with laser pistols, and unique amongst them is their ability to quickly cobble together complex machinery from available parts – including strange and effective war machinery. All of these items are unique, pulled from immediate surroundings, and break down with 2d4 uses.





Vulzari

Armor Class:	6[13]
Hit Dice:	1+1
Attacks:	Claw and beak, or by weapon
Special:	Special: Infection
Move:	Move: 12
HDE/XP:	HDE/XP: 2/30

As Big As: A mule.

Smells Like: Dusty feathers and a rotten chicken coop.

Sounds Like: A squawking factory foreman.

Favorite Pastime: Tending to eggs, freedom fighting, "Spreading Vulzari culture."

Turnoffs: Omelets, free will.

The Vulzari are a race of chicken-men who genetically subvert other humanoids to produce more of their own kind. They use Dromeks (See Chapter 7: The Mudling Mansions, pp.108) to dominate the will of other sentient beings and mutate them. A typical clutch of Vulzari consists of 2d12 1 HD Vulzari, 2d8 0-level human thralls, and a Foreman of varying HD. They will spend time underground, kidnapping and transforming others, before making surface incursions.



X'Xul



Armor Class:	0[19]
Hit Dice:	5
Attacks:	2 claws or spell
Special:	Psychic link
Move:	18
HDE/XP:	8/800

As Big As: A horse-sized grasshopper.

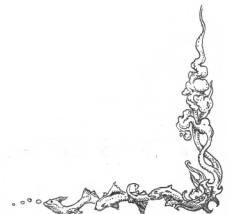
Smells Like: Bug juice and grape soda.

Sounds Like: The clacking of chitin, the whir of a thousand gossamer wings.

Favorite Pastime: Genetic experimentation, slaving.

Turnoffs: Fleshbags, meatsacks, carnivals.

The X'xul are transdimensional wizards who've become trapped on Gathox. They deploy slaves to work Gathoxan mines, and are capable of reading the obscure signs of Gathox's movements. They often use human skinsuits, grown in vats deep within the Cerulean Municipal Conference Hall, to interact with other sentient species in public. Few in Gathox are aware of the true nature of the X'xul. Most operate alone or in pairs, although all X'xul within a one-mile radius share a basic psychic link with one another. X'xul prefer to use slave labor to fight for them when possible. They cast spells as a Mentalist of equivalent HD, and there are ancient X'xul who've shed their exoskeleton so many times that they've grown to 20 HD.



INDIGENOUS SPECIES

Each of these monstrous species claims its origin on Gathox, and is not found natively in any other environment. Some may prove themselves to be particularly tenacious invasive species on other worlds. Each is fairly commonplace in Gathox.

Arachnoclast

Armor Class:	4[15]
Hit Dice:	2
Attacks:	3 laser
Special:	Surprise
Move:	6
HDE/XP:	4/120

As Big As: A small boulder.

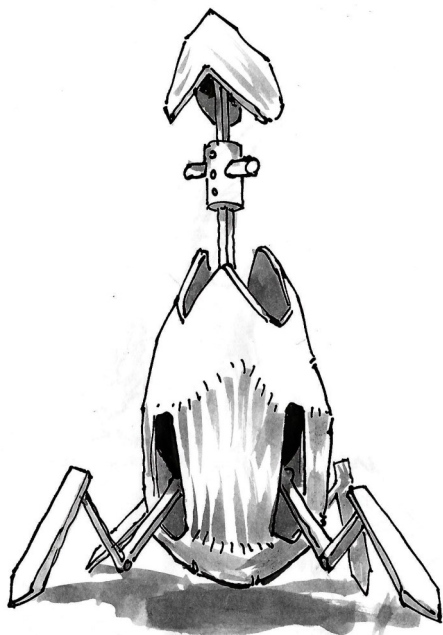
Smells Like: Oil and dust.

Sounds Like: Clacking and cracking.

Favorite Pastime: Rummaging through garbage, resting in place.

Turnoffs: Hammers, picks.

Arachnoclasts are the unlikely byproduct of technological waste and rubble – they are dimly aware, self-replicating technotrash which filter and recycle waste and rock to produce more of their kind. When encountered, they appear as smooth rocks or boulders. When moved or disturbed, they spring into action (receiving a +1 to initiative), and attack with their rotating laser turret. They are found in groups of 1d6 members. They do not understand language.



Body Electric



Armor Class:	5[14]
Hit Dice:	2
Attacks:	1 zap
Special:	Phasing
Move:	24
HDE/XP:	3/60

As Big As: You.

Smells Like: Ozone.

Sounds Like: Crackle and hum.

Favorite Pastime: Feeding off sick magnetic lines, brah.

Turnoffs: Rubber insulation.

Bodies Electric are a techno-growth spawned by Gathox itself to collect and store excess electromagnetic energy, and are about as intelligent as a drunk frat boy. When seeking out sources of energy to consume, they appear as small, 4-legged metal spheres with a single rotating camera. When disturbed or threatened, they will emit a burst of electrostatic energy which forms itself into the shape of a spiky humanoid. This humanoid is often described as "extreme." This emission can speak and attack with 30' laser shots or electric sword arms. They can be lured or pressed into service with the promise of a steady supply of sweet, sweet energy.

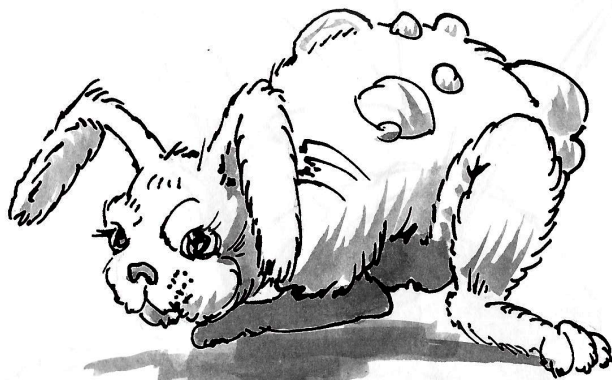


Boil Bunny

Armor Class:	9[10]
Hit Dice:	1/2 (1-2hp)
Attacks:	1 bite (1 point of damage)
Special:	Reproduction
Move:	6
HDE/XP:	2/30

As Big As: A house cat.
Smells Like: Fluff and rot.
Sounds Like: Giggling.
Favorite Pastime: Eating carrots, drinking Dew-On-Iron.
Turnoffs: Agitation, death.

Boil bunnies are the furry and fruitful quasi-domesticated mammals of Gathox. They appear much like rabbits, only with two legs and a multitude of rancid boils on their backs. They can be trained to perform tricks like dogs and even pull small sleds (see *Head Of State*, pp.92). When slain, the boils on their backs erupt into 1d6 more boil bunnies who grow to full size in 1 round and attack the killer on sight. Total immolation is sufficient to keep reproduction from occurring; many are the tales of burning neighborhoods devastated by a boil bunny infestation in Gathox.

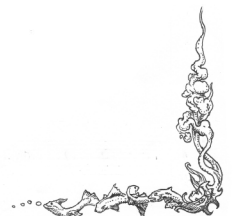
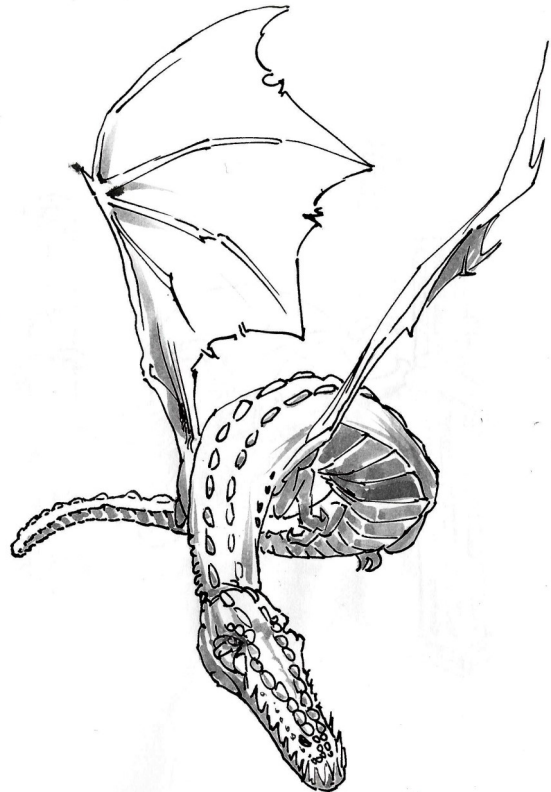


Crocodactyl

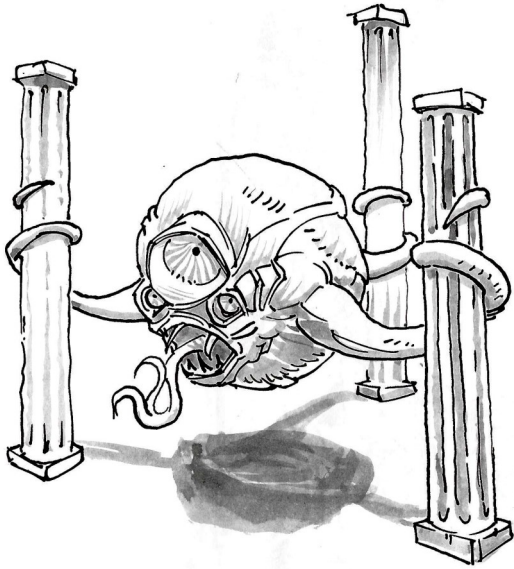
Armor Class:	3[16]
Hit Dice:	2+2
Attacks:	Bite
Special:	Fly
Move:	4/15
HDE/XP:	4/120

As Big As: A pony.
Smells Like: Swamp water.
Sounds Like: A rabid Chihuahua.
Favorite Pastime: Gnawing on bones while gliding under the sun.
Turnoffs: Saddles, mammals, not gnawing on bones.

The Crocodactyl is a winged lizard, presumably bred as a chimera long ago, that now serves as a tempestuous mount for certain factions in Gathox. Untamed or encountered without their masters, they will hunt in packs of 2d3, divebombing their prey with vicious bite attacks. On a natural 20, the Crocodactyl will inflict 3d6 damage with its bite.



Flat Earther



Armor Class:	7[12]
Hit Dice:	3
Attacks:	Bodyslam
Special:	Ground shake
Move:	6
HDE/XP:	4/120

As Big As: A wrecking ball on stilts.
Smells Like: Molding cheese, halitosis.
Sounds Like: Dullness given breath.
Favorite Pastime: Mashing things into puree.
Turnoffs: Elocution.

Flat Earthers are the farming experiment of a rogue Contrail Antenna (see pp.105) long ago, which have since become their own self-perpetuating species. They can speak, although reasoning with them is notoriously difficult. They are generally solitary, but deep in the bowels of Gathox adventurers have reported bearing witness to large, slaving, orgiastic conventions of the creatures. They can swing their bodies from the pillars they carry, inflicting 1d6 damage with a 1 in 6 chance of requiring a save against being knocked unconscious for 1d4 rounds. Additionally, they can slam their pillars on the ground, requiring a 3d6 vs. DEX check or everyone in a 10' radius is knocked to the ground for a round.

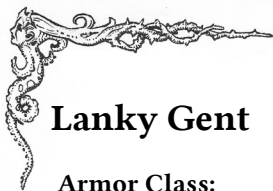
Head of State



Armor Class:	8[11]
Hit Dice:	1-3
Attacks:	Voice or spell
Special:	Command
Move:	6 (towed by Boil Bunny) or 12 (Motorized)
HDE/XP:	3-7/60-600

As Big As: A head on a scooter.
Smells Like: Fancy essential oils.
Sounds Like: A puffy huffenpuff; a hoity-toity.
Favorite Pastime: Giving orders, receiving adulations.
Turnoffs: Insults, poor speech patterns.

Heads of State are the actual heads of rich, powerful aristocrats or gang leaders which have been cybernetically attached to small scooters or chariots. They no longer age, and have a voice module built in which allows them to *command* others. A Saving Throw is required to avoid the effect, otherwise the victim must obey the simple command issued. Some Heads of State may have been wizards prior to their current state, and cast spells accordingly. All chariots to which Heads of State are attached are motorized and never run out of fuel, but many Heads of State prefer to command Boil Bunnies to tow their chariots – this allows them a profusion of available cannon fodder should they come under attack. Rumor has it that, somehow, Heads of State can even procreate.



Lanky Gent

Armor Class:	4[15]
Hit Dice:	7
Attacks:	Weapon, spell, or death sphere
Special:	Death sphere
Move:	12
HDE/XP:	10/1,400

As Big As: Angus Scrimm.
Smells Like: Formaldehyde, tweed.
Sounds Like: A grandfather in a tomb.
Favorite Pastime: Compressing humans into dwarves.
Turnoffs: Ice cream vendors.

When old, patriarchal wizards reach the late years of their lives, some opt for early reincarnation at the Catwalk of Private Vicissitudes. If the wizard was sufficiently wicked, sowing misery and discord wherever they went, they will reincarnate as a Lanky Gent. This imposing, grimacing figure retains a few memories of his previous life, but is mostly concerned with collecting live humans to compress for his dwarf army, as well as dead ones to serve as his eyes and ears in the world. The Lanky Gent retains half the spell levels of his previous life, and wields considerable new powers. He can forge a compression machine which changes unconscious humans into compressed, bloodthirsty, dwarf-like monsters which obey his command. He can imbue human corpses with certain alchemical properties, allowing him to see through them wherever they are placed. Finally, he is accompanied by his Death Sphere, a 3 HD, AC 0[19], Move 24 titanium flying ball with a blade, which he can direct at-will to puncture the heads of his enemies. The Lanky Gent prefers to establish dominion in a section of disused dungeon.



Filth Elemental

Armor Class:	4[15]
Hit Dice:	3-7
Attacks:	Two tentacles
Special:	Choking cloud
Move:	9
HDE/XP:	5-9/240-1,100



As Big As: A pool of ick.
Smells Like: A pool of ick.
Sounds Like: The slapping and flapping of meat and mush.
Favorite Pastime: Purifying trash of its wholesome aspects.
Turnoffs: Cleanliness.

Filth Elementals originate from the actual bowels of Gathox, and are given form in the refuse of the city. They lie in wait for healthy creatures to come by, at which point they emit their *choking cloud*, which causes every creature within a 30' radius to make a Saving Throw or succumb and begin retching uncontrollably. Creatures affected by the *choking cloud* suffer a penalty of 4 to their AC, move at 1/4th of their normal rate, and lose 1 CON per round. At zero CON, the creature dies horribly; the GM may choose to allow subsequent Saving Throws every round to cough out the cloud of stinking poison. CON recovery occurs at a rate of 1 point per day. Filth Elementals of 5 HD or higher may only be harmed by lasers, fire, or magic.





INVASIVE SPECIES

These monstrous pests have managed to infest the dingiest parts of Gathox, and are considered a nuisance by most denizens of the Great Spire. They are likely to be found in abandoned buildings and subterranean complexes. Some suspect that a madman long ago brought them to Gathox, possibly as a zoological display.

Lumigoy

- Armor Class:** 3[16]
- Hit Dice:** 4
- Attacks:** Tail whip or rattle
- Special:** Charm
- Move:** 6 walk/ 12 fly
- HDE/XP:** 5/240

As Big As: A Nile crocodile.
Smells Like: Lavender and patchouli.
Sounds Like: An aging aristocrat filled with ennui.
Favorite Pastime: Enslaving other monsters with its rattle.
Turnoffs: "Fleshy hyoomaaahns," free will.

Lumigoy see themselves as the rightful rulers of the sky and enjoy enslaving others to serve their lazy, selfish whim. Their tiny, infantile hands are a source of species-wide shame, and any derogatory comments made in relation to their hands will be met with irrational outrage. Their ceremonial baby rattles, when shaken in specific patterns, can force listeners to make a Saving Throw or succumb to magical enslavement for 1d3 weeks at a time. This servitude can only be dispelled by slaying the Lumigoy who caused it.



Fleet Petal



- Armor Class:** 6[13]
- Hit Dice:** 1
- Attacks:** 2 kicks
- Special:** Surprise
- Move:** 15
- HDE/XP:** 2/30

As Big As: A healthy mule.
Smells Like: Grandma's favorite perennials.
Sounds Like: The pitter-patter of too many little feet.
Favorite Pastime: Photosynthesis for breakfast and lunch, some sensible carnivory for dinner.
Turnoffs: Swathers, scythes, pressed flower collections.

Fleet Petals spend the majority of their days standing utterly still (surprise on a 1-2 on 1d6) amidst other flora, soaking up sunlight and absorbing nutrients from the earth through their many toes. In the evening, however, their attention turns to pumping blood, seeking out easy mammalian prey. A well-hidden proboscis can extrude from the center of their flower heads, ready to suck up the tasty juices of a trampled foe. Larger varieties have been known to target humanoids. Small bands of 2d3 Fleet Petals have been known to migrate together up to a mile a day.





Retch Fly



Armor Class:	6[13]
Hit Dice:	1/2 (1d4 hp)
Attacks:	Bite
Special:	Acid
Move:	10
HDE/XP:	1/15

As Big As: A football.

Smells Like: Week-old garbage and fresh lime juice.

Sounds Like: Amplified mosquito buzzing.

Favorite Pastime: Drinking intestinal fluids.

Turnoffs: Torches, loud clanging noises.

Retch Flies tend to gather near dead or unhealthy creatures upon which they can easily prey. Its horrific bite exudes a bilious blue acid that does an additional 1d4 burn damage each round until a successful Saving Throw is made or 4 rounds have passed. Retch Flies are universally despised and readily dispatched. Ancient civilizations would breed swarms of Retch Flies to unleash on advancing armies, softening them up for the kill.

Scrumlau

Armor Class:	2[17]
Hit Dice:	3+3
Attacks:	Bite or grapple
Special:	Drain
Move:	2 crawl/ 4 fly
HDE/XP:	5/240

As Big As: A merry-go-round.

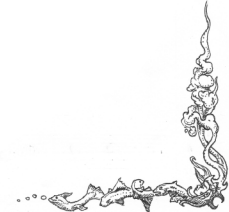
Smells Like: Freshly cut cedar.

Sounds Like: The deep voice of a southern gentleman.

Favorite Pastime: Using its leg-pincers to torture and exsanguinate prey while eating them alive.

Turnoffs: Open water, rudeness.

Scrumlau will grapple with any viable prey, man-sized or smaller, hoping to pin them and initiate tickle torture. A target temporarily loses 1 point of CON for every round of tickle torture, requiring a successful 4d6 vs. STR to break free. When the torture reaches its most severe (within 4 rounds), the Scrumlau begins to feed with its blunt, powerful beak. Survivors regain 1 CON per hour until fully recovered.



MUTANT FREAKS

These creatures are the byproduct of heinous experiments, manufacturing horrors, and leftover psychic effluvia in the city. While they sometimes find themselves forced to toil under the auspices of cruel masters, they inherently desire their freedom and vengeance against the forces that made them.

Assemblage

Armor Class:	6[13]
Hit Dice:	1+1 - 2+2
Attacks:	1 limb or two limbs
Special:	None
Move:	12
HDE/XP:	1-2/15-30

As Big As: Ranges from ham-sized to man-sized.

Smells Like: Old sweat, medical waste.

Sounds Like: Stiff limbs cracking in the cold.

Favorite Pastime: Obeying master.

Turnoffs: Punishments from master.

Assemblages are the most common form of Mutant Freak, and come in two types: small sets of random body parts stitched together, and recombined pieces forming a humanoid shape. Small Assemblages can only attack with one limb and are rarely capable of speech, while large Assemblages have the capabilities of a full human. Most Assemblages have been bound, brain-washed, or otherwise dominated into a state of high loyalty to their creators, although occasionally they break free and become fully individualized.



Fresh Meat



Armor Class:	5[14]
Hit Dice:	2
Attacks:	Tentacle whip
Special:	Grease
Move:	16
HDE/XP:	2/30

As Big As: A large mastiff.

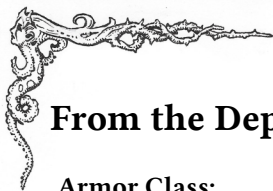
Smells Like: A butcher shop.

Sounds Like: The clacking of raw bones, the uncomfortable oozing of foul liquids.

Favorite Pastime: Scuttling in darkness.

Turnoffs: Heat.

Human thighs, animal sphincter muscles, octopi tentacles . . . the Fresh Meat is a favored pet construct amongst deviant Stitches, Doctors, and Flesh Consultants. The Fresh Meat has only one downward-facing orifice for both consumption and evacuation, which can exude a *grease* up to 5 times per day, which covers a 10' area in a slick, flammable offal. The Fresh Meat is incredible fast and will strategically *grease* large corridors against intruders. It is rumored that a pack of Fresh Meat roams the Great Arboretum under the light of full moons, frolicking and clacking their bones together in a dance of freedom.



From the Depths

Armor Class:	3[16]
Hit Dice:	1-5
Attacks:	1 slime per HD
Special:	Succumb
Move:	6
HDE/XP:	2-6/15-400

As Big As: A room full of slime.

Smells Like: Toxic waste.

Sounds Like: Moans and meeps.

Favorite Pastime: Dissolving, re-forming.

Turnoffs: Containment tanks and steep inclines.

From the Depths are a congeries of dissolved experiment victims given new life. They moan in anguish, and their moans inspire despair. Each round spent listening to their moaning, victims must make a +1d6 vs. WIS check to avoid going catatonic (1d6 first round, 2d6 second round, and so forth). From the Depths will then attempt to engulf, dissolve, and absorb the body into itself, at which time it will gain another hit die. They can lob acidic slime balls up to 30'.



Stitched One

Armor Class:	5[14]
Hit Dice:	6
Attacks:	3 by weapon
Special:	Multi-wield
Move:	12
HDE/XP:	7/600

As Big As: 2 men, one sitting atop the other's shoulders.

Smells Like: Passionflower, disease.

Sounds Like: The echoes of a grunting bodybuilder.

Favorite Pastime: Balancing challenges.

Turnoffs: Short entryways.

Stitched Ones are the ultimate in personal bodyguard technology, cobbled together from three athletic adult humanoids. They can attack with up to three of their six limbs each round, and are competent with most melee and ranged weapons. They consume incredible amounts of food, up to 25 pounds per day. It has been observed that, when liberated, Stitched Ones instinctively seek out the nearest temple or shrine to The Goddess Who Balances on Narrow Precipices.



SURDITES

Surdites are the insectoid hive-minds that serve the Grand Stultified Energon. They play with the corpses of sentient beings as a taunt, and are often tasked with inscrutable plans devised against those who move freely upon the surface of Gathox.

Lesser – Colony



Armor Class:	7[12]
Hit Dice:	2
Attacks:	1
Special:	Surprise, hover
Move:	14
HDE/XP:	3/60

As Big As: A human without feet.
Smells Like: Bleached bones, dirty dish rags.
Sounds Like: A C-rated villain.
Favorite Pastime: Haunting corridors, devouring corpses.
Turnoffs: Sunlight, cleanliness.

Surdite Colonies are large clouds of corpse-eating gnats that inhabit the raiments of the dead. They prefer to interface with larger organisms via animal skulls which serve as their heads. Some prefer to spook adventurers, others are looking for fresh corpses to eat. They can disperse, lying in wait ready to spring and make their attack (surprise on 1-3 on a 1d6). They can form vicious claws with which to strike their opponents, and can hover up to 20' off the ground.

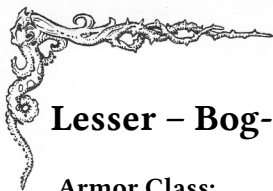
Lesser – Cryptkeeper

Armor Class:	6[13]
Hit Dice:	3
Attacks:	1
Special:	Hidden escapes
Move:	12
HDE/XP:	4/120

As Big As: A skinny dead janitor.
Smells Like: Windex, rot.
Sounds Like: A carnival caller.
Favorite Pastime: Why, cleaning, of course!
Turnoffs: Messy corpses.

Cryptkeepers are the official janitors of the underbelly of Gathox, cleaning out the dead from dungeon corridors. Many a sunken ruin features a hidden room with 1d4 Cryptkeepers, who play their shoddy instruments through the wee hours and feast upon the dead. They aren't necessarily inimical to the living, and are animated by a curious and intrepid tapeworm. They instinctively know where hidden doors are, and use them to quickly move through dungeons or escape danger.





Lesser – Bog-Hazz (Screaming)

Armor Class:	4[15]
Hit Dice:	2+2
Attacks:	2 tentacles or scream
Special:	Flying
Move:	16
HDE/XP:	4/120

As Big As: A head with guts and arms.

Smells Like: A fresh mint julip.

Sounds Like: Computer-generated red noise.

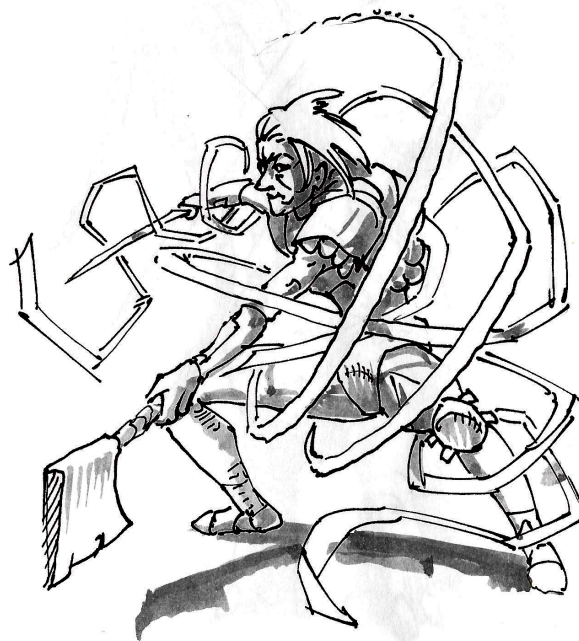
Favorite Pastime: Screaming, slapping things.

Turnoffs: Quiet times, legs.

Occasionally, a Surdite Colony will consume the body of a music-loving Mentalist, and begin the process of becoming a Bog-Hazz. The Bog-Hazz patrols the domains of The Grand Stultified Energon, providing aid in the form of sonic assault to fellow Surdites. They are sometimes found in the captive employ of gangs as well, and the Kermen seem particularly adept at making use of the Bog-Hazz. Their scream is simultaneously sub- and super-sonic, causing severe disorientation to all living things within 40'. Victims must Save or suffer 1d3 points of damage per round for the subsequent 3 rounds, as well as suffer a -1 to attack and Saves.



Lesser – Gauze of the Wounded



Armor Class:	2[17]
Hit Dice:	3 or 6
Attacks:	1
Special:	Entomb
Move:	12
HDE/XP:	4-7/120-600

As Big As: . . . well, a 20' strip of gauze.

Smells Like: Old wounds.

Sounds Like: The slithering of raw cotton on stone.

Favorite Pastime: Making people into mummies.

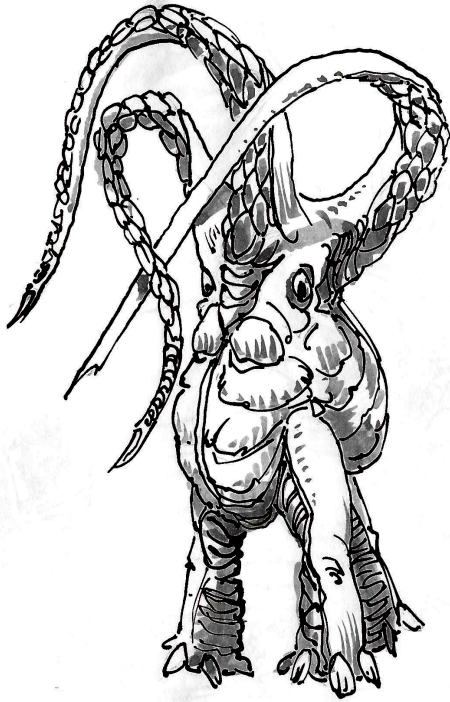
Turnoffs: Fire, stitchery.

The Gauze of the Wounded is a series of bacteria which have feasted upon the dried blood of bandaged wounds. They then animate this gauze, flying through the dark in search of fresh bodies, attempting to wrap itself around a living creature. Each attack is a grapple; 2 successes allow the Gauze of the Wounded to fully encase the victim and begin suffocation. Victims killed by this attack add three hit dice to the Gauze and provide it with an ambulatory body through which to enact its will.





Greater – Siphon Man

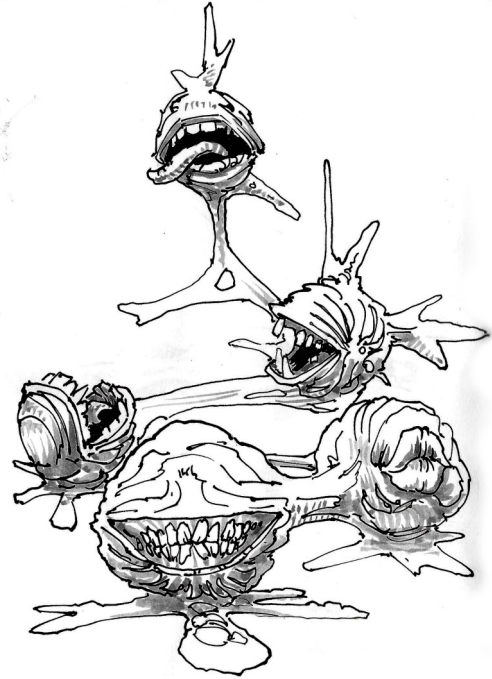


Armor Class:	1[18]
Hit Dice:	8
Attacks:	3 siphons or 1 kick
Special:	Level drain
Move:	9
HDE/XP:	10/1,400

As Big As: A Baobob tree.
Smells Like: Corpse spirit.
Sounds Like: The plodding of great masses of flesh.
Favorite Pastime: Drinking your essence.
Turnoffs: Electricity.

The Siphon Man is the ultimate expression of Surdite desire: to suck the juices out of other sentient creatures. While Siphon Men remain solitary from one another, they often surround themselves with Colonies and Bog-Hazz in their deep tombs. Siphon Men can attack with three forceful, straw-like tentacles which each do 2d6 damage. Just the touch of a tentacle requires a Saving Throw, with failure indicating that the hollow tip has embedded itself in the flesh. Each round thereafter, the victim must Save or *lose a level*. Creatures killed in this manner are infected with a Surdite Colony and rise in 1d3 rounds under the command of the Siphon Man. Siphon Men take half damage from normal weapons and fire, but take maximum damage from electricity.

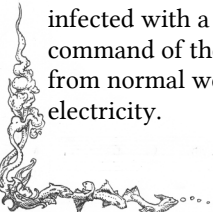
Greater – The Chortler



Armor Class:	0[19]
Hit Dice:	9+2
Attacks:	5
Special:	Gas, cackle
Move:	12
HDE/XP:	13/2,300

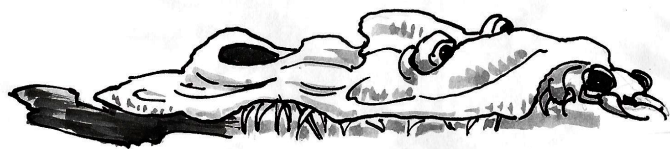
As Big As: A conference room.
Smells Like: Vomit, despair, malice.
Sounds Like: Infinite, recursive laughing.
Favorite Pastime: Assuming the voices of the slain.
Turnoffs: Heat, silence.

The Chortler acts as a massive expression of Surdite multiplicity, reveling in its own myriad set of booming voices and continually trading places with itself. The Chortler can freely fire a tooth from each of five mouths every round, each of which strikes for 1d8 damage and requires a Save against the permanent loss of 1 CHA. Victims reduced to 0 CHA become mindless, faceless thralls in service to The Chortler. Additionally, the mouths can instead choose to act in unison, communally emitting a paralytic gas (Save or paralyzed for 1d6 rounds) which affords it the time to slowly consume living flesh.





Minor – Slough



Armor Class:	8[11]
Hit Dice:	1/2
Attacks:	1 bite
Special:	Sleep poison
Move:	12
HDE/XP:	2/30

As Big As: A forearm.

Smells Like: Fresh blood, coal dust.

Sounds Like: Skittering and slopping.

Favorite Pastime: Collecting faces.

Turnoffs: Heavy objects.

The Slough is a lowly, singular Surdite resembling a millipede the length and girth of a human forearm. Its desire in life is to chew off the faces of sentient beings, living or otherwise, and carry those faces straight down to The Grand Stultified Energon. It can bite for 1d3 damage, injecting a venom which cause a Saving Throw against *sleep*. The Slough can remove a face with surgical precision in 1 round, propping the thing on its back and slithering away.

Ultimate – Anti-Cosmic Cold

Armor Class:	-1[20]
Hit Dice:	12
Attacks:	3 cold blasts or special
Special:	Enervation, paralysis
Move:	16
HDE/XP:	15/2,900

As Big As: Anywhere from door-sized to cavern-sized.

Smells Like: A dying breath, ancient ice.

Sounds Like: Creepy 80's ambient synth.

Favorite Pastime: Negation.

Turnoffs: Creation.

The Anti-Cosmic Cold is the most tangible expression of The Grand Stultified Energon in physical reality. It is a rotating portal of entropy, comprised of a million infinitely black butterflies, which continually exudes the cold of the void. It can change its size drastically, filling massive spaces or shrinking to move through tiny cracks. At any given time, it will be attended in its temple grotto by either a Siphon Man or a Chortler, a Cryptkeeper, and either 1d8 Bog-Hazz or 2d4 Colonies. Most of the corpses accumulated by other Surdites eventually make their way down to the Anti-Cosmic Cold. The Cold can emit 3 cones of void cold per round, each of which is 15' in diameter, extends for up to 100', and does 3d8+3 damage. The Cold can also "touch" a creature, either immediately draining two levels or paralyzing it for a turn, whichever it chooses.



WALKING CANCER

The Skeleton Within

The vast pollution of Gathox breeds monsters of its own. Dwelling in sewers, trash piles, and choked wrecking yards, Walking Cancers are the unholy alliance of filth and mold with the unfortunate bodies of otherwise healthy creatures.

Le Goiter

Armor Class:	7[12]
Hit Dice:	2
Attacks:	1
Special:	Infect
Move:	9
HDE/XP:	3/60

As Big As: A turkey dinner, or larger.
Smells Like: Fear, pain, offal.
Sounds Like: Gurgling.
Favorite Pastime: Skulking, tearing itself off its host.
Turnoffs: Radiation, electricity.

Le Goiter is an intelligent cancer which takes over a fleshy host, slowly dissolving its innards before tearing free and subdividing to attack new victims. While attached to a host, it has access to all the skills of the creature, and can heal itself by dissolving 1 HD worth of the host. When the host is dead, Le Goiter splits into 2d10 tiny versions of itself, each of which slink off to find a new host to which they can attach. Most victims are infected with Le Goiter during sleep, and a failed Saving Throw means successful attachment. Victims typically live about a week.



Armor Class:	5[14]
Hit Dice:	3
Attacks:	1 claw or weapon
Special:	Infect
Move:	12
HDE/XP:	4/120

As Big As: Your skeleton.
Smells Like: You, minus the meat.
Sounds Like: Jangling bones, of course!
Favorite Pastime: Sensuously removing the skin and meat of a host.
Turnoffs: Radiation, skin.

The Skeleton Within is a spore-cancer which inhabits tombs, graveyards, and scenes of mass carnage. It infects a host via inhalation, requiring a 4d6 CON check to resist. Within a day, infected hosts begin to feel like they're living in someone else's skin. The second day, they suffer an identity crisis and itch all over. By the third day, The Skeleton Within will tear itself free from inside the host, and run wild with the other Skeletons deep below the Cheery Orchard Necropolis. Magical intervention or heavy doses of risky radiation are necessary to destroy The Skeleton Within before it kills a host.



Sewer Child



Armor Class:	4[15]
Hit Dice:	2+2
Attacks:	Touch or gaze
Special:	Fear gaze
Move:	16
HDE/XP:	4/120

As Big As: A child – a haunting, evil little child.
Smells Like: Gingerbread and sewer.
Sounds Like: Wordless splashing in the dark.
Favorite Pastime: Creeping on the living.
Turnoffs: Sunshine, bath time, adults.

Sewer Children are the lamentable merging of lost street kids and sentient, telomere-damaging oils which flow from time to time in the sewers and gutters of Gathox. The victims are quickly engulfed by the oil, transformed into silent, unsettling beings with jet black surfaces and shining, pupil-less eyes. They congregate in groups of 3-12 in the sewers, silently stalking prey to convert into oil. Some sages and geologists speculate that the Sewer Children can psychically commune via oil spills. The touch of a Sewer Child does 1d6+1 shock damage, and the concentrated gaze of a Sewer Child requires a victim to Save or fall victim to *Fear* for 1d4 rounds.

ZHEZH

The nature of the Zhezhn is discussed extensively in Chapter 3 (see pp.107). Suffice it to say, the godling's antibodies take many forms, contain incredible power, and pose grave threats to those who dare to cross their paths.

Formless – The Glowing One

Armor Class:	3[16]
Hit Dice:	3-10
Attacks:	1 energy zap
Special:	Psychic powers
Move:	9
HDE/XP:	5-12/240-2,000

As Big As: A rectory.
Smells Like: The taste of a kaleidoscope.
Sounds Like: Thrumming machinery in the base of the skull.
Favorite Pastime: Siphoning psychic energy.
Turnoffs: Going without a steady supply of psychic energy.

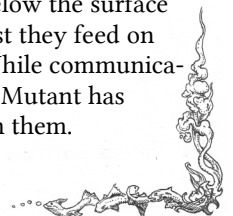
The Glowing One is perhaps the most common form of Zhezhn. When first seen by another creature, it has a 1 in 10 chance transforming into: **Roll 1d4- 1)** Fear of Falling; **2)** Contrail Antenna; **3)** Pyramid Eye; **4)** Kupal Bug.

Otherwise, the Glowing One appears as a shimmering, hovering, vibrating mass of light with vaguely discernible eyes. Its shape will consist of one of the following: **Roll 1d4- 1)** A 10' tall Ankh with a head just below the loop; **2)** A 7'-per-side pyramid of stars with eyes in the center of each side; **3)** Two 8'-tall waves perpetually crashing into and receding from one another; **4)** A 12'-tall swirling cyclone of crystalline shapes.

Every Glowing One can shoot a bolt of pure psychic energy up to 90' once per round, doing 1d6+1 damage. Additionally, each Glowing One can use the *Liminal Materiality* power described in the Mutants section of Chapter 4 (see pp.58). A 5+ HD Glowing One can additionally use *Auratic Pattern Recognition*, a 7+ HD Glowing One can additionally use *Telepathic Tranception*, and a 9+ HD Glowing One can additionally use *Field of Atonia*.



Glowing Ones tend to dwell just sufficiently below the surface of Gathox so they can remain undetected whilst they feed on the psychic energy of creatures above them. While communication with Glowing Ones is rare, the occasional Mutant has reported the ability to psychically interact with them.



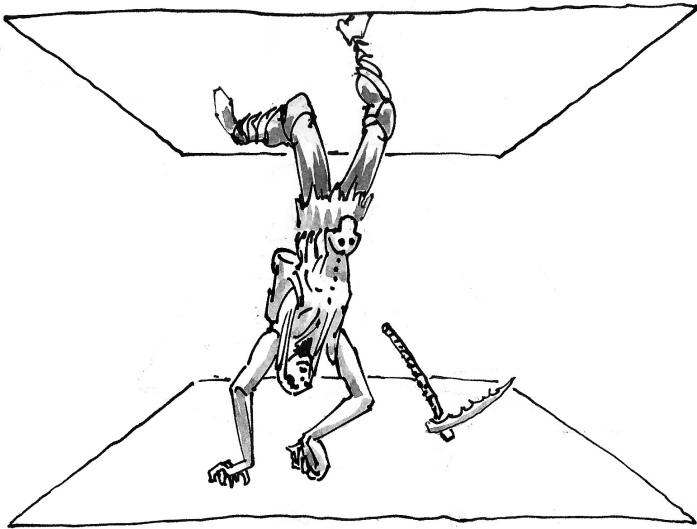


Greater – Fear of Falling

Armor Class:	2[17]
Hit Dice:	6
Attacks:	Special
Special:	Falling
Move:	10
HDE/XP:	8/800

As Big As: Two 10' floor traps spaced 10' apart.
Smells Like: A dash of ozone, a whiff of chlorine.
Sounds Like: Nothing.
Favorite Pastime: Perpetually dropping creatures to harvest their fear.
Turnoffs: Unknown.

The Fear of Falling is a particularly nasty Zhezhn whose sole purpose is to inflict perpetual falling on a creature, harvesting their fear as they go. The Zhezhn consists of two 10' square pits, each of which acts as a portal to the other, which allows the Zhezhen to cause a creature to fall between itself for an indefinite period of time. The Zhezhn will remain stationary until someone approaches it, at which time it will quickly surprise (1-3 on a 1d6) its victim and move directly under it. Once the victim has fallen the equivalent of 100', the Zhezhn will spit them back out where they entered, incurring 10d6 falling damage. The Fear of Falling can be detected with magic, psychic abilities, and black lights, and can only be harmed by magic, psychic powers, or lasers.



Greater – What Great Works of Man

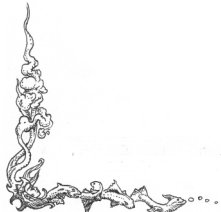


Armor Class:	Special, see below
Hit Dice:	5-20
Attacks:	Special, see below
Special:	-
Move:	As below
HDE/XP:	6-20/400-4,700

As Big As: The PC's.
Smells Like: The PC's.
Sounds Like: The PC's, but meaner.
Favorite Pastime: Torturing sentient beings with their own hubris and shortcomings.
Turnoffs: Being ignored.

What Great Works of Man is a strange Zhezhn which specializes in mirroring sentient beings and harassing them with an intimate knowledge of their failings. It transforms itself from a mass of invisible ether into an exact duplicate of the party. If attacked, the Zhezhn will respond with the full abilities of each member of the entire party, engaging them in intelligent one-on-one combat until the PC's desist. If the party ignores the Zhezhn, it will follow them wherever they go, loudly taunting and enumerating the crimes of the party. The Zhezhn is only bested by one of the following conditions, as chosen by the DM:

- 1) Defeated in combat with the party, meaning that the PC's are better at being themselves than the Zhezhn is at portraying them.
- 2) The PC's formally atone for the sins which the Zhezhn enumerates.
- 3) The PC's insult the Zhezhn better than the Zhezhn insults them.
- 4) The PC's find a way to break the psychic connection which the Zhezhn has established with them.





Lesser – Contrail Antenna



Armor Class:	3[16]
Hit Dice:	5+2
Attacks:	2 laser eyes
Special:	Confusion
Move:	24
HDE/XP:	8/800

As Big As: A monolith.

Smells Like: Jet engines, burnt foil.

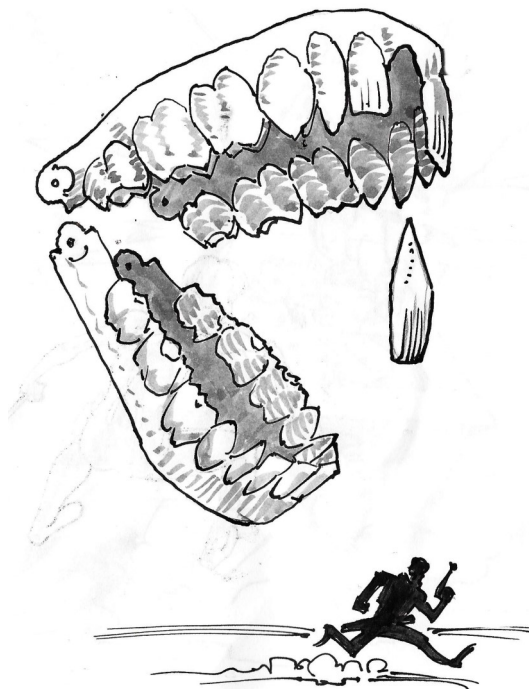
Sounds Like: A raving lunatic.

Favorite Pastime: Spreading conspiracy theories to increase psychic stress.

Turnoffs: Reason.

The Contrail Antenna is a Zhezhn specifically designed to feed off paranoia and distrust. It takes the form of a massive head, adorned with tin foil and a channeling antenna, propelled by two jet engines which leave thick, stinking, long-lasting contrails wherever it goes. It can shoot a laser from each eye every round, and perpetually spouts conspiracy theories about the individuals it attacks, directly relating the paranoid delusions to the private details of their lives. 3 rounds of listening to this drivel requires victims to make a 3d6 vs. WIS check, or succumb to *Confusion*, which causes the victim to wander aimlessly in a paranoid haze for 1d4 turns. *Confusion* can be broken by the destruction of the Zhezhn or by magical or medical means.

Lesser – Falling Teeth (Rottenjaw)



Armor Class:	2[17]
Hit Dice:	6+1
Attacks:	1 bite
Special:	Falling teeth
Move:	16
HDE/XP:	7/600

As Big As: A small bus.

Smells Like: Hangover breath.

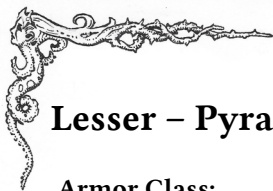
Sounds Like: Teeth forever grinding.

Favorite Pastime: Crushing things with its teeth.

Turnoffs: Macrodentistry.

The Rottenjaw is a common Zhezhn, manifested from intense dreams of people losing their teeth. The Rottenjaw can bite unwary assailants for 2d6 damage, affecting everyone within a 10' radius. The Rottenjaw may instead choose to drop one of its huge, loose teeth onto a target. Victims struck by the tooth suffer a permanent -1 CHA from the disfigurement the jagged tooth causes, in addition to 1d6+1 damage. Creatures killed by the falling teeth of the Rottenjaw will, within a round, have their own upper and lower jaw ripped from their skull, becoming a baby Rottenjaw which grows to full size within a turn. The Rottenjaw takes 1/2 damage from mundane weapons.





Lesser – Pyramid Eye

Armor Class:	5[14]
Hit Dice:	4+1
Attacks:	1 stomp or 1 eye beam
Special:	Fear
Move:	12
HDE/XP:	6/400

As Big As: A refrigerator.

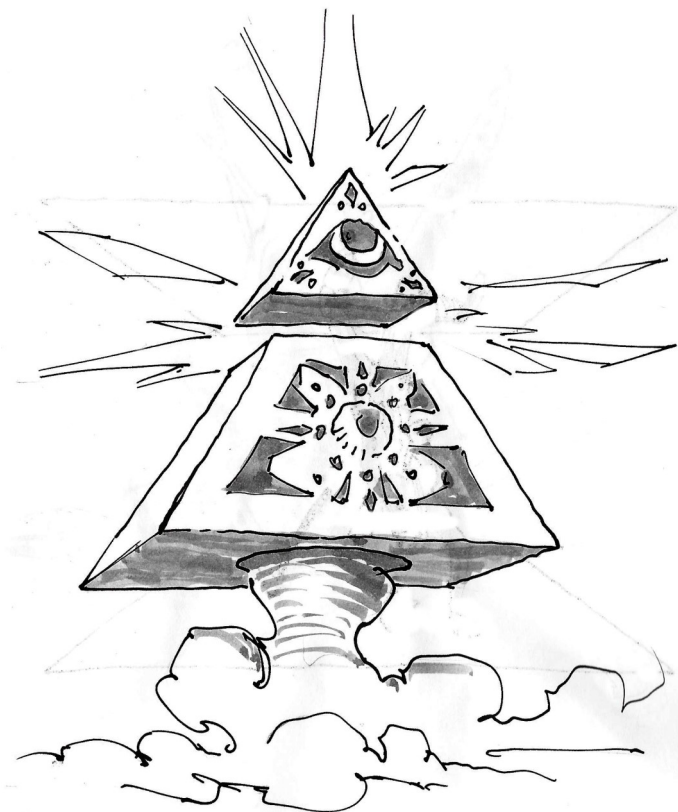
Smells Like: Sandalwood, wet dirt.

Sounds Like: A distant buzzing, the clang of impossible gears.

Favorite Pastime: Giving chase to intruders.

Turnoffs: Reason, a lack of fear.

The Pyramid Eye is the watchdog of the Zhezhn realm, often accompanying Greater Zhezhn on their forays or standing guard in key defensive locations. They detest most humanoid intruders, and will give chase for a considerable distance. As they perpetually float, they can attack by stomping any creatures in a 10' square for 1d6+1 damage. They can also use their upper rotating eye to fire on any target within a 30' radius. Lastly, they can shift their rainbow color patterns into an uncomfortable rhythm which requires a Save or the victim succumbs to *Fear* for 1d4 rounds.



Minor – Kupal Bug (Glow Worm)

Armor Class:	8[11]
Hit Dice:	1
Attacks:	None
Special:	Charm
Move:	6 crawl or 12 fly
HDE/XP:	2/30

As Big As: A plush bear.

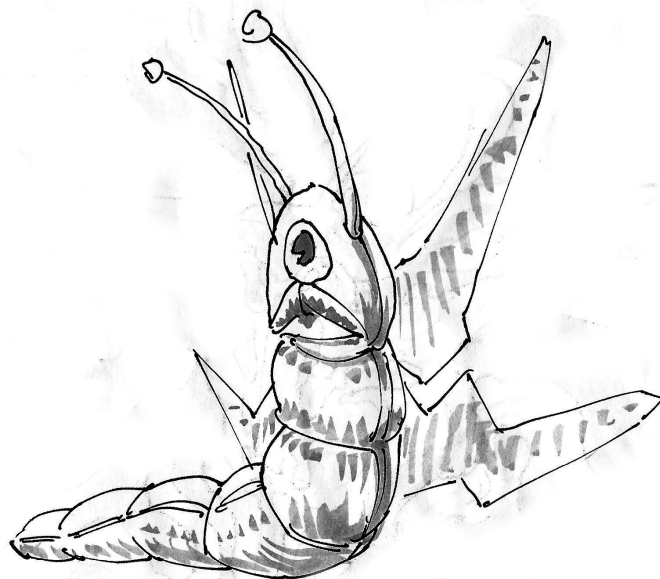
Smells Like: Cotton candy.

Sounds Like: Cute meeping from a squishable critter.

Favorite Pastime: Being cute to garner sympathy.

Turnoffs: Scorn.

The Kupal Bug is a Zhezhn sympathy trap – it's job is to endear itself to passersby and feed off their feelings of affection and empathy. It can use *Charm Person* once per day to bind itself to another creature. For each week, the Kupal Bug is taken care of, the victim must make a 4d6 vs. WIS check, or lose 1 point of INT as the Bug sucks away the capacity for reason. A victim reduced to 0 INT becomes a mindless thrall to the Bug. A Kupal Bug reduced to 0 hit points disappears in a flash of scintillating light, reappearing at least 1 mile away.



Ultimate – Xkxaksik

Armor Class:	-3[22]
Hit Dice:	18
Attacks:	4 Ray Bursts
Special:	Psychic powers
Move:	16
HDE/XP:	22/5,000

As Big As: It wants to be.

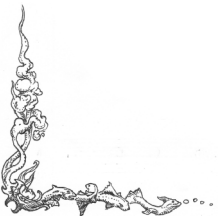
Smells Like: The taste of light.

Sounds Like: A choir of machine angels.

Favorite Pastime: Communing with Gathox.

Turnoffs: Unknown.

The Xkxaksik is the Ultimate Zhezhn, and only one exists at a time. It dwells near the heart of Gathox, although it may manifest itself almost anywhere it needs. Its motives are inscrutable, other than that it watches over other Zhezhn and disturbances of power within the city. In combat, it can emit 4 Ray Bursts each round, which do 3d6 damage each. It can use one of the following psychic powers per round, at will: *Liminal Materiality*, *Psionic Summons*, *Auratic Pattern Recognition*, *Field of Atonia*, *Psychic Guillotine*, *Telepathic Tranception*, *Paralytic Communion*, and *Bleeding Heart Syndrome*. It regenerates 3 hit points per round, cannot be hurt by mundane weapons, and is always attended by 2d3 Glowing Ones.





CHAPTER 7:

IN THE BOWERS OF THE MUDLING MANSIONS

This chapter provides an introductory adventure for Gathox, complete with hooks, RP awards, a vertical dungeon, and a terrible artifact. Some information in the adventure rehashes that found earlier in this book; this is intended to present as much adventure-specific information within the confines of these pages as possible.

INTRODUCTION

The Dohjak Neighborhood Friendship Society has won the right to Kettle properties after their Pebble Dancer Troupe claimed victory in the annual Parade of Dying Leaves celebration. The contested property is a strip of alley just off of Slipshod Street and Mogan Way. Several months ago, the abandoned ruins of Kamma Tower had been noticed sinking into the substrate of the city. Such prime real estate coming into play could easily spark a turf war, so the Friendship Societies of the Kettle declared it the prize for the annual Celebration.

Strangely, the night before the Celebration, nearby residents bore witness to a violent eruption of mud, stone, refuse, and purple fire as the alley floor vomited forth a teetering stack of apartments braced between the walls of two tenement buildings. Many of the mudders, the homeless and shifty beggars and brigands in the neighborhood, have disappeared from the area . . . much to the surprise and delight of well-to-do locals.

The Dohjaks are none too pleased with the developments on their new property. Gold and purple lights can be seen flickering in the apartments at night, and the stench of sewer rot follows the wafting green smoke plumes billowing forth from the highest vents and windows. The Dohjaks have issued a standing offer to enterprising and motivated parties to clear out the mudder apartments and pave the way for proper development.

In addition to the right to keep whatever can be found in the “Mudling Mansions,” the Dohjaks have offered: 1,000 gp to clear the tower, another 1,000 gp to level it, and 500 gp to capture and deliver the party or parties responsible for the construction of the

tower. Each objective is worth 1 RP to each surviving character.

THE PARADE OF DYING LEAVES CELEBRATION

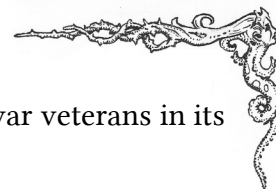
This is the Kettle’s fall celebration, consisting of a large musical parade comprised of local Friendship Societies and religious factions, ending with a dance competition and ritual gang fights that determine property rights and collaborative public works.

ENTER THE DOHJAKS

The Dohjaks are offering this job, and have already seen interested parties racing to meet the requirements of the contract and earn that sweet, sweet gold. They will have to meet Mehlud the Splinter, their gang leader, at the Dohjak’s headquarters, in order to get the contract. This would be considered a single point of entry into the adventure, although the GM may choose to introduce this any number of ways: typical bar rumors, having the PC’s attend the Parade of Dying Leaves Celebration (see note above), coming across one of the mudders who escaped Kamma Tower, or simply through an advertisement in *The Kettle Crier*.

Dohjakeen Friendship Hall - This four-story flagstone building occupies a small garden yard on Gripperbite Alley. The facade consists of a reconstructed striated cliff face. Ebony hardwoods and elegantly curved furniture adorn the interior, and the smells of vegetable broth and grain alcohol permeate the walls and carpeted floor.

Point of Contact: Mehlud the Splinter, “Penitent of the Petrified Grove” (see pp.22)- Mehlud sports a magnificent afro-beard decorated with delicate dangling silver leaves. He smiles with a gummy grin which exposes tiny, square, well-set teeth. His shrunken pupils hint at his decades long bakra addiction. By the time the PCs meet him, he has already given out official writs of duty to two other parties and will issue a third to the PCs with a mix of dismissiveness and skepticism. Depending on how well the PC’s play off their interactions with Mehlud,



he may be willing to hire out one or two of his Pebble Dancers for 30 gp/week, gold up front.

Pebble Dancer Troupe - These warrior performers paint their bodies grey, adorned with silver leaf tailings and stripped to loincloths. They wear chitin musical plates in a spiral pattern around their torso and limbs. The most skilled dancers and gymnasts often moonlight as brawlers and enforcers for the gang. They carry ritual weapons called ‘Mulkin,’ which are Vulzari femurs reinforced with steel and set with sterling silver spikes at the end. **Typical Pebble Dancer: AC: 6[13]; HD: 1+1; HP: 5/5; Attacks: 1 weapon; Move: 12; Eq.: Mulkin, Chitin plates, punching shield, torch.**

AREAS OF INTEREST

Slipshod Street - A rough combination of dance halls, bakra peddlers, and butchers. Notable for the strange geometry of its non-figurative statuettes.

Mogan Way - A narrow, twisting, ascending street which wraps its way around the Temple of Toil complex. The Temple of Toil houses manufacturing and indentured laborers; press gangs, mauled factory workers, and elite merchant caravans are a regular sight here.

Gripperbite Alley - Home to the Dohjakeen Friendship Hall, The Twelve Sisters Boarding House, and an unmarked booze hole run by mutant siamese twins named Woody and Micky.

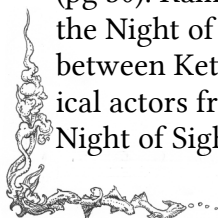
Kamma Tower - These ruins have been piled over by the recent eruption of Mudling Mansions. The tower functioned as a temple for The Goddess That Balances on Narrow Precipices. The bodies of 77 tightrope walkers are rumored to have been interred alive in the walls as a consecration for the Goddess.

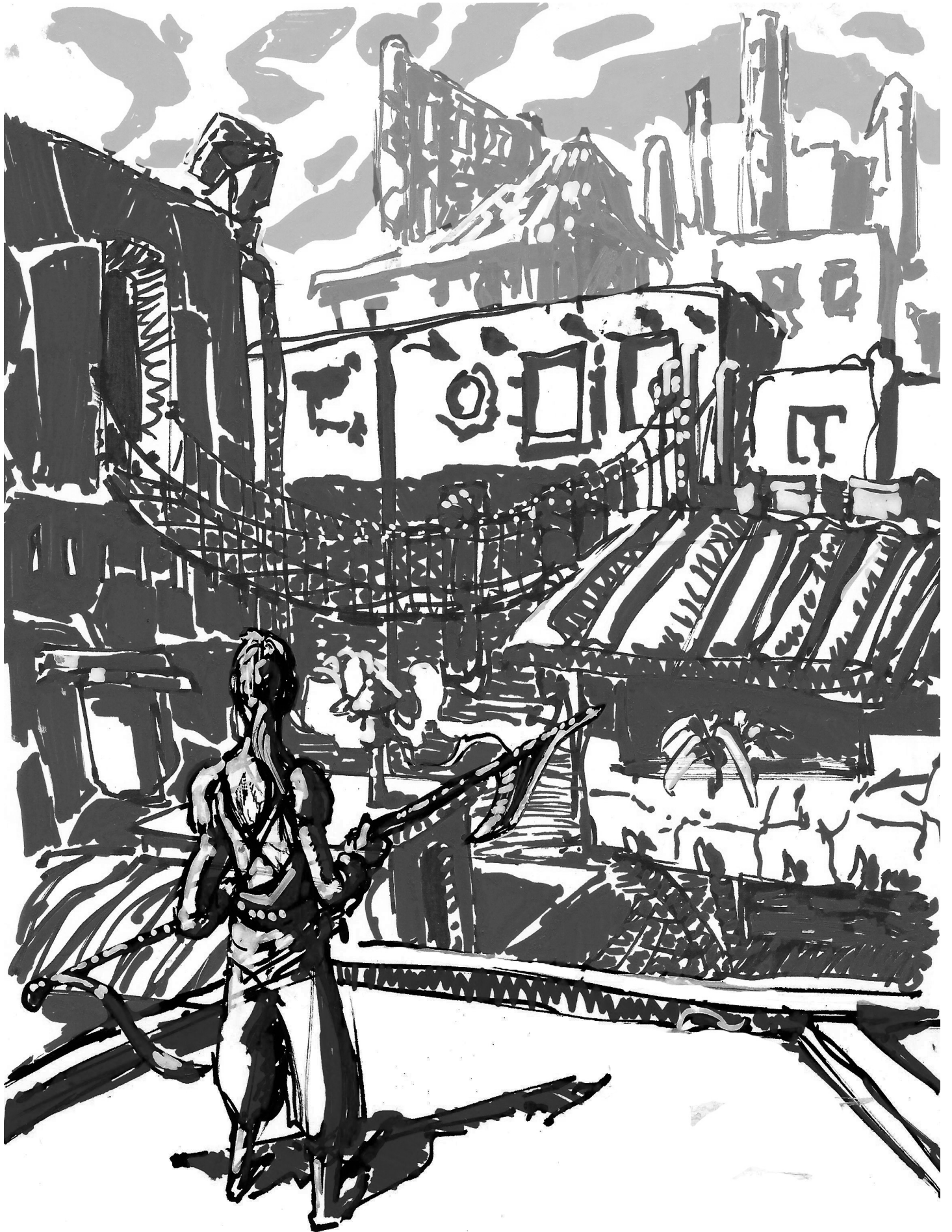
Kamma Tower served as a place of worship for gymnasts, contortionists, fitness gurus and dieters. The temple was founded by the performance enhancement mutant known as Pankratz the Wobbler (pg 30). Kamma Tower was abandoned not long after the Night of Sighing Clowns, a night-long turf war between Kettle street performers and a cadre of physical actors from the nearby Berchan Favella. The Night of Sighing Clowns depleted the ranks of

parishioners and left disillusioned war veterans in its wake.

RUMORS

Roll 1d8	Result
1	Mudling Mansions was erected by the Cult of Sha-Benyu as an incursion into Kettle territory (false).
2	I heard that gymnasts were buried alive in Kamma Tower (true).
3	The Dohjaks are stretched thin and afraid to sacrifice their own men to take the Mudling Mansion (false - contracting third parties is an ostentatious display of wealth and good for the body politic).
4	“The Goddess” will return to claim her rightful place in the Kettle if anyone tries to take Mudling Mansions (possible, but beyond the scope of this adventure).
5	Kamma Tower used to serve as a smuggling route between the Kettle and the Necropolis (true).
6	Word has it that the missing mudders were kidnapped by the Gecko People (half true - Vulzari shapeshifters have used their earth magic to erect the tower and claim the space for their own factional goals, kidnapping homeless people to use as human slaves).
7	There’s gold in them thar apartments (true).
8	It’s the richies from the Craw up above that’re causin’ all this ruckus down here (sometimes, but not in this case).







THE MUDLING MANSIONS

The tower comprises of a strange, green-brown clay mixed with refuse and brick rubble. A lone Vulzari Foreman named Relka raised the tower with the assistance of his most prized possession: The Dromek (more on Relka and his treasure below). His clucking lieutenants, Buzza and Vaclav, work on strict instructions to capture and ‘convert’ any interloping humans in Relka’s heinous and unsterile laboratory on the third floor. Players may run into partially converted human thralls who will invite them to a lavish glazed duck and fried gizzard dinner on the second floor for an ambush. Relka hasn’t yet found the opportunity to seize full control of the sunken ruins of Kamma Tower, both being preoccupied with growing the ranks of his henchmen and also fearing the strange power he senses radiating from below.

Beneath the Mudling Mansions lies the sunken ruins of Kamma Tower. The tower was designed with official and hidden spaces, the official designated with a visceral Muscle Red paint and the hidden halls painted with a dull, institutional blue. The interior of the first floor, marked B3 on the maps, is decorated with shades of purple. Surdites from the Cheery Orchard Necropolis have taken advantage of the tower’s abandonment and moved in, seeking a route into the Kettle for their nightly ravagings. They’ve killed two out of three members of Kiel’s Party (see below), and are hunting the third. They’re also in the process of excavating the interred gymnasts and delivering the bodies back to the Necropolis for reanimation.

FACTIONS IN THE MANSIONS

RELKA AND THE VULZARI

Relka was an urban mining boss of some repute before unearthing a Vulzari Dromek in the Great Arboretum. The Dromek warped his mind over the course of weeks and convinced the surly foreman to insert the Dromek’s phlebotic tubes into himself and give over his flesh to its whim. While the transformation was traumatic, Relka remembers some bits of his former life, and will occasionally wax poetic about his nights in the dance hall with his former partner, Aleppa. He also maintains a surprisingly pragmatic and workmanly attitude

toward his Vulzari imperatives.

Relka maintains tight control over his lieutenants and demands regular reporting. His Dromek-converted thralls tend to roam aimlessly, seeking uninfected humans to lure back to Relka’s laboratory. A number of thralls and fresh Vulzari have lost their lives to the exploration of Kamma Tower, and Relka has received psychic impressions of the quasi-undead below. He greatly fears this presence, as he has yet to amass a sufficient force to assault their position.

Relka’s endgame is to establish legitimacy for his Vulzari outpost, acquiring sufficient forces to defend his territory in the Kettle and slowly convert humans to his new species paradigm. He will attempt to flee if cornered without support, and will sacrifice any subordinates necessary to ensure his ends. Surrender may be an option for him, depending on PC actions.

Faction Quotes:

“I have spent my life judging the distance between the Gathoxan reality and the Gathoxan Dream.”

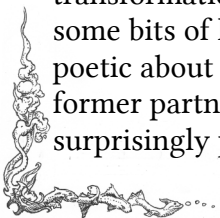
“Well, there’s nothing better than the satisfaction of a good day’s work and a hot cup of human juices.”

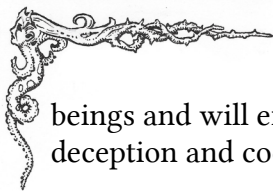
“Need a job? Lost your direction? I’ve got just the cure for you!”

JONGA AND THE SURDITES

Jonga is an immense colony of Surdite brain bugs that have exclusively fed on rotten and undead flesh for over a century. Jonga despises the notion of singular mounds of sentient flesh, and spends much of its time dispersed throughout the main chamber of Kamma Tower, reveling in its broad physical distribution and psychic connection to the Grand Stultified Energon dwelling deep within the Necropolis.

Jonga has spawned many Surdite colonies, each given the imperative to explore, report on, and ultimately claim territories for the Energon outside the Necropolis. Jonga’s Surdite colonies tend to speak in an ecstatic, revivalist manner, encouraging the holy freedom of becoming feed for the colony. They are utterly inimical to the needs of other sentient





beings and will engage in only the barest amount of deception and coercion to lure potential victims.

Jonga's endgame is claiming Kamma Tower and its environs, as it has done with several other properties, in the name of the Grand Stultified Energon. Additionally, Jonga has been instructed to retrieve the bodies of all 77 interred gymnasts and return them to the Necropolis. While Jonga resents this deprivation of a viable food source, it loves the Energon and will do nothing to endanger it or controvert its edicts.

Faction Quotes:

"The fool sayeth in his heart, 'There is no Energon,' and worships his own flesh instead."

"Believe and be healed! A holy supper is upon us!"

"Your accoutrements were placed upon you to test our faith, and we remain unshaken."

THE DROMEK

The Dromek is a Vulzari colonial artifact which serves to convert humanoid species into Vulzari lizard men. There are many Dromeks scattered across the city and indeed throughout spacetime, and they have the nasty habit of surfacing as soon as the threat of the Vulzari has been forgotten.

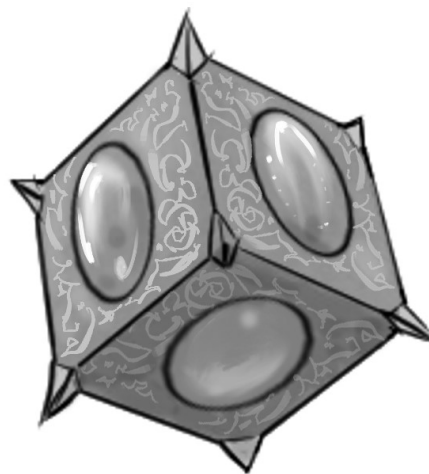
A Dromek is an ornately sculpted bronze, silver, and ebony cube, 11" on a side, featuring strange fluid writing akin to Arabic script (Vulzari longhand). Each corner contains a retractable phlebotic tube with a hollow silver thorn used as an IV needle.

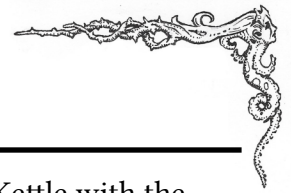
Each Dromek is aware and has a conversion agenda. Physical contact of more than a few seconds will prompt the Dromek to telepathically flood the holder with a warm, euphoric body high, which ends as soon as contact is terminated. A full minute of contact will reduce the telepathic barrier between the Dromek and the holder, allowing the Dromek to speak via telepathic link. After the first time this is established, physical contact between the Dromek and the holder is no longer necessary, just a proximity of 100' or less.

The Dromek begins to weave a tale of glory about the Vulzari, hinting at secret powers and grand truths to be had when converting. Each tale told forces the user to make a WIS save, starting at 0 penalty and accumulating a -1 penalty to the check with each subsequent tale. If prompted, the Dromek will even attempt to prove its claims, granting the holder a simple bonus of tougher skin, limited aura sensing, or a temporary boost to DEX, which lasts while the victim is in physical contact with the Dromek. If a victim fails their WIS check, they will begin to hook the phlebotic tubes into their veins. Each tube insertion prompts a saving throw, as the severe pain and horror of the process can potentially break the bond with the Dromek. Additionally, three successful WIS saves in a row will permanently break telepathic contact with the Dromek.

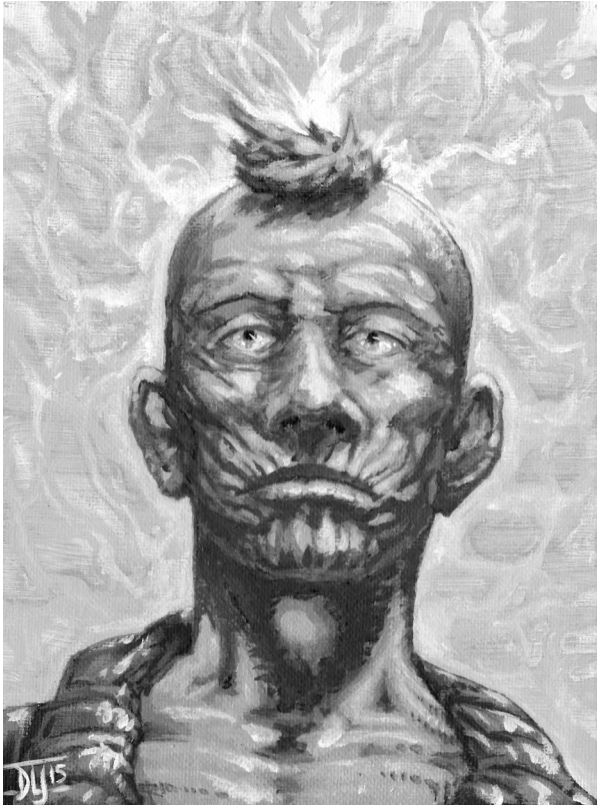
Once all four tubes are inserted, an hour-long transformation occurs, as the victim's blood is slowly pumped into the box, tainted with Vulzari spores, and returned to the victim's circulatory system. At the end of the process, the victim makes a saving throw. If successful, the victim's body does not change but they become biologically susceptible to the telepathic commands of any Vulzari in the vicinity, essentially rendering them a human thrall. If the save is failed, they transform fully into a monstrous Vulzari.

Artifact value: 500 - 1,500 gp, depending on market.
XP value: 750





KIEL'S PARTY

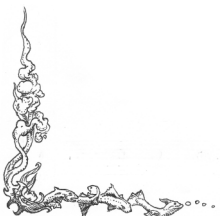


Kiel is a plucky and slightly naive Street Tough who's led his friends to the slaughter, totally unprepared for the horrors of the Mudling Mansions. If the players come across his safe room, he's stark raving mad and lashes out. He may be calmed down sufficiently to aid the party in their mission, and may end up as a suitable hireling or henchman at the GM's discretion. Regardless, his two party members, Bertrand the Street Preacher and Mikey the Barrel-Chested, were slaughtered just outside of **Area 6**, and he feels responsible for what happened to them.

WANDERING THE KETTLE

The players will likely explore The Kettle with the intent of experiencing the city, acquiring supplies, gathering clues, or performing recon. Use the table below for random encounters in The Kettle; for every 20 minutes spent streetside, roll a 1d6. A roll of 1 or 2 indicates an encounter occurs.

ROLL	ENCOUNTER
1	2d4 members of a random gang shake the PC's down for cash or goods.
2	Frantic Dohjak patrol, 1d8 members; looking for a fugitive Kermen.
3	Group of mudders, worried about their missing friend, taking a break from hustling.
4	Kermen merchant brigade unit, trying to extort a lowly mutant open air vendor.
5	1d6 clubbers, spun out on Bakra root, looking for a fix/party/directions to a dance hall.
6	1d4 Huttimer soldiers, drinking warm beer and buttered bread, angry about sin.
7	1d6 FPA revolutionaries, engaged in bitter argument with an equal number of Kermen manufacturers. One or both sides try to draw the PC's into the argument and potential fight.
8	A lone Elven King footsoldier, down from the Favella and looking to prove his mettle.



END GAME

The PC's can cash in on the contract if they meet one or more of the following conditions:

- 1) Discover Relka's machinations and deliver him to the Dohjaks for questioning/enhanced interrogation. Worth 500gp, 1 RP.
- 2) Clear the Mudling Mansions of all interlopers and show the Dohjaks their success in this endeavor. Worth 1,000gp and 1 RP.
- 3) Level the Mudling Mansions without destroying the surrounding properties. Worth 1,000gp and 1 RP.

The first goal may be a bit tricky, given the Vulzaris' collective penchant for never being taken alive. It will require negotiation, subterfuge, and a solid understanding of their motivations to capture Relka. This will likely be complicated by the fact that, once Relka is in custody, the PC's will likely have unbridled access to the Dromek. If the Dromek's existence is revealed to the Dohjaks, they'll almost certainly want to destroy the artifact.

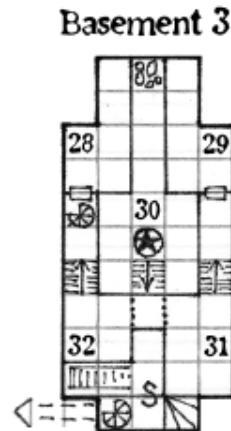
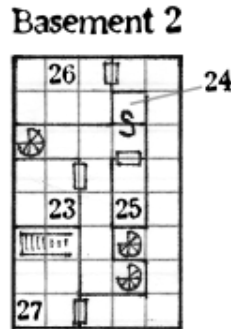
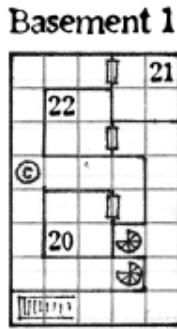
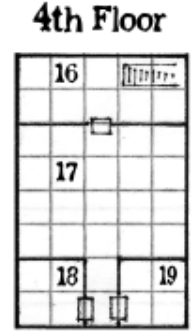
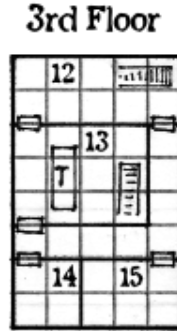
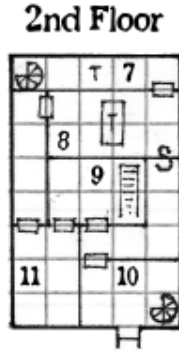
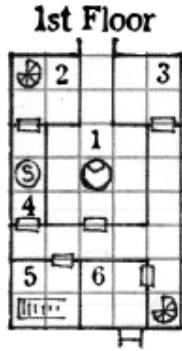
The second goal is ostensibly the easiest, if only for the fact that many players naturally gravitate toward clearing dungeons. It could be complicated by the first goal or by discovery of Kamma Tower below. In playtests, players have both ignored the presence of Kamma Tower when discovered and kept the information to themselves until they could clear it. It's likely that awareness of the ruins will prompt the Dohjaks to move in with additional forces, as long as one of the other contractual goals has been met.

The third goal is a strategic, resource-based problem to solve. The second goal will likely need to be met in order to accomplish it. The PC's are required to tear down the Mudling Mansions without wrecking the entire neighborhood, which consists of densely packed, flammable shanty complexes. In playtests, both groups of players attempted to simply burn the building down, accessing the oil fountain in **Area 1**. This, of course, backfired, as the first floor simply fired into a hard-ceramic material with the added bonus of setting the surrounding buildings on fire. Options include strategic dynamiting and hiring out a

work crew, negotiating their price below the value of the goal. Whatever creative solutions the players develop, make sure to take the environment into account when determining consequences.



DUNGEON MAP: THE MUDLING MANSIONS



□ = 10 feet

MANSION ROOM KEY AND DESCRIPTIONS

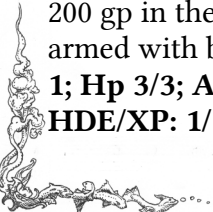
1) Entryway and Foyer - four feet of mud, slime, and refuse are piled up in front of the door. A faint scent of incense and cooking grease emanates from within. The central foyer features a fountain that churns fresh, black crude oil. 25% chance per visit of meeting human thrall who will attempt to escort the PCs upstairs for dinner.

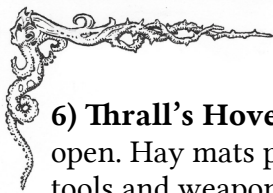
2) Stairwell Antechamber - Piled with floor tiles, discarded rags and clothing. Small diamond worth 200 gp in the pile. 2 thralls waiting to escort PCs, armed with butcher knives. **Thrall: AC: 7[12]; HD 1; Hp 3/3; Attack: 1 butcher knife; Move: 12; HDE/XP: 1/15.**

3) Antechamber - Orange ceramic desk, lantern, writing tools (as a set, worth 150 gp).

4) Trap Hall - 1 in 6 per body crossing floor flipping, 12' fall to western hallway surrounding areas 21 and 22 .

5) Stairwell to Kamma Tower - Walls sprouting mold, fungus, small bioluminescent plants. Save vs. asphyxiation damage if disturbed.





6) Thrall's Hovel – Door jammed; 4d6 vs. STR to open. Hay mats piled around the walls, improvised tools and weapons. 75 gp worth of coin, plus another 100 gp in dirty magazines and baggies of bakra. 4 thralls here, mad with transformation. **Thralls: AC: 7 [12]; HD 1; Hp 4/4; Attack: 1 improvised weapon; Move: 12; HDE/XP: 1/15.**



7) Psychedelic Gas Trap - Triggered by non-thralls/non-Vulzari psychically. Mud vents in the walls pour out green and purple gases, save or suffer 1 hour of moderate hallucinations (-2 penalty to attack, save, and initiative).

8) Dining Hall - Table set for 6, thrall waiter will bring out duck and fried gizzards with sake. Duck will be poisoned with a mild sleep aid (save or sleep for 1d6 rounds). Fine silverware worth 225 gp. **Thrall Waiter: AC: 7[12]; HD 1; Hp 5/5; Attack: 1 serving utensils; Move: 12; HDE/XP: 1/15.**

9) Staging Room and Stairwell - Barrels for clothing and possessions (value of 50 gp). Manacles on walls for holding prisoners. Gravity is reversed in this room by means of permanent enchantment, keeping drugged prisoners even more disoriented. Players looking into this room will see a rope dangling straight up from the stairwell as a clue. 2

Vulzari overseers, one with revolver, one with ritual spear). **Vulzari Overseers: AC: 6[13]; HD 1+1; Hp 6/6; Attack:1 revolver or spear; Move:12; HDE/XP:2/30.**

10) Rear Guardroom - 2 Vulzari guards with bows stationed here, shotguns and daggers. This guardroom has a 25% chance per visit of being empty due to shift change. **Vulzari Lookout: AC: 6[13]; HD 1+1; Hp 5/5; Attack: 1 melee or ranged; Move: 12; HDE/XP: 2/30.**

11) Kitchen - Small earthen oven, notable lack of silverware, pots and kettles, attended by 2 human thralls acting as passable chefs. Hostile to unescorted PCs. Deluxe knife set, with storage crate, worth 130 gp. **Thrall Chefs: AC: 7[12]; HD 1; Hp 4/4; Attack: 1 kitchen knife; Move: 12; HDE/XP: 1/15.**

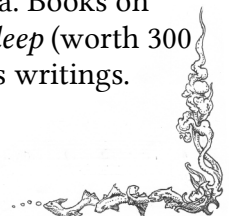
12) Vulzari Quarters - Vulzari sleep here during the day. Skin sacs hang from ceiling, like upside down vertical body bags, dripping with ichor. 6 engraved ritual spears worth 50 gp each. 1d3 Vulzari at any given time, possibly sleeping in a skin sac. **Vulzari Mooks: AC: 6[13]; HD 1+1; Hp 5/5; Attack: 1 spear; Move: 12; HDE/XP: 2/30.**

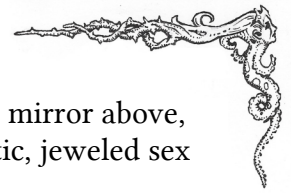
13) Operation Room - Various surgical devices, bloody rags, phials, and blood rivulet drainage off of table. Space for the Dromek. 10% chance per visit that **Relka** is attending to a prisoner mid-conversion with the Dromek, attended by **Buzza** and **Vaclav**. Surgical tools worth 400 gp, 70 lbs.

14) From the Depths – A young 2 HD From the Depths sleeping in a pit. Emits baby wailing during all hours, though quieter while asleep. 50% chance of being found asleep. **From the Depths: AC: 3[16]; HD 2; Hp 8/8; Attack:2 slimes; Special: succumb; Move:6; HDE/XP:3/60.**

15) Buzza's Quarters - Strewn with booze bottles and raw human limbs half gnawed upon. Turntable and record collection worth 40 gp.

16) Strategy Room - Documents pertaining to "The Human Plague" penned poorly by Relka. Books on the history of Gathox, and a scroll of *Sleep* (worth 300 gp) tucked away in the midst of Relka's writings.





17) Relka's Flat - Decorated with construction tools, has a resemblance to a 'man cave,' with graffiti in Vulzari on the walls and crude drawings. Chest with gold jewelry totalling 450 gp, 100 gp in coin, and amphetamine stash worth 75 gp/ 3 doses. **Relka** usually present, attended by **Buzza** and **Vaclav**. If the situation turns grim, Relka will attempt to use oil to burn the place down. **Relka: AC: 5[14]; HD 4+1; Hp 16/16; Attack: 1 spear or shotgun; Move: 12; HDE/XP: 5/240.**

Buzza: AC: 6[13]; HD 2+1; Hp 8/8; Attack: 1 spear or rifle; Move: 12; HDE/XP: 3/60.

Vaclav: AC: 6[13]; HD 2+1; Hp 8/8; Attack: 1 spear or revolver; Move: 12; HDE/XP: 3/60.



18) Vaclav's Room - Shabby chic decor, kept surprisingly tidy. Tchotchke worth 90 gp.

19) Lookout Station - Pair of binoculars on a tripod (50 gp), surveying level (30 gp). Always manned by a human thrall. **Thrall Suicide Bomber: AC: 7[12]; HD 1; Hp 6/6; Attack: 1 revolver or stick of dynamite; Move: 12; HDE/XP: 1/15.**

20) Decrepit Suite - Love bed with mirror above, dusty. Small end table contains exotic, jeweled sex toys worth 120 gp.

21) Sacrificial Room - Piles of small animal corpses as well as severed fingers, toes, and locks of hair, to a cheap ceramic Goddess statue. Candles and incense. Goddess statue worth 50 gp. Disturbing the pile will awaken a **Surdite**. **Surdite Colony: AC: 7[12]; HD 2; Hp 7/7; Attack: 1 claw; Special: surprise, hover; Move: 14; HDE/XP: 3/60.**

22) Trophy Room - Accumulation of trophies and accolades for athletes. Trophies, in material, worth 225 gp. Defended by a **Screaming Bog-Hazz**. **Surdite - Bog-Hazz: AC: 4[15]; HD 2+2; Hp 10/10; Attack: 2 tentacles or scream; Special: flying; Move: 16; HDE/XP: 4/120.**

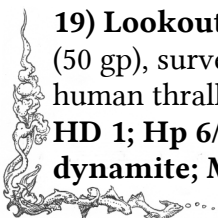
23) Shrine to The Body Electric - Tanning Booth, various gels and lotions, motivational posters, all lit with black light candles. Booth worth 350 gp, candles worth 30 gp. Tanning booth is also an electricity trap - 1d6 shock damage when touched or moved without insulating gloves, save for ½ damage.

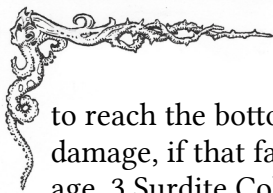
24) Closet, Kiel's Panic Room - Kiel has spiked and trip-wired the door, slowly going crazy. **Kiel - Street Tough 3: AC: 5[14]; HD 3; Hp 12/12; Attack: 1 by weapon; Special: Intimidate; Move: 12; HDE/XP: 4/120; Eq.: brass knuckles, heftblade, BDSM suit, shin guards, elbow pads, knee pads.**

25) Caretaker's Room - Simple bedroom with janitorial supplies.

26) Weight Room - Fully stocked workout room. Weight system worth 400 gp (3000 lbs worth of equipment), 7 canisters of performance powder (each equal to 3 meals worth of dried rations), each worth 10 gp. Currently occupied by 9 varmints. **Varmints: AC: 7[12]; HD 1/2; Hp 2/2; Attack: 1 bite (1d3 dmg); Move: 9; HDE/XP: 1/2/10.**

27) Stairwell Foyer - Treadmill and rowing machine, old time radio. Machines broken, radio worth 30 gp (there are no stations, but strange pitched static can be heard, which increases in intensity when psychic powers are used within 60'. The stairs in this room trigger into a slide based on 3 or more bodies passing over it, with an 18' fall totaling 2d6 damage





to reach the bottom; save to catch the ledge and avoid damage, if that fails then 3d6 DEX check for ½ damage. 3 Surdite Colonies have made it this far from the Necropolis and are happily gnawing on the remnants of recently disinterred gymnast corpses. **Surdite Colony: AC: 7[12]; HD 2; Hp 7/7, 6/6, 5/5; Attack: 1 claw; Special: surprise, hover; Move: 14; HDE/XP:3/60.**

28) Observation Room 1 - Gymnastics rings and twin bars are the central feature of this room. If any of the equipment is touched, 6 zombified gymnasts burst out of the walls and relentlessly pursue the PC's. **Zombified Gymnasts: AC: 8[11]; HD 1; Hp 4/4; Attack: strike or weapon; Special: immune to sleep, charm; Move: 9; HDE/XP: 2/30.**

29) Observation Room 2 - A pool and a hot tub occupy this room; both are stagnant and lukewarm.

30) Chamber to the Goddess - 18' statue of the Goddess balancing on a tightrope, made from silver with crystal insets on a steel frame (value 2000gp whole or 900gp for stripped materials). Yoga mats

(total 50gp, 20 lbs.) scattered around the floor. If the statue is disturbed, oil from the fountain on F1 will begin to pour into the room, filling everything within 6 rounds. It will stop when it rises to level B2. Jonga is here with three Surdite attendants, hopelessly biased against the singularized organisms invading their territory. **Jonga: AC: 5[14]; HD 4; Hp 14/14; Attack: 1 claw (claw has 30' range); Special: surprise, hover; Move: 14; HDE/XP: 5/240.**

Surdite Colony Attendants: AC: 7[12]; HD 2; Hp 6/6; Attack: 1 claw; Special: surprise, hover; Move: 14; HDE/XP: 3/60.

31) Lounge - Rotting couches, wicker chairs, and end tables are scattered around this room. Prints of exotic birds adorn the walls (0 gp value, 5 lbs.).

32) Break Room - Small propane stove, kettle, mostly empty beer keg, rotten salad bowls. Propane stove and 2 canisters of propane worth 35 gp. Two Surdites consume a Vulzari corpse here. **Surdite Colony: AC: 7[12]; HD 2; Hp 5/5; Attack: 1 claw; Special: surprise, hover; Move: 14; HDE/XP: 3/60.**

RANDOM ENCOUNTER TABLE

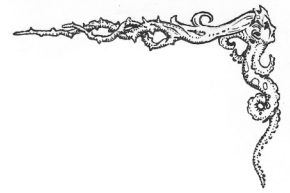
For every 60' traversed in the Mudling Mansions/Kamma Tower, roll a 1d6. On a roll of 1 or 2, roll for an encounter on the table below:

1D6	ENCOUNTER
1	2 Screaming Boghaz, searching for an object stolen from their lair. Bog-Hazz: AC: 4[15]; HD 2+2; Hp 10/10; Attack: 2 tentacles or scream; Special: flying; Move: 16; HDE/XP:4/120.
2	4 Human Thralls, scouting from another part of the dungeon. Thralls: AC: 7[12]; HD 1; Hp 4/4; Attack: 1 cleaver; Move: 12; HDE/XP: 1/15.
3	1 Vulzari, returning to its lair with plunder. Vulzari Reaver: AC: 6[13]; HD 1+1; Hp 7/7; Attack:1 spear or rifle; Move: 12; HDE/XP: 2/30.
4	1 Surdite, scouting for Jonga from another part of the dungeon. Surdite Colony: AC: 7[12]; HD 2; Hp 6/6; Attack: 1 claw; Special: surprise, hover; Move: 14; HDE/XP: 3/60.
5	14 Boil Bunnies, actively patrolling their newfound territory. Boil Bunnies: AC: 9[10]; HD 1/2; Hp 2/2; Attack:1 bite (1 dmg); Special: reproduction; Move: 6; HDE/XP: 2/30.
6	1 Flat Earther, seeking a path further underground. Flat Earther: AC: 7[12]; HD 3; Hp 10/10; Attack: 1 bodyslam; Special: groundshake; Move: 6; HDE/XP: 4/120.



APPENDIX A

MISCELLANEA



The following entries are intended to be useful GM aids for stocking hirelings and providing additional specialty items. Aside from being value to players and keeping them on the hedonic gold treadmill, they provide a tangible sense of the character of Gathox.

SAMPLE HIRELINGS, HENCHMEN, AND FOLKS-AT-ARMS

Emm Pops

Prim and scoldish linklass covered in chimney soot.
HD 1; **HP** 3/3, **AC** 9[10], 4 torches, lantern, 3 oils, wire brush.
10Gp/mo.

The Thin Green Duke

Hauntingly thin Man-at-Arms, dressed in green sequin jumpsuit.
HD 1; **HP** 5/5, **AC** 5[14], Glittery shoulder pads, rhinestone girdle, battle axe. 25 gp/mo.

Lucky Number Seven

Three-legged, one-eyed, stub-tailed wardog mutt.
HD 2+2, **HP** 9/9, **AC** 6[13], 2d4 bite, To-Hit 18. 30 gp/mo.

Pavel Flipper

Alcoholic child porter with a penguin flipper left arm.
HD 1, **HP** 3/3, **AC** 8[11], backpack, large sack, belt pouch. 10 gp/mo or daily alcohol.

Boro the Amazing Marching Lizard

Giant lizard pack mule.
HD 4, **HP** 21/21, **AC** 3[16], 1d8 bite, To-Hit 15.
Bedazzled saddle and harness, bucks rider whenever they roll a critical failure on any roll. 120Gp/mo., includes lizard specialist trainer.

T-Bone and Rex

Double-dog-headed Mutant Freak/ Watchdog-At-Arms.
HD 2, **HP** 9/9, **AC** 5[14], Attack by weapon, To-Hit 17. 2 hand axes, chitin plate, chew toy. 45gp/mo. Comes with dual dog bowls.

SAMPLE UNUSUAL ITEMS OF GREAT VALUE

Rod of Retraction

Collapsible, 10' carbon fiber pole, great for those hard to reach places. 10 lbs., 50 gp.

Zerkmaster 3000

This compact, hermetically sealed grease gun features a one-hand grip, 3 swappable refillable cartridges, and 32 fl. ounces of high grade machine grease free with purchase. 5 lbs., 75 gp.

Amulet of Aggression

This esoteric adornment features a chrome hexagonal pendant, 5" across, with dark red hemispherical jewel in the center which is rumored to flash brilliantly whenever 'hit' with laser or focused LED lights. Complete with paracord necklace and adjustable cinch-strap. 1 lb., 95 gp.

The Hands of God

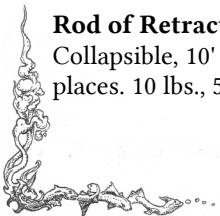
This unwieldy contraption features a white battery-powered backpack with potentiometer knobs and on/off switch. Attached to the backpack are two braided cables, the ends of which feature large paddles with parallel hand grips. When set to the on position and both paddles applied to a subject, an incredible shock of destructive energy is released. 3d4 damage, melee, 20 charges, 35 lbs. 250 gp.

Flying Wombat Armor

This suit of ultra-light armor features a woven mix of kevlar and carbon fibers, sewn into the form of a 'onesie' jumpsuit. The most incredible feature of this new, cutting edge technology is the wings and tailflap sewn between the limbs, allowing for high speed controlled falls. Base-jumping parachute included. +2 AC, 15 lbs., 600gp.

Jolt-Amp Mega-Punch-Fist Beast Pills

These totally EXTREME ultra-hardcore performance pills bring out the elite in you! Just one pill will power you for hours, giving you the extra high-kick to the face you need to kill the sky! Each pill restores 1d4+1 hp, allows the user to double their healing for 3 hours, and improves WIS checks for one hour. 5 pills per bottle, each bottle 75 gp.



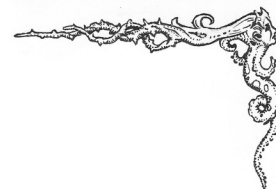


APPENDIX B

THE COMPLETE TABLES

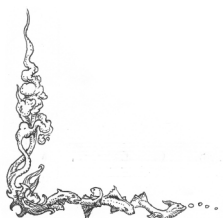
ROLL	RESULT
1d6 vs. Ability	Exceptionally easy task, but a small margin of error still exists.
2d6 vs. Ability	Fairly easy task, with a margin of error.
3d6 vs. Ability	Standard check, used in most cases, with a reasonable margin of error.
4d6 vs. Ability	Challenging task, with a high margin of error.
5d6 vs. Ability	Incredibly difficult.

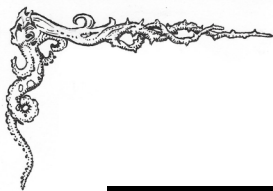
ROLL (1D10)	WILD MAGIC EFFECT
1	The air ionizes, creating a burnt oxygen smell in a 20'x20' area.
2	The caster's skin changes hue 10% warmer, toward red.
3	The caster's skin changes hue 10% cooler, toward blue.
4	Light rapidly shifts from bright to dark, like a strobe, 10' radius, for 1 round.
5	A thin sheet of ice materializes on everything in a 20' radius.
6	The sounds of laughter in reverse fill a 20' radius for 3 rounds.
7	The spell leaves a permanent holograph hovering at the point of casting.
8	The caster's face transmogrifies into an entirely different face for a day.
9	The skin melts off the caster's hands, leaving exposed muscle and bone. No damage.
10	The caster's eyes become two glowing orbs of purple light.



BENEFICIAL MUTATIONS

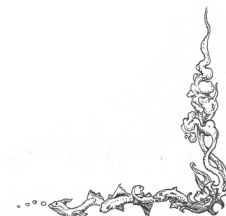
1	Claws or teeth do 1d6 dmg, appearance changes to reflect the growth.	11	Mutant sprouts oily fur which resists most liquids, but not acids.
2	A nimble tail, 4' in length, grows from the tailbone. Usable as a 3rd limb.	12	Elongated tongue, retractable; can reach 1d3 feet in length.
3	A fully functional third arm grows from the chest of the Mutant.	13	6 holes appear instead of nose; can detect poisons by smell within 10'.
4	Extra pair of eyes above normal eyes, allowing for infravision up to 30'.	14	Calcium deposits on skull create heavy dome; 1-point bonus to Saves against mental attacks..
5	Skin becomes random mix of fur and scales, +1 AC bonus.	15	Quick regeneration, allows Mutant to recover 3 hp per rest turn instead of 1.
6	Mutant can secrete mild paralytic venom from glands in throat, two doses per day.	16	Pockets form just below eyes, can shoot spines up to 20' 3/day, 1d4 dmg.
7	Mutant becomes barrel-chested and grows super-sized lungs. Can survive underwater twice as long as normal.	17	Can eat almost anything non-poisonous and nonmetallic, never needs rations.
8	Natural skin webbing appears between digits and limbs. Good for swimming at twice the normal rate and gliding and reducing fall damage by 10'.	18	Translucent skin with shifting pigmentation allows Mutant to blend into environment from 20' or further. Reduces chance to spot the Mutant by 1 in 6.
9	Giant bat ears allow echolocation within 15'. Need ear-pro for loud sounds.	19	Bulbous cancers (3 daily) grow from body; can detach and move, following simple commands (including listening, carry up to 5 lbs., and spying). 2 hp each, up to 5 at once under command.
10	Marsupial pouch grows on torso, allowing Mutant to carry an extra 30 lbs.	20	1d6 limbs become tentacles. 1-4 for arms/legs, 5 is head, 6 means body is amorphous and flexible. Sensory organs and fine motor skills remain intact. Head tentacle can also grasp objects.

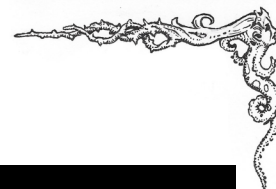




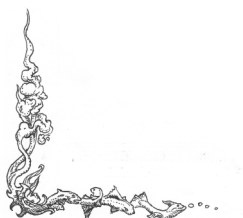
NEGATIVE MUTATIONS

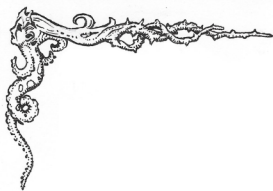
1	Skin dry and brittle, takes double damage from fire.	11	Diseased skin, flaking and red, possibly pustulent. -1 CHA.
2	Stress can cause paralysis - 3d6 vs. WIS check in stressful situation (GM fiat), failure forces Mutant to curl up in a ball for 1d4 rounds.	12	Enlarged facial features, creating slurred speech and breathing. -1 CHA and -1 to reaction rolls.
3	Water dependent - needs to immerse in water for 10 minutes every 6 hours or suffer 1d4 dmg/hour.	13	Misshapen limbs and twisted bone growth, add 1 die of difficulty to DEX checks.
4	Direct sunlight causes Mutant to suffer a -1 penalty to attack, damage, and Saves.	14	Brittle bones and weak ligaments. When making a STR check, roll twice and take the lower number.
5	Arthritis - swollen joints make it difficult to haul gear. -2 Encumbrance slots.	15	Fused spine - makes checks for climbing, crawling in confined spaces, and gymnastic movements 1 die more difficult.
6	Black and white vision, unable to see color.	16	Body temperature can't regulate - double the negative effects of cold and heat.
7	Taste and smell senses are totally absent.	17	Shrunken or missing arm (1-2) or leg (3-4).
8	Weak skin - physical attacks inflict an extra point of damage.	18	Tumors cover body, reducing movement by half and encumbrance by -20 lbs.
9	Single eye - two eyes have merged into one. Depth perception off, leading to a -1 attack penalty.	19	Insatiable appetite requires the additional consumption of 1d4 rations per day.
10	Inhuman voice, -1 to reaction rolls.	20	Roll two negative traits from above.





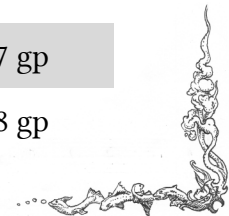
LEVEL	STREET TOUGH	SOLDIER	MARTIAL MASTER	PSYCHIC	FAITH HEALER	COSMIC DOCTOR	MUTANT
1	Skinner	Grunt	Trainee	Table Knocker	Street Preacher	Neophyte	Odd Growth
2	Bruiser	Cadet	Adept	Sir or Madame	Cloaker	Parlor Trickster	Scummer
3	Mack	Privateer	Wheel of Fists	Seer	Witness	Lesser Magi	Weirdling
4	Ruffian	Mercenary	Purveyor of Pain	Medium	Ministrant	Chanter	Lurker
5	Knifer	Stalwart Ward	Lord of the Field	Clairvoyant	One Who Binds Wounds	True Magi	Child of Gathox
6	Harrier	Sergeant of Earth	Lord of the Walls	Channeler	One Who Feeds Many	Wizard	Beast in Low Places
7	Enforcer	Sergeant of Heaven	Tactician of Sun	Speaker of the Dead	Bearer of Good Tidings	Master of Strange Tides	Beast in Shadows
8	Boss	Sergeant of the Five Points	Strategist of Stars	Voice of the Undying Will	The Light of Truth	The Wind Between the Stars	Dwells In Deep Murk
9+	Kingpin	General	Xanatos	Heavenly Avatar	Saint	Dark Sorcerer	Monster





AMMUNITION	COST
Arrows for Bows	10 gp for 20
Bolts for Crossbows	15 gp for 20
Bullets for Rifle or Revolver	25 gp for 20
Charges for Lasers	75 gp for 10
Shells for Shotgun	30 gp for 20
Shot for Slingshots	3 gp for 20

WEAPON	DAMAGE	RATE OF FIRE	WEIGHT	RANGE	PRICE
Axe, battle*	1d6+1		15	M	7 gp
Axe, hand	1d6	1	5	M or 20'	3 gp
Axe, Lungblade**	1d6, exp. dmg. on 6		20	M	225 gp
Billy club	1d6		5	M	3 gp
Blackjack	1d6-1, on nat. 20 Save vs. K.O.		2	M	7 gp
Bow, short	1d6	2	5	30'	25 gp
Bow, long	1d6+1	2	5	60'	50 gp
Bow, cross	1d6+1	1	5	45'	45 gp
Brass knuckles	1d6-1, Save vs. KO on Nat. 20		3	M	5 gp
Club	1d6		10	M	0 gp
Dagger	1d6-1		2	M	2gp
Dynamite (stick) ***	2d6, 1 in 4 fuse fail	1/2	1	see below	125 gp
Flail	1d6		12	M	4 gp
Flail, heavy*	1d6+1		15	M, 2nd rank	10 gp
Hammer, throwing	1d6-1	1	5	M, 20'	2 gp
Hammer, war*	1d6		15	M	7 gp
Lance	1d6		15	M, 2nd rank	8 gp





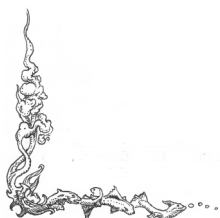
WEAPON	DAMAGE	RATE OF FIRE	WEIGHT	RANGE	PRICE
Laser, pistol**	1d6, exp. dmg. on nat. 20	1	7	60'	325 gp
Laser, rifle*,**	1d6+1, exp. dmg. on nat. 20	1	20	120'	400 gp
Mace	1d6		10	M	5 gp
Morningstar*	1d6		15	M	5 gp
Mulkin	1d6		7	M	8 gp
Pole Arm*	1d6+1		15	M, 2nd rank	8 gp
Quarterstaff*	1d6		10	M, 2nd rank	2 gp
Revolver	1d6-1	2	5	45'	60 gp
Rifle*	1d6+1	1	10	120'	85 gp
Slingshot*	1d6-1	1	1	40'	1 gp
Shotgun*,****	1d6+1 to all targets in 10' area	1	10	20'	200 gp
Spear	1d6	1	10	M, 2nd rank, thrown	3 gp
Sword, short	1d6-1		5	M	7 gp
Sword, long	1d6		10	M	10 gp
Sword, bastard*	1d6 one-handed, 1d6+1 two-handed		12	M	20 gp
Sword, heftblade*	1d6+1		15	M	30 gp
Sword, katana*	1d6, exp. dmg. on 20		10	M	40 gp

* two-handed weapon.

** mechanical failure on a natural 1 requiring 30% of cost to repair.

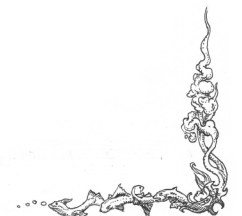
*** damage affects 20' radius of blast center - fuse fail is 50% chance of detonation in hands.

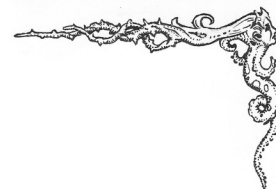
**** effective within 20' and hits everyone in a 10' square.





PIECE	EFFECT ON AC [AAC]	WEIGHT	COST
BDSM leather suit	-2[+2]	20	150 gp
Belt, Skull	-1[+1]	15	40 gp
Bracers, Metal	-1[+1]	10	25 gp
Breastplate	-1[+1]	15	60 gp
Chain or link tunic	-1[+1]	20	40 gp
Chug Boots	0*, see description	N/A	250 gp
Elbowpads, kneepads	-1[+1]	5	25 gp
Gauntlets, Metal and fur	-1[+1]	10	30 gp
Girdle, metal and lizard skin	-1[+1]	12	40 gp
Shin Guards	-1[+1]	10	30 gp
Gutter Gills	-1[+1]; 6 rnds. breathing, 10' dark vision.	10	75 gp, 10 gp refill
Helm, metal or carbon fiber	-1[+1]	5	25 or 50 gp
Helm, Skull w/fangs, horns	-1[+1]	10	35 gp
Joreen Chitin Plates	-2[+2]; nat.20 reduces by 1	15	120 gp
Karate Bandana	-1[+1]*, see description	3	40 gp
Kevlar, flak jacket	-2[+2]	20	200 gp
Shield, punching	-1[+1]; also, 1d3 counter on miss	10	15 gp
Shield, body	-1[+1]	15	10 gp
Shoulderpad/baffles/pauldron	-1[+1]	8	30 gp
Trenchcoat, lined	-1[+1]	5	50 gp
Wicker weave	-1[+1]; easily burned or softened	15	10 gp

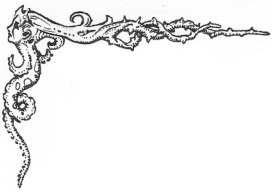




DEED	POINTS (RP)
Successful Heist	1
Successful Retrieval	1
Successful Assassination	2
Simple Contract Fulfilled	1
Complex Contract Fulfilled	2
Neighborhood Territory Claimed/ Defended*	1
Guard or Escort Terms Fulfilled	1
Simple Investigation Solved	1
Complex Investigation Solved	2
Successful Carousing	1
Gaining A Level	1

*Neighborhood Territories become available when players clear dungeons, wipe out an enclave of gangsters, take over a business, or seize residential territory. It is up to the GM to provide these opportunities, especially by paying attention to player interest in mentioned properties and developing missions around them.

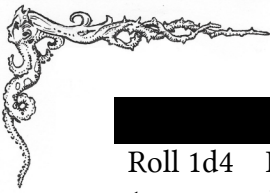




TERRITORY BIDS

TERRITORY	MIN BID	MAX BID	COUNTER	VALUE	YIELD	STAFF
Market Booth	2	6	10%, 1 gang	150 gp	35 gp	1 mook
Market Tent	3	10	15%, 1 gang	200 gp	50 gp	2 mooks
Abandoned Shack/ Apt.	4	12	20%, 1 gang	230 gp	70 gp	3 mooks
Street Corner	5	15	25% 1 gang	275 gp	80 gp	3 mooks, 1 Lieutenant
Small Business	7	20	35% 1st gang 10% 2nd	650 gp	120 gp	3 mooks, 1 brainiac
Large Business	10	25	50% 1st gang 20% 2nd	1,000 gp	180 gp	3 mooks, 1 Lt., 1 brainiac
Dungeon, Small	12	30	55% 1st gang 25% 2nd	1,500 - 3,000 gp	250 gp	6 mooks, 1 Lt., 1 brainiac
Dungeon, Large	17	35	65% 1st gang 30% 2nd	2,200 - 5,000 gp	320 gp	10 mooks, 2 Lt.s, 1 brainiac
Apartment Complex	20	45	70% 1st gang 35% 2nd	8,000 - 12,000 gp	500 gp	12 mooks, 4 Lt.s, 2 brainiacs
Factory/ Base	25	60	80% 1st gang 40% 2nd, 20% 3rd	10,000 - 15,000 gp	625 gp	20 mooks, 2 Lt.s, 3 brainiacs
Mansion/ Villa	27	70	90% 1st gang, 50% 2nd, 30% 3rd	15,000 - 22,000 gp	800 gp	25 mooks, 5 Lt.s, 2 brainiacs
Mega-fortress/ Castle	30	100	100% 1st, 70% 2nd, 40% 3rd, 20% 4th	25,000 - 30,000 gp	1,100 gp	30 mooks, 6 Lt.s, 4 brainiacs





TYPE OF GANG

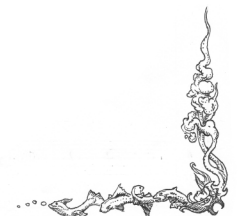
Roll 1d4	Result
1	<i>Neighborhood Gang</i> - While criminal, their origins are based in social play and mischief. Identities rely on ostentatious bluster or threat.
2	<i>Mafia/Tong</i> - Larger families, clans, ethnic or business interests. Initiatory membership, typically featuring discipline and a code of conduct.
3	<i>Symbolic Alliance</i> - Loose horizontal alliances of gangs or chapters who adopt the same or similar symbols. Umbrella divisions as opposed to hierarchy.
4	<i>Ideological Alliance</i> - Large alliance of smaller ideologically-aligned groups. Often religious or ethnically homogenous. Most likely to make spectacular displays of public violence.

GANG STRUCTURE

Roll 1d6	Result
1	<i>Egalitarian</i> , with an elected boss and/or lieutenants.
2	<i>Cult of Personality</i> , with a strong, charismatic leader.
3	<i>Might Makes Right</i> , where leadership is challenged and established based on violence.
4	<i>Hired Guns</i> , with membership bearing employee status.
5	<i>Inner Circle</i> , where a central committee of leadership steers the group.
6	<i>Sleeper Cell</i> , with discrete power distribution and the scope of action is limited.

SIZE AND DISTRIBUTION OF GANG

Roll 1d8	Result
1	1 boss, 1 lieutenant, 2d3 mooks
2	2-boss partnership with 2d4 mooks
3	1 boss, 2 lieutenants, 2d6 mooks
4	3-boss triumvirate, each with a lieutenant and 1d6 mooks
5	1 boss, 3 lieutenants, 3d4 mooks
6	Frontman and silent senior partner, 3 lieutenants and 2d8 mooks
7	Headless: 4 lieutenants, each with 1d6 mooks
8	1 boss, 2d3 lieutenants, each with 1d8 mooks



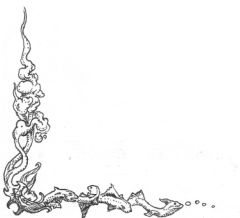


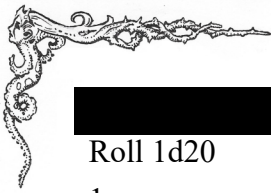
NAMING SCHEME

Roll 1d10	Result
1	<i>Honorific, two words.</i> Ex.: Shining Force, Rising Tide, Radiant Fist.
2	<i>Two word opposites.</i> Ex.: Goodly Scoundrels, Holy Bastards, Burning Sharks.
3	<i>Outlaw name.</i> Ex.: Pistoleros, Hole-in-the-Wall Gang, The Executioners.
4	_____ <i>Brotherhood/ Sisterhood.</i>
5-6	<i>Family name of leader.</i> Ex.: The Muenchen Family, The Jodorowsky's.
7-8	<i>Geographical name.</i> Ex.: The Scrape Hill Bandits, The Blood River Reavers.
9	<i>Business front.</i> Ex.: Talon and Feather Mercantile, The Tanner's Guild.
10	<i>Leader's crew.</i> Ex.: Tamara's Boys, Agathura's Raiders.

GANG MOTIVATIONS

Roll 1d12	Result
1	Social club/fraternization.
2	Defense of territory.
3	Religious fanaticism.
4	Hated enemy.
5	Ethnic/cultural supremacy.
6	Class warfare.
7	Control of legitimate businesses.
8	Black market entrepreneurship.
9	Mercenary muscle/contract work.
10	Protection of a certain class of people.
11	General mayhem/targeted terror.
12	Reactionary/ revolutionary (against status quo).

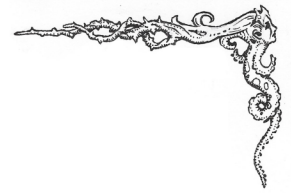




DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

Roll 1d20	Result
1	Boss has a twin as lieutenant; 50% chance their aims are at odds.
2-3	Drug addiction runs rampant in the lower ranks.
4	Members are indentured, and fallen members are replaced by siblings or parents.
5-6	The mooks are planning a mutiny.
7	The lieutenants are quietly moving against the boss(es), unbeknownst to their mooks.
8	The boss is planning to kill and replace the lieutenant(s) as soon as possible.
9	The gang has recently lost a significant amount of territory/business.
10	The gang is in it's heyday, having recently acquired a tremendous resource.
11-12	Upper management is blind to the machinations of outside forces.
13	The gang has an extensive network of informants, and is unlikely to be taken off-guard.
14	Fallen members are martyred and idolized, leading to fanaticism amongst the lower ranks.
15	All trust has broken down, leading to factionalism.
16	The organization is currently planning its most risky operation yet.
17	The gang is old and semi-defunct, save for one up-and-coming young tough.
18-19	The leadership is held together by romantic interests.
20	Roll one additional motivation on the d12 table and roll again here.





LOST LEGACY CONDITIONS

1) Lost Turf War – If the players bid all the way to a turf war as described earlier in this chapter and lost that war, they will immediately lose an amount of Legacy equal to the max bid value of the territory in question.

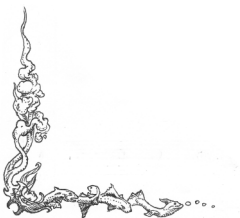
2) Seized Territory – If the players suffer the seizure of a territory by a rival gang, they lose an amount of Legacy equal to half the max bid value of the territory.

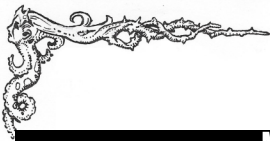
3) Lost Bid – If the players lose a territorial bid before reaching a turf war (i.e. they choose not to up the ante all the way to a conflict), they lose 1/2 the value of the minimum bid on the territory in Legacy.

4) Loss of Key Hirelings – If a Lieutenant is killed or commits Mutiny in the course of play, the gang loses 1 Legacy; the Mutiny or death of a Brainiac incurs the loss of 2 Legacy.

TIER (LEGACY)	GANG TITLE	BENEFIT OF TIER
0-10	Alleycats	-
11-20	Hoodlums	-
21-30	Ruffians	-
31-40	Young Bloods	5% price discount in home neighborhood*
41-55	Street Gang/ Posse	Reduced chance of assault in home neighborhood
56-70	Tough Company	Additional 5% price discount in home neighborhood*
71-85	Wrecking Crew	Recognized in previously inaccessible social circles
86-100	Rat Pack	Additional 5% price discount in home neighborhood*
101-125	Mob	Reduced chance of assault city-wide
126-175	Mafia	May request peaceful audience with other gang leaders*
176-250	Cabal	Can create a new holiday and capitalize on the profits
251+	Syndicate	Can create a new city-wide social norm

* Indicates the gang must own territory to enjoy listed benefit.





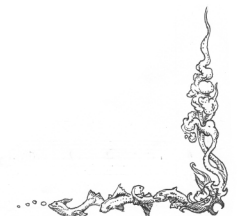
MUDLING RUMORS

**Roll
1d8**

- | Roll
1d8 | Result |
|-------------|--|
| 1 | Mudling Mansions was erected by the Cult of Sha-Benyu as an incursion into Kettle territory (false). |
| 2 | I heard that gymnasts were buried alive in Kamma Tower (true). |
| 3 | The Dohjaks are stretched thin and afraid to sacrifice their own men to take the Mudling Mansion (false - contracting third parties is an ostentatious display of wealth and good for the body politic). |
| 4 | “The Goddess” will return to claim her rightful place in the Kettle if anyone tries to take Mudling Mansions (possible, but beyond the scope of this adventure). |
| 5 | Kamma Tower used to serve as a smuggling route between the Kettle and the Necropolis (true). |
| 6 | Word has it that the missing mudders were kidnapped by the Gecko People (half true - Vulzari shapeshifters have used their earth magic to erect the tower and claim the space for their own factional goals, kidnapping homeless people to use as human slaves). |
| 7 | There’s gold in them thar apartments (true). |
| 8 | It’s the richies from the Craw up above that’re causin’ all this ruckus down here (sometimes, but not in this case). |

ROLL (1D8) MUDDLING ENCOUNTER

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | 2d4 members of a random gang shake the PC's down for cash or goods. |
| 2 | Frantic Dohjak patrol, 1d8 members; looking for a fugitive Kermen. |
| 3 | Group of mudders, worried about their missing friend, taking a break from hustling. |
| 4 | Kermen merchant brigade unit, trying to extort a lowly mutant open air vendor. |
| 5 | 1d6 clubbers, spun out on Bakra root, looking for a fix/party/directions to a dance hall. |
| 6 | 1d4 Huttimer soldiers, drinking warm beer and buttered bread, angry about sin. |
| 7 | 1d6 FPA revolutionaries, engaged in bitter argument with an equal number of Kermen manufacturers. One or both sides try to draw the PC's into the argument and potential fight. |
| 8 | A lone Elven King footsoldier, down from the Favella and looking to prove his mettle. |





APPENDIX N

INSPIRATIONAL MATERIAL

City of Darkness: Life in Kowloon Walled City by Ian Lambot, Greg Girard

Planet of Slums by Mike Davis.

Confessions of a Yakuza by Junichi Saga

Alas, Babylon by Pat Frank

A House of Hollow Wounds by Joseph S. Pulver, Sr.

The Quantum Thief by Hannu Rajaniemi

The Sword of Rhiannon by Leigh Brackett

All You Need is Kill by Hiroshi Sakurazaka

The King in Yellow by Robert W. Chambers

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- * A fully mapped and fleshed out Vertical Slum, stuffed to the gills with greedy factions, hook-laden NPCs, and seedy locations.
 - * A new gangland system for running domain-level games at level 1.
 - * 43 fully illustrated strange and inimical monsters to spring on unsuspecting players.
- * New classes, skills, ability checks, hirelings, and gear for players to work their will across the mean streets of the Great Spire.
- * A vertical dungeon introductory adventure to test the skills and resourcefulness of new and seasoned players alike.
 - * Over a hundred lavish interior illustrations by D.L. Johnson.
- * Five pieces of interconnected chapter fiction contributed by Josh Wagner.

